



Dr. Mark L. Bailey

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Preparing Leaders for the 'Long Haul' in Ministry

My seminary colleague Dr. Howard Hendricks has long said that the number one need in the world is for leadership, and the number one need in leadership is for character.

Dr. Warren Wiersbe described integrity when he wrote in *The Integrity Crisis*: "A person with integrity is not divided (that's duplicity) or merely pretending (that's hypocrisy). He or she is whole; life is put together; and things are working harmoniously. People with integrity have nothing to hide and nothing to fear."

Dr. Larry Crabb addresses that need for integrity in this issue of *Veritas*. His deep desire is to finish well in his ministry and personal walk with Christ—a commitment we hold in common with him here at Dallas Seminary.

I call it preparing for the "long haul" in ministry. I appreciate so much Dr. Crabb's refreshing transparency and authenticity in sharing with our students the struggles he faces as someone who has walked with and served the Lord for many years.

Indeed, it would do all of us good sometime to wake up at two in the morning and ask ourselves the hard questions. Such times of honest reflection are crucial to producing a life of faithfulness to which our Lord can say, "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matt. 25:21).

This statement provides an outline of the kind of leaders that friends like you are helping produce at Dallas Seminary: "Well done" refers to being skillful and competent, "good" refers to spirituality and character, and "faithful" speaks of steadfastness and consistency.

As you stand with us in this ministry, I am glad we can put tools like *Veritas* into your hands to help you "continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of" (2 Tim. 3:14). Your prayers and financial support of Dallas Seminary are incredible blessings that enable us to equip God-called leaders who can teach the life-giving Word of God—and who are committed to ministry for the long haul! Thank you.

Dr. Mark L. Bailey
President
Dallas Theological Seminary

VERITAS

Equipping Christians to live by truth—veritas—from God.

Finding Hope at Two in the Morning

*Answering Life's Crucial Questions
When You Are Feeling Discouraged*

by Dr. Larry Crabb

When the pressures of life wake you up in the early hours of the morning and you sit quietly wondering what to do next, there are some basic questions you can ask and answer that will provide an anchor for the soul.

DALLAS THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



Larry Crabb holds a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Illinois. He is a well-known psychologist, conference and seminar speaker, Bible teacher, author, and founder/director of NewWay Ministries.

Dr. Crabb is currently Scholar in Residence at Colorado Christian University, and he serves as spiritual director for the American Association of Christian Counselors. He has written many books, including *Understanding People*, *The Marriage Builder*, *Finding God*, *Connecting*, *The Safest Place on Earth*, *The Pressure's Off*, *Shattered Dreams*, *SoulTalk*, and *Inside Out*. His latest book, *The PAPA Prayer*, was released in February 2006.

Dr. Crabb has received the Gold Medallion Award from the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association for his books *Inside Out* and *Understanding People*. He and his wife, Rachael, live in the Denver, Colorado, area. For additional information, visit www.newwayministries.org.

This message is taken from a chapel address that Dr. Crabb delivered to the Dallas Seminary student body during the fall semester. We believe it has special relevance for every believer.

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Finding Hope at Two in the Morning

*Answering Life's Crucial Questions
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I have been sobered by a question that a pastor asked me at a recent luncheon. It is a question that every pastor, and every other Christian leader, asks many times in the course of his or her ministry: "How do I keep going when beneath my ministry 'game face' I feel empty, alone, and deeply discouraged?"

That question sobered me because as I have entered my 60s, I find myself longing more than ever to finish well and more aware than ever of the temptation to take the broader, easier road. It breaks my heart whenever I hear of a Christian leader who has succumbed to

temptation and fallen, and I don't want my life to wind up as a tragic story. Yet I am as capable as anybody else of falling off in some very bad directions and moving away

from the ministry or simply giving up in discouragement. And the truth is that every Christian faces the same challenge, regardless of their position.

Seeking Strength

As I reflected on that pastor's question, I asked myself where it is that I turn for strength when I am tempted to leave the narrow, difficult road that Jesus calls all of us to walk and go off into something that is a little bit easier.

So I want to share with you the thought process I go through when I get up in the middle of the night, sit quietly in my living room, and wonder how to persevere when I feel empty and when the tensions and disappointments of relationships seem too much to bear.

It's at those times that I review the things I deeply believe and have become persuaded of, calling to mind Paul's admonition to Timothy: "As for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of" (2 Tim. 3:14). What I do at two in the morning is reflect on what I call the seven questions of spiritual theology. These are questions that God has written the Bible, I believe, to answer—and they are questions we would answer incorrectly if we didn't open our Bibles.

Seven Crucial Questions

QUESTION NO. 1 Who is God?

C.S. Lewis called this

perhaps the most important difference between Christianity and all other religions. In Christianity, Lewis writes, "God

is not a static thing but a kind of dynamic, pulsating activity, a life, almost a kind of drama, almost, if you will not think me irreverent, a kind of dance."

Jonathan Edwards described the substance of deity that equally adheres to the three persons of the Trinity as a disposition, a flowing energy of radical, holy love, what Edwards called "God's self-communicating disposition."

So at two in the morning, when the pressures of life are great, I remind myself that, if you will not think me irreverent, God is a party to which I am invited. I don't want to be like a bashful kid at his first junior high dance—hugging the wall, holding my little plastic cup of red punch that I don't even like, terrified to get out on the dance floor.

John Owen's classic book, *Communion with God*, introduced me to the incredible hope of relating with and uniquely enjoying each member of the Trinity. I want to join Owen as he follows the Spirit's rhythm into communion with the Father and Son. God is the only perfect "small group," and He invites me to join!

QUESTION NO. 2 What is God up to?

God is the only perfect "small group," and He invites me to join!

I remind myself that living for His glory makes God relentlessly determined to make me like His Son—at whatever cost to me because of my unholy nature and at whatever cost to Him because of His holy nature. Again, in C.S.

Lewis's words, "When God said be perfect, He meant it. He meant that we must go in for the full treatment." And in Lewis's

wonderful style, he said that while “it may be hard for an egg to turn into a bird, it would be a jolly sight harder for it to learn to fly while remaining an egg.”

“We are like eggs, yet we cannot go on indefinitely being just ordinary, decent eggs. We either must hatch or go bad.” If, as Lewis also said, “it is doubtful that the entire universe was made for any other purpose” than to make us more like Christ, then as I sit in my living room at two in the morning, I find my heart crying out, “Lord, free me from bonded self. Let me fly like an eagle.”

QUESTION NO. 3
Who am I?

Dallas Seminary’s founder, Dr. Lewis Sperry Chafer, wrote, “We have no more important revelation in Scripture about people than that we bear the image of God.” And whatever else that means, at the very least it means I have the capacity to want God more than I want any other conceivable good—to want to know Him and enjoy Him on His terms whether my spouse

divorces me, my cancer of 10 years ago returns, or I endure long seasons of dryness and frustrations. I often remind myself that I bear God’s image.

QUESTION NO. 4
What has gone wrong?

There’s a famous story of the *London Times* newspaper inviting philosophers and religious leaders to answer the question, “What is wrong with the world?” All of these learned essays came in, but the one that caught everyone’s attention was this reply from the great writer G.K. Chesterton, who wrote, “Dear Sirs, I am. Yours Truly.”

What has gone wrong is that, in Augustine’s famous phrase, every soul, mine included, has curved in on itself. Theologians call this study *harmartiology*, the doctrine of sin. My capacity to even want God has been corrupted and perverted by what J.I. Packer calls an anti-God virus. After counseling with hundreds, maybe thousands, of people over the past 40 years, I believe this anti-God virus is behind everything that we

wrongly call a psychological disorder and wrongly assume we can treat with therapy.

All we are doing, in many cases, is changing ourselves in a more adaptive manner, what I call “socializing the flesh.” The core reality behind all addictive disorders, buried beneath terrible pain and consuming terror, is self-centeredness—idolatry of the self, a fist in God’s face that demands better treatment. We are in a dreadful state that we cannot fix apart from the gospel.

So I realize that the problem is not the people who are disappointing me, the frustrations I feel in my ministry,

power to defeat on my own.

QUESTION NO. 5
What has God done about our problem?

The answer is His wonderful grace.

The Father sent the Son by the Spirit to be a new kind of human being. God had in mind a created person who never for a moment, under any circumstances, lived to preserve or protect His own sense of well-being. So God sent the eternal Son to become a human being, to live out His dream of a new humanity—a Man who would fully entrust Himself to God even

while soldiers were putting nails in His hands. Jesus felt God’s pleasure for

We are in a dreadful state that we cannot fix apart from the gospel.

or the emptiness I wish would go away and be replaced with an exuberant fullness. What is deeply wrong is the flesh that is still within me and that I have no

being the perfect Man, but He endured God’s wrath for the fact that I turned away from God, something that Jesus never did. Jesus died and rose again so that

I could be forgiven for being so insanely foolish as to think for a moment that there is a greater good to be enjoyed by turning away from God so I can lead an easier life. When I think about what God has done about this severe sin problem for which there is no solution but the cross, I worship in wonder as I hum “Amazing Grace.”

QUESTION NO. 6

What is the Holy Spirit doing today?

What is He doing in your life today? Is He moving? Is He operating? Is He inviting you to a dance that you are afraid to join? I think of the Spirit’s work in terms of providential blessings

For example, I couldn’t control the fact that my mother began a seven-year decline into Alzheimer’s disease and then died two years ago. I couldn’t control that my brother would be the last standby passenger to board an airplane that crashed and killed him 14 years ago. I couldn’t control that after four years of undiagnosed illnesses, I was rushed to the hospital 10 years ago and diagnosed with cancer. I also can’t control my providential blessings, of which I have many.

What is the Spirit doing in all of this? I believe He is detaching me from dependence on every source of joy other than being included in the divine Father-Son relationship. So what do I depend on for my joy? That my ministry

well and people say, “You did a great job, Larry. Thanks so much”?

I do get joy from these things, but if I am depending on them, I am an idolater. And at two in the morning, when I am feeling alone and desperate and empty, I realize that the Holy Spirit is separating me from all of my idols, such as enjoying ministry success more than communion with God. The Spirit is taking me into spiritual misery to empty the space in my heart that I have filled with myself, so He can fill it with the life of Jesus.

QUESTION NO. 7

How do we cooperate with the Spirit?

How do we cooperate as He is emptying us of ourselves so the Father can fill us with Jesus, so we can actually become like Jesus and fulfill our purpose to bring pleasure and glory to the Father?

We cooperate with the Spirit when we cease to be chess players with life and become poets. We must realize the absurdity and wickedness of strategizing our every personal, relational, and ministry move to make our lives work better.

Making All the Right Moves

I was the ultimate chess player as a father. When our two sons were born, I was determined to do it right. By the time my kids were five, they could define *propitiation*. We had Old Testament and New Testament survey for family devotions. I even purchased an overhead projector. I figured I would do everything right and

pray with my fists clenched in demanded expectation of what God should do in response to my moving the pieces of my chess game.

We cease being chess players in life and instead become poets when we surrender to the truth that nothing works as it should in this world, and we abandon ourselves to God as He advances

Is He inviting you to a dance that you are afraid to join?

and sufferings that I can neither predict nor control.

goes well? That my next book sells? That my counseling goes

His kingdom through our weaknesses. We begin to yearn to discern the Spirit's purpose and rhythm in the middle of life's disappointments and discouragements. We begin to ask God questions like, "What are You saying to me?" "How can I advance Your kingdom when I feel empty and discouraged and my ministry is failing?" and "How can I advance Your kingdom

when friends betray me?"

I am indebted to G.K. Chesterton for the illustration of chess players and poets. Chesterton said, "Poets do not go mad, but chess players do." The reason is, "The poet only asks to get his head into the heavens. It is the magician, the chess player, who seeks to get the heavens into his head, and it is his head that splits."

Joining the Dance

Sometimes at two in the morning, I repent in brokenness over my chess-playing nature that insists I be in control. I realize that I am still curved in on myself as I play chess with my soul, my marriage, and my ministry. So like that kid at the junior high dance, I put down my plastic cup of red punch, step away from the wall, and move to the dance floor to enjoy God the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

Together we enjoy the party, floating with the Spirit's rhythm through the empty seasons of

Ecclesiastes, the dark nights of Job as we groan in a disordered world, anticipating and enjoying those Song of Solomon foretastes that God graciously provides as we wait for the full banquet of heaven. Poets hear the music of heaven in the song of God's answers to the essential questions of life.

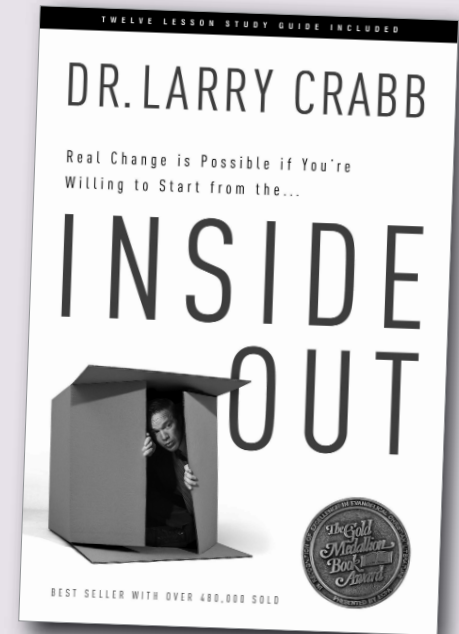
These seven questions have come to be a foundation for everything I do, and I pray that God will use them for blessing in your life. I long to finish well, and I long for you to finish well. †

IN APPRECIATION FOR YOUR
SUPPORT OF DALLAS SEMINARY . . .

An Invitation to Authentic Christian Living—without the Masks!

Christian counselor and best-selling author Dr. Larry Crabb says you don't have to pretend that you have it all together when you really don't. To help you in the quest for authentic living, Dr. Crabb has written *Inside Out*, an insightful book that has sold more than half a million copies and is a winner of the Gold Medallion Award for excellence in Christian publishing.

Dr. Crabb encourages you to take an honest look at your innermost struggles—such as loneliness or impure thoughts—and bring them before God. Only then, he says, can you be set free and experience a truly fulfilling Christian life.



A New Level of Fulfillment

"Only Christians have the capacity to never pretend," writes Dr. Crabb. That's because real change is only possible when you face the realities of your internal life and let God mold you into a person who is free to be honest, courageous, and loving.

Inside Out has helped many people experience true freedom in Christ, and now it is your turn to discover how to put aside the masks we wear and find a new level of fulfillment in your Christian life.

TO RECEIVE THIS RESOURCE AS OUR THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF DALLAS SEMINARY, USE THE ENCLOSED REPLY CARD (FOR SUBSCRIBERS) OR CALL 800-387-9673 x3722. THANK YOU!