



CONNECTED

July—September 2021

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MY DEAR FAMILY
Five precious days in Galveston celebrating 2 university graduations and my passing of milestone #80. I am truly a blessed man!

I THOUGHT GETTING OLD WOULD TAKE LONGER!

I'M STILL NO PROPHET

If you know me at all, you know I'm a planner. I don't like surprises, and I have observed that without planning I get a lot more surprises that I really don't like. And, which most of the time do not seem very God-honoring. Even so, with good intentions to give God my best and lots of planning to make it happen, lots of things don't go as planned.

I felt pretty certain that right after giving up pastoral responsibilities, I'd get right into a steady routine of writing good Christian materials. I already had one new title in progress, and a couple more in editing for republishing. With hip replacement surgery for Mrs. Hutson, three surgeries of my own, the passing of fourscore (my 80th birthday) and a good many other things that asserted themselves, I have not done nearly all I had planned. I am still learning to go with the flow of God's timing.

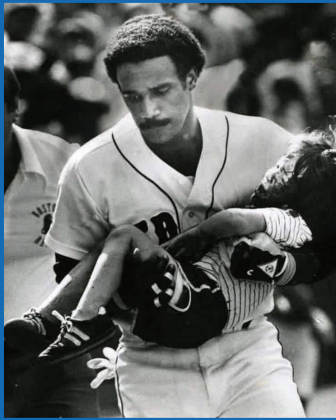
In the last three months my calendar has had the freckles. I have given what seems to me an inordinate amount of time to medical issues. Believe me, in this current environment, involvement with doctors can eat up lots of time: securing appointments, assuring them you're COVID-19-free and answering lots of pre-visit questionnaires, preparing for a surgery, securing releases

from your primary care and heart doctor, follow-up visits after surgery and the time it takes to go and come back. With three surgeries on my part, one for Margaret and one for her younger sister who needed us, I have gotten to know several doctors and their staffs on a first-name basis. Right now I am in therapy.

In May I rolled around another year for which I am most grateful to God. The family turned it into quite a celebration. We combined the event with the graduation of our daughter-in-law from Adam's State University in Alamosa, Colorado. She received her Master's Degree in Counseling. At the same time our granddaughter received her Doctor's Degree in Occupational Therapy from Creighton University in Omaha, Nebraska. Ours was a wonderful time.

I have had the great privilege of teaching three *Basic Bible Classes*. There is no better investment of time than bringing people to Christ. I also conducted the funeral services of three dear friends. I consider it a great privilege to be in a position to help many people from a broad base with a kaleidoscope of needs. I haven't done many of the things I planned to do; I have done a large number of good things which I didn't plan at all. I am so pleased with and

grateful to my great Master who directs my path.



Back in August 1982, a line drive foul ball hits a four year old boy in the head at Fenway. Jim Rice, realizing in a flash that it would take EMTs too long to arrive and cut through the crowd, sprang from the dugout and scooped up the boy. He laid the boy gently on the dugout floor, where the Red Sox medical team began to treat him.

When the boy arrived at the hospital 30 minutes later, doctors said, without a doubt that Jim's prompt actions saved the boy's life. Jim returned to the game in a blood-stained uniform. A real badge of courage.

After visiting the boy in the hospital, and realizing the family was of modest means, he stopped by the business office and instructed that the bill be sent to him.

This is what a sports Hero looks like!

TWELVE OF MY GREATEST DESIRES

1. *That three of my chief identification marks will be (1) love, (2) humility and (3) integrity.*
2. *That I will love and accept people for who they are, not because of their status, what they own or what they can do in return for me.*
3. *That I will never be for sale: for money, for acceptance, for popularity, for power, for anything.*
4. *That I will not be blinded to reality and truth: by my own long-held beliefs, by friends and people I trust, by famous and impressive people, by people who are good to me, by bribes or any material considerations or by any other influence.*
5. *That I will not be eaten up with spiritual cancers before I mortally die: pride, conceit, jealousy, anger, hatred, bitterness, cynicism, revenge, covetousness or an impure heart.*
6. *That I will never preach what I don't practice.*
7. *That I will be a Christian in deed, not merely in word.*
8. *That I will be a true friend to my friends, not merely an acquaintance.*
9. *That I will not live in the past.*
10. *That I will never be afraid or ashamed to stand up for the one who gave Himself for me.*
11. *That I will never have more than one Master, and that all I say and do will be routine excellence to His glory.*
12. *That I will finish well.*

Friendship is like a BOOK. It takes few seconds to burn, but it takes years to write.

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LITTLE THINGS MATTER

- ⇒ *Not what you have, but what you see;*
- ⇒ *Not what you see, but what you choose;*
- ⇒ *Not what seems fair, but what is true;*
- ⇒ *Not what you dream, but what you do;*
- ⇒ *Not what you take, but what you give;*
- ⇒ *Not what you pray, but as you live.*

*"Genius is one percent inspiration and ninety-nine percent perspiration."
Thomas Edison*



My mother Dena and brother Robert. 1927.

A LIFELONG PURSUIT

When God said, *"It is not good that the man should be alone,"* (Genesis 2:18) He nailed it. Before I knew how to pronounce the word let alone spell *"friend,"* I subconsciously understood there were people who cared for me and had my welfare at heart. I needed and trusted them; at the hint of trouble, I ran to my mother, my dad and my big sister.

I have spent a lifetime searching for really true friends.

Acquaintances, people I know and love? Hundreds! Like the rings from a rock into a lake, some acquaintances are pretty close and personal; we know each other quite well. Others are way out there; met them once or twice. I hardly know them, and no trust has been established. Then, there are almost limitless stages of acquaintances between those up close and those way out there.

True friends? The number is so small it shames me. Many whom I thought were there, weren't. The disillusionment was not always or altogether their fault. Too many times, I have not kept up my end of the friendship. Some have dropped me, and I still don't know why. Friendships that are life-long are pretty rare, and they require a certain amount of maintenance; but they are precious and worth the effort, and we all need them. The story of a person who has no one to care about is really sad.

True friendships are not between people who are perfect or who see eye-to-eye on everything; nobody is perfect, and there are always differences. True friends have learned to love and respect *in spite of*. True friends seek each other's welfare; they are honest with each other, even when it comes to flaws and weaknesses. Even at the risk of anger and rejection, they help each other with their blind spots.

True friendships are not based on the possibility of something in return. When I was Senior Pastor at Berean Baptist Church in Houston, we gave lots of money to missionaries. I still have a sick feeling as I remember the large numbers of missionaries who greeted me with such glowing praise and respect; only later did I learn how they trashed me and Berean to other missionaries (especially on the field) and pastors because of some of our beliefs. Money generated lots of false friends; and so does acceptance and the prospect of gain. I have heard that those who win the lottery are quickly inundated with *new friends*.

Since I was a kid, I have been on a life-long search for true friends; people who would love me for who I am, not for what I have to give. I want people in my life with whom I can bare my soul, and know they will love me in spite of my baggage. I also want to know they will *have my back*, that I won't find my dirty linen on a neighbor's clothesline. I have found that true friends need some maintenance, but not much. *"A man that hath friends must show himself friendly,"* Proverbs 18:24. True friends don't smother and monopolize their friends; by demanding too much time and attention, with heavy expectations, with long phone calls or by jealousy. True friends share their friends, respect their time and privacy and give them space.

I am so thankful to God for every true friend I have. I am still seeking, the pursuit is still on; and there is plenty of room in my life for more true friends.

STAFF
AUTHOR/SPEAKER

What is my official title at Northwest Baptist Church in Houston? “Staff Author/Speaker.” Yes, I am still officially active in the gospel ministry of our great God. I intend to be sprinting from here to the end.

At 80 I am no longer a Senior Pastor. I did it for well over 60 years, but there comes a time when this mortal body increasingly asserts itself. Parts begin to wear and tear, and stamina and endurance fade.

Someone once said, “*Frost on the roof does not mean the fire has gone out in the furnace.*” I consider it a great privilege that God has put me in a position to leave a written and audio legacy. Yes, I’m contemplating making audio books out of some of my works. I can’t go like I once did, but I am still pretty mobile.

I have observed that fruit trees produce their best and sweetest fruit during their final years. In my view, my best years are ahead, not behind.

A good character is the best tombstone. Those who loved you will remember. Carve your name on hearts, not on marble.



Pastor Javier Perez and Mari with their daughter, grandchildren and son-in-law pastor Alberto. Bro. Javi is pastor of Emanuel Bautista Church in El Pratt, a suburb of Barcelona, Spain. Bro. Alberto is pastor of Emanuel Bautista Church which is a few hours away in Elche, Spain.

Thanks to each of you who have helped with the building needs in El Pratt.

A BOOK I HAVE READ & HIGHLY RECOMMEND

Because They Hate: A Survivor of Islamic Terrorism Warns America

Brigitte Gabriel
Macmillian Digital Audio
ISBN: 9781427201690

Because They Hate is basically an autobiography, but it is so much more. It’s the story of a Lebanese girl who lost her childhood to militant Islam. Brigitte Gabriel was born in 1964 to an elderly Christian couple living in Southern Lebanon near the Israeli border. She was 10 years old in 1975 when militant Muslims from throughout the Middle East poured into Lebanon and launched a holy war against all Lebanese Christians. This became the first front in a worldwide jihad of fundamentalist Islam against non-Muslim peoples. As illustrated by Osama bin Laden and the bombing of the World Trade Center in New York, American is in the crosshairs.

Brigitte experienced Islam and jihad firsthand. For seven years, she and her parents lived in an underground bomb shelter, without running water or electricity and very little food. Their own longtime Muslim neighbors and friends subjected them to attacks and the viciousness of Islam which has the goal of world domination.

Islam’s path to achieving this goal is the destruction of every person and every ideology which stands in its way. Christians and Jews represent “Western” culture and are the first and primary targets. All who will not submit and embrace Islam are considered to be “infidels,” and it is the duty of Muslims to destroy them by whatever means it takes.

There are “radical” Muslims and “secular” or “moderate” Muslims, but they all stand united in their basic cause and goal: world domination by Islam. All moderates do not approve the suicide bombings, bombing of the World Trade Center, the beheading of western journalists, the overthrow of governments, the mass killings of “Christians” or terrorism and Jihad; but they will not seriously and openly oppose the radicals. Revenge and retaliation are too risky. The gory pattern is that all who oppose or expose Islam suffer revenge, destruction and often death.

Because They Hate is a political wake-up call. Most of the last half of Gabriel’s book is a warning that the United States is threatened by fundamentalist Islamic theology in the same way Lebanon was. She cites multiple U.S. organizations (Council on American-Islamic Relations, Muslim American Society, Muslim Republic Affairs Council, etc.) which preach hate for American, Israel and freedom; and which raise American money for terrorism and the support of terrorist organizations such as Hamas and Al Qaeda. With chilling clarity and plenty of proof, she shows that lying and deceit are official tools to promote the Islamic agenda of world control by any and all means necessary. The end justifies the means: lying, distortion of the facts, misrepresentation, partial truth and deceit. Anything goes; Impose Islam regardless of the cost: hatred, violence, slaughter, murder, mayhem, killing of innocents, the worst of the worst. To achieve world domination, all is justified. Recruits are taken to training camps and taught to use American values against America: trust, fair play, openness, freedom of speech and religion, innocence till proven guilty. Islam capitalizes on Western apathy, naivety and gullibility. They’re especially using *political correctness* to silence critics and those who would expose the enemy they are. They accuse those who expose them as the enemy of freedom of being intolerant, hatemongers, bigoted and guilty of hate crimes.

They have mastered the Western Media which is notorious for failure to get to the truth in matters. The media is almost totally silent on the wholesale violence in all Muslim countries against Christians and other Muslims who fail to toe the line. The media fails to expose Islamic terrorism, the total dominance of women by Muslim males and the fact that females have no rights in the Islamic world. Imams routinely preach hatred and violence in mosques worldwide including America. Where’s the media? And, where is the media on “*honor killings?*” Yes, it is common practice for Muslim fathers and mothers to kill their own daughters when they suspect of involvement with an outsider. For “dishonoring the family,” they even kill daughters who are raped. The media fails to report that becoming a suicide bomber is the only way for a disgraced Muslim girl to regain her honor and the honor of her family. They play down the fact that families are paid \$25,000.00 by terrorist organizations for a child that becomes a suicide bomber.

Islam, particularly Saudi Arabia, has poured billions of dollars into American Universities such as Harvard, USC, Rice and A & M to establish chairs in Mid-eastern studies. In exchange for the huge sums of money, the Muslim donors control the curriculum and professors which is almost universally anti-American and pro-Islamic. Within three years of the bombing for the World Trade Center, professors in American universities were openly teaching that the terrorists were justified in what they did; that evil America forced them into it and *had it coming*.

Radical Islam will stop at nothing short of domination of all non-Muslim countries. Fiercely articulate and passionately committed, Gabriel outlines the history, social movements, and religious divisions that have led to today’s critical historical conflict.

EVERY person who values freedom and deplores evil should read this book. Gabriel’s claims are obvious, right in front of our eyes. It’s sobering and chilling; I strongly recommend this extraordinarily powerful book.

TAKE NOTHING FOR GRANTED

There are lots of roses in the garden; but without a conscious effort to see and smell them, all you'll remember is all those thorns and how you got scratched. There's a negative streak in most of us. With glee we sing in church, "*Count your many blessings, see what God has done.*" At work we grip, knit-pick and focus on what's wrong. Our compliments and genuine thanks to our mate are pretty scarce. We're onto the government and politicians like a bird on a June bug. Somebody says, "*Good morning.*" we answer, "*What's good about it?*" It's a way of life.

Blessings are everywhere, but we're taking them for granted. Mom and dad, our children and our siblings. Good friends and friendships. The health we have, the job that pays our bills. A strong economy and jobs. The huge blessing it is to live in America with its abundance of food, freedoms, medical help, safety, jobs and opportunities on so many fronts. A good church and pastor. A warm home, good meal and a place to sleep. Due to very little credit to us, our heart keeps beating and our lungs keep breathing even when we're sleeping. When we get right down to it, none of us can take much credit for the sustaining of any of the rich blessing which we enjoy and take for granted.

Yes, *take for granted*? Most of us are really good at it. In fact, it's one of our specialties. So often only a rude wakeup call brings us to realize the blessings we had; and too often by then it's too late. A sudden illness: heart attack, cancer, stroke or kidney failure; and the good health we used to have looms really large. A car wreck, fall or freak accident have ways of waking up people to reality. A dear ole friend is gone forever. *I lost my job, my home, ability to drive, my leg, my best friend, my husband, my wife. My good church is gone. Forever! It's been so long since I heard a truly passionate, meaty, well delivered sermon. My country is crumbling.*

It's not a matter of *if* you will lose *every* mortal blessing; it's just a matter of *when*. Who knows which day will be the last? The day is not too far away when you will say *Goodbye* to your best friend for the very last time, but you probably won't be aware it's the last time. One day you will go to work for the last time. And to church. You'll hear your last sermon. *All* of the things and people you counted precious won't be there anymore. Maybe because of death, but maybe not. There are many things that can put a dagger in the heart of the mortal things we count precious.

Friends, take nothing for granted: not another day, your country, your freedoms, your church, your preacher, your friends, your health, your ability to swallow and walk and breathe and see! Nobody. The possessions you have. The days of your life. The people you love. Your youth.

Pay attention to the roses, and don't let the thorns distract you. Never take for granted how beautiful roses really are or what a privilege it is to be in a rose garden. Tell your wife you love her, and show her you mean it by how you act. Wives, are you listening? Tell your friends what they mean to you; and your boss, your preacher, your children, your mother, and your dad. Thank God for every day, and live it to the fullest. Tell Him that you appreciate your health and all of your working parts. Tell Him you're glad to be a free man.

Take nothing for granted.

Oh, boy! Is this really just a joke?

One day a florist went to a barber for a haircut. After the cut, he asked about his bill, and the barber replied, "*I cannot accept money from you, I'm doing community service this week.*" The florist was pleased and left the shop. When the barber went to open his shop the next morning, there was a 'thank you' card and a dozen roses waiting for him at his door.

Later, a policeman came in for a haircut, and when he tried to pay his bill, the barber again replied, "*I cannot accept money from you, I'm doing community service this week.*" The officer was happy and left the shop. The next morning when the barber went to open up, there was a 'thank you' card and a dozen donuts waiting for him at his door.

Then a Congressman came in, and when he went to pay his bill, the barber again replied, "*I cannot accept money from you. I'm doing community service this week.*" The Congressman was very happy and left the shop. The next morning, when the barber went to open up, there were a dozen Congressmen lined up waiting for a free haircut.

"Both politicians and diapers need to be changed often and for the same reason." Ronald Reagan

A RINGSIDE SEAT

My longtime pastor friend Eddie Atkinson produced a true treasure of astoundingly profound art: color ink drawings of Bible scenes. Bro. Eddie has been in heaven over five years, and most people do not know his spectacular art treasure exists. I cannot bear to see it vanish from the human radar; and for a long time I have been at work to (1) get this fine art onto a big stage for the world to see and appreciate and (2) make reprints available to interested people. These scenes need to be on the walls of Christian homes and churches.

On a Friday morning at the end of April, Betty Atkinson, her son Lonnie and I met with my dear and life-long friend Robert Flournoy in his Lufkin law office. We brainstormed about how to put this treasure on the map with the potential of turning hearts to God. I am not a man given greatly to feelings and superstition. I've heard my fair share of sensational stories about meetings with God and "*miraculous*" happenings. I have listened to most of them with skepticism. On that Friday morning in a simple law office in Lufkin, Texas, I knew God was in what was going on; no religious service and no effort to invoke anything, just godly people seeking the help of Almighty God in a right cause. I sat there in awe as I saw the development of a vision and plans. Connections seemed to come out of nowhere and dots began to connect: personal friends and other people we collectively know who are uniquely equipped to do what needs to be done. I knew I was sitting in a ringside seat watching God at work. It was an awesome experience, the kind of thing I have lived through only a handful of times in my life.

Bro. Eddie created 21 color ink drawings of Bible scenes: *The Handwriting on the Wall, Ezekiel's Wheel within a Wheel, The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, Zechariah's Ten Visions, Samson Pulling down the Philistine Stadium, The Man among the Tombs, The Constructing of Noah's Ark* and many more. They are accurate to the minutest details found in the biblical accounts. Without an extremely well-trained eye, you would never know they were created with ink pens and not brush strokes. Bro. Eddie created four other black and white scenes.

I ask each of you to join us in regular prayer for the success of this undertaking.