A Tribute to a Godly Life
by Dr. Mark L. Bailey

Given the topic of the enclosed message, it is most fitting that I dedicate my column to the memory of Mr. John Bradford, a man of God who epitomized the characteristics of a biblically faithful life and ministry.

John, who was a member of the DTS Board of Incorporate Members and a successful businessman in Birmingham, Alabama, went to be with the Lord on May 15, 2010.

John was the youngest person ever to be elected to the DTS Board, serving faithfully for 35 years. He held many leadership roles, including Chairman of the Board of Regents and Vice Chairman of the Board. His leadership and heart for the Lord will be sorely missed.

In addition to his service with us at Dallas Theological Seminary, John was also a longtime trustee of the Young Life ministry. Young Life recognized John with its Lifetime Achievement Award, which speaks volumes to his impact on the lives of many young people.

We at DTS knew John as a strong leader with a servant’s heart. He also had a thorough knowledge of God’s Word and a passion for Jesus Christ. One tribute to him read in part, “John studied God’s Word daily, allowing it to seep into his daily life and conversation as well as his leadership. . . . John Bradford leaves a legacy of generosity, friendship, and an enduring devotion to Jesus Christ.”

Would to God that this could be said of all of us. A life and testimony like John Bradford’s is what we strive for as followers of the Savior. I can tell you that as a professor and discipler of tomorrow’s Christian leaders, it is great when I can point to godly examples like John Bradford and then tell our students, “Follow his example as he followed Christ.”

Dallas Theological Seminary is profoundly grateful for the life and ministry of John Bradford, and we pray God’s continued comfort and sustaining grace for his wife, Martha, and members of his family.
Dr. Mark Bailey has served in a number of key positions at Dallas Theological Seminary. Following his student days, he became professor of Bible Exposition, vice president for academic affairs, academic dean, and provost before he accepted his role as the Seminary’s fifth president.

Dr. Bailey earned his bachelor’s degree from Southwestern College in Phoenix, two master’s degrees from Western Conservative Baptist Seminary in Portland, and his doctorate from Dallas Theological Seminary. He has authored To Follow Him: The Seven Marks of a Disciple (Multnomah, 1997) and co-authored The New Testament Explorer (Word, 1999).

Theological education and pastoral ministry have been Dr. Bailey’s career passions. While teaching and holding administrative roles at Dallas Theological Seminary, he was also the senior pastor at Faith Bible Church in DeSoto, Texas, from 1994 to 2000.

Dr. Bailey has guided tours to Israel, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, Greece, and Rome and has served in missions in Argentina, Venezuela, and Hungary. He and his wife, Barby, have two sons: Joshua, who is married to Emily, and Jeremy, who is married to Callie. They also have three grandchildren, Fiona, Gavin, and Rowan.

This is a special issue of Veritas! In the pages that follow, Dallas Theological Seminary’s president Dr. Mark Bailey invites you into a Faculty Workshop where he addressed the Seminary’s professors on the important subject of their calling to be faithful communicators of God’s Word. We are privileged to listen in as Dr. Bailey shares 10 essentials for biblical communicators. We are sharing this message with you as an “inside” look at the heart of Dr. Bailey and his colleagues at Dallas Theological Seminary. In addition, we want it to serve as a pledge to friends like you of our godly faculty’s unswerving commitment to teach and model God’s holy, inerrant Word to our students and to you. We hope Dr. Bailey’s message will also encourage you in your study and ministry of the Word.
To others. Recently I heard from two of our graduates who encouraged me to tell you to keep on faithfully guarding that trust. I spoke at the Frisco Bible Church in Frisco, Texas, and had lunch with two of our graduates who are on staff there. The gratitude that poured out from them for the training they had received at DTS was just phenomenal.

The second characteristic of biblical communicators is that they understand the privilege of ministry. None of us went to school with “being a seminary professor” as our major. We are here not just because we decided to pursue this profession, but because God saved us and equipped us and gifted us and then called us here.

Paul was the classic example of a person called and appointed to the ministry: “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 1:12–14).

Paul never got over the privilege that was his to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ. Our ministry is a privilege as well; let’s continue to hold it as such.

Lives of integrity

Number 3, biblical communicators lead lives that model integrity. The apostle instructed Titus: “For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say ‘No’ to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age” (Titus 2:11–12). To Timothy he said, “Set an example for the
believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12).

We not only have a content to teach, but we also have a life to live in front of our students. We know that students watch their mentors and often want to imitate the people they admire. By God’s grace, our goal is to be able to say to our students by our lives if not by our lips, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

4

A MISSION FOR GOD

Here’s a fourth characteristic of biblical communicators I want you to see: We serve in ministry as a mission to God as our Master. What we do, we do for the Lord. It has benefit to others, and it holds joy and fulfillment for us, but first and foremost, our service is to God. That means being at our best at all times as we serve Him.

How can we do this? Let me echo four ways: by constantly being nourished on words of faith, following sound doctrine (1 Timothy 4:7), expending great effort (1 Timothy 4:12), and serving with a clear conscience (2 Timothy 1:3).

I love this last statement in particular because it relates to our work ethic as we serve our Master. Paul could stand before the Lord and before His people and say that he was serving God with a clear conscience—not because of who he was, but because of the grace God had shown toward him. We have a responsibility for a holy life because we serve a holy God.

5

USING OUR GIFTS

A fifth characteristic of biblical communicators is that they make faithful use of their spiritual gifts. As faculty, you know this passage: “Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you. Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress” (1 Timothy 4:14–15).

The truth that the giftedness we possess is truly a gift from God that is recognized by other leaders in the body of Christ has very personal meaning to me as I reflect on my ordination to the ministry at my church in Phoenix where I served on staff while also teaching at Southwestern College. I remember being in a room with about 40 pastors from all across Arizona. I had to read and defend my doctrinal statement, and the examiners could ask any question they wished. They voted to recommend me to the church, and then the deacons recommended me to the congregation.

It was huge for me to realize that the elders and deacons were recognizing a gifting of God in my life, and the only response I could make was to use those gifts that had been entrusted to me by God and recognized by the church. I know you have had similar experiences. One of my great joys is getting to see you as our faculty diligently exercise the tremendous gifts God has given you.

6

CARE WITH GOD’S WORD

On to number 6 in our list of 10 traits of biblical communicators: They handle the sacred Scriptures carefully. Paul’s classic instruction on this is found in 2 Timothy 2:15, where he writes: “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”

We are committed to handling the Word accurately and carefully as those who are called to teach its truths to others. And we do so, knowing that as teachers we will give a strict accounting to the Lord for our service (James 3:1). Part of being diligent is also being ready on any occasion to proclaim the Word of truth. Again, Paul said to Timothy: “Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2), a verse from which we have adopted Dallas Theological Seminary’s motto.
Let me say here a personal word of sincere thanks for all the late hours, the early hours, and the extra effort you put in so that the Word of God is handled correctly as you teach—and so that our students will also handle the Word carefully as biblical communicators themselves.

7

**AVOID WRANGLING**

Seventh, biblical communicators avoid quarreling in unnecessary arguments. I want to be careful with what I say here because I am not talking about defending the truth and engaging in dialogue and debate with those who would distort the truth. Sometimes that involves diving into complex matters of theology and nuance that may seem arcane to some. But we need to remember the truth that what is being taught in the seminary today will show up in the pews tomorrow.

I find it interesting that part of the instruction from Paul to Timothy is this: “Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 2:23–25).

I am not against arguing for the truth or correcting people in light of the truth. I think you understand my heartbeat here, and I am trying to pick up Paul’s heartbeat for the spirit in which that happens. We who are married know that we can say something to our spouse that may be true, but it may not be loving in the way we say it. Likewise in our theological discussions, let’s make it a matter of prayer before we get involved in a particular discussion or dispute.

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8

**MINISTER WITH FAIRNESS**

Here’s our eighth characteristic: Biblical communicators lead God’s people with fairness. We read this in 1 Timothy: “I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism” (5:21).

The context of this verse is the selection and appointment of leaders, and Paul’s desire was their fairness and evenhandedness in the way these appointments are made. A spirit of impartiality is so critical for those of us who teach and instruct others.

9

**SUFFER WHEN NECESSARY**

Characteristic number 9 of biblical communicators is a tough one: They suffer whatever and whenever necessary. Paul was an expert on this one: “That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day” (2 Timothy 1:12). The apostle suffered in doing the ministry, but he wasn’t alone. He told Timothy: “Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:3).

For Paul, suffering came as he served on the front lines and the frontiers of the mission field. Not all of us have been there, but God has taken us through all kinds of tough experiences so that we can have a ministry in people’s lives that we would never have had without that suffering.

We know that God always has a redemptive purpose for the things we suffer. Paul said that our suffering has eternal implications: “Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory” (2 Timothy 2:10).
SERVE ENTHUSIastically

Tenth and finally, biblical communicators engage enthusiastically in good works. We are to be “eager to do what is good” (Titus 2:14). The idea here is to be passionate for good deeds. Paul finished his letter to Titus by instructing him to remind the people that they needed to be “ready to do whatever is good” (3:1).

I love what our DTS family has done in response to the devastation of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and this year in Haiti—to whom our $300,000 was channeled as well as multiple work teams. The testimony of our alumni’s ministry there is huge; I continue to hear good things from that region. And I know what many of you are doing through your churches, your families, and your other ministries in addition to your service here—how you serve the Lord enthusiastically.

What a glorious privilege we have to serve God at Dallas Theological Seminary. We are dealing with the Word of truth. We are dealing with the will of God for people’s lives and their future. We are dealing with the testimony of Christ. We are dealing with the gospel, His purpose, and His grace. It’s a treasure that has been entrusted to us. Continue to guard it carefully and pass it on faithfully.

Dr. Charles Dyer, a Dallas Theological Seminary graduate and former provost of Moody Bible Institute, has given us an excellent book on living a life of integrity.

In an easy-to-read and inspirational style, Dr. Dyer shows how character and conduct are intimately connected. He combines instruction with illustration as he shows how character traits were lived out by great men and women of the Bible. Conduct reveals character, and we best understand integrity when we see it lived out in a person’s life.

Character Counts is also a book about values—the key qualities needed to live a life of integrity that pleases God and blesses others. This volume is the perfect companion to Dr. Bailey’s study in this issue of Veritas on the traits of biblical communicators. Be sure to request your copy of Character Counts today!