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Jeff's JOURNAL

Insider Notes, News, Trends, and Resources from the President's Office

Restructure Open Bible?

Every other year since my election as president of Open Bible Churches I have convened a two day "Strategic Prayer & Planning" gathering in Des Moines. Starting in February of 1996, we have now facilitated five such events. Participants, usually numbering about thirty and intentionally dominated by pastors, are asked to fast and pray three days before arriving. In addition, national board members and other leaders, including ethnic representatives, women, and young emerging leaders are included.

Those of us privileged to have attended these seasons of prayer, strategic thinking, and strategic planning, will recall special moments of spiritual insight, corporate illumination, prophetic utterance/demonstration, and divine initiative. In these hotel "delivery rooms" (I call them groaning, travailing, birthing sessions), past highlights include:

- Agreement on our mission statement: "...making and releasing disciples, planting churches, sending missionaries"
- Our eight primary objectives, PLANTERS: (see inset)
- Development of a National Prayer Network
- Leadership Development as a strategic priority—laborers for the harvest
- Church planting and multiplication as a non-negotiable
- Emerging vision for ethnic ministries – birth of Mission USA
- Growing passion/focus on children and youth ministries – 85% of decisions for Christ made here

Other initiatives too numerous to mention have emerged from these February incubators, but none portend greater challenge than a recommendation

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Teri Beyer,
Secretary/Treasurer

Build a Better Brain

As we age, memory lapses make us fear we're losing our mental edge. Doctors used to think brain development occurred only during youth. But new research shows humans can add new neurons throughout life. Each neuron has branches called *dendrites*. Whenever the brain is stimulated by a new experience, new dendrites form.

Here are five ways to help stimulate dendrite growth:

1. *Switch hands*

Practice doing things with you nondominant hand. It will increase the number of circuits in the cerebral cortex. Brush your teeth, cut your food, style your hair, or try writing with your nondominant hand.

2. *"Lose" a sense*

Try using your other senses. Get dressed with your eyes closed or learn to distinguish different house keys by touch. Turn off the sound on the TV and try to follow the

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NEW CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTION RULES

Substantiation of non-cash, charitable contributions has been an area about which the IRS has long complained. Donors have frequently taken deductions for the donation of cars, boats, and airplanes far in excess of the value of the gift to the charity. To solve this problem H.R. 4520 was passed on October 11, 2004. This bill amends section 170(f) of the Internal Revenue Code. Now no deduction over \$500.00 will be allowed for the donation of vehicles unless the donor obtains a contemporaneous acknowledgement from the donee that includes the vehicle identification number AND 1) the gross proceeds the charity received from the sale of the vehicle, OR 2) a statement the charity will be using the vehicle personally to help it carry out its charitable pursuits. This acknowledge-

ment must be provided to the donor within 30 days of the sale of the vehicle or the decision to retain the vehicle for use by the charitable organization. This change also provides for severe penalties to charities that fraudulently acknowledge such donations. The change becomes effective in 2005. In addition, section 170(e)(1) of the Code was amended to include additional restrictions on the treatment of charitable contributions of patents and other intellectual property. While these may not be typical contributions received by churches, if such contributions are received, churches will be expected to comply with IRS rules and should always know what their obligations are regarding substantiation of all types of charitable contributions.

CHURCH LAW

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coming from this year's Strategic Prayer & Planning event, i.e., "to consider possibilities of restructure in Open Bible Churches."

It has been interesting for me to "chew" on this recommendation...one the National Board of Directors embraced and approved. Most fascinating, perhaps, has been the fact that very few of those involved in the process seem to have an "agenda," or an "axe to grind." That is to say, they don't have a preconceived reorganization plan...they aren't trying to dethrone anyone...they aren't grabbing for money...they don't yet even have their arms around "Why did we decide to do this?" 😊. Frankly, I find that very refreshing.

It is possible a few have biased presuppositions, but my sense is that most leaders in

Open Bible are simply and unreservedly desperate for God's highest and best. United they stand on this premise: If anything we are doing is a barrier or hindrance to God's agenda and the Holy Spirit's pleasure, then we want to dismantle it. We insist on being in the river of God's purposes. If we are wasting money or time, we want to stop it. Open Bible must be and will be missional and not maintenance minded – that is what is driving us and what represents our vision for individuals, churches, districts, regions, departments, and the national office.

As I write this article it is ten days before Thanksgiving, so let's talk turkey! I am not an expert in organizational redesign and restructure, but it is likely I have as much or more experience, training, and academic preparation in this area than most Open Bible leaders. I have personally participated

Prayer & Evangelism

Lord Jesus – come and conquer me.
Samuel Rutherford, Scottish Reformer

Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons, but they are helpless against our prayers.

J. Sidlow Baxter

Before we can pray, “Thy Kingdom come,” we must be willing to pray, “My kingdom go.”

Alan Redpath

God listens to our weeping when the occasion itself is beyond our knowledge, but still within His love and power.
Daniel A. Poling

The American soul has withered, and awaits an infusion of the lifeblood of love. Whether or not we respond may determine the very survival of our civilization.

Barbara Elliott

Give up on no man as long as he is alive; until he is laid in the grave, give up on no man.

Andrew Murray

Evangelism without social work is deficient; social work without evangelism is impotent.

John R. Mott

With one ear we listen to the sweet melodies of heaven, and with the other ear we hear the cries of hell.

Unknown evangelist, as quoted by Doug Stringer

in numerous such processes in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors. I still read organizational and management literature. I’m not bragging...just the opposite! I’m confessing I’m not an expert – nor are there any credible reorganization change agents out there if they call themselves “experts.” That’s because experts usually do it right, and in the field of organizational development and structure there is no exact science...it is just as much an art.

Everyone knows there are multiple ways to get to a destination, or to solve a problem, or to achieve a purpose. Similarly, there are multiple ways to organize/structure an enterprise to achieve a mission. While there are sound, guiding principles developed through research that improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness, it is nevertheless a sad reality that non-profit

organizations often spend more time on structure and programs (how to do it), than on mission (doing it).

Experienced leaders and organizational consultants understand there is collateral damage associated with restructure processes. Occasionally they work; more frequently they do not. Recently I was with several denominational leaders in San Diego. During prayer, two denominational officials asked to be remembered as their movements are considering possibilities of restructure. Later in the meeting a leader of 500 churches from another movement said regarding restructuring, “Don’t do it brothers. It will cost you a lot of money, you will lose momentum, your mission won’t be advanced, and morale will be in the toilet.” Gulp!

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Build a Better Brain (continued)

plot. Taste foods while holding your nose.

3. Make small changes

Rearrange the furniture or reorganize your desk. Take a different route to work. Eat breakfast for dinner and dinner for breakfast. Travel around the grocery store in the opposite direction.

4. Take up a challenging hobby

Artistic pursuits, for example, activate nonverbal and emotional centers in the cortex. Try learning a musical instrument, or studying a foreign language.

5. Become more social

Interacting with other people is the best single brain exercise. It brings all the senses into play. People with good social networks have fewer physical and psychological problems as they age. Telephone a friend. Make small talk with the supermarket clerk. Go to the bank teller instead of the ATM. Join a book club or arrange a weekly game of Scrabble or Monopoly – anything that involves complex thought and social contact.

*Bottom Line TOMORROW
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Jerry Lambert,
Executive Director
of Planned Giving
& Advancement

Merry Makers

A boy was watching his father write a sermon. "How do you know what to say?" he asked. "God tells me," the pastor responded. The boy thought a moment and asked, "Then why do you keep crossing things out?"

A Sunday school teacher challenged her children to write a letter to God. They were to bring their letter back the following Sunday. One little boy wrote, "Dear God, We had a good time at church today. Wish you could have been there."

Finding one of her students making faces at others on the playground, Ms. Smith stopped to gently reprove the child. "Bobby, when I was a child, I was told that if I made ugly faces, it would freeze, and I would stay like that." Bobby looked into her face and replied, "Well, Ms. Smith, you can't say you weren't warned."

HAVE IT YOUR WAY

Planning is a part of life. We plan vacations, daily schedules, and our finances. However, we often neglect to plan for the last stage of life. Some view this as planning for death. I view it as making sure the final years of our lives are spent the way we want. Here are two tools to help ensure you "Have It Your Way:"

ESTATE PLANNING

A Living Will –

This document lists your preferences concerning life-sustaining procedures, such as being put on a respirator, and instructions about receiving such treatments as dialysis or nourishment through a feeding tube. Your living will can be revoked or revised at any time even if you're in the hospital.

Most hospitals have living wills for free upon request. You can also get a free form by contacting your Area Agency on Aging (found in your phone book). In addition, the AARP Foundation provides a question-and-answer booklet and forms for \$10.

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So why "consider possibilities of restructure" if the cards seem stacked against us before we start? Here are three possible answers. First, because I believe the motive of the motion was pure. The intentions of Open Bible leaders are not selfish, their hearts seem captivated by God, and their eyes are on the harvest. Second, because evaluation is good and change has merit, e.g., new wine and wineskins. Open Bible has a mandate from God in Jeremiah 1:10 to "root out, pull down...to build, and to plant." Whatever that may encompass, we want to obey. Third,

Their address is:

Box 96474, Washington, DC 20090-6474.

A Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care –

A durable power of attorney transfers your health care, decision-making rights to another person of your choosing. This is important if you become incompetent

and unable to make such decisions for yourself. Like the living will, it is available upon request from most hospitals and can be changed or canceled, but it must be done in writing.

When completed make sure you give copies of both documents to all your family members. If your family does not live nearby, you may wish to include trusted friends. The person you designate as your durable power of attorney and your doctors should also receive copies. Have it your way.

while this process has some potential to divide and hurt, I believe it has greater potential to build loving, enduring relationships between our five regions, and to cause them to move together in singleness of purpose.

Regional leaders and national officers, and their spouses, had a taste of glorious unity and harmony during a recent meeting in Perry, Iowa. I look forward to telling you that story.