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October 2017

THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

Inside Terry's Office:

The Book of Galatians - Institutionalists and Individualists

"When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face because he was clearly in the wrong. ... I said to Peter in front of them all, 'You are a Jew, yet you live as a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?'" - Gal. 1

Are we reading gossip? Is Paul encouraging dissension between the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians? Are Peter and Paul asking others to take sides in their personal dispute?

No. Paul is being honest about a problem that everyone already knew was a problem. The problem may seem to be a theological one, but it really isn't. This letter, and others, make it clear that Peter and Paul were in theological agreement but that they disagreed on how to best represent the gospel.

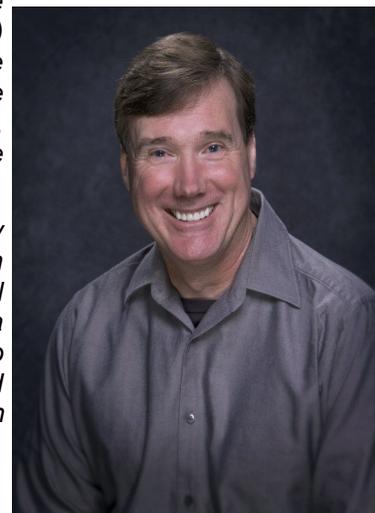
*The dispute is one that the Old Testament history represents clearly; the institutionalists and the individualists. In the Old Testament we read of the constant stress between the institutional leaders, the Priests and Kings, and the individualists, the Prophets and the Judges. God called, anointed, and used them all. No category of calling involved a better group of people or a group with less problems to overcome. Nevertheless, there has always been certain tensions between the groups. In its simplest form, the question is whether the individuals or the institutions are of primary importance. **The Biblical answer has always been that the health and survival of the institutions are subject to the needs of the individuals.***

Although, we can understand Peter's concern for the functioning of the church in Jerusalem, comprised mostly of Jewish converts who revered the 'institutionalized' law, Paul was right to challenge him to, in essence, stop protecting the institution. Paul asserts that the institutional expectations are often counterproductive to God's purposes among individuals. In such cases, the institutions are expected to adjust to the needs of the individuals or, as has happened over and over throughout history, the institutions are allowed to die.

How can this be? Plumblines Ministries is an institution now. Our local churches are institutions. Our denominations are institutions. Our missions are institutions. They have been founded by God, gifted and anointed to serve His purposes, and need to be supported by the Christian community (individualists). Right? Well ... only to the extent and for the time that God determines. We all, as individuals, must be prepared to die and so must our institutions. Our institutions are often tempted to claim that individuals owe their allegiance to them. I remember preaching to members of the congregations I pastored that they should be more concerned about the needs of the church and that they shouldn't be 'selfish consumers' but 'committed servants'. However, God has not committed himself to preserving the influence, prosperity, or even the life of any institution. And, since we really can't (and don't want to) function without the structure and nurture of our institutions, we are subject to equating the advancement of the Kingdom with the advancement of our institutions (ministries, churches, denominations, governments, etc.) Yet, like Peter, we become hypocritical when we misprioritize the needs of our institutions.

Ours is a kingdom of individuals in unique relationships with Holy Spirit, himself. When we are tempted to require individuals to conform to the needs of the institution we are subtly undermining their individual relationships with Him. Yet, we are called to let the institutions take a secondary role to the needs of the individuals – sounds like chaos to me. Nevertheless, we are asked to trust Holy Spirit and to not safeguard our institutions. - - Can I just say, 'Lions, and tigers, and bears – Oh My!'"

In His Grip, TWE



ESTABLISHING A PLUMBLINE IN THE HEART OF GOD'S PEOPLE

The Plumblines

Galatians Identified with Christ

Galatians 2:19-21, The Message

“What actually took place is this: I tried keeping rules and working my head off to please God, and it didn’t work. So I quit being a “law man” so that I could be God’s man. Christ’s life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. **I identified myself completely with him.** Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. **My ego is no longer central.** It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. The life you see me living is not “mine,” but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back on that.

It is not clear to you that to go back to **that old rule-keeping, peer-pleasing religion would be an abandonment of everything personal and free in my relationship with God? I** refuse to do that, to repudiate God’s grace. **If a living relationship with God could come by rule-keeping, then Christ died unnecessarily.”**

I’ll never forget reading this passage paraphrased in The Message for the first time and thinking, “Now that was written for me!” In particular, verse 21 resonated within my very core! This was a fall to my knees moment; an awakening to me that a good girl doesn’t need a Savior. The Voice reads

this way in verse 21, **“If being right with God depends on how we measure up to the law, then the Anointed’s sacrifice on the cross was the most tragic waste in all of history!”**

My friend recently introduced me to a book, **Grace for the Good Girl** by **Emily P. Freeman**. If you know me at all you know this is a book title that is designed for me and my very personal struggle. The quote below describes me very well:

This innate desire to be good indeed protected me from a lot of heartache and baggage. It protected me from teenage pregnancy and bad grades and jail. **But it did not bring me any greater understanding of God. It did not protect me from my own impossible expectations.** (p. 26)

She says later, “I lived as a believer in God but **I did not live from God.** I was a child of the God of grace but I was looking for life in the law.” (p. 70)

I realize that not everyone can relate to this good girl syndrome, as I refer to it, as others would say they came to Christ out of the more obvious sin manifestation lifestyles. Either way there is a common compulsion to either “get things right” or find out how to “do things right” that interferes with our ability to **live from God and to love well.** Crabb quotes Martin Luther in his forty-eighth love letter on Galatians,

The Christian life is like a drunk riding a horse. We keep falling off one side or the other, either into legalism, which chokes the freedom to love, or into license, which perverts freedom into guilt-free selfishness. (66 Love Letters, p. 255)

In the book of Galatians Paul revisits the purpose of the law which was to expose our heart condition and to remind believers the law was never meant to make us righteous. (Galatians 3:2, 3) What a difference it can make to be able to come to the word in freedom, eager to enhance our understanding of God rather than heap more shame for not measuring up according to what we think is demanded of us. In closing, consider this summary of Paul’s message to the Galatians from The Voice, chapter 5:

We are done with the demands of the law; now we are free to live in the Spirit and to be truly right with God. As free people, the Spirit gives us the characteristics of Jesus; we, too, can freely love in joy and peace. We can have patience along with kindness and faithfulness that can only come from the Father. We can reflect the goodness of God while being gentle in operating with self-control. For those who follow Him and live in the Spirit, these characteristics or fruits are a gift from God. As we grow in the faith, we find that we belong to God and can walk daily in the Spirit.



David Willets.....Welcome to Plumblin!

David Willets is a long-time friend of Plumblin. We are very excited to have him on our staff!

David represents some new and exciting *FIRSTS* for us:

- *He will be the first counselor who gained most of his training outside the training program we provide.
- *He will be the first counselor with a Doctorate (in pastoral counseling).
- *He will be our first staff person to specialize (in grief counseling).

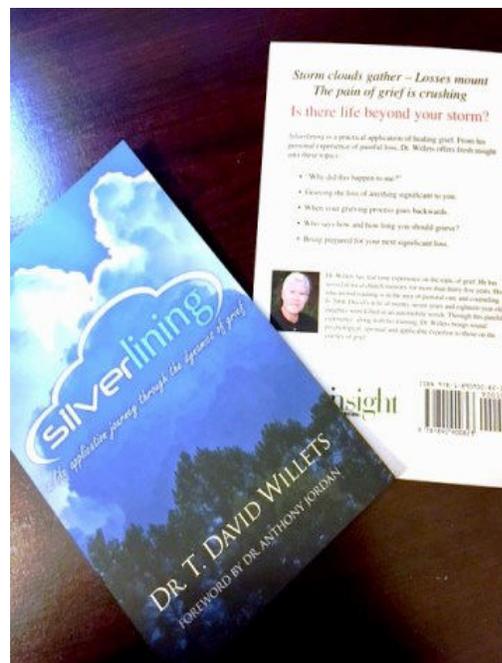
We look forward to partnering in ministry, learning from, and sharing life with David.

As C.E.O. and founder of Plumblin, I am encouraged for all our staff has to gain from partnering with David and am so grateful that we can offer specialized counseling for those in grief. I anticipated that our sponsoring churches would soon begin filling up David's schedule with referrals, but someone has heard before this official announcement and already made a referral. As you can imagine, the need is heartbreaking!

Please join me in lifting David, and those he will be counseling, in prayer. Our staff all recognize that God is the healer and redeemer, and that we are privileged to be one avenue of His grace. Also, please consider sponsoring David on a monthly basis. Since our sponsoring churches cover our overhead, we can raise our salary support and offer counseling for free to those referred by our sponsoring churches. We are blessed to be trusted as an extension of the pastoral ministry of these local churches.

So, let me be the first to say, "Welcome to Plumblin, David! We are blessed to have you!"

In His Grip.....TWE





FUNdraiser

WHEN: Tues, Nov 7, 2017
5pm to 9pm

WHERE: Red Robin – Kenosha & Garnett
4801 W. Kenosha St. Broken Arrow, OK



20% of Proceeds will be donated to Plumblin

Dine In

Bring this page to the Fundraiser and present with your order!

Come Join Us!

Stickman's Prayers

Plumblin's newest book, *Stickman's Prayers* has been published and is now available at Plumblin!

stickman's prayers

the everyday practice of
"loosing prayers"
and the ministry of
"exploratory prayers"



Michelle Carpenter
Terry Ewing
Erin Garcia
Margo Hanne
Carolyn Knippers
Carol McNamarra
Sue Merrill

Would you be surprised to know that the "Prayer of Jabez" was a joke?

Would you be happy to know what kind of prayers are appropriate for you to pray for yourself and what kinds are meant for you to pray for others and others for you?

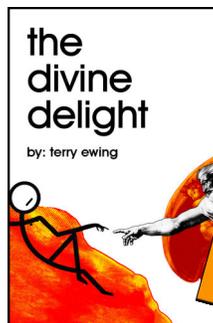
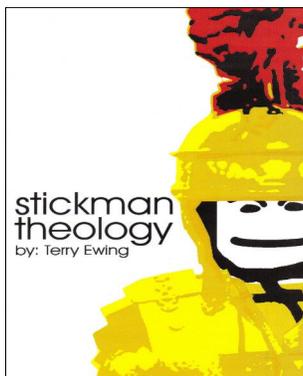
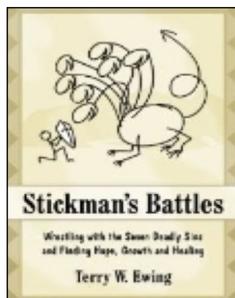
Would you like confidence and freedom to simply enjoy your personal and ministry prayers?

Praying is the most natural thing in the world for Christians; an on going conversation with our best friend, counselor, and confidant; gratitude to our Savior and provider; intercession on behalf of our friends; requests to our Creator. In this regard, a book on prayer may seem presumptuous. When you write a book on Prayer aren't you suggesting that some are praying wrongly, or, at least could be praying better?

That really is not the kind of message we look to promote. So...why the book?

The *Stickman's Prayers* serves two purposes. First, to challenge some ideas that other teaching and preaching concerning prayer has promoted. And, to offer simple encouragements to personal prayer and prayer ministries.

Available at Plumblin for a suggested donation of \$10.00 each



Did you know you can download

Stickman Theology

On your KINDLE?

Did you know that when you shop on Amazon, you could be helping to financially support Plumblin? Through the Amazon smiles program, **Amazon will donate a portion of the sales to Plumblin.** All you need to do is go to smiles.amazon.com, designate Plumblin Ministries, and start shopping! Amazon will then donate 0.5% of the total sales price to Plumblin. Please remember to bookmark that page and you can help us as you shop!

PLUMBLINE

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