

# TargetPoint

January 2008

## *“Navigating the Darkness”*

Vince D’Acchioli

As I began this new-year my heart has been stirred with some very mixed emotions. You see my flesh is still warring with my spirit regarding where God is leading us. I guess we are never free of that really. My flesh wants only to look at my circumstances and enter into fear. My spirit desires to trust God and allow His love to cast out fear. My flesh says get out there—mix it up—do—do—do. My spirit is saying *“be still”*.

My ability to trust God and truly be still is related to where God is positionally in my life. Have placed Him on the other side of my circumstances so that I see Him through those circumstances? Or, have I put Him between me and my circumstances so that I see them through Him. The difference is huge.

In the former scenario my circumstances rule me. My vision of God is tainted by life’s struggles. I find it difficult to sense His working in my life as I strain to work out my own resolutions. Does this sound familiar?

If He is between me and those same circumstances, then two things happen. First, I see everything through His eyes and can trust that He is the author of my life and I trust Him completely. Second, those same circumstances have to get through Him in order to impact me. Here is a great truth, loved one; if your circumstances have to go through Him to get to you—then no matter what happens we can glory in the fact that God ordained it.

That sounds great Vince but how do I get God there—I’ve tried and I can’t seem to see my trials through His eyes—what is the secret? I have discovered that the only way I can get God there is by me deliberately putting Him there—daily. I get up every day now asking Him to guide me and help me see today’s challenges through His eyes. I make sure I do not start my day without reading the Word praying and praising Him. I have spent most of my life looking for short cuts around this—there aren’t any.

So, if you find yourself like me—prone to wandering in the darkness—then place the embodiment of light Himself in front of you. And remember this—the enemy of your soul is relentless. There will continue to be times of darkness and despair as our flesh caves in to his lies. The process of working through that and realizing that I am seeing God now more clearly than my struggles is called spiritual maturity. It will not happen over night—I am certainly not there yet. But it will happen if you commit to the process.

I have been doing this long enough now to say with boldness, *“no matter what happens to me I will not abandon my savior—I love my Jesus more today than ever in my life”*.

*For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, and He watches all his paths.*

**Prov. 5:21**

# TargetPoint

February 2008

## *“Navigating the Crooked Places”*

Vince D’Acchioli

In last month’s *TargetPoint* I raised the question about where God is positionally in your life. Is He on the other side of your circumstances...or between you and your circumstances? The thought was that we need to work hard to keep Him between us and our circumstances so that we see life and many of the attending struggles through His eyes.

In coming to terms with this idea I have discovered another important truth that is essential in maintaining this posture. Consider the following verse:

*Consider what God has done: Who can straighten what he has made crooked?*  
**Ecc. 7:13**

Tough stuff and crooked places are not going to go away. The real test is how we choose to respond to them—what lessons we learn from them. We can respond with bitterness that usually leads to a victim mentality or we can see God at work and believe He is the author of our circumstances and will ultimately use them as the platform to launch us into His greater purpose.

*We may wait till He explains,  
Because we know that Jesus reigns.*

*It puzzles me; but, Lord, You understandest,  
And will one day explain this crooked thing.  
Meanwhile, I know that it has worked out Your best—  
Its very crookedness taught me to cling.*

*You have fenced up my ways, made my paths crooked,  
To keep my wand'ring eyes fixed on You,  
To make me what I was not, humble, patient;  
To draw my heart from earthly love to You.*

*So I will thank and praise You for this puzzle,  
And trust where I cannot understand.  
Rejoicing You do hold me worth such testing,  
I cling the closer to Your guiding hand.*

F.E.M.I.

**Here is the BIG question**—Are you more interested in seeing your own ideas come to fulfillment or God’s will?

# TargetPoint

March, 2008

## *“An Important Message for Men”*

Vince D’Acchioli

Next week I head to Canada to speak for **Promise Keepers**. I have been asked to open and close this important conference in the BC area. I will also be conducting a workshop on *How to Powerfully Pray for Your Wife*.

In preparing for the workshop I was impressed to share some of the important principles in this month’s **TargetPoint**. Cindy and I are convinced that this is an area that is oftentimes neglected and misunderstood in christian relationships. These principles or keys are perhaps the most powerful weapons we have against a ruthless enemy that is working overtime to destroy our families and the very fabric of our civilization.

This workshop addresses how to pray for our wives and what it means to be the spiritual head of our homes. As a part of my discussion, I talk about five keys to meeting a woman’s deepest need...

### **1. Assume the Role of Spiritual Leader in Your Home**

- Be the one to suggest praying together.
- Your spending time alone with God is one of the most encouraging things you can do for her.

### **2. Spend Quality Time With Her**

- The definition of listening is *wanting to hear*.
- Make sure time with her has the same priority on your calendar as your appointments at work.

### **3. Have Total Commitment**

- Never use the “D” word—in our culture divorce and separation has become the norm. Old fashioned commitment is just that—old fashioned.
- Continually let her know that she is number one—no matter what happens.
- Brag about her as often and to as many people as you know.

### **4. Be Financially Responsible**

- Here is a good test—if you were to go to heaven before her would her life style have to change?
- Never make important financial decisions unless you are both in agreement.

### **5. Be Her Best Friend**

- Ask her to share her dreams with you.
- What would she do if she had more time?
- Learn how you may be able to do more things together and then commit them to your calendar.

**Here is the BIG Question**—are you investing in the one who will be next to you in that rocking chair when the party is over—or are you spending more of your time and energy trying to impress and please people who will not be present at your funeral?

# TargetPoint

April, 2008

## “A Word to the Italian(s)”

Vince D’Acchioli

Many people forget that one of the most important books of the Bible was written to the Italians (Romans). A good friend and respected theologian once told me that if you only had one book out of the entire Bible to work from in order to understand most of what is needed it would be the book the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans. Further, if you could only have one chapter of one book—it would be Romans chapter 8.

This information came back to me the other day as I was reading my devotions and praying. During a prayer meeting the night before one of our intercessors shared that she thought God was putting some final touches on my transformation from relying upon my own energy and gifts—to living by the Spirit.

During my quiet time I felt impressed to read Romans chapter 8 and guess what? The lead in for this incredible chapter reads “Living by the Spirit”. I am persuaded that this powerful chapter contains some incredible truths regarding the secret to living life before God. I want to encourage you to, along with me, read this chapter every day for the next week—maybe the next month. Do it with pen and paper in hand and listen carefully to what the Spirit is saying to you. It’s so exciting to listen and hear His voice.

In the weeks to come I will be putting together a series of teachings based upon some of the important principles I am discovering—here are just a few:

**6. The Spirit Has Set Me Free**

- I do not live under condemnation.

**7. My Spirit And My Flesh Are At War**

- I must *resist* my *nature* and respond to the *Spirit*.

**8. The Secret To Victory—Christ Living In Me**

- The indwelling Holy Spirit in me is able to overcome my flesh nature.

**9. If I Love God He Is Working For My Good--Always**

- Loving God is the secret to life.

**10. God’s Great Plan—For Me To Be Like Jesus**

- I am called, justified and empowered for this purpose.

**11. God Is For Me And Nothing Can Separate Me From His Love**

- I am totally secure in Him.

**Rom. 8:38-39** “*For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*”

# TargetPoint

May, 2008

## *“The Proper Perspective”*

Vince D’Acchioli

### WHERE ARE WE?

- *We are in a war the implications of which are being greatly underestimated minimizing the value of our deep and serious sacrifice.*
- *We are in more danger from both inside and outside our borders today than we were prior to 911.*
- *Our economy, driven by media frenzy, is fragile and impacting many people deeply as foreclosures and bankruptcies are skyrocketing.*
- *We are looking at candidates in an important election cycle who do not share our values or possess the ability to communicate vision that inspires or brings confidence for our future.*
- *The judicial and legislative oversight in our nation are passing laws and affirming values that honor the minority, no matter how reprobate, and completely ignore the majority and any awareness of moral common sense.*

What do you think? Have I helped your day? The above is a short list—you or I could easily fill a book with statements like this that reflect the challenges facing this critical time in which we live. There is one statement or idea however that I want us to focus on—what is my response towards all of this? Here is the big question:

### *Is my perspective Godly?*

As I was musing—ok complaining—over something I read in the paper one day God spoke to my spirit and asked this penetrating question; *what do you think the odds are that your initial reaction or perspective about anything is the same as mine?*

Now I know that had to be God—there is no way my mind could have come up with that one. After thinking on this for a while it began to change me from the inside out. I believe what I am moving towards here represents a common problem with many of us who call ourselves followers of Christ. Our perspective is more shaped by our worldly opinions and politics than by God and His view of things.

If you find yourself being caught up in this battle—struggling with where we find ourselves—*anxious about how to impact it all*—here are some practical ideas and suggestions for you to consider:

#### IDEAS:

1. God is still on the throne
2. He has an opinion
3. Our opinions don’t count
4. My job is to seek Him and discover His heart in all matters

## SUGGESTIONS:

1. Discover which of your concerns you are most passionate about and take them to God in prayer daily
2. Be careful where you get your information—there is bias everywhere—stop watching the television tabloid news where you find yourself having imaginary arguments with O'Reilly and Matthews
3. Ask God to give you a deep love for those you do not agree with—ask Him to help you see those people through His eyes—then—pray for them
4. In all this continue to vote and be active as a responsible citizen of our country remembering that you are also a citizen of a heavenly kingdom

In closing I want to remind you of some profound ideas that came from the apostle Paul in the form of his final words to Timothy. May these words reach deeply into your soul and help guide your perspective.

**2Tim. 4:1-5** *In the presence of God and of **Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage --with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.***

# TargetPoint

June, 2008

## *“What Do You Believe”*

Vince D’Acchioli

In preparing to speak to a group of middle school boys at my church in a couple of days my mind wandered back 25 years. I was in a high school class room in Los Angeles speaking to a group of young people on career day. At that time I was Vice President for a Fortune 1000 company based there. After my talk a young lady in the third row asked me a question. “Do you need a college education in order to have a job like yours?”

It seemed like an innocent enough question but I could not help but notice that everyone in that class was on the edge of their seat waiting for my reply. The answer I gave was not as important as what I took away from this experience and the subsequent back-and-forth dialogue that ensued. You see, that was really a camouflage for the real question—what these young people wanted to know was whether they had to endure ANYTHING by way of a price to pay for reaching their desired goal.

When I left I remember thinking that we were raising a generation of young people that lacked two things: patience and the ability to apply critical thought. Today, twenty-five years later, I think we are seeing the result. In America we have moved from the home of the free and the brave to a land full of slaves and cowards. We have become ideological slaves and practical cowards.

*In America we have moved from the home of the free  
and the brave to a land full of slaves and cowards*

What do I mean by these terms? An ideological slave is someone who believes something (often passionately) with little or no background or evidence to support their conviction. Most information today is communicated through sound-bites. People end up with mere glimpses of an idea and form strong opinions for which they have no real defense. It may be because of a respected parent, teacher or friend who believes a certain way that they get influenced in a way even strong evidence cannot alter.

Try asking the average person a question like who they are voting for—or if they support some hot issue and when they give you their opinion then ask them how they came to their position. You will more often than not discover a shallowness that is embarrassing. How did this happen? You and I live in a society bent on indoctrination at the expense of education. We no longer know how to think and weigh pros and cons—it’s more about being cool or politically correct.

The result of this brings us to the point where, because we have no real in-depth convictions, we have lost our bravery and many have become practical cowards. It is hard to find people today that are willing to die for anything. Remember when we truly valued our brave young men and women who gave their life for our freedom. My sense is that today real compassion has been replaced by lip service.

Ok so what does all of this have to do with being a Christian? I am convinced that too many people who call themselves followers of Christ are in the same boat. Let me ask you a question—can you adequately relate to anyone why you believe what you believe? I think many of us have transferred our dysfunctional learning methodology into our beliefs about our Lord. I remember being on an airplane many years ago and sitting next to a man who I proceeded to talk to about Jesus. I was a new believer and passionate about it. This man was an atheist who knew more about the bible than I did and he proceeded to tear me up.

One of the strongest principles the bible teaches is that the truth shall set us free. So, this begs the question—do you know the truth? **Focus On The Family** has recently released one of the best film series I have ever encountered. It is called **The Truth Project**. I have had the privilege of showing this dynamic 13-week series three or four times now to various groups. Every Christian needs to go through this series in order to discover why we believe what we do. If you need more information you can go to [www.thetruthproject.org](http://www.thetruthproject.org).

Here is what I really want you to take away from this **TargetPoint**:

- Can I defend why I believe what I do?
- Am I doing enough to understand my kids or other young people I encounter—do I encourage them to go deeper in their understanding?
- Understand that we are dealing with multiple generations now that obtain most of their information through sound and video bites.
- You can not change any of this by challenging their positions—you must be a model and gently ask thoughtful questions—that is what Jesus did.

Lord, help us to begin changing one heart at a time—and Lord, let it start with me.

# TargetPoint

July, 2008

## *“Men On Target”*

Vince D’Acchioli

In my forty-five plus years of experience in the workplace and ministry I have had a variety of exciting and challenging job assignments. Loading and unloading trucks, cleaning rest rooms, welding, commercial construction, merchandising, advertising, marketing, retail store management, manufacturing and, over the last 25 years, senior executive positions in both secular and religious organizations.

As I moved through this diverse tapestry of work experience I have had the opportunity to study the effectiveness of hundreds of men. The following are some important conclusions I have drawn from this experience and have served as the foundation upon which the ministry of *On Target Ministries* has been built.

### **The big three:**

I have found that the most secure, happy and effective men have three things in common, they know *God intimately, they know how and why God made them (vision) and they are living the vision out (power)*. These men know **God** and accept Jesus Christ as their personal savior, have a good understanding of His **vision** for their life and possess the **power** to live out that vision and make a difference. Let me explain more fully.

#### **1. Knowing God:**

As any Christian man should readily admit, the foundational issue in our life must be **an appropriate knowledge of, and relationship with, God**. I need to expand what may seem obvious for most Christians because of what I have observed as a major gap between knowing *of* God and *know—ing* God.

Intimacy with God, that is, really knowing Him in a deep and personal way, is the very essence of the inner life of the man our ministry is attempting to build. This kind of relationship with God is foundational in the lives of those men who have moved on to discover vision and the power to live it. In fact, I believe that there is an undeniable and powerful formula at work here.

INTIMACY WITH GOD = STRENGTH OF VISION.

I have observed many men who try to short-cut this formula only to end up with their own, or some watered down version of God's ultimate purpose for their lives. The men I am describing understand the formula and give significant time and attention to this most important relationship. It is the most important priority in their lives.

## 2. Vision:

The men we are studying here know how, and for what purpose, God made them. I believe that whether we are dealing with men who know God or not, the two most important issues in any man's life are *vision* and *power*. Vision in the sense that even as little boys we all seem to long for a sense of destiny or purpose. We want to know who we are and why we are here. The power issue, which we we'll discuss in more detail later, has to do with influence and making a difference.

The Bible say's "where there is no vision the people perish". God's word also reveals that we all possess special gifts or abilities for the building up of the body of Christ. The sad testimony for most men however, is that while these truths are acknowledged, most of us have never discovered our natural gifts and do not know where God wants to point our life.

### STRENGTH OF VISION ENCOURAGES OBEDIENCE

The secure, happy and effective man has discovered his unique areas of giftedness and how to appropriate God's vision for his life. Using the Word, revelation by His Spirit, the advice of godly counsel and a careful evaluation of circumstances, this man knows where he is going and what to do when he gets there.

## 3. Power:

Power is a significant issue in any man's life. Although too often men accumulate and dispense power in a negative way and for the wrong reasons, this should not be confused with the positive results that flow out of a life filled with Godly power. Godly power simply means that we are enabled and have the resources to influence and make a difference wherever God places us.

The men I am describing know their level of influence and have discovered how to apply that influence in appropriate ways. There is nothing more devastating to the cause of Christ today than men who use their influence and power in in-appropriate ways. For Christian men operating in a secular culture, the only thing worse than no response, is a wrong response.

What I have discovered here is that in the same way that intimacy with God is related to strength of vision, our obedience and availability is related to power. The formula for this is:

### OBEDIENCE AND AVAILABILITY = POWER

These men have a keen understanding that the kind of Godly power that is needed, only comes as they maintain an obedient, submitted lifestyle before Him. They understand that God is looking for obedience and availability—not our own ability.

Are you striving to become this kind of man? Do you understand and apply these principles in the proper order? Intimacy with God is critical to understanding His purpose and appropriating the power to live that purpose out.

# TargetPoint

August, 2008

## *“A Passion For His Presence”*

Vince D’Acchioli

It is hard to find anyone who is not being affected by the condition of our economy. Uncertainty about the future is running rampant with mixed signals about whether there is an end in sight. A couple of months ago I wrote to you about having a godly perspective in life. As I reread that message the words “*Is my perspective Godly?*” hit me. I immediately saw a slight change with a major implication. “*Is my perspective God?*”

### *Is my perspective God?*

You might ask here—so what is the difference? In May I made a strong case for looking at our lives and circumstances through God’s eyes, the idea that we need to ask God to help us see things as He does. That is what I meant by having a Godly perspective. This is very different from God *being* my perspective. One has to do with seeing things through Him—the other is all about seeing Him.

If there is one thing that best encapsulates what I have learned over the last two years it is my need for Him. Not His ideas, theological notions or even life lessons—just Him. My desire now is for His presence to be sensed in my life every day—every minute. I want to be the kind of man that hungers after Him more intensely than I have ever hungered after anything.

*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*

James 4:8

It occurs to me that today there are far too many Christians that know something *about* God without really *knowing* God. Even our politicians are awkward at talking about God—some say they are playing the god-card. I wonder what our nation would look like if more of our leaders had a passion for His presence and pursued that with the same intensity they pursue power, position and influence.

The Lord has been teaching me that all I really need is Him—everything else in life is secondary. This means I must redouble my efforts to spend more time with Him—worship Him. My pastor reminded all of us this week about the relationship between worshipping God and how life works. If the priority is getting more of Him than what else need we be concerned about?

#### **LIFE APPLICATION:**

Is your life all about God or more wrapped up in what God can do for you? Are you only concerned with His perspective, as important as that is, or are you developing a passion for more of Him?

# TargetPoint

September, 2008

## *“Waiting Patiently”*

Stuart Briscoe

*I waited patiently for the LORD to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. Ps 40:1*

It isn't just people who try our patience. Situations do it too. We find ourselves in places we don't want to be, doing things we have no desire to do, in circumstances we don't want to embrace, and there's little or nothing we can do about it. So we fume and fester, and our frustrations intensify.

David knew all about this. He was God's man, but he spent far too much time on the run from his enemies. The throne was his by right, but the wilderness was where he spent many a night (see 1Sa 16:13; 18:1-24:22). He said, “Troubles surround me—too many to count! They pile up so high I can't see my way out. They are more numerous than the hairs on my head. I have lost all my courage. Please, Lord, rescue me! Come quickly, Lord, and help me” (Ps 40:12-13). It is not surprising that he turned to the Lord for help, and it is perfectly understandable that he wanted it “quickly.” Men usually want solutions to be delivered at once, if not sooner. But note how David began this Psalm. “I waited patiently for the Lord” (40:1). His natural desire for quick solutions had been tempered by long experience of the way God works. David's natural desire for a quick answer was tempered by a willingness to “wait patiently.” He knew from previous experience that it was only a matter of time before he could once again testify, “He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along” (40:2).

God is not the God of the quick fix. Neither is he the Lord of the instant. He takes his time growing an oak from an acorn and allows the long winter to prepare the earth for the warmth of spring. But it is precisely the promise of spring that makes the winter more palatable, and it is the certainty that an oak lies hidden within the acorn that makes it bearable to wait for the tree to grow.

Why, we wonder, does God take his time? No doubt his reasons are many and profound, but perhaps it is because we can only appreciate how solid is the rock he provides when we have thoroughly experienced the mud and the mire.

# TargetPoint

October, 2008

## *“A Great Test...An Incredible Opportunity”*

Vince D'Acchioli

*Then I said: “O LORD, God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and obey his commands,<sup>6</sup> let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s house, have committed against you.<sup>7</sup> We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses. **Nehemiah 1:5-7 (NIV)***

Well, it is finally over. We have voted as a nation and we are awaiting the signing in of a new president. As is the case with most elections, there are significant numbers of people who are very happy and those who are very sad—in fact maybe even mad. I want to address any of you who may be in the latter category. You are saying or thinking things like, *I don’t get it, this can’t be happening, this is the end of the world as we know it, this has to be God’s judgment on America.*

If I am to be honest with you I would have to admit thinking some of these same thoughts. Having admitted that, I want to be quick to tell you my heart’s desire to repent. Please hear me my friends—God is still on the throne. He is in command and all is well. After all is said and done it is now our responsibility to move on and become the church God desires and deserves. That is not a church preoccupied with whining—rather one determined to pray for His Kingdom to prevail.

Nehemiah’s powerful prayer should be our guide. He recognizes the sin of both his nation and himself and acknowledges the relationship between obeying His commands and ultimate judgment. Given what we know about the history of God’s dealing with His creation, where we find ourselves should not be a surprise.

My friends this is a great test for those of us who call ourselves followers of Christ. In fact, this may be the greatest test of the church in America since its founding. Will we focus on our preconceived ideas about the future and all the stuff brought about by man—or will we pray as Nehemiah did to the great God of the universe, recognizing our true source of redemption and peace?

As my pastor, Brady Boyd says, *we are entering a time where the church has a tremendous opportunity.* I believe we need to keep our heads up and our knees bent and pray God give us wisdom on how to seize the moment. This could be one of our finest hours but it will depend on what we do with it. I can tell you categorically the first and most important thing we all need to do is to—quit complaining and feeding a negative attitude and start praying for your new president. Like him or not on January 20, 2009 he will be our leader.

**Here are some specific things I would like for you to consider:**

- Examine your own life and repent immediately for any personal sin acknowledging as Nehemiah did that the sins of a nation are always the result of the cumulative effect of the sins of its people
- Begin praying for our new president and his emerging staff right away and guard your heart against doing this in a grudging way
- Pray specifically for God to invade our new president's heart being grateful for any relationship he may already have and asking God to take it where He wants it to be
- Pray for the church in our nation to repent and ask God to bring forth a great revival
- Remember that the election is over and determine to stop spreading negatives and concerns based in fear—imagine how the world might be influenced by what it perceives as its enemy becoming a positive force
- Resist becoming preoccupied with concerns over future legislation and imposed new law and remember what the Bible says:

**Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*

I have often said that when *you attempt to legislate social justice issues with the absence of righteousness, all you breed is bitterness contempt and hate.* It is not now, nor has it ever been, about law. It is about a heart change. And that will only happen as the church—you and I—become all that God desires.

*Lord Jesus I acknowledge that my thoughts are not your thoughts and that what you see is so foreign compared to what I see. Lord, help me to see the world around me and my current circumstances through your eyes and to become a powerful influence in your hands toward seeing your kingdom advanced in our nation.*

# TargetPoint

November, 2008

## “The Hope of the World”

Vince D’Acchioli

*Three pastors got together for coffee one day and found all their churches had bat-infestation problems. "I got so mad," said one, "I took a shotgun and fired at them. It made holes in the ceiling, but did nothing to the bats." "I tried trapping them alive," said the second. "Then I drove 50 miles before releasing them, but they beat me back to the church." "I haven't had any more problems," said the third. "What did you do?" asked the others, amazed. "I simply baptized and confirmed them," he replied. "I haven't seen them since."*

Well, I guess there is no shortage of humor regarding church. We must be careful however not to let the humor numb us with regard to a healthy understanding of what church is—or better said—ought to be. The following is an excerpt from my talk last month at Promise Keepers titled *The Hope of the World*. In light of what I wrote last month regarding “the church’s finest hour”—it seemed appropriate to explore how God views church.

**Acts 2:42** *They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

In Acts 2:42 we see four purposes for the early New Testament church gatherings. As I briefly unpack these you may want to take this opportunity to examine where you line up regarding your relationship with your church.

### 1. To learn (Teaching)

If you are traveling in an airplane with a small child, in an event of an emergency you are advised to put your own oxygen mask on first—then help the child. I wonder how many people pick a church the other way around. As adults we need to take seriously our need for hearing and applying the truth of God. Do you go to church with an honest bent toward learning?

**Luke 4:16** *He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read.*

### 2. To fellowship

I am convinced that we experience most of our growth through strong relationships. Cindy and I still look back with such fond memories to our marriage class at **The Church on the Way**. Our dearest friends to this day came from that rich experience. Today we are still growing through our fellowship with so many at our church. Has this been your experience? If not, please consider a deliberate plan to seek out meaningful relationships with other believers who will encourage you and help you to grow in your walk with Jesus.

**Hebrews 10:25** *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another...*

### 3. To celebrate/worship (Breaking of Bread)

Most observers of the current church model would agree that it does not look a lot like the early church. While I am not against the idea of being culturally relevant we must never lose sight of why we gather—it is to celebrate and worship our awesome God. Over many years of observing the church I have come to the conclusion that we have evolved a rather narrow perspective on worship. In Acts it says they came together for the *breaking of bread*. Early worshippers knew that there was no more profound form of worship than to participate in Holy Communion. We need to understand that our times of worship through music and other celebratory expressions are good—God loves them. We also need to expand our idea of worship, especially corporate worship, to include many other functions within the church.

**Acts 20:7** *On the first day of the week we came together to break bread.*

### 4. To seek God (Prayer)

I do not believe there has ever been a time in the history of our nation that we have needed God more. It reminds me of the story of the master, seeking to answer his student's question regarding how to find God. He brings the student to a river and asks him to go under the water and hold his breath for as long as he can. When the student had been under for some time and attempted to surface, the master held him down until he was almost unconscious. When the student came up gasping for air he asked the master why he had done that. The master replied, *son, when you are as desperate for God as your were for that breath of air...you will find Him.*

We will never truly discover God apart from prayer. We need personal prayer for the everyday challenges we face and we need corporate prayer for our nation and world. God clearly calls us toward both. How do you react when your church calls you out to a time of prayer? Are you thinking that it sounds like a nice spiritual thing to do or do you really believe God answers prayer and find yourself eager to join in?

**2 Chron. 7:14** *If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land*

Ideas to consider—questions to ponder. I want to encourage you to take this information seriously. There are many today who want to condemn the local church and blame her for many of our social ills. While I am not suggesting the church is innocent in many areas, I am saying we can NEVER give up on “the bride of Christ”. The church is God's chosen instrument for revealing the life and love of His Son to a dying world.

# TargetPoint

December, 2008

## *“There Will Be Giants”*

Vince D’Acchioli

*There we saw the giants... (Numbers 13:33)*

I just came from a New Year’s Day early morning gathering at **The World Prayer Center** at **New Life Church**. Last week I invited some men’s ministry leaders to join me at 6:30 AM for what I believed God was calling us to do as we enter this unprecedented new season. It was a powerful time punctuated by a sweet sense of His presence and favor as 18 men prayed and sought Him with all their heart. This time also served as the springboard for an every Thursday morning gathering of men in 2009 that is going to be led by our pastor, Brady Boyd.

All of this was prompted by the Lord waking me up very early on Christmas Eve morning. There were a number of things He impressed upon me that I felt I needed to share this morning and I want to share them with you as I feel there is a unique relevance which extends to a broader audience as we enter this New Year. There are three truths specifically I feel the Lord wants us to consider as we move forward:

### **1. There Will Be Giants**

In Numbers we see a powerful story of the nation of Israel facing giants. Do you see giants too? My sense is that few of us have made it through 2008 without encountering some giants. Here is the good news for believers—it is clear that Israel only saw the giants as they were headed right for them. If they had turned back the giants would have been gone from sight. This idea begs a bigger question—*if you are not seeing giants, could it be you are going the wrong way?*

I believe God was telling me that there will continue to be giants and they are going to get bigger. Our job is to face them squarely recognizing the second truth...

### **2. God Is Looking On**

**Isa 18:4** *I will remain quiet and will look on from my dwelling place.*

An excerpt from **Streams In The Desert** says this about Isa 18:4. *In this passage, Assyria is marching against Ethiopia, whose people are described as “tall and smooth-skinned” (Isa 18:2). As the army advances, God makes no effort to stop them, and it appears as though they will be allowed to do as they wish. The Lord is watching from His “dwelling place” while the sun continues to shine on them, yet “before the harvest” (Isa 18:5) the entire proud army is defeated as easily as new growth is pruned from a vine.*

There are a couple of powerful takeaways here. First, you and I need to resist the temptation to react in dysfunctional ways when faced with a sense of urgency. This could also mean reacting to urgent needs for ministry. My experience is that when faced

with urgency my response includes an unhealthy dose of my flesh. To remember that God's timing is not ours is not easy but critically necessary. If we are going to face and ultimately see our giants defeated it is going to take a supernatural level of patience and confidence in God (faith)—remembering He is our rear guard. This of course is not possible without the third truth He shared with me.

### 3. Get Prepared

It was about 4:30 AM that Christmas Eve morning when I believe God shared with me three powerful words...*"Prepare My people"*. I immediately sensed a broader dimension of what He is saying, that the Body of Christ in our culture is not prepared for what is about to happen. I had, and still have, a strong sense that we have not experienced but a small taste of what may be about to happen in our nation. As I view the landscape of Christianity in our nation I am persuaded that we are way too soft. I am convinced that the struggles we are going through right now are God's training for what the future holds.

Please understand that I do not consider myself a prophet—but I do not think an honest look at our landscape today requires a prophetic response either. Even the most casual of observations should inform us of our vulnerability.

Let me close with some specifics regarding what I believe God is calling you and me to do this year:

- Remember that God will only do through you what you first allow Him to do in you. He is calling you and I to get prepared because it will be necessary in order for Him to use us to reach beyond our own perceived limits of ministry with His power and anointing for the days ahead.
- Obedience is going to be the key in 2009. Of course obedience is a major part of our on-going development all the time but I have never sensed a stronger and more serious call to obedience as I do now. There is a relationship between obedience and power.
- So, do you want to be used powerfully by God? Then here is the idea I want to leave with you. What are those one or two things you struggle with the most?

I do not think I need a list here to prompt your thinking—**YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THEY ARE**. The bigger question is **WHAT DO YOU INTEND TO DO ABOUT IT THIS YEAR?** I believe God is telling us we can ill afford to be applying half-hearted efforts at ridding our lives of sin. My friend it is time for us to step up to the plate, quit whining and acting like victims and put the past behind us.

Most of you reading this are mature enough believers to know what you need to do to overcome your giants. Ignorance is not a barrier most of us need to overcome. I want to implore you—**PLEASE** determine to overcome those things that are hindering you from realizing all that God wants to see formed in you. The stakes are higher than they have ever been and God wants to use you.

May He richly bless you as you seek Him this New Year.

**James 4:8** *Draw near to God and he will draw near to you.*