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## Are you Adventing this year?



Recently I have been hearing the word “adulating.” Several young adults I know have used this word to relate the idea that they are now beginning to act like adults instead of teenagers and their actions are showing it. An example might be, “I paid my credit card bill on time. I am adulating!”

A suggestion for Christmas 2017 is for Christians to be “Adventing.” Advent is not just days on a calendar but a time to actively consider, meditate and celebrate the coming of Jesus. This can be done individually, with your family or with your community of faith. Adventing helps prepare our minds, hearts and souls to receive the full meaning of Christmas.

Here are some suggestions to get you prepared. As the commercials say – “ACT NOW!” in planning for your time of Adventing.

### Books:

Christmas Abundance: a Simple Guide To Discovering The True Meaning Of Christmas, by Candy Paull

Sacred Space for Advent and the Christmas Season 2017-2018 by The Irish Jesuits

Redeeming the Season: Simple Ideas for a Memorable and Meaningful Christmas

(Focus on the Family Resources) by Pam McCune and Kim Wier

Unwrapping the Greatest Gift, A Family Celebration of Christmas by Ann Voskamp

Simply Wait: Cultivating Stillness in the Season of Advent by Pamela Hawkins (Upper Room)

### Online:

The Advent Project, Biola University [cca.biola.edu/advent/](http://cca.biola.edu/advent/)

Celtic Advent Calendar, Contemplative Cottage [contemplativecottage.com](http://contemplativecottage.com)

Family Advent Calendars, Focus on the Family [Focusonthefamily.com](http://Focusonthefamily.com)

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if you do not want to receive this mailing or if there  
is someone else in your church who would benefit  
by receiving it.



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# DISCIPLESHIP NOW!

West Virginia Baptist Convention

## SEPTEMBER 2017

**DISCIPLESHIP NOW is a  
periodic resource  
provided for local  
churches from the office  
of Discipleship  
Ministries.**

### This issue:

- ◆ Children
- ◆ Discipleship Texts
- ◆ Devotional Resources
- ◆ Christmas Readiness
- ◆ Student Ministries



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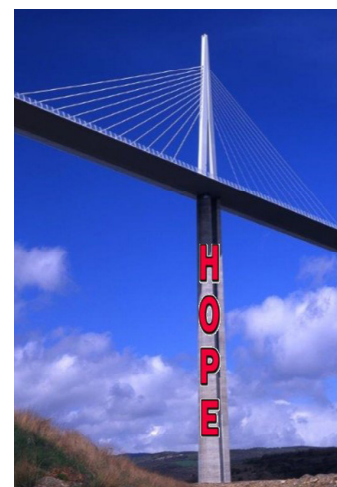
West Virginia Baptist Convention -  
[www.wvbc.org](http://www.wvbc.org)

American Baptist Churches USA -  
[www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org)

[www.internationalministries.org](http://www.internationalministries.org)

American Baptist Home Mission  
Society - [www.abhms.org](http://www.abhms.org)

[www.judsonpress.com](http://www.judsonpress.com)



## Faith in the Workplace – A Story

He was a very rich, influential individual who had worked hard to achieve a level of success above the average person in town. His family was large and was considered happy and close. Many people in town admired him and he was a trusted advisor. His church family respected him and looked to him as a leader and wise counselor. He was dedicated to God and his community of faith and tried every day to live as a man of integrity and virtue. Blessed was the word many used when describing him. He was a model of leadership for those in the town and church. Life was good!

As happens all too often, his financial situation changed rapidly one day. His holdings lost value and he even lost several key components to his financial portfolio. It was a quite a blow! While trying to think and strategize about how to deal with the loss and regain a level of normalcy, he was faced with another more serious loss. His children had been enjoying a family meal together, one in which he could not attend, and in a freak accident all in the house were killed. Searing, agonizing, overpowering pain and sorrow wracked his heart, mind and soul.

Falling to the ground, he . . .

Sometimes we forget the Bible DOES have much to say to each of us about our faith in the workplace. The Bible includes many stories of ordinary people of faith facing crisis, major decisions, temptations and sin. Your workplace may be in an office building, in the classroom, moving from place to place in a vehicle, on the computer, in your home, in a store or on a playing field. Your workplace may be in the house caring for children, the elderly or the challenged. Your workplace may also be in school as a “student.” Wherever you work, how do you continue to be a person of faith? How do you remain strong in the face of adversity in whatever form it presents itself? Does faith even have a place at work?

In 2017 the Discipleship Ministries commission for our West Virginia Baptist Convention will be emphasizing Faith in the Workplace. Churches and individuals are encouraged to study and learn about being faithful followers of Christ in the workplace. Materials for use in churches, small groups and individually will be recommended. A special workshop on Faith in the Workplace will be presented at the October annual meeting and a discipleship text message group will be formed. Looking forward to a great year of study together!

P.S. – Want to know the end of the story? Read the book of Job and see how Job, his friends and God handled the situation.

*Lisa G. Simmons  
Director of Discipleship Ministries*

*Our mission is to empower local churches to be Christ honoring communities of faith, and to help them fulfill their mission by enabling them to do together what they cannot do alone.*

CHALLENGES ARE OPPORTUNITIES

Ministering to children with disabilities can require more work, accommodations, adaptations and extra volunteers. But when we view these challenges as opportunities, we begin to see there’s no wasted effort in making a difference in the life of a child. For example, it’s rewarding to see children understand and apply the Bible to their lives – but when you recognize the child, who’s nonverbal can understand it too, you want to do fist pumps in the air.

Celebrate kids’ milestones. Parents of children with disabilities are often the first to recognize the value and significance of their children’s milestones – no matter how small they might be. As ministers to children with disabilities, we have the privilege of joining in the celebration as we recognize the effort and determination that brought these kids and their families into your church family.

Recognize a different kind of normal. Kids with disabilities don’t have more struggles than their typical peers. Their challenges and life experiences, however, are different. If we’re able-bodied, disability isn’t something we have personally experienced, which could make us look at disability as something bad. But for most kids with disabilities, they have only experienced life through their disability. It’s part of their identity. It’s their “normal.” We might imagine their life as hard; for some though, it is simply different.

Slow down. For some children, the limitations that come with their disability might make them feel sad. They might feel lonely because not many people are willing to slow down and get to know them, listen to what they have to say, or spend time with them. Perhaps they have a medical condition that requires several hospital procedures and therefore they don’t spend as much time “just being kids.” Sometimes, as adults, we might fail to invest in them with the misunderstanding they can’t learn like other kids do. In reality, everyone is capable of learning. It looks different for each of us. But most of all, it’s important kids know Jesus understands and cares about their struggles.

When kids with disabilities join our ministries, the extra support and help they might need allows us to reach into their hearts and show them the heart of Jesus.



2 COMMON QUESTIONS CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES ASK

For some children, their life experiences are directly impacted by their disability. Helping kids wrestle with their faith means we have to be ready to answer these two questions.

Why did God make me different?  
While many adults have come to see God’s good design in their disability, children might have a harder time understanding how God could use their disability for good or why he made them different. Remind children of Psalm 139:13-16, and help them understand that God made them perfectly.

Will people accept me for who I am?  
The reality is disability attitudes in our culture and our world aren’t always positive, and children with disabilities are aware that many tend to look down on them. At church, we have the honor to allow people with disabilities to take their rightful place as valuable members of God’s family. Remind children of 1 Corinthians 12:12. Share how the verses that follow talk about Jesus giving the most vulnerable a place of honor within God’s family. Instill in them that they belong in the church, and we belong to each other.

(Both articles from Children’s Ministry magazine July/August 2017)

“How am I supposed to live as a believer of Christ in school?” This big question comes up over and over in small group discussions with teens. Here are some reasons junior and senior high students say that living faithfully as a Christian is hard to do in their school environments: peer pressure, contrary world views, feelings of isolation, anti-Christian sentiments, environments limiting the ability to share their faith and fear of not being accepted.

So then, how as a teen do you live faithfully in a world that desperately needs the gospel (good news) of Jesus when you don’t feel you can share it? Philippians 2:14-15 can give us some help. *“Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, ‘children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.’ Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky.”*



That reminds me of a time I turned my hands blue. It was just a silly crafting mishap really but the variation from my normal skin tone was unmistakable. My children noticed right away:

“What happened to your hands? They are blue!”  
“Um... Mom? You do know your hands are blue, right?”  
“I couldn’t help but notice that your hands are blue. What’s up with that?”

I couldn’t hide it (unless I wore gloves) and I didn’t need to draw attention to it... my family “couldn’t help but notice.” When we encounter Christ we’re changed much more than at surface level, but from the inside out.

John, chapter 1 says of Jesus, *“In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”* Jesus said, *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*

Christ is the light of the world; He is our light. And Jesus calls us to be a light.

Matthew 5:14-16 *“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”*



Being changed by God will affect things that people can see on the outside. People will notice the things that we say or the things that we don’t say. They’ll be able to observe things we do or choose not to do. But deeper still, God changes us on the inside. And that... that is the light that will shine.

If all that following God changes in our lives is what we do, as observed on the exterior, then our shining is for ourselves... shining our own righteousness. But, when being a follower of God means we’ve laid down ourselves and given God the place of Lordship in our lives, when we choose in response to God’s great love for us, to live each day for Him, well... then we shine... not for ourselves but for the glory of God.

**When we shine for the glory of God because of the glory of God, that’s something that can’t help but be noticed.**

How does that look in the halls of your school? How do you shine the light of Christ? Philippians 2:14-15 says that when we do “everything without grumbling or arguing” we shine. Jesus told his disciples in Mark 10 to follow his example of leading by serving. Paul admonishes us in Ephesians 4:32 to forgive one another just as Christ forgave you. Romans 12:13 encourages us to practice hospitality.

As you read through those scriptures, what situations does God bring to mind? To what people in your life does this apply? How can you, in the small and big ways, take daily action to shine the light of Christ by living your faith?

Jill Narraway  
Associate Director of Camping and Youth

Parents/Youth Workers/Church leaders:  
Are you looking for some resources to *help you* as you guide teens navigating the waters of living as a believer in today’s culture and helping them shine their light? Check out these two websites:  
<https://cpyu.org/resources/>  
<http://brinerinstitute.org>



# Student Ministries

Faith in the work place? “I am a middle school, high school, college student...I don’t have a job!”

Where is the work place for middle school, high school or college students? It is where they go every day... school! Recently, the Student Ministries of the West Virginia Baptist Convention have challenged the students to live out their faith in schools. The mission field of public schools needs our students to be present and active with their faith.

“The Race: From Here to Eternity” is the challenge before the middle school and high school students. Hebrews 12:1-3 is the foundational scripture for this emphasis. The challenge is to not only surround yourself with good people, but also to be a witness that draws other people to themselves and to Christ. Imploring the students to live the life of Christ so that people see Jesus and then speak for God. Runners train for a race. Disciples need to prepare to be a witness with daily bible reading, praying for the hurting people they are with each day and sharing the good news.



The college students involved in Baptist Campus Ministries constantly hear: BCM, “Changing lives that change the world!” and that mission is about each student being changed by following Jesus and then impacting the world. Marshall BCM is currently studying the parables. The challenge before them has been to change their world, one relationship at a time. The parable of the Good Samaritan is a story of action often used. Who is your neighbor and have you talked to someone? Notice we asked talk, not text, social media, etc. In a world of isolation, we have to take a risk and get to know people before we can meet their needs. Stop, get to know a name, take a risk and talk to someone who is not in your friend group! See everyone as your neighbor in the work place.

To help change the outlook of students toward their mission field, we have been asking these three questions:

1. What problem in the world do you want to solve?
2. What do you have to give?
3. What are the needs and opportunities around you?

If all disciples of Christ ask these questions, they will demonstrate faith in the workplace whether that is a hospital, factory or school.

*In Christ,  
Rob Ely  
Director of Student Ministries*



# Discipleship Texts – 2018

Starting in January 2018 the Discipleship Ministries Commission will be launching a new program titled Discipleship Texts. Weekly texts focusing on discipleship will be sent out to those who register. The texts are designed to be thought-provoking, inspiring, empowering, challenging and comforting. The texting list will be private and only used for 2018.

Fill out the form below and send to:  
Discipleship Ministries  
West Virginia Baptist Convention  
P.O. Box 1019,  
Parkersburg, WV 26102  
Attention: Valma Adams



This form can be copied and distributed in your church.  
Online forms can be found at the West Virginia Baptist Convention website, [www.wvbc.org](http://www.wvbc.org) under the Commissions tab, then Discipleship, Camps and Conferences.

For more information, contact Lisa Simmons, Director of Discipleship Ministries, [Lsimmons@wvbc.org](mailto:Lsimmons@wvbc.org) or 304-273-9693.

## Discipleship Texts - 2018 Registration Form

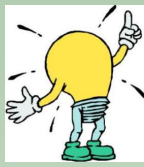
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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Church: \_\_\_\_\_





## Idea Bank

Topical Resources for Discipleship  
Topic: Faith in the Workplace



Study workers in the Bible. Examples:

Abraham – Leader and business man

Moses – Leader of an opposition group, manager, strategist, religious leader

Daniel – Public worker and immigrant

Joseph – Public leader and immigrant

Miriam and Aaron – Associates in leadership both publically and religiously

Joshua – “Second Chair” leader who moved up the ladder, soldier

David – King, soldier

Solomon – King

Job – Successful businessman

Peter, Andrew, James and John – Small family  
business workers

Lydia – Woman in business

Priscilla and Aquila – Small business owners

Paul – religious worker and religious leader



Ask these questions during the study:

What kind of faith did the person exhibit? Use adjectives to describe it.

What situation(s) did the person face?

How would you solve this workplace dilemma? Upon what do you base your decision?

How did their faith or lack of faith impact the situation?

How could other believers have helped or hindered a resolution?

What is the message for Christians today who are in the workplace?

Adapt the above for study with youth who are in the workplace.

Read and download the article [Faith at Work Is About the Practice, Not the Preaching](#) by Sandra Krakowski

([www.entrepreneur/article/238718](http://www.entrepreneur/article/238718)) and discuss with a Sunday School class or small group.

Consider a sermon based on Colossians 3:22-4:1.

Use materials from Worklife ( [www.worklife.com](http://www.worklife.com)) for a church-wide emphasis on faith in the workplace.

These materials will be on display for viewing at the WVBC Annual Meeting, October 19-20, 2017.

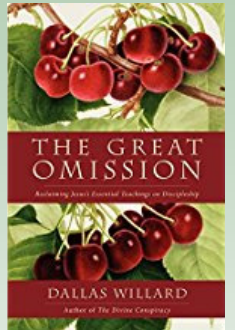
Weekly Text Messages – Sign up for weekly text messages from the WVBC Discipleship Ministries

Commission for 2018. Forms will be available online after October 31 and at the annual meeting.

These messages will be thought-provoking and encouraging. Only once per week during 2018 and the list is private.

## Book Review

The Great Omission: Reclaiming Jesus’s Essential Teachings on Discipleship  
by Dallas Willard



Dallas Willard’s prophetic voice is clearly heard and still rings true in his 2006 classic *The Great Omission*. This is an easy read in the sense of how accessible it is, but it is not an easy message to receive. Willard pulls no punches in his description of the church in our society today, starting with a succinct statement about its failure in the area of discipleship: “For at least several decades the churches of the Western world have not made discipleship a condition of being a Christian. One is not required to be, or to intend to be, a disciple in order to become a Christian, and one may remain a Christian without any signs of progress toward or in discipleship.”

Rather than following the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” Willard says the church has fallen instead into the Great Omission because of its aspiration toward a different and painfully lesser goal: “Make converts (to a particular ‘faith and practice’) and baptize them into church membership.” Ouch.

According to Willard, the understanding of “salvation” through profession of faith in Jesus Christ too often carries a limited meaning, that of entry into heaven upon death. This understanding has for many people eclipsed the fact that Christians are called to be concerned as well about the character and quality of their lives *while they are still on earth*. The church should understand and accept its role in making disciples of all nations, he says, guided by the notion that the true meaning of discipleship is full obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ—in this life. The function of the church, then, is to help people move toward such obedience and onto a path of genuine spiritual formation and transformation.

Willard offers thoughtful guidance on how to remedy the current state of discipleship in the church. It is his belief that “becoming Christ-like never occurs without intense and well-informed action on our part” and that the most commonly held “Christian” practices (Bible study, prayer and church attendance) alone are not enough to bring about genuine soul transformation. He recognizes solitude and silence as “powerful means to grace” and regards fasting, Scripture memorization and other disciplines as essential for living a life obedient to Jesus.

Willard’s criticism of the church is hard to dispute, and his call to authentic discipleship is challenging, to say the least. But it would also be hard to dispute the idea that accepting that challenge, difficult and demanding as it may be, could only bring about a richer, more deeply spiritual life for us as individuals and as the church.

—Valerie Gittings



Are you looking for a great faith-based movie recommendation for families this Christmas? *The Star: The Story of the First Christmas* is coming soon!

Christian director and filmmaker Timothy Reckart was nominated for an Academy Award in 2012 for his stop-motion short film “Head Over Heels.” Since then, he’s been on a journey that led him to direct *The Star*, an animated, faith-based feature coming to theatres this holiday season. The Star features an A-list ensemble of talent, from Oprah

Winfrey to Mariah Carey to Ving Rhames.

*The Star* is a nativity story told through the animals’ eyes. It’s a great movie with a Christian point of view, but it’s also a great movie with a lot to offer everyone. It touches on the subjects of family and self-sacrifice in a way that will resonate with kids and parents. This story is about “Bo”—the donkey who carried Mary. Bo is trying to find his purpose. He sees the star and knows he has a calling to do something big. He figures out what that is during the course of the movie. The filmmaker’s hope is that the movie offers an empowering message, especially to kids, that there’s a plan for you. It may not be about getting famous or being popular—it may be about something seemingly small but that has a very big impact.