YM OVERSIGHT BOARD REPORT । 2023

I believe God would have me share three directives, three instructions to us for the days ahead as a denomination and individually as His beloved children.

Directive #1 Face the Pressure
We will never know how strong God is if we duck and cover in the face of conflict or shrink back from obeying Him out of fear. We discover how mighty God is when we take a stand knowing that we may be ridiculed, rejected, or persecuted. “For the eyes of the LORD roam to and fro over all the earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are fully devoted to Him” (2 Chronicles 16:9).

*A* highlight of this past year was the inauguration of Malone President Dr. Greg Miller. In his address, Dr. Miller celebrated Malone’s Evangelical Friends roots and boldly declared that Malone will be a biblically based, Christian university. We are thrilled to report that, through the generosity of our churches, EFC-ER was able to provide an additional $130,000 in support for our school. Sadly, Malone’s posture is in direct opposition to the “inclusive” cancel culture of our day.

The Bible is full of people who were “canceled” by their culture — Noah building an ark, Abraham calling himself a father of nations, Moses waving a staff, Elijah drenching an altar, Mary pregnant by the Spirit of God, and Jesus declaring Himself the Son of God. They canceled Jesus to death. But God resurrected Him. Jesus said if we deny Him, He will deny us before His Father. This cancellation is for eternity. So how do we develop faith to face the pressure?

Directive #2 Fear the Lord
We must live in reverential awe of the Lord. The remedy for the tepid Christian is dwelling in the secret place of the Most High (Ps. 91:1). We must know God by spending time in His Presence and His Word. We will be wowed by His splendor, moved by His mercy, awed by His perfect judgment, and completely undone by His love.

This is why the Oversight Board and Directors consider our Testimonies and Faith & Practice a top priority. We must make sure they are biblically sound. To the very best of our ability, the Testimonies must use language that is clear, concise, and reflective of the character of Christ. Thank you to all who have participated in the process. Special thanks to Rusty Savage and Pete Fowler for generously sharing their time and talents.

A well-developed Faith & Practice allows us to keep an orderly, clear, efficient church life that meets the needs of people, and is a faithful witness to the character and glory of God. This frees up our time and energies for the work of the harvest.

Moses met with God on the mountain and at the Tent of Meeting before going out to serve the people and be God’s spokesman. We get into trouble if we reverse that order. To love God first and people second is the greatest commandment. And the greatest commandment leads to the great commission.

Directive #3: Find the Lost

Author Jill Briscoe has traveled the globe teaching pastors, missionaries, and church leaders, and served on the board of directors of World Relief and Christianity Today. A woman once asked Jill where she received her call to ministry. Jill replied, “I got saved.” She also teaches that “the orbit of the earth between your feet is your mission field.” Finding the lost was among Jesus’ final commands to his disciples. It is still His command to everyone who claims Him as Lord.

Last October, the Oversight Board directed me to chair the Executive Director search committee. I want to thank fellow committee members - Pete Fowler, Samuel Huang, John Ryser and Ed Vinson for their wise counsel and prayerful leadership. We received over two dozen applications from around the country and from within and outside of our denomination. There were several top-quality candidates and we selected three to interview (all from EFC-ER, I might add).

We have selected Ed Walsh as our recommendation for the position of Executive Director. I look forward to moderating the Q & A sessions with him on Saturday morning. I do not want to steal anything from what Ed will be sharing, but finding the lost has been heavy on my heart since hearing Ed’s testimony and presentation during his interview. So, there is a teaser for you…

Bishop Joey Johnson, senior pastor of the House of the Lord in Akron, challenged graduating Bible and Theology seniors at Malone with these words, “Spirit-filled Christians are not called to be on the Titanic destined for destruction in life; or on the Love Boat cruising to get all the pleasure we can in this life; or in the Ark just making sure we save everyone already safely in the boat. No! We are to be on an aircraft carrier carrying God’s Kingdom in sorties and missions around the world!” A sortie is a sudden rushing out of troops from a position of defense against the enemy. We are called to take the gospel wherever we go. That is how we find the lost.

I am continually impressed by Oversight Board members, Tom Crawford, Greg Miller, John Ryser, Geoff Schultz, Scott Calhoun, Pete Fowler, Chuck Goldy, Paul Hoffman, Marva Hoopes, Dave Mercadante, Dave Roudabush, Rusty Savage, Norbu Tamang and Ed Walsh. Their diligent, faithful, mostly behind-the-scenes work for the ministry and mission of EFC-ER is invaluable.

We thank former member, Zach Bohler, and retiring member, Norbu Tamang, for their powerful contributions to the Board. Their eloquence in prayer, innovative thinking, wise comments, and godly character will be missed.

Dr. Tom Crawford, our retiring Executive Director, has been a true Pioneer in ministry — dedicated to Christ and His kingdom, zealous in evangelism, stalwart in defense of pastors and churches. Tom is a wise and compassionate servant leader. We are grateful for his six years of leadership and will honor him at the Sunday evening service.

This Yearly Meeting, may we be immersed in worship, inspired by sermons, informed by reports, invigorated by fellowship, and intentional in voting. Together let us determine to face the pressure, fear the Lord, and find the lost!

Deb Robinson

Oversight Board Chair