

ministry of the church. He has demonstrated a high level of competency and calling in these areas.

I am going to be focusing my energies in two specific areas: teaching and missions.

**Teaching:** Our world is changing very rapidly and the church must be able to adapt to those changes or we are going to find our selves in a weakened condition and unable to withstand the pressures of this increasingly hostile world system. My vision is to develop a teaching model that will create a re-thought, re-educated, and remodeled church.

**To enable every believer to be a self-feeding, self-reproducing believer** who is not dependent upon any other person for his spiritual growth and spiritual education, and who can effectively disciple others to the same level of spiritual growth. This is the goal of our Institute for Christian Discipleship and the teaching track in our Adult Sunday school. (And teens if you are wondering why you are now included in the adult sunday school - its because I no longer consider you to be children - but young men and women who need to begin now to accept your role in the ministry of the church.)

**To enable every man and wife to shepherd their own family** - I want to help you to teach your children the word of God, to equip your children with strong and durable spiritual values, to conduct effective family worship in the home - and as a family to effectively minister and evangelize in your own communities. So that, if it should happen that you would be cut off from the church body as we know it you would not be set adrift, but able to sustain your family as an Island of Righteousness in your community.

**To raise up and enable gifted men to shepherd groups of families** in a small group setting- to prepare the church to effectively function in small cells. If the time comes when it is not possible or practical to meet in large public meetings such as this one - we intend to develop a network of cells that will continue to strengthen individuals and families and will continue to effectively evangelize the communities in which they live.

**MISSIONS:** As I assume the leadership of our mission team I want build on the very strong foundation that Carl and Verlaine have laid down over their years as leaders of the mission team. I have spent a great deal of time in prayer and meditation about the future of our mission outreach - and though it is not fully formed in my mind yet the role I am to play during my tenure on the mission team - I know

this: **God has called this church at this hour and in this generation as an outpost of the Kingdom for worldwide evangelization.** He is calling us to be courageous risk takers, bold and unafraid. He is calling us to be creative and willing to do what may not have been done before to extend the call of the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. While the full picture is not fully developed yet - what IS CLEAR in my mind is this:

**1. Our first MISSIONARY OBLIGATION is our own home.** We need to become missional families who understand that we have no business trying to reach the world when our own children are outside the circle of grace.

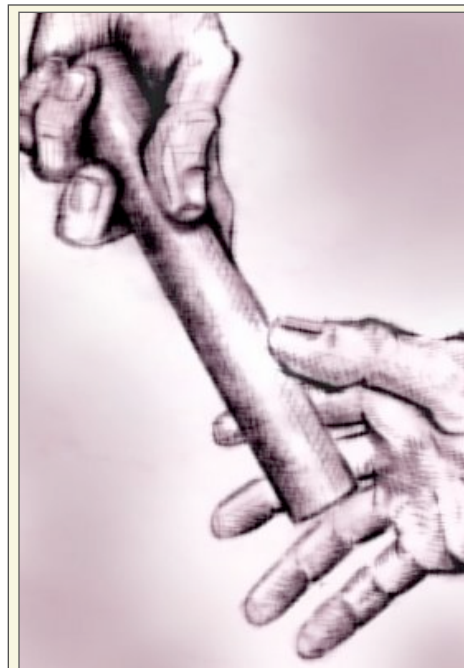
**2. WORLDWIDE EVANGELIZATION for us begins in Brattleboro, Vermont,** and Vernon, Vermont, and Putney and Hinsdale, NH - and whatever neighborhoods we inhabit as a church. Missions is not JUST over there - it must begin right here. We must be more committed to and effective in bringing the gospel to our own communities. As a church we must more deeply commit ourselves to reaching and teaching the next generation right here in our own community. We are surrounded by families with no spiritual memory, we have contact with scores of children who will not hear the gospel at home. It is time for Kid's Church Teachers to step up and godly women to come forward to assist with Keepers of the Home and spiritual men to put on the uniform of the Royal Rangers and do the good work of guiding young men to godliness and finally,

**3. GLOBAL MISSIONS is not the sole responsibility of the Missions team** - it is the call of God upon every believer in Christ. In some way - either directly or in support - every individual and family in the church must assume some level of responsibility for fulfilling the Great Commission. We begin at home, but our eyes must always be on the horizon, because God has called us to begin here in Brattleboro but surely to continue to reach toward the furthest horizon and the unreached masses that have yet to hear that Jesus is Lord.

We have run a good race thus far - let's be careful not to drop the baton!

# AGAPE

## PULPIT SERIES



Agape Christian Fellowship  
30 Canal Street  
Brattleboro, VT

## The Passing of the Baton

*Refocusing Our Vision for 2010*

Pastor Michael Gantt

2 Timothy 1 & 2

December 27, 2009

One of the most deflating moments for the United States in the history of the Olympic Games occurred in 1988 in Seoul, Korea. The American 4 X 100 men's relay team was poised to break the world record. There was no thought that this team could lose. As one of the last events in track and field, it was much anticipated. The crowd followed the clock knowing where the baton had to be passed to each runner, if the world record was to be broken. The noise swelled as the third runner stretched to make connection to the last one, who would take it across the finish. By now there was no question as to who would win, but only by how much and whether the world record be broken. Then the unthinkable happened. The hand off was not completed. The Americans dropped the baton. The crowd, electrified moments earlier, was hushed into stunned silence. Having relied arrogantly on their inherent speed, the Americans had failed to sufficiently practice the handoff.

This is exactly what Paul is attempting to avoid—the dropping of the baton. **The baton in Paul's second letter to Timothy is the gospel**—the message of good news. Paul writes a letter to his spiritual son and protégé to inspire the hand-off. But Paul sees people all around him dropping the baton and walking off the track. Quite frankly, he is fearful that this might be Timothy's lot as well. The early converts in Asia, now modern Turkey, were denying their faith under heavy persecution. Paul sits confined in a prison cell with iron bars criss-crossed over a one foot opening in the ceiling. Like Jesus at trial when his companions of three years scattered in his time of need, Paul is seeing the same thing happen to him. In II Tim. 1:15, Paul writes, "You know that everyone in the province of Asia has deserted me..." In the 4th chapter Paul returns to the subject of his desertion, calling on Timothy to come to him before winter and bring his cloak, because only Luke is with him. In regards to his trial under the Roman Emperor Nero he writes, "At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me." (II Tim. 4:16).

With what appears to be wholesale abandonment, Paul continues exhort Timothy to complete the link to the next generation. Read in 2 Timothy 2:1-2: When Paul says, "You then, my son, be strong..." this is a earnest plea to his beloved in the face of the trend of desertion. Don't be the next victim. Not you, too. Don't you disappoint me! Perhaps the greatest pain in this life is that of betrayal. You make an investment in a child as a parent, in a partner in a

business, as a discipler with a disciplee, only to have your values rejected. But

Paul is not just saying to Timothy, be strong, as if he is to endure, grit his teeth, or set his jaw in the face of peril. You might as well ask a turtle to run, or a snail to hurry.

Paul says to Timothy, "You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." (II Tim. 2:1) Find strength that comes from the undeserved favor that was bestowed on you, the love that pursued you into the arms of Jesus Christ. This is a love that is lavish and beyond measure. Let this grace be your strength in these tenuous and strenuous times. Carry out your purpose, Timothy. Don't abandon the gospel I have entrusted to you.

This purpose is succinctly stated is the often quoted verse II Tim. 2:2: "And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to the reliable men who will be also qualified to teach others." In this verse Paul envisions the four legs of the relay race; the baton pass to future generations. **Leg 1:** Christ to Paul; **Leg 2:** Paul to Timothy; **Leg 3:** Timothy to reliable men; **Leg 4:** reliable men who can teach others.

**1. Christ to Paul:** Paul is convinced that the gospel that he proclaims is not of human origin. In fact, he says that he got it not through the normal human means of transmission, but directly from Jesus Himself. Writing to the Galatians Paul says, "I want you to know, brothers, that the gospel I preached is not something that man made up. I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:11, 12).

Most certainly Paul is at least alluding to his encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus where he received his call to be an apostle of the one whom he had vigorously opposed.

**2. Paul to Timothy:** This same gospel, Paul says, is the one I passed onto you before many witnesses. Why does Paul speak here of the public transmission of the gospel? In other words, the gospel I instructed you in private is no different than the one you heard me declare in open air markets, synagogues, and public forums in Athens. Paul is saying to Timothy that the gospel we proclaim is an open book. It requires no secret knowledge. There is not some hidden revelation for a few. What you see is what you get. This leads us to the third leg of the baton pass.

**3. Timothy to reliable men:** This is the gospel that Timothy is to "entrust to reliable men and women".

The word "entrust" is a favorite one of Paul's in this letter. This word comes from the commercial banking setting of the day. The gospel is a deposit, treasure, or trust that is given to a bank or put into a safe deposit box for safe keeping. It must not be tampered with, distorted, or lost in any way. The church acts as a repository, trustee, or steward of the grace of God. Paul is saying to Timothy, I was entrusted with a message directly from Christ, I have passed it on to you. Now don't lose any of it as you pass it to faithful men.

Don't just invest this gospel in anyone, but find reliable, dependable, loyal, responsible people. Look at the character of those with whom you spend considerable time. Are they teachable? Is there a hunger for God? Are they able to become self starters or self-feeders?

**4. Reliable men to teach others also:** Timothy in addition to those who are reliable, find those who are able to teach others the message of the gospel and complete the transmission to the next generation after them. Paul is saying to Timothy that as I found you, and as I entrusted this gospel message to you - find faithful and able men to whom you can entrust this ministry.

Is this not the role of every Christian parent? Yet many of us struggle with the sense that we are not confident and competent to even teach our own children. This is an area that we want to address in our disciple-making model here at Agape. We envision core communities for those who are actively parenting. In this supportive fellowship we as a church want to be an equipping community where we come alongside you and give you the tools so that you can be the primary disciplers of your own children.

Built into the discipling vision that Paul outlines here is generational multiplication. From Christ to Paul, Paul to Timothy, Timothy to reliable ones, reliable ones to those who can teach others. The calling of the church is to equip you for this vocation.

Beginning in the coming year, with the blessing of the elders of the church my role as Sr. Pastor is effectively changing to allow me the latitude to further develop this model in our ministry. We are dropping the word "associate" from Bryan's position and simply calling him Pastor. He will be assuming the administration of the day to day pastoral