

Pastoral Interviews
Report for Week of: 7-24-98
Number of Calls: 10
Number of Conferences: 4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. Bible study series mentioned by pastors in this interview include: Amazing Facts (3), 20th Century (2), Bob Forss' materials from Indiana, Doug Batchelor's Historicals of Prophecy videos, Steven Moore's materials based on Genesis, Lafe De Jesus for Spanish, In His Steps, Discover Bible Lessons, Good News by Gray, It's Your Choice for teens/juniors by Steve Case, 27 Fundamental Beliefs book, Tony Cirigliano's materials (in Spanish), Real Truth, and one pastor uses his own studies. What variety!

Suggestions on improving studies might be grouped into three areas. The first is theology. A couple comments were made about studies being more relational, not just cognitive. One pastor wished for a greater emphasis on righteousness by faith. This pastor was using the Amazing Facts series. Yet another pastor was concerned that whatever we do, we don't "water down" the truth.

Several pastors made suggestions along the lines of the targeting of the studies. There was mention made by few about how some series are geared to a less educated audience (Good News) and some for a more educated audience (20 Century). One pastor said, "I'd like something geared for the 5th grade level, but for adults." One said, "Perhaps we can have a multi-tiered approach in the same series."

Comments were also made about the format of the lessons. Three pastors emphasized the "personalization" process of using studies. They pick and choose. They modify. Or they create their own. Another emphasized the difficulty of holding people, and wanted something 50 minutes long. Another desired more contemporary artwork in the series. Another would like a video series that's 30 minutes long combined with review sheets.

2. Four of ten pastors say their church(es) have mission statements. One of these pastors said the statement was in place before he came, and the church never looks at it. The other three churches have statements created through a basic group process, most often starting with the church board and finishing with a vote by the entire membership. Help for learning this process came from seminary classes (Doug Kilcher), and seminars attended (Don Reynolds in Ohio Conference, Ben Maxon in Carolina, John Maxwell seminar). One pastor seemed a little put off by the question, and then said, "We KNOW what our mission is: To prepare people for the Second Coming of Jesus."

3. Five of ten pastors say they have seen A.C.N.'s Cross Training programs. One said he's never heard of it. Another is Hispanic, so never taps into it because of language barriers. Of those who have watched, a few have seen so little they had no comments. Suggestions for topics include having programs on the duties of every church officer, a

program on help for prayer meeting services. Programming suggestions include making them relevant to small churches, tap into presenters that 3ABN has used (they might have a little experience under their belts being in front of a camera), and use live audiences as much as you possibly can. One pastor in Southwest Region loves the programs, called them “excellent” and is surprised more pastors in his conference don’t tap into this great resource. He especially enjoyed the program on using the Discover Bible School lessons.

4. Ideas and resources for vibrant worship services focused mostly on personal strategies and basic philosophies. Two pastors mentioned specific resources. One watched a videotape from Willow Creek and picked up some ideas. Another visited the Hamilton Road Community Church (and wasn’t that impressed—good music, but the service wasn’t as thematically integrated as he thought it could have been).

Interestingly, the most common response on this question focused on congregational involvement. Three pastors emphasized the value of having a sharing and prayer request time during the service. One pastor has a woman with gifts of prayer who is in charge of this time. Other service strategies include a good children’s story (to include the whole family) and using blended types of music to reach a wider spectrum of tastes.

Under “philosophies of worship”, comments were made about general approaches to worship. Three pastors indicated the pastor was the focus of the atmosphere. “If the pastor is upbeat, the service will be upbeat.” I.e. the service tends to take on the personality of the pastor. Another stressed the crying need for “Biblical preaching and preachers filled with the Holy Spirit. On the other hand, another pastor spoke of the gradual process of change and the need to educate members about diversity. And yet another said he redefines worship as a frame of mind, not just an activity. “It’s something you are, not something you do.”

Pastor: RR

Conference: Arizona

Church(es)/Position: 4 churches

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

I’ve been using a series by Bob Forss (audio cassette, Indiana Conference). Also Doug Batchelor’s Historicals of Prophecy. Steven Moore has a series out in both Spanish and English, going through all the basic doctrines from the stories in the Genesis.

My only suggestion is I need to create my own.

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

Oh brother if my churches only had a vision.

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

Yes. Not here, but in my previous church. One of those churches used them all the time. I only have one church with a dish. Its just a sorry situation. In another church, the head elder has the equipment at home. He makes sure everything gets recorded. And these gets passed around.

No suggestions. I personally haven't seen enough of them in the last three years.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

What I've been doing is visiting other churches and seeing what they are doing (nonAdventist). I'm trying to become acquainted with how people in our district worship, so that when they visit our church we will know how to relate to them. We had a Presbyterian church rent our facilities (much to the dismay of some of our members). What's amazing is the Christian kindness of these people. Offering to clean our church, gave us some beautiful boquets of flowers, and worked on the outside of our church property. It has made quite an impression on our members!

Pastor: DG

Conference: Arizona

Church(es)/Position: 2 companies, 1 churches

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

My own. Something geared to a 5th grade level (of reading), but geared to adults. Be nice to have something also more contemporary as far as art goes.

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

No, I'm so new here I don't know, but I doubt it. When I worked on mission statements in other churches, I just used a group process.

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

Yes. Never seen Cross Training.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

What I've used is a lot of music. I like more than the average, and I encourage a lot of participation. Also do children's music and the adults seem to enjoy this. And we try to incorporate a blend of the new. We have an informal liturgy that gives people a chance to share experiences, encounters from the past week with God.

I really don't see anything of value coming from higher levels of the organization... Is this interview for the union or the conference? [Told him NAD]. I don't really have much of a relationship with anyone in the Union or NAD... Those levels of the church are kind of beyond reality for a lot of us. As far as my daily ministry, what comes from them is out of touch. Programs shoved at us don't cut it. I personally believe that there is no substitute for human contact and personal relationships with people and letting the dynamics of the Holy Spirit operate and that's what its really about.

I think sometimes people in higher levels of the organization are working to justify their position or existence in the corporation rather than doing things that are really going to... and there are nice resources out there that people can use... I've come up with a few things that have worked for me. So, I'm not trying to indite the whole structure...

I think that there is no substitute for human contact. I think even Bible studies can miss the questions people have on a given subject. So, I really don't use them, I use my own. I know there are ministers who have a hard time remembering names and texts. He has to read something to get it across.

I would love to have more spiritual fellowship with some of the brethren above me in the power structure... [Explained about Monte's effort to hear pastors through these interviews, that the Consortium process attempts to test, assess, try out, etc. That there certainly are "out of touch" bureaucrats in the system... It was amazing how this pastor only had five minutes but gave me more when we touched on some nerves important to him. He thanked me for the rare occasion to feel like someone above the conference level had an interest in his work/ministry.]

Pastor: CP

Conference: Arizona

Church(es)/Position: 2 churches (1 English, 1 Spanish) and 1 Spanish company

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

Lafe De Jesus (Spanish). It comes in 10 lessons. I prefer a 50 minute study, not something long.

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

I have a statement for the “project” that we are doing to establish a new church. I took a class on “growing churches” from Andrews. The teacher explained this (Doug Kilcher). We also read a book on this. I think its called the Purpose-Driven Church. I’m reading a great book by Ken Blanchard on One Minute Manager. Also, I’m reading Stephen Covey’s book on the 7 Habits.

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

Haven’t seen them. We’re mostly Hispanic.

On another topic, one of my churches grew 200%. I think it was a dream that started in my heart that I communicated to my members. I wanted to have 200 people in my church, and it grew into another company. I have been here 6 years. I’ve planted several churches.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

I have two things in my worship that I believe that can help. We have a new ministry with a woman. She is director of prayer and testimony ministries. We have 5-7 minutes for members to write down their prayer requests in a book. The person, the reason, and answers to prayer. It has really been powerful. We also do a children’s story and that has really helped draw the “family” together in our church service.

Pastor: GD

Conference: Mountain View

Church(es)/Position: 2 churches

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

In His Steps. I'm pretty well satisfied. I use variations sometimes.

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

One did. I don't think they look at it anymore. It happened before I came.

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

Yes. Haven't watched any Cross Training. I did watch one on reviving something. Make certain it is pertinent to all churches, not just large churches. In the last eight years, all the churches I've had are small. It would be good to find something for churches who only have 15 members. For instance, when you talk about small groups, the small church is a small group. A lot of things we are asked to do require more team members than what is available in our small churches.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

The biggest thing I've found is that people enjoy variety. We hear that people are stuck in ruts and change is scary. I think that's somewhat true, but I also believe in my experience that gradual change that is owned by members works well. We talk about praise music and words on the screen, etc. but I believe ruts can be broken when we educate our members. I'm not suggesting that we blow the saints away. I'm a conservative/liberal. I feel I'm so diverse. I like a lot of different types of music. There are variations in churches and their thinking. If I cater only to the segment that likes hymns, I miss others. I try to explain in seminars, prayer meeting, etc. the differences of people, then the little changes aren't as difficult.

Pastor: GY

Conference: Carolina

Church(es)/Position: 1 church

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

20th Century. Every pastor has their own ideas. I won't use anybody's Daniel and Revelation stuff, because I like to go chapter by chapter. Because when you use someone's book (like Finley or Maxwell), you only cover what they highlight. I like to cover the whole book, and I think it helps people see how easy. I think we need to have someone come out with a study that covers the whole book, each chapter. And of course,

every study I give is slightly different. I sometimes use the Discover Bible Studies (VOP) which has no doctrine, really. I like Amazing Facts for after people go through any set of studies. Its great to help people get ready for being questioned about their faith.

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

Yes. You take anything in management and it will talk about mission statements. I've seen many different plans. I think this issue causes confusion for many pastors... When I was in Ohio with John Fowler, we went through a management program with Don Reynolds. I think what was so important was ... somebody would go there and help them instead of giving them something to read.

Anyway, went to church board and asked, "What's the mission of our church?" Gave them some examples. We encouraged everyone to write out their own, then we combined everyone's together. Cut it down, short statement. Then brought to the whole church. In one of my church's we put it on our stationery.

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

What I'd like to see, I don't know if this is a viable thing... I would like to see something on the "duties" of each officer. I would like to also see some broad viewpoints on how to build prayer meeting. Lots don't. One thing I've found ... my people are fortunate, they like my sermons, so my vespers are an extension of my sermons. Prayer meeting are discussions within the Bible.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

Over the years my sermons have changed. Read a book on sermon presentation that said, "The longer you are in ministry, the more your sermons will change." I used to write out sermons, then notes, now I just use the Bible. We went to a church on vacation in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Did a fabulous job during his sermon. Passed on EGW notes on his topic. Thought it worked well. There are many good styles. I've never had too much success with reading other people's books. The longer I've preached, the more I've depended on the Holy Spirit, and the more I lean on strictly the Bible. I think we can learn from books, but. I also think we need more music in our churches. I think the celebration church style can teach us something. We've got to find some way to make our churches more of a place of joy and happiness away from the world, and less focus on fighting over issues in the church. We as people who love the Lord can bring happiness to the church in ministering to others.

Pastor: JS
Conference: Carolina
Church(es)/Position: 1 church

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

Good News for Today. I also use 20th Century. With the kids I use the Good News by Marjorie Gray and It's Your Choice (Steve Case). I use the Good News for adults with people with less education. And the 20th Century for more educated people.

What I'd like to see is something in a more modern translation and more updated illustrations. For instance, 20th Century I think is quite dated. I was just given a disk by Glenn Coon, Jr. naming it something like the 21st Century CyberBible Study.

On our web page we are using something called "Bible Dig". I think the people who put out the stuff for getting sermon resources. Our web page is www.tagnet.com/upward/. Written by Joel O'Neil from the Georgia/Cumberland Conference. We just started this Bible studies by email idea. Our webmaster for this is Richard Bonjour (rbonjour@worldnet.att.net). We hope it goes well.

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

We do. Back when I was in Ohio Conference I went to a seminar led by John Maxwell. I've been doing mission statements since 1987. I've internalized the process and lead my church board through it. I also did some training in the Central California Conference on Vision and Mission.

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

I've only done two. My biggest problem is generating interest in having them come. I don't know what it is. Timing of the programs? The topics? I've attempted to enthusiastically promote them. Haven't recorded or passed them out, will try.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

Don't know of any resources. I watched the video stuff from Willow Creek on worship. A lot of it I couldn't use, some I could use. You can't use the two words "Willow" and "Creek" around here with the hair raising on some people's necks!

Pastor: CS
Conference: Carolina
Church(es)/Position: 2 churches

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

I use a variety of things. I have my own and I have others. I may give them some reading to do. I baptized a Lutheran minister by having him read the 27 Fundamental Beliefs book.

I want the options to never water down the message. It needs to be clearer and clearer.

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

No. We know what our mission is, very simple. Our mission is to get people ready for the soon Coming of Jesus Christ.

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

I don't get too much involved with the Cross Training programs. We have dishes but don't use them much.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

I think we need strong, dynamic, biblical preachers. Not just programs to entertain people, but pastors who are dynamic. That's the crying need. Of course, we've got to be infused with the Holy Spirit. We've lost some churches as a result of going toward an entertainment mode.

Pastor: KM
Conference: Carolina
Church(es)/Position: 2 churches

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

Currently using two different series and both of them I have helped developed. Tony Cirigliano created some in English and I translated them to Spanish. I have a video series that we created from some meetings. Our church is using the Discover Lessons (VOP) for correspondence.

It's a tricky thing. You have to have multi-tiered approaches. Some people don't have the intelligence to use some lessons. We were using the Real Truth lessons with some people, but felt like it was an insult to their intelligence. So, I'd suggest something with a multi-tiered approach (True and False for simpler approach, then a more in depth approach). Even the advanced lessons of Real Truth are not as deep.

One thing about videos (like Ken Cox) is that they are long. I'd suggest shorter ones. People who watch things on the video need a follow up where they look things up in their Bibles. I use for my own series a "review sheet" to "make sure they got it." Videos may hit the emotional level, but the real proof is in looking in the word of God afterwards. So, make the videos 30 minutes long. Then documentation afterwards. I find it hard to get people to commit to 1 1/2 hours.

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

We are in the process of doing that. I'm going to feel my way through. I've taken a bunch of classes on it here in our conference. Ben Maxson taught on this.

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

The only ones I've really watched (some on the Finley meetings), they had one on VBS. It was long and tedious. Couple years ago. It's weird to be in front of a camera. I have a hard time looking at the camera. I have sympathy for those standing there. We are competing with media that's out there. People can easily get turned. Consider seeing people 3ABN has tapped into. These speakers at least have a little practice under their belt. Having audience reactions woven into the camera shots really gives zest to the momentum. Any time you can have an audience is worth doing.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

Wow. Nothing. I went to the service at Hamilton Road Community Church when I was up that way. The thing ... it was more planned than most services, but I didn't feel it made it more vibrant. There were many who enjoyed it (mostly because of music). I have mostly a retiree church and an ultra-conservative church. One guy in the community plays banjo, did well, but not appreciated.

What we've done is an opportunity for people to respond, prayer request time, etc. Interaction. Praise or thank you reports. Its not polished but real. We've attempted to beef up our music, but its difficult with slim numbers. That part of "celebration" (more music that is upbeat and worshipful) is right on.

Pastor: WH

Conference: Southwest Region

Church(es)/Position: 2 churches

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

Amazing Facts. My greatest frustration deals with the fact that ... its necessary to have a focus on "truth" and "doctrine". But I don't find the materials too relational. Cognitive, not very affective. How to think, how to behave.

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

No.

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

Never heard of it.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

No. Haven't found anything. In terms of my own innovation, I think that our worship has been revitalized simply from changing the focus on how worship is defined. I think what has helped us is to not think of worship as a frame of mind, not an activity. This is what I teach my people. Its not something you do, but something you are. And so, when you come from your point of reference, you tend to worship as God blesses you in your own experience. Within this framework, we can render acts of worship. When the focus is placed on the person and where they are in their own religious experience, then they are empowered to give. You can't just explain to people, "Here's how to worship." It's a blending of everyone's gifts to God. That takes people outside the narrow framework of worship being from 11:00 to 12:00 and into worship as a way of life.

Pastor: WH

Conference: Southwest Region

Church(es)/Position: 2 churches

1. What Bible study series do you primarily use to help prepare people for baptism? Would you be interested in something new or different? What would you like to see changed or improved in the current selection of studies?

What I really like is Amazing Facts. I know there are a lot of black pastors ... there is a pastor in our conference who has a Bible study series... I'd like to see a greater emphasis on righteousness by faith. Practical godliness. Emphasizing more on knowing Jesus Christ, rather than "I shouldn't eat this, etc."

2. Does your church have a mission statement, and/or vision statement? If yes, briefly explain the procedure you went through to create it. (Resources, consultants, etc.?)

No.

3. What kind of training would you like to see offered via satellite linkage to your local churches? (Topics, presenters, time length, how often, how much interaction, type of handouts, how far ahead announced, target audience).

Yes. I don't know if I'd change anything. I'm really involved in Pathfinders. The programs I've seen on Cross Training are excellent. I've seen the ones on family, saw one on the Discovery Bible Studies. The previous pastor you talked to... his father is a member of my church and we have the satellite. It's an excellent tool. I am surprised more pastors in our conferences have not bought into the idea. People were initially concerned about the long-term value. Our president has attempted to show that A.C.N. has lots of programs throughout the year.

4. Have you found any helpful strategies or resources for vibrant worship services?

I don't know if I can suggest anything there. The worship service tends to take on the personality of the pastor involved. There's a whole lot of stuff going around on video talking about celebration churches. One of my churches is very conservative and afraid of celebration churches. It's going to take on the preaching style and the personality of the pastor. If he's upbeat, the worship service will tend to be upbeat.