

May, 2016
Newsletter

FaithLife Ministries
"Equipping Church Leaders Globally for 15 Years"



American Perception of Christians

"No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other." - Matthew 6:24

In America today it seems that Christians and Christianity are under a relentless attack. The ACLU has been fighting for years to have the Ten Commandments and any other Biblical or Christian symbols removed from public display. Christians are sued for not baking cakes for gay weddings. In Houston, the mayor tried to demand that local pastors turn over their sermons to her for review for potential hate speech. And many Americans feel that Christians have no right to express their religious beliefs politically.

Christians today are perceived as bigoted, out of touch, homophobic, intolerant and a danger to society. A recent Barna Research report found that the majority of Americans see some Christian activities as extremism, such as handing out tracts or praying in public (*Five Ways Christianity is Increasingly Viewed as Extremist*, February 23, 2016 release, www.barna.org). These are very recent trends and it would have been hard to imagine this happening even 10 years ago.

But this is the America we now live in. Our nation has not only turned its back on God (as I wrote in my book [About Face](#)), but it is now looking to destroy or marginalize any aspect of Christian values or beliefs in our society.

How did this happen? Where did all of this anti-Christian sentiment come from? What did we do to deserve such a backlash from our own countrymen and women? I believe that the answer to that question can be found in two reasons.

First, our society has become more socialist. Many Americans have come to believe that capitalism does not work anymore. President Obama declared this back in 2011. The government has grown much larger in the past 10 years and many Americans are looking to the government for answers and help. As a result, we are seeing more people on government support programs and calling for free healthcare and free college educations. One candidate for President, Congressman Bernie Sanders, is a self acknowledged socialist and is campaigning on all of these issues. Many Americans are supporting him, especially young people, and want the "state" or government to run and control our society and economy.

Why does this matter? Because Christianity is the enemy of the State! Christianity places God above man, and therefore our allegiance to God above allegiance to the State. The State cannot tolerate this because it must make everyone stay in line with the secular program. No exceptions are allowed. History show us what happens when the State gets this kind of control – it produces the Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, and North Korea, just to name a few. Anytime we give more power to the State we will lose more of our freedom. The two go hand in hand. So as more Americans call for more government action and put their faith in the State, it is inevitable that Christianity, and Christians, will be viewed as the enemy!

Second, our society has become more accepting of individual rights with virtually no limitations. That includes the right to have sex with whomever one chooses regardless of the dangers or consequences, the right to have free healthcare, the right to marry anyone or anything, and the right to kill innocent babies for their own convenience. All of these behaviors are against God's Word. When Christians stand up and call some of these behaviors sinful, harmful, or evil, they are viciously attacked in the media, on social media, and in political activities.

Why does the culture respond this way? Because Christian values (and God) are a threat to them doing whatever pleases them regardless of the dangers to society or others. Again it is placing man's desires above God's desires. And these two desires will always be in conflict. The Apostle Paul wrote in **Galatians 5:17**, "*For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with one another so that you do not do what you want.*" In other words, they are mutually exclusive. You cannot have both! So for Americans who only seek man's ways, God's way's will always be a threat to them and they must not be allowed at all!

I don't believe that the Christian Church has changed much at all in the past 10-20 years, at least not in their teaching or presentation of the gospel. What has changed is the attitude of many Americans towards Christians, the Church, and Christianity due to the 2 factors mentioned above. Many Americans have developed what God calls a *hardened heart*.

I want to encourage you with the words of the Lord to Joshua in **Joshua 1:9**, "*Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged; for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go.*" So let us not worry about how we are perceived by anyone other than God. Let us continue to "*fight the good fight, finish the race, and keep the faith*" (1 Timothy 4:7) and leave the results up to Him!

Uruguay MCL Training Conference

March 11-15th, Montevideo

Barry traveled to **Montevideo April 8-17th** to teach our **Management for Church Leaders (MCL)** training there for the first time.



He was joined by our MCL Trainer from Brazil, **Steve Burkhalter**, and they taught 34 pastors and leaders with the **Church of God (COG)** in Uruguay. The training

took place in the evening on Monday - Friday and the participants were there every night eager to learn and grow in their leadership abilities. One pastor told us he would start training his church leaders the very next month! Steve and I therefore had time during the day to explore this beautiful South American city and country. Our host, **Pastor Julio Amarillo**, the Director of Education for the COG in Uruguay, says he would like us to come back in two years and teach our MCL Volume #2! We thank God for the opportunity to bring our training there and look forward to returning!

Israel MCL Training Conference

May 5-6th, Sea of Galilee

Barry was invited to **Jerusalem, Israel May 2-10th** to train the leaders of a ministry called **Shevet Achim** on our **Management for Church Leaders** training. This ministry brings children from Iraq, Syria and the Gaza strip to Israeli hospitals for life saving heart surgeries. We were connected to them through our church in Alpharetta, GA. I trained 11 leaders over two days at a facility on the Sea



of Galilee, where Jesus once taught! It was a wonderful training and perhaps the first time I have trained leaders from a single ministry. This enabled us to zero in on

issues that most directly affect them. I was also able to spend a week among their community and to also see some of the sights of the Holy Land. It was such a blessing to be there and to see how God is using them to build bridges among Jews, Arabs and Christians in the Middle East. God was also using our ministry to better equip them for what they are doing. Praise God!

My Holy Land Experience

“We live by faith, not by sight.” – 1 Corinthians 5:7

I recently had the opportunity to make my first visit to Israel and the Holy Land. It had long been a goal of mine to get to the Holy Land and to visit the sites where Jesus was born, ministered, taught, died on the cross, and was raised from the dead. I had envisioned a place where history would come alive right before my eyes. I was anticipating a spiritual experience beyond anything I had ever felt before! *(Photo is of Barry at Capernaum.)*



However, as I toured Israel and visited such sites as Bethlehem, Capernaum and Jerusalem, I did not experience what I had anticipated I would. I suspect it was because many of the sites did not look anything like what I thought. I think there were several reasons for that.

First, much of what I thought I would see was based on portrayals of the areas in movies. Hollywood often tends to create movie sets that are more like our preconceived ideas than what actually existed at the time. Second, the Scriptures don't always provide a detailed description of the geography so we each envision or imagine what the area must have looked like in our own minds. Third, what existed 2,000 years ago is not what we see today. Areas have been built over and the original locations look vastly different than they might have back when Jesus lived. Finally, the authenticity of a particular site is based upon the evidence they have. Very few of the sites I visited have enough solid evidence to prove that's where a specific event took place. So the sites that I visited did not meet my expectations of what I thought I was going to see.

Nevertheless, we do know that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, ministered in Capernaum, and died in Jerusalem. And while the actual locations of the events in these cities may not be known with absolute certainty, they **ARE** where these things took place in history. As I visited these places I thought about Jesus, what He did, and what it must have been like back then (according to Scripture), and as a result I felt a deeper spiritual connection with Him! It was not the sites themselves that impacted me, but rather the realization and consideration of what took place there that did!

One of the things I did witness were people who were touching these spots as if the sites themselves could convey a special spiritual power because Jesus had been there. To me, I saw that as idolatry. We worship a living God, not historical places or relics from the past. Our God lives and reigns in us and through us and we don't need to visit the Holy Land to feel His presence or be filled with the power of His Holy Spirit. That comes from God, and faith in Jesus, and is available to all who call on His name!

Visiting the Holy Land most assuredly affirmed my faith and belief in Jesus' life, death and resurrection!



Global MCL Training

Our MCL Global Trainer Network continues to train leaders at a strong pace in 2016. Through May they have trained over 2,800 pastors and church leaders in 13 nations! The

photo below is from a training in **Ziobwe, Uganda** in March by **Pastor Joseph Richard**. There have been 50 conferences in total this year conducted by 20 Trainers! There are about 21 conferences taking place in June and July and so more training reports will be coming in.

We continue to support our network trainers with prayer and some limited funds and we are encouraged



by their ability to train and travel on what we are able to provide. We are thankful for their diligence, creativity, and desire to spread our training to their nations. They will also be taking our training to some new nations later this year. Praise God for what He is doing through all of them!

MCL Training Testimonies



I received the following testimonies from some of our Global Trainers regarding our MCL training:

"I worked in the police force before coming to the Lord! This training is very useful for me as I provide a leadership role to many pastors and Church leaders. Thank you so much for bringing this training to my area." - Pastor H.R. Sahu , India

"There was a church in which there were conflicts but after the training they reconciled. This shows how much the training is so important." - Pastor Henry Thuo, Kenya

"The training is a blessing to the body of Christ in Loum" - Pastor Tchhoffou Eric, Cameroon

Leadership Character

This year the American people are looking for a new leader. But what exactly is a leader? A leader is someone who not only is effective in positively influencing others, but who also demonstrates character. People want leaders they can trust to do what they say. One's character is what makes trust possible. This is true for all leaders, whether they are political, business or church leaders.



I believe that there are 5 basic characteristics of a leader:

First, they must have integrity. It means they say what they mean and do what they say. Too often leaders lose credibility because they do not follow through on their commitments.

Second, they must have wisdom. This is more than knowledge and reflects a leader's ability to analyze information and make positive and correct choices and decisions. Leaders lose influence when they make poor decisions or bad choices.

Third, they must have humility. Leaders must put the needs of others above themselves. Nobody likes a self-serving leader. Leaders lose support when they focus on their goals instead of the needs of their followers.

Fourth, they must encourage others. Leadership is not about the leader, but it is about the followers. Leaders who serve and encourage their followers are more successful than those who don't. Leaders lose followers when they focus on themselves.

Fifth, they must empower others. Leaders who won't delegate or develop other leaders restrict their own potential and that of others. Leaders lose momentum and growth when they don't tap into the capabilities of others.

The conduct of a leader also reflects their character. **1 Timothy 3:2-3** shows us 7 ways a leader should conduct themselves:

1. **Be above reproach** – no one doubts their character
2. **Be self-controlled** – they are disciplined
3. **Be respectable** – people look up to them
4. **Be hospitable** – they are open and welcoming
5. **Be able to teach** – they instruct and educate others
6. **Be gentle** – they respect others and do not use harsh words
7. **Be a servant** – they focus on people, not money

These qualities define the conduct of a true leader. We must always look for them when following or electing leaders.

(This is from Chapter 3 of our MCL Volume #2 Training)

Our 2016 Schedule

| <u>Dates</u> | <u>Location</u> | <u>Purpose/Host</u> |
|--------------|----------------------|--|
| Feb 8-10 | Phnom Phen, Cambodia | MCL Training - <i>Vanarith Chhim, Cambodia Lutheran Church</i> |
| Apr 11-15 | Montevideo, Uruguay | MCL Training - <i>Pastor Julio Amarillo, Uruguay Church of God</i> |
| May 5-6 | Jerusalem, Israel | MCL Training - <i>Jonathan Miles, Shevet Achim</i> |
| June 15-22 | Bangkok, Thailand | Global Proclamation Congress for Pastoral Trainers |
| Jun 28-30 | Quilmes, Argentina | MCL Training - <i>Pastor Jorge Rivero, Argentina Church of God</i> |
| Aug 15-16 | Ho Chi Min, Vietnam | MCL Training - <i>Joshua Nguyen, Marketplace Ministries</i> |
| Aug 18-19 | Hanoi, Vietnam | MCL Training - <i>Joshua Nguyen, Marketplace Ministries</i> |
| Oct 17-18 | Tallin, Estonia | MCL Training - <i>Pastor Ove Sander, Estonia Lutheran Church</i> |
| Nov 5 | Cumming, GA | FLM Board of Directors Meeting |

Prayer Requests



- Pray for **Samuel Sudarsanam** from **Gandepalli, India** as he leads a crusade in a tribal area June 1st - 3rd.
- Pray for **Barry & Gideon Nair**, one of our MCL Trainers from India, as they prepare a joint presentation to the **Global Proclamation Congress** for pastoral trainers in **Bangkok, Thailand** from June 15-22nd.
- Pray for our upcoming summer MCL training in **Quilmes, Argentina** June 28-30th, **Ho Chi Min City, Vietnam** August 15th-16th, and **Hanoi, Vietnam** August 18th-19th.
- Pray for MCL training opportunities to emerge with our new connections in **Jamaica & El Salvador**
- Please pray for the people of **Ecuador** suffering from the massive earthquake. We are thankful that our ministry contacts there are all OK.
- Please pray for the Christians in **Nepal**. The government recently placed restrictions on their freedom of religion.

News & Notes:



- **Pastor Wilson Esambe**, our MCL Trainer in **Cameroon**, told us he is planning to take our training to **Chad** and **Gabon**, 2 new nations for us.
- We are awaiting the possibility of another MCL training in **China** this September.
- We ran Facebook ads in April in 16 nations where we have no contacts at present. We have sent training materials to 2 new contacts as a result (*Jamaica & El Salvador*).
- We added a new MCL Trainer to our network from **Malawi, Jacob Zacharia**. He translated for me when I was there in 2013.
- We have been invited to train in **Costa Rica** and are awaiting the determination of dates for that trip.
- Don't forget to donate your **Thrivent Choice Dollars** to FaithLife Ministries!

David Quispirroca Update

We were able to send David a contribution of \$5,000 for his ministry in the Middle East. Thanks to all of you who donated towards his ministry in honor of our 15th anniversary! David is now making his plans for his ministry there, which have been changed due to the sending of refugees back to Syria by Greece. He will likely go back and forth for now and has already been in Israel and Turkey. Please continue to keep David in your prayers.



Thank you for your prayers & support!

Barry & Kim

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