"We also, before the temptation comes, think we can walk upon the sea, but when the winds blow, we feel ourselves begin to sink . . . and yet doth it yield no good unto us? We could not live without such turnings of the hand of God upon us. We should be overgrown with flesh, if we had not our seasonable winters. It is said that in some countries trees will grow, but will bear no fruit, because there is no winter there."

- John Bunyan

Ministry

They Called Him Rabbi

Teaching is as important as preaching in a sermon

by Joe Azzopardi, pastor, Manitoba-Saskatchewan Conference

When Jesus walked the dusty roads of Palestine, He was acknowledged by the people as Rabbi, meaning teacher. In fact, teaching is what occupied most of Christ's time on earth. As a former teacher myself, I sense that it is not just preaching that needs to be done from the pulpit, but teaching.

Both preaching and teaching should be part of a sermon, but they're not necessarily the same. Preaching means to advocate a belief, or to publicly proclaim a message. Teaching encourages learning through explanation or demonstration. If we leave teaching out of our sermons we cannot expect our congregations to follow through with what we advocate or be empowered by our messages. Matthew 28:20 says that we are to teach people to obey, not tell people to obey. Telling brings awareness and conviction, but teaching enables.

I write my sermon with the question, "What do I want my congregation to learn from scripture, and apply to their lives?" I want not just to advocate, but to answer their what, why, and how questions. The results have been gratifying.

Take, for example, the concept of sanctification. When I was a layperson I remember that pastors used the word "sanctify" often, but I can't remember any explanation as to what the word actually meant. When I explained it to my congregation, and
how it applied to our journey as disciples, I had several members thank me because in their decades as Adventist believers no one had ever made it clear to them.

Similarly, people often participate in communion with only a weak understanding of what it means. I split my communion sermon into three small sermons, one to be preached for each of the ordinances: the footwashing, the bread, and the wine. Many members confessed that they had never realized that the bread and the wine were akin to legal contracts with God, promising to exchange their life for the life of Jesus and giving God permission and themselves a willingness to be changed into new creatures in Christ.

Our members may understand what our doctrines say, but they may not understand the reasons behind them, or how they’ll help them to follow Christ. I would encourage that we would all be known as teachers, as Jesus was, so that our members can move from knowing what we believe and ought to do towards understanding the whys and hows of discipleship.

Response

Responses to “The Relationship Stuff” by Loren Seibold, in the last issue of Best Practices

After a lifetime of pastoral ministry I couldn't agree more. The relationship stuff is certainly the most challenging, demanding, and frustrating side of ministry. It can also be the most rewarding and personally fulfilling. But does anyone ever 'master' it? I can't say I ever did. I continually felt like a beginner, even after 40 years.

- Loren Fenton

Most pastors now at rest might have lived longer on another career path. I thank God for the positive relationship stuff that kept the negative stuff from becoming overwhelming. Would I follow the promptings again? Yes. Would I plan to be more fervent in prayer? Absolutely. I always admired certain colleagues who seemed to function unscathed by criticisms and conflict.

- Ken Lockwood

As the wife of a retired pastor, I think being a true shepherd is a lot like a good marriage - you have to get a lot of rough edges knocked off - a lot of personal stuff left behind - in the process, but you have to keep persevering. If you're willing to keep working and learning, it gradually gets better and you enjoy it more. Basically, it's called learning to be unselfish.

- Carrol McBroom Grady

Great article! Should be reading for all considering the call.

- Cam Page

Upcoming Conferences

**Andrews Music and Worship Conference: March 29-31**

NAD Ministerial is delighted to partner with Andrews University in offering the **2012 Music and Worship Conference**. Click the photo to the left to watch a short video invitation from Conference director Nick Zork. March 29-31, 2012 will mark the ninth annual Andrews University Music and Worship Conference. "For effective worship ministry in a changing world, we must stay rooted in firm Biblical principles. Hosted on the University campus, this conference will provide theologically-grounded training opportunities for church musicians, pastors, worship leaders, and anyone involved in worship ministry. As a participant, you will have access to a variety of seminars, workshops and worship experiences."

**3 Rezns WP12 Is**

NAD Ministerial is delighted to partner with the Pacific Union Conference in offering **WestPoint of Evangelism**. Click the photo to the left to watch a short invitation from conference director Brad Newton. "WestPoint is three days of speakers and seminars designed to inspire and strengthen God's call to connect your community with Christ. Meeting in the heart of the Silicon Valley, you have access to leaders from Facebook and Google to guide you towards the ways these two global-reach technologies can impact your local church's mission. WestPoint is seminars and workshops on church growth and evangelism, communication, the cutting edge resources for ministry, leadership, and Biblical teaching presented by experts who are not just reading about it but living it in daily ministry."

**SONscreen Film Festival: April 12-14**

Pastors, if you or some of your members are into film and video then they should check out the NAD sponsored **SONscreen Film Festival**. Click the photo to the left to watch a five minute video about this Adventist film festival. SONscreen is the annual gathering for Christian...
young adults who have a passion for using film and video for the purpose of creating timely and relevant productions for social awareness, outreach, and uplifting creative entertainment. Since its debut in October 2002, the festival has become the destination for established and up-and-coming Christian filmmakers to share their creative work, gain exposure, and network with other media and film professionals. SONscreen Film Festival X is April 12-14, 2012 in Simi Valley, CA.

Resources for Pastors

New Fund Raising Resource for Congregations
Are you planning a building project—a new church, addition, school building, or Community Service building? Do you wonder how you should go about getting the funds? Does it seem like your campaign for funds goes on forever? Are your members or constituents tired of talking about money? If you have these questions and probably many others, Successful Fundraising, published by NAD Philanthropic Service for Institutions and distributed by AdventSource may be for you.

Reading for Pastors

Author Jane Overstreet on the six key traits of what she calls “unleaders”.
Having once built a church in the face of community opposition, stories like this pique my interest. In suburban Chicago (not far from Bill Hybels’s church) an Islamic congregation has repeatedly been denied permission to build a mosque in their preferred style, with dome and minaret, because it would be “obtrusive” - even though churches with towers exist in the same vicinity. Right or wrong?

Major denomination okays (optional) name change: Southern Baptists can now label their congregations “Great Commission Baptists”.

A timely topic worth thinking about: should a politician’s religion matter? In the next US election, at least one of our choices will be a Mormon or a Roman Catholic. Here is some interesting source material.

- Many past Presidents were less open about religion than candidates today - and some were decidedly unconventional. Quote: "Even though he is considered one of the greatest presidents, Abraham Lincoln likely would be neither nominated nor elected today: he never joined a church, publicly confessed a creed, nor publicly uttered belief in God's endorsement of his policies."
- Kennedy’s decisive address about his religion in 1960 sounds like our traditional Adventist stance! Quote: "I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute, where no Catholic prelate would tell the president (should he be Catholic) how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote; where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference; and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the president who might appoint him or the people who might elect him . . . and where religious liberty is so indivisible that an act against one church is treated as an act against all."
- Amy Sullivan’s TIME essay on the de facto religious test in US politics. Quote: "Voters aren’t wrong to care about the moral views that guide a candidate. The problem is that religion has become so politicized that it actually gets in the way of providing that moral clarity."
- And don’t forget Article VI, paragraph 3: "No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States."

A controversial answer to the question, “Why is God so silent?” Quote: “It is odd to say, but God’s silence may actually preserve his mission for us. The ability to be stable here in this life is actually facilitated by God’s (empirical) silence.”

Outreach: what happens when you start a courageous outreach to gangs - and it attracts dangerous people? In this case, the city is shutting down Chattanooga’s church-run Club Fathom. Quote: "Under the current mayor's administration and court rulings telling us how we are to conduct our worship services and what types of people we can or cannot allow - it makes it impossible to live out the gospel of Jesus Christ to love and accept all,”

To the Point

There is always one fact more in every man's case about which we know nothing . . . I have never met the man I could despair of after discerning what lies in me apart from the grace of God.
- Oswald Chambers
In prayer it is better to have a heart without words than words without a heart.
- John Bunyan

First: He brought me here, it is by His will I am in this strait place; in that I will rest.
Next: He will keep me here in His love, and give me grace in this trial to behave as His child.
Then: He will make the trial a blessing, teaching me the lessons He intends me to learn, and working in me the grace He
means to bestow.
Last: In His good time, He can bring me out again - how and when, He knows.
Say: I am here - By God's appointment, in His keeping, under His training, for His time.
- Andrew Murray

You have not lived today until you have done something for someone who can never repay you.
- John Bunyan

If two angels were to receive at the same moment a commission from God, one to go down and rule earth's grandest empire,
the other to go and sweep the streets of its meanest village, it would be a matter of entire indifference to each which service
fell to his lot, the post of ruler or the post of scavenger; for the joy of the angels lies only in obedience to God's will.
- John Newton

Fear, lest, by forgetting what you are by nature, you also forget the need that you have of continual pardon, support, and
supplies from the Spirit of grace, and so grow proud of your own abilities, or of what you have received from God.
- John Bunyan

News, Ideas & Reminders

A reminder that we have a [Best Practices Facebook page that we'd love for you to join.](#)

Humor: [How you can tell if someone is new in church](#)

Humor: [You think elections are bad now?](#)

Risk management for children under you care remains a big problem in the church. (Major lawsuits about sexual
abuse against the church now working their way through courts in California.) Check here for latest child protective
resources.

Other NAD resources:

- Prophecy decoded series
- New Pathfinder honors in community service
- NAD Facebook page
- Adventist Recovery Ministries newsletter “Journey to Life”

From Walt Williams: [InMinistry Spring Intensives](#) now posted and open to interested pastors. Check in and check them
out. One might be just what your ministry needs right now.

An early announcement of the 8th annual National Conference on Innovation, October 7-9, in Columbus,
Ohio. Speakers include Miroslav Volf (Founder and Director of Yale Center for Faith and Culture and Henry B.
Wright Professor of Theology, Yale University Divinity School), Mark Wexler (Executive Director and Co-Founder of Not for
Sale, a movement to re-abolish slavery), and David Kinnaman (President of Barna Group, the nation's leading research
organization focused on the intersection of faith and culture.)

- Previous resource links:
  - The Hope of Survivors, ministry to victims of pastast sexual abuse
  - iFollow website
  - NAD NewsPoints (formerly Friday Fax): by email, or on a web page.
  - Adventist Parenting e-newsletter
  - The one Project
  - Facts with Hope, evidence-based health messages for bulletins
  - NAD Volunteer Screening Guidelines and Screening Form
  - The digital Andrews Study Bible
  - Adventist Family Ministries
  - REACH North American Resources Guide
  - Adventist Meetings Speaker Registry
  - World Life Expectancy website
  - The ONE project, Seattle
  - NAD Calendar of Special Days
  - Facebook page for Adventist songwriters, poets and artists
  - Facebook page for pastors' spouses
Upcoming NAD Events

Do you have an event you'd like to invite NAD pastors to? Send details to BestPractices@Ameritech.net.

Youth Week of Prayer. Mar 17, 2012 - Mar 24, 2012, North American Division. Special materials are available online. For more information, email: dunchiem@gc.adventist.org

Great Controversy Tour. Mar 30, 2012 - Apr 12, 2012, Italy, Switzerland, France and Germany. Join Gerard Damsteegt, associate professor of church history at Andrews University to see prophecies of Daniel and Revelation come alive! Visit Rome, Italy and Reformation sites in the Waldensian Valleys, Switzerland, Germany and France. A most exciting experience! To reserve your spot, call or fax 269-471-5172. For more information, email: octours@mac.com

SEEDS Atlantic Union. Mar 30, 2012 - Apr 1, 2011, Stamford Marriott Hotel & Spa, 243 Tresser Blvd, Stamford, CT 06901. The Festival of the Laity SEEDS Conference is for Church Members, Leaders, and Pastors Who Equip Them. You will find inspiring worship services, heartwarming music, exciting witnessing stories, challenging preaching, and 65 different seminars that will encourage and equip you for reaching people for God. Phone: 800-255-7568. For more information, email: ContactSEEDS@nadei.org

Worldwide Day for Prayer and Fasting. Apr 7, 2012, Worldwide. First Sabbath of each quarter has been designated as days of prayer and fasting for the world church. Families and individuals are encouraged to establish the first day of each month and one day a week as normal or partial fast days. Support information and helps are being developed by the Prayer and Fasting Subcommittee.

Religion Communicators Council. Apr 12, 2012 - Apr 14, 2012, Philadelphia Airport Marriott Hotel, 1 Arrivals Road (Terminal B), Philadelphia, PA 19153. Plan now to attend the annual convention for the Religion Communicators Council (RCC) “In[ter]dependence: Religion Communication Today”. You will experience interactive workshops, and attend two award banquets. Featured Speaker: Debra L. Mason, Executive Director, Religion Newswriters. For more information, email: rccprc@rcn.com; nmonn@pensions.org


Adventist Singles Retreat - Chesapeake Conference. Apr 20, 2012 - Apr 22, 2012, Mount Aetna Retreat Center, 21905 Mt. Aetna Road, Hagerstown MD 21742. Guest Speaker: Nikolaus Satelmajer. Forest Randall will teach the Sabbath school lesson. Phone: 410-992-9731 or 410-531-3192. For more information, email: fmthomas1950@yahoo.com

Adventist Singles - Pacific Union. Apr 26, 2012 - Apr 29, 2012, Loma Linda University, Wong Kerlee International Conference Center, Chan Shun Pavilion, 11121 Campus Street, Loma Linda, CA 92350. Featured Speakers: John Bradshaw, Director/Speaker, It Is Written; Luis Torres, President, Guam-Micronesia Mission. Phone: 805-413-7254. For more information, email: vivienne@puconline.org

The ACS Outreach Leadership Conference is sponsored by the Adventist Community Services - Washington, the North Pacific Union Conference and NAD Adventist Community Services. It will be held at the Washington Conference Office in Federal Way, Washington on March 2-4, 2012. Participants will hear challenging speakers and choose from 30 training seminars. For registration and more information: www.washingtonconference.org/ACS.

Nonprofit Leadership Certification Program

- Southeastern Conference: 1701 Robie Ave, Mt. Dora, Florida 32712,
  - Session I, June 3-7, 2012
  - Session II, September 23-27, 2011

- ACS Outreach Leadership Conference, Washington Conference Office
  - March 2-4, 2012

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Spam
Not spam
Forget previous vote
Jane Overstreet: Six key traits of "unleaders"

The author of “Unleader” discusses the common traits she has found in effective leaders during her 15 years as president and CEO of Development Associates International.

October 25, 2011 | Editor's note: Jane Overstreet, the president and CEO of Development Associates International, became so fascinated at the leadership differences she discovered between Saul and David when preparing for a conference presentation that she expanded her study into a book, “Unleader.”

“I was surprised by what I found, because in a way, it’s terribly simple,” Overstreet said. “They’re old biblical stories, but they’re traits that you see today. Human nature hasn’t changed much during these years.”

She offers up six traits that distinguish the Davids -- the “unleaders” -- from the Sauls.

Fear God more than you fear people

What helps you make decisions as a leader? There are always things driving you. In Saul’s context, oftentimes it was fear of what people thought. For David, it was always about what God thought.

Enable the people under you

I find that leaders very consistently either use people or enable them. Saul used people and spit them out; in fact, he almost killed his own son at one stage because he hadn’t obeyed. David, on the other hand, took a band of discontented losers and turned them into mighty men that stuck with him for more than 40 years.

Put God’s interest above your own

Most Christian leaders start out wanting to do something for God, but somewhere along the way, their success becomes their god. You see this so clearly with Saul and David.

Lead with integrity

Integrity is being the same person whether you are on a platform, in the office or at home. As for Saul, though he started out with a heart for God, his desperation drove him to seek out answers from a witch. David, on the other hand, always lived by his principles. He had some mega failures, by the way, which is sad -- but nice in the sense that we can all relate to that. He was just quick to turn and ask forgiveness and clean it up when he saw it.

Let people get close enough to love you as a leader

This surprised me when I saw it, because in Saul’s life you can’t find a story about someone close to him. In fact, even his family members distanced themselves from him eventually. And David’s story is just full of good friends. There were people who loved him deeply and would do anything for him.

I think a lot of times, leaders, even in our culture, are so busy and so success-driven that they alienate themselves from families, friends and everybody else. Eventually, that will get you. You will fail over that.

Let God love you

We all know we’re supposed to love God, but I’ve come to the conclusion that we have it a bit backwards. We need to make space to let God love us so that we automatically love him in return. It’s a relationship; it's not a sort of to-do list that you can check off.

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DuPage mosque again denied minaret and dome

Scaled-down dimensions of proposed build still exceed County Board-approved height limit; supporters of Muslim house of worship cry foul

By Brian Slodysko, Chicago Tribune reporter

March 7, 2012

Amid opposition from local residents, leaders of a planned mosque near Willowbrook were dealt a setback Tuesday in their ongoing efforts to include a minaret and a dome as part of the structure.

During a heated hearing that included accusations from the public of demagoguery and religious insensitivity, the DuPage County Development Committee failed to endorse the plan on a 3-3 vote. The committee's ruling followed a rejection of the proposal by the DuPage County Zoning Board of Appeals, said committee Chairman Tony Michelassi, who voted in favor of the project.

The recommendations of both committees will be taken into consideration by the whole County Board when it votes on the project next week.

"I don't think the Zoning Board of Appeals understood (the ordinance). The three board members voting against MECCA today also lack the correct understanding," said Mark Daniel, an attorney representing the Muslim Educational Cultural Center of America (MECCA). "It appears that the rules of the game are changing without justification."

The group previously tried to win approval for a 69-foot dome and a 79-foot minaret when the County Board first considered construction of the mosque. Amid fierce opposition, construction of the religious center on 91st Street near Illinois Highway 83 was approved while a waiver to build the higher dome and minaret was denied.

In recent years, mosque proposals have created controversy within DuPage County. Some have been approved amid fierce opposition. One that was rejected is the subject of a federal lawsuit. The County Board last fall passed changes to zoning laws, restricting the placement and design of future houses of worship.

MECCA leaders most recently sought a waiver to construct a dome that would peak 50 feet off the ground and a 60-foot minaret, the tall spire from which the faithful are traditionally called to prayer.

But with a cap on the height of new religious buildings set at 36 feet in residential areas, the group could not realistically construct a dome and minaret that are functional and true to religious custom, Daniel said.

Opponents of the mosque have said, among other things, that the structure would be obtrusive. The faith of future MECCA congregants has nothing to do with their opposition, nearby residents say. They noted that six churches of different denominations peacefully coexist in the neighborhood.

But others in attendance thought otherwise.

"If this was a Greek Orthodox church … would we hear the same debate?" questioned the Rev. Larry Ulrich, who identified himself as chairman of the Justice and Advocacy Committee for the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago. Residents "saying the neighborhood has six other churches" does not mean this isn't "religious prejudice."

Diana Cornett, who spoke on behalf of residents at the meeting, said faith has nothing to do with her objections. 

"If Wal-Mart were moving in we would say the same things," said Cornett.

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. — A panel for the Southern Baptist Convention recommended Monday that its leadership endorse a new, add-on description for the denomination — "Great Commission Baptists" — but stopped short of a complete, legal name change.

Officials described the new term as a way to give an official, sanctioned identity to affiliated churches and believers who don't want to use the term "Southern."

Convention President Bryant Wright and other church leaders are concerned that the Southern Baptist name is too regional and impedes the evangelistic faith's efforts to spread the Gospel worldwide.

The "Great Commission" refers to Matthew 28:16-20, in which Jesus instructs his disciples at Galilee to "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

"We are Southern Baptists. That's who we are. The Great Commission is what we do," said Jimmy Draper, the head of the name task force and a former SBC president. He was also president of the SBC's publishing and retail arm, LifeWay, when it changed its name from the Baptist Sunday School Board.

The panel rejected a complete name change, citing the legal costs and difficulties like the thousands of will and trusts naming the SBC. They also noted the positive associations many hold with the Southern Baptist name, such as with its well-regarded disaster relief organization.

Wright said a name change was first proposed in 1903, and the idea has lingered since then. He hopes when members realize the cost of a legal name change, they will see the wisdom in the recommendation and have unity moving forward.

The executive committee will consider the name recommendation on Tuesday. Anyone can then introduce the proposal at the annual convention this summer to be voted on by delegates, but a measure endorsed by the committee would carry greater weight.

Regardless, all Southern Baptist churches are independent and call themselves whatever they like. In the past, Draper said some pastors had been criticized for not embracing the Southern Baptist name. He said the names could be used together, like "Southern Baptist Convention — Great Commission Baptists," or either could be used by itself.

"This allows people to make a change if they want to without feeling condemned for it," he said.

Draper said it was possible that over time more congregations could start using "Great Commission," instead of "Southern Baptist," but no one knows if the new term would ever replace Southern Baptist completely.

"We'll just have to see how God leads," he said.

The Southern Baptist Convention formed in 1845 when it split with northern Baptists over the question of whether slave owners could be missionaries, and for a long time the name was associated with white racism. That is not so much the case these days — in 2008, about 18 percent of SBC churches were composed of largely non-white members — but the denomination is associated with conservative politics.

A recent survey conducted by the SBC's own LifeWay Research firm gives weight to the idea that the name does drive away some potential members.

Of the 2,000 Americans surveyed, 40 percent of respondents had an unfavorable view of the denomination and 44 percent of respondents said that knowing a church was Southern Baptist would negatively impact their decision to visit or join the church.

Although 53 percent of respondents overall had a favorable view of the Southern Baptists, the high negatives are a concern for a denomination in which spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ is a fundamental to their faith.

While the 16 million member denomination continues to plant new churches in the U.S. and around the world, it has seen a decline in baptisms, church attendance and membership in recent years.
March 12, 2012

The Surprising Faith Of 8 American Presidents

Posted: 02/19/2012 9:09 am

Presidential religious lives are, for the most part, rather unremarkable--just like the majority of Americans they represent. As the 2012 presidential race, and especially the Republican nomination, dominate the news, the religion of the sometimes-frontrunner Mitt Romney continues to be an issue for many Republican voters. Americans have a hard time imagining a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, a Mormon, as President. Yet Mormonism is, perhaps, the most American of all religions, founded by an American citizen and based on a sacred text that tells the story of God's work in the Americas. As many question Romney's religious heritage, it would be enlightening to look at eight presidents whose religious lives have troubled and fascinated Americans, or whose faiths may surprise us even today.

1. Andrew Jackson. Our first Presbyterian president, Jackson's religious life is noteworthy because he conscientiously refused to allow his religion to be a part of his office. Long before the Presidential Prayer Breakfast or the National Day of Prayer, Jackson was called on by members of Congress and influential religious leaders to call for a national day of prayer and fasting in response to a cholera epidemic. Jackson refused, stating that to do so would be to transcend "those limits which are prescribed by the Constitution for the President," and he feared that this religious encroachment could "disturb the security which religion now enjoys in this country in its complete separation from the political concerns of the General Government."

2. James K. Polk. Like Jackson, Polk also was reared in a Presbyterian community, though he was never a member of the church and was never baptized as a Presbyterian. The reason he was never baptized is that his father and grandfather were considered to be religiously suspect by the local Presbyterian church, "free-thinking radicals" who openly honored Deism and its proponents, like Thomas Paine. Polk's father refused to give a profession of faith, so Polk was not baptized until days before his death. This streak of independence, of not allowing others to dictate one's religion is certainly an American trait. Interestingly, Polk did have his own significant religious experience in a quintessentially-American way--at an open-air Methodist revival meeting where he "went away . . . a convicted sinner, if not a converted man," considering himself to be a Methodist (the first Methodist president) for the rest of his life. Out of deference to his wife's Presbyterianism, Polk waited until the week before his death to be baptized and confirmed into membership in the Methodist church, by the same pastor who had preached that open-air sermon years earlier.
3. **Abraham Lincoln.** Even though he is considered one of the greatest presidents, Abraham Lincoln likely would be neither nominated nor elected today: he never joined a church, publicly confessed a creed, nor publicly uttered belief in God's endorsement of his policies. One should read Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, his "Meditation on the Divine Will," or his private letters in which he would declare simply, "The Almighty has his own purposes." Lincoln resides at the center of American political and religious history, and he seemed to ponder politico-theological matters more deeply than most ministers and theologians of his day. He never claimed to be born again, he never claimed Jesus as his favorite philosopher, and he loved to tell ribald stories and poke fun at himself. Yet he clearly sought the will of God and divine direction during what he called the "butchering business" of the Civil War.

4. **Franklin D. Roosevelt.** President Obama was not the first president to use the Gospels to justify social and economic policy. Roosevelt often drew on the Sermon on the Mount to promote the values of the New Deal and believed that service to God was best expressed in service to others. Also like President Obama (and many others), Roosevelt often refused to go to church while in Washington, saying, "It bothers me to feel like something in the zoo being looked at by all the tourists in Washington when I go to church."

5. **Harry Truman.** In his 1949 Inaugural Address, Truman stated, "We believe that all men are created equal because they are created in the image of God. From this faith we will not be moved." As he once wrote to his wife Bess, "I had a Presbyterian bringing up, a Baptist education, and Episcopal leanings, so I reckon I ought to get to heaven somehow, don't you think so?" While in the White House, Truman often attended the First Baptist Church in the District of Columbia, in part because its pastor made no show at all of Truman's attendance. As Truman wrote in his diary in 1948, "I go for a walk and go to church. The preacher always treats me as a church member and not as the head of a circus. That's the reason I go." He also penned in his diary: "If Jesus Christ were to return he'd be on the side of the persecuted all over the world. He'd most likely be wearing a ready made sack suit and be standing on a street corner preaching tolerance, brother love and truth." And Truman concluded that Christ would "probably be placed in a sanitarium in the free countries." However, it is troubling to read also in Truman's Memoirs that he saw that attainment of the atomic bomb (and the victory over Japan) as having "come with the help of God, who was with us in the early days of adversity and disaster, and who has now brought us to this glorious day of triumph." One might see why "Give em Hell" Harry kept these thoughts private.

6. **Dwight D. Eisenhower.** Eisenhower may have been instrumental in bringing "under God" to the Pledge of Allegiance and making "In God We Trust" the national motto, but he was reared in a religious tradition that does not allow its adherents to take oaths of office or to recite the Pledge of Allegiance--the Jehovah's Witnesses (a religion/denomination born in the United States, as was Mormonism). His home was the meeting place for fifteen Bible Students (an earlier name for Jehovah's Witnesses), where they had lessons and held services, until he left for college. However, Eisenhower became the only president to be baptized and join a church during his presidency--the Presbyterian church in this instance.

7. **John F. Kennedy.** On September 12, 1960, Kennedy delivered the speech of his political career in Houston, Texas, before a crowd of several hundred mostly Protestant ministers.
Kennedy was addressing what he referred to as "the so-called religious issue." As Kennedy saw it, the nation was facing a raft of issues from the threat of Soviet communism to hunger and despair at home. "These are," he argued, "the real issues which should decide this campaign. And they are not religious issues---for war and hunger and ignorance and despair know no religious barrier." Nonetheless, JFK knew he had to address the question of his Catholicism. Kennedy famously (and for some, especially today, quite controversially) declared, "I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute; where no Catholic prelate would tell the president----should he be Catholic----how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote," and he concluded, "I do not speak for my church on public matters; and the church does not speak for me." Earlier in his career in Congress, JFK once quipped that in Boston they learned their politics at home and their religion from Rome. As JFK put it, "I believe in a president whose religious views are his own private affair, neither imposed by him upon the nation, or imposed by the nation upon him as a condition to holding that office."

8. Jimmy Carter. During the 1976 North Carolina Primary, Carter made the statement that he was a "born-again" Christian, and most journalists and political pundits had little if any idea what this Southern Baptist, regular church-goer, Sunday School teacher was talking about. Soon almost every presidential aspirant was claiming to be born again or at least on pretty close speaking terms with God, if not having God on his campaign staff. In a short period of time, the president went from being seen as the nation's fire hydrant to our Chaplain-in-Chief, and we all wanted to know, religiously and/or theologically speaking, what made these candidates tick. The year Carter ran for the presidency a leading national magazine proclaimed "The Year of the Evangelical," and that November he beat President Ford in part due to strong evangelical support. Yet, many of those same voters would reject Carter four years later for his failure to seek to enact their views into public policy, as on abortion. As a Southern Baptist, Carter hewed strongly to his denomination's traditionally strong and sound commitment to the separation of church and state.

For the first two hundred years of this country, most of its presidents worked diligently to keep their religious lives private and to keep some sort of wall between their religion and the office. But this presidential race has brought us the "Thanksgiving Family Forum" (featuring most of the Republican presidential candidates and sponsored by an Evangelical Christian policy group), and 2012 already has brought us a National Prayer Breakfast at which President Obama tied his faith to his tax policies. The men who have been president have often struggled to balance their private faith with their public duties, and this election year will likely continue to reveal that tension in a public way that would have likely shocked our founders and shaken many of our presidents.

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/darrin-grinder/the-presidents-and-their-_b_1283210.html?view=print&comm_ref=false
December 5, 2007

On Sept. 12, 1960, presidential candidate John F. Kennedy gave a major speech to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, a group of Protestant ministers, on the issue of his religion. At the time, many Protestants questioned whether Kennedy's Roman Catholic faith would allow him to make important national decisions as president independent of the church. Kennedy addressed those concerns before a skeptical audience of Protestant clergy. The following is a transcript of Kennedy's speech:

Kennedy: Rev. Meza, Rev. Reck, I'm grateful for your generous invitation to speak my views.

While the so-called religious issue is necessarily and properly the chief topic here tonight, I want to emphasize from the outset that we have far more critical issues to face in the 1960 election: the spread of Communist influence, until it now festers 90 miles off the coast of Florida; the humiliating treatment of our president and vice president by those who no longer respect our power; the hungry children I saw in West Virginia; the old people who cannot pay their doctor bills; the families forced to give up their farms; an America with too many slums, with too few schools, and too late to the moon and outer space.

These are the real issues which should decide this campaign. And they are not religious issues — for war and hunger and ignorance and despair know no religious barriers.

But because I am a Catholic, and no Catholic has ever been elected president, the real issues in this campaign have been obscured — perhaps deliberately, in some quarters less responsible than this. So it is apparently necessary for me to state once again not what kind of church I believe in — for that should be important only to me — but what kind of America I believe in.

I believe in an America where the separation of church and state is absolute, where no Catholic prelate (should he be Catholic) how to act, and no Protestant minister would tell his parishioners for whom to vote; where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference; and where no man is denied public office merely because his religion differs from the president who might appoint him or the people who might elect him.

I believe in an America that is officially neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jewish; where no public official either requests or accepts instructions on public policy from the Pope, the National Council of Churches or any other ecclesiastical source; where no religious body seeks to impose its will directly or indirectly upon the general populace or the public acts of its officials; and where religious liberty is so indivisible that an act against one church is treated as an act against all.

For while this year it may be a Catholic against whom the finger of suspicion is pointed, in other years it has been, and may someday be again, a Jew — or a Quaker or a Unitarian or a Baptist. It was Virginia's harassment of Baptist preachers, for example, that helped lead to Jefferson's statute of religious freedom. Today I may be the victim, but tomorrow it may be you — until the whole fabric of our harmonious society is ripped at a time of great national peril.

Finally, I believe in an America where religious intolerance will someday end; where all men and all churches are treated as equal; where every man has the same right to attend or not attend the church of his choice; where there is no Catholic vote, no anti-Catholic vote, no bloc voting of any kind; and where Catholics, Protestants and Jews, at both the lay and pastoral level, will refrain from those attitudes of disdain and division which have so often marred their works in the past, and promote instead the American ideal of brotherhood.

That is the kind of America in which I believe. And it represents the kind of presidency in which I believe — a great office that must neither be humbled by making it the instrument of any one religious group, nor tarnished by arbitrarily withholding its occupancy from the members of any one religious group. I believe in a president whose religious views are his own private affair, neither imposed by him upon the nation, or imposed by the nation upon him as a condition to holding that office.

I would not look with favor upon a president working to subvert the First Amendment's guarantees of religious liberty. Nor would our system of checks and balances permit him to do so. And neither do I look with favor upon those who would work to subvert Article VI of the Constitution by requiring a religious test — even by indirection — for it. If they disagree with that safeguard, they should be out openly working to repeal it.

I want a chief executive whose public acts are responsible to all groups and obligated to none; who can attend any ceremony, service or dinner his office may appropriately require of him; and whose fulfillment of his presidential oath is not limited or conditioned by any religious oath, ritual or obligation.
This is the kind of America I believe in, and this is the kind I fought for in the South Pacific, and the kind my brother died for in Europe. No one suggested then that we may have a "divided loyalty," that we did not believe in liberty," or that we belonged to a disloyal group that threatened the "freedoms for which our forefathers died."

And in fact, this is the kind of America for which our forefathers died, when they fled here to escape religious test oaths that denied office to members of less favored churches; when they fought for the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom; and when they fought at the shrine I visited today, the Alamo. For side by side with Bowie and Crockett died McCafferty and Bailey and Carey. But no one knows whether they were Catholic or not, for there was no religious test at the Alamo.

I ask you tonight to follow in that tradition, to judge me on the basis of my record of 14 years in Congress, on my declared stands against an ambassador to the Vatican, against unconstitutional aid to parochial schools, and against any boycott of the public schools (which I have attended myself)— instead of judging me on the basis of these pamphlets and publications we all have seen that carefully select quotations out of context from the statements of Catholic church leaders, usually in other countries, frequently in other centuries, and always omitting, of course, the statement of the American Bishops in 1948, which strongly endorsed church-state separation, and which more nearly reflects the views of almost every American Catholic.

I do not consider these other quotations binding upon my public acts. Why should you? But let me say, with respect to other countries, that I am wholly opposed to the state being used by any religious group, Catholic or Protestant, to compel, prohibit, or persecute the free exercise of any other religion. And I hope that you and I condemn with equal fervor those nations which deny their presidency to Protestants, and those which deny it to Catholics. And rather than cite the misdeeds of those who differ, I would cite the record of the Catholic Church in such nations as Ireland and France, and the independence of such statesmen as Adenauer and De Gaulle.

But let me stress again that these are my views. For contrary to common newspaper usage, I am not the Catholic candidate for president. I am the Democratic Party's candidate for president, who happens also to be a Catholic. I do not speak for my church on public matters, and the church does not speak for me.

Whatever issue may come before me as president — on birth control, divorce, censorship, gambling or any other subject — I will make my decision in accordance with these views, in accordance with what my conscience tells me to be the national interest, and without regard to outside religious pressures or dictates. And no power or threat of punishment could cause me to decide otherwise.

But if the time should ever come — and I do not concede any conflict to be even remotely possible — when my office would require me to either violate my conscience or violate the national interest, then I would resign the office; and I hope any conscientious public servant would do the same.

But I do not intend to apologize for these views to my critics of either Catholic or Protestant faith, nor do I intend to disavow either my views or my church in order to win this election.

If I should lose on the real issues, I shall return to my seat in the Senate, satisfied that I had tried my best and was fairly judged. But if this election is decided on the basis that 40 million Americans lost their chance of being president on the day they were baptized, then it is the whole nation that will be the loser — in the eyes of Catholics and non-Catholics around the world, in the eyes of history, and in the eyes of our own people.

But if, on the other hand, I should win the election, then I shall devote every effort of mind and spirit to fulfilling the oath of the presidency — practically identical, I might add, to the oath I have taken for 14 years in the Congress. For without reservation, I can solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of president of the United States, and will to the best of my ability preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution, so help me God.

Transcript courtesy of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.
Officially, the United States has no religious test for elected officials. The prohibition is right there in Article VI, section 3 of the Constitution: “No religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.” Accordingly, the government may not prevent an individual from seeking or holding office because of their particular religious faith or lack thereof.

Voters, however, are an entirely different matter. Since 2000, more than two-thirds of Americans have told Pew pollsters that they want the President to be a person of faith, which effectively imposes a test of religious belief for candidates. And some voters go even further—often explicitly encouraged by their religious leaders—by reserving their support for candidates who openly profess theological beliefs similar to their own.

At the CNN debate on Tuesday night, Anderson Cooper asked the GOP presidential aspirants whether voters should subject candidates to such religious tests. Answers ranged from the enthusiastically pro-test position of Newt Gingrich—“How can you have judgment if you have no faith? And how can I trust you with power if you don’t pray?”—to the nonsensical response from Rick Perry—“I can no more remove my faith than I can that I’m the son of a tenant farmer. The issue, are we going to be individuals who stand by our faith?”

Only Mitt Romney was willing to challenge the concept of a religious test. “That idea that we should choose people based upon their religion for public office is what I find to be most troubling,” he said. “The founders of this country went to great lengths to make sure—and even put in the Constitution—that we would not choose people who represent us in government based upon their religion.” The answer was self-serving, yes, given that Romney has the most to lose if Republican voters judge him by his Mormon faith. But it was also right.

Americans wouldn’t accept an ethnic or gender test for office. Why then do so many voters impose a de facto religious requirement on their candidates?

In some instances, a candidate’s religion is simply a matter of tribal identity. In 1960, 78% of Catholic voters chose Kennedy; 62% of Protestant voters did not. Similarly, in the 2008 Republican primaries, the vast majority of Mormon voters supported Romney while evangelical Christians largely backed his opponents.

Some voters, particularly conservative evangelicals, are like Pastor Robert Jeffress, whose comments at the recent Values Voters Summit brought the question of religious tests back into the news. In an interview on CNN after his speech, Jeffress said that “Born-again followers of Christ should always prefer a competent Christian...to a competent non-Christian like Mitt Romney.” He went on, “As Christians we have the duty to prefer and select Christians as our leaders.” The American Family Association’s Bryan Fischer, who also spoke at the Summit, echoed that belief: “The next President needs to be a man of sincere, authentic, genuine Christian faith.”

For many voters, however, religion is simply a proxy. It’s a way of getting a sense of a candidate’s moral foundation, his philosophical worldview. Voters aren’t wrong to care about the moral views that guide a candidate. The problem is that religion has become so politicized that it actually gets in the way of providing that moral clarity. Yet liberals and conservatives alike have fallen for the idea that a candidate’s religious beliefs are the key to predicting how they will govern.
I was reminded of this a few weeks ago when I taped a segment for On the Media about how reporters cover religion on the campaign trail. In an unaired portion of the interview, I got into a debate about the relevance of candidates’ theological beliefs with host Bob Garfield, who argued that everything should be on the table. “Shouldn’t we know if Rick Santorum believes homosexualit...
No Religious Test Clause

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

The No Religious Test Clause of the United States Constitution is found in Article VI, paragraph 3, and states that:

The Senators and Representatives before mentioned, and the Members of the several State Legislatures, and all executive and judicial Officers, both of the United States and of the several States, shall be bound by Oath or Affirmation, to support this Constitution; but no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States.

This has been interpreted to mean that no federal employee, whether elected or appointed, career or political, can be required to adhere to or accept any religion or belief. This clause immediately follows one requiring all federal and state officers to take an oath or affirmation of support to the Constitution, indicating that the requirement of such a statement does not imply any requirement by those so sworn to accept a particular religion or a particular doctrine. The option of giving an "affirmation" (rather than an "oath") can be interpreted as not requiring any metaphysical belief or as a nod to Mennonites and Quakers who would not swear oaths but would make affirmations.

The clause is cited by advocates of separation of church and state as an example of "original intent" of the Framers of the Constitution of avoiding any entanglement between church and state, or involving the government in any way as a determiner of religious beliefs or practices. This is significant because this clause represents the words of the original Framers, even prior to the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

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Background

See also: Test Act

A variety of Test Acts were instituted in England in the 17th and 18th centuries. Their main purpose was to exclude anyone not a member of the Church of England from holding government office, notably Catholics and "nonconforming" Protestants. Government officials were required to swear oaths, such as the Oath of Supremacy, that the monarch of England was the head of the Church and that they possessed no other foreign loyalties, such as to the Pope. Later acts required officials to disavow transubstantiation and the veneration of saints.

Many colonists of the Thirteen Colonies had left England in part to gain a measure of religious freedom. With the royal government's religious favoritism fresh in their memory, the Founders sought to prevent the return of the Test Acts by adding this clause to the Constitution.

 Forced oaths

The Supreme Court has interpreted this provision broadly, saying that any required oath to serve anything other than the Constitution is invalid. In the case of Ex parte Garland, the Court overturned a loyalty oath that the government had tried to apply to pardoned Confederate officials. As the officials had already received full presidential pardons (negating an argument based on their potential status as criminals), the Court ruled that forcing officials and judges to swear loyalty oaths was unconstitutional.

 State law

Earlier in U.S. history, the doctrine of states' rights allowed individual states complete discretion regarding the inclusion of a religious test in their state constitutions. Such religious tests have in recent decades been deemed to be unconstitutional by the extension of the First Amendment provisions to the states (via the incorporation of the 14th Amendment).

Eight states (Texas, Massachusetts, Maryland, Mississippi, (Article XIV, Section 265), North Carolina, South Carolina, Arkansas [Article 19 Section 1], and Tennessee) do include language in their constitutions requiring state officeholders to have particular religious beliefs; additionally, one state (Pennsylvania Article 1 Section 4) specifically protects officeholders with religious belief but is silent on whether those without such beliefs are also protected.[1] The required beliefs include belief in a Supreme Being, and belief in a future state of rewards and punishments. Some of these same states specify that the oath of office include the words "so help me God".

In some cases, these beliefs (or oaths) were historically required also of jurors, witnesses in court, notaries public, and state employees. In the 1961 case Tovaros v. Watkins, the U.S. Supreme Court unanimously ruled that such language in state constitutions was in violation of the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the United States Constitution, but did not rule on the applicability of Article VI, stating that "Because we are reversing the judgment on other grounds, we find it unnecessary to consider appellant's contention that this provision applies to state as well as federal offices."

In the 1997 case of Silverman v. Campbell[2] the South Carolina Supreme Court ruled that the state constitution requiring an oath to God for employment in the public sector was unconstitutional.[3]

References

2.  ^ 486 SE.2d 1, 326 S.C. 208 (1997)
stayed in the grave for three days and then he rose back to life right here on earth and then he
ascended to heaven with all the disciples watching. Acts 1:11. But there was a difference with
Jesus Christ the son of God, His body did not rot (see corruption) like we humans do when we
die. God the father, rose Jesus from the grave before his body rotted. Acts 13:35

44.

Rene says:
November 21, 2010 at 1:12 pm

Thanks for writing this Michael.

I think I’ve come to the same conclusion – if God proved to everyone that He was 100%
Complete and Total Love and that people had something much better than they good ever ask
or imagine when they died, everyone on earth would be suicidal.

It’s very ironic. God has proved him/her/itself (since God is beyond gender) to me, and told me
the best news I could have ever dreamed of. It happened after a year of studying theology. I
had just returned from a missions trip where people were being healed by God’s power, and
then God gave me an amazing experience lasting half an hour.

Ever since then, I've been 100% sure that God exists. However, it has ironically made me feel
that all I ever want to do is die...because the next life is so much better, all I can see in
comparison to the next life is an awful world of suffering and sadness.

Perhaps too much good news is bad for us? When I first went to study theology I really wanted
to know what the good news was for the early Christians. I dug so deep, that eventually I saw
it and couldn't believe it. Then God showed up and told me that what I had discovered in Early
Christianity was correct...it really was good news.

But my experience has made me so sure of the good life to come that I am always wanting to
die. But I cannot for the sake of my family. Honestly, to live is the sacrifice that I must make.
To die is wonderful. Perhaps that is what Paul meant? "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain".

In all truth, it is much better for God to be silent and not prove that heaven is real. It saves our
lives. But every once in a while God gives one of us an experience to remind others that it
really is real. These stories give others hope, and maybe my story will give others hope in the
reality of God and the wonderful next life. But if he proved it to you, you might end up like
me...just wanting to die.

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If I were in charge of the universe, I would most certainly do things differently. Hey, this is a given. God already said that his ways are not my ways. I also know that his ways are better than my ways. I would just do some things differently.

I doubt there is anyone who has ever escaped the subject of “divine hiddenness.” Maybe you have not termed it as such, but you have often wondered why God does not reveal himself in a way that is more satisfactory to our longings for experiential intimacy with him. “With him” may not be the right way to put it. A better way would be to say that we long for experiential intimacy with “the other side.” As someone has once said, “One out of every one people dies.” These are pretty good odds. We know that one day we will die and experience that which awaits us beyond death. Yet this life is virtually void of “signs” from the “other side.” In a way, all we have to work from is what Phillip Yancey terms “rumors” of another world. There is quit a bit of mystery, even for Christians, as to what exactly ”the other side” will be like. This can scare us. In fact, it can scare us so badly that we avoid death at all costs.

Of course, as Christians, we do have faith that this “other world” is real and that heaven is an actual place where God awaits us. We also have faith that God, from this “other world,” has spoken to us through Scripture. Yet we long for an experiential intimacy that parallels the norms of our lives today. We want to hear the voice of God. We have questions for him. We desire a sense experience that is often referred to as “empirical.” We want to see vivid signs of the other side that will solidify our faith and alleviate any residue of doubt that might does exist.

As Christians, God’s silence—God’s hiddenness—should not come as any surprise. Yes, I might do things differently. Were I on God’s board of directors, I might give him some gentle encouragement to be a little more open to showing himself, especially to his own children. But the fact is that we will not see God, hear God, or touch God in the way we so desire. If we did, the Christian worldview would be compromised as the Scripture tells us we should not expect to have our faith experienced though such empirical means.

Peter says, “And though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.” (1Pet. 1:8-9)

You see, Peter here assumes that we have not seen Christ (or God or the Holy Spirit). At least visually. Peter’s point would be moot if he did not mean to include all other forms of
experiencing God empirically. The fact is that when Christ ascended into heaven, that was the last we have seen or heard from him in such a way. The door to the “other side” was shut.

Please note: I did not say “That was the last time he was active in an evident way.” Big difference. The point is that we do not and will not directly experience God through our eyes, ears, or hands until Christ returns.

Why does God stay so hidden?

Allow me to take an all too familiar turn here for a moment.

Following my sister Angie’s first attempt at her life six years ago, she felt great shame. The shame itself seemed to be enough motivation for her to try again. “I tried to kill myself, Michael!” she said when I tried to encourage her. “Everyone is always going to think I am crazy. I am crazy!” “You are not crazy Angie,” I responded, not really knowing what to say. She quickly answered, “Yes, but you have never tried to kill yourself.” I was not sure what this meant, but it was obvious that her definition of “crazy” was based upon a comparison of herself to those who, in her mind, were sane. “You are right,” I said, “I have not ever tried to kill myself. But there are circumstances where I might.”

Under what circumstance might I try to kill myself? When would I consider suicide?

You must remember that, among other things, death is a crossing point to the “other side.” It is the point where “rumors” of another world fade into the reality of the other world. I was watching my all time favorite show Justice League (!) with my son Zach the other day. It was an episode where Flash went so fast that he actually began to cross over to the “other side.” The molecules in his body were completely unstable and he was stuck between this world and the next. When prodded to come back, Flash had a hard time. He said, “But it is so beautiful over here.” You see, the lines were blurred between this life and the next and Flash wanted to go to the next. He could not concentrate on this world any longer due to his exposure to the next. In other words, he wanted to die due to his empirical exposé to the “other side.” He needed to have an experiential breach between this life and the next in order to remain here and accomplish his mission (gettin’ them bad guys).

I don’t think this make believe story is too far from reality. You and I also need an experiential (empirical) breach from the “other side.” We need not to see Jesus. We need not to talk to Jesus. We need not to hear Jesus.

The disciples, understandably, did not want Jesus to die. When he did, they were so bold as to desire to die with him. Thomas, of all people,—doubting Thomas—when he thought Jesus was going to die, said to the other disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him” (Joh 11:16). I love the simple faith this expresses. Peter was no different (Lk. 22:33). All who were with Jesus had experienced the “other side” in the person of Christ and they were not willing to let that go, even to death. In Acts 1:6, they still had hope that Christ had blurred the lines permanently: “Is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” But they had to watch as Christ was taken into the sky, never to be seen again until his second coming (Acts 1:9-11). The point is that the
disciples would have gladly gone on a suicide mission with Christ if it meant a continuation of their exposure to the “other side” in the person of Christ.

You and I would do the same. Were God to show himself in the ways we so often think he should—were he to do things the way we would do them, we would never be able to accomplish our mission. We would continually be wanting to die in order to cross over. We would be like Flash, having empirical involvement in the world to come, but still having one foot in the previous world. However, unlike Flash (who had Superman and Wonder Woman pulling him back), we most definitely would cross over. Why wouldn’t we? The mysterious would be unmysterious. The lines between this life and the next would be so blurred that we would not hesitate to take that extra step of death, even by our own hand.

It is odd to say, but God’s silence may actually preserve his mission for us. The ability to be stable here in this life is actually facilitated by God’s (empirical) silence. I am not saying this is the only reason God is silent, but it does make sense.

Would I do things differently if I were in charge? I am sure I would, to my own detriment. That is why I am not in charge. What are the circumstances that I might kill myself? If God was empirically evident and the lines between this world and the next were too blurred.

http://www.reclaimingthemin.org/blog/2010/06/why-is-god-so-silent-or-when-i-would-consider-suicide/
A Christmas Eve shootout prompted a government crackdown and eviction of a Chattanooga, Tennessee, church and its controversial gang-outreach program. Residents have criticized Club Fathom, run by Mosaic Arts Venue pastor Tim Reid, for hosting secular concerts for teens that have turned rowdy. Police have responded to at least 19 assault calls there since 2006.

City officials asked for an injunction to close down the club and the church after a Christmas Eve event attended by about 400 people ended in a gunfight that wounded 9. A judge granted a 15-day restraining order, allowing only church services and Bible studies and capping occupancy at 100. Soon thereafter, Mosaic's landlord evicted the church.

"Under the current mayor's administration and court rulings telling us how we are to conduct our worship services and what types of people we can or cannot allow—it makes it impossible to live out the gospel of Jesus Christ to love and accept all," Reid posted on Mosaic's Facebook page. But Mayor Ron Littlefield calls Mosaic a "business masquerading as a church."

Tennessee's religious freedom laws require that the government show a compelling interest before interfering in a church's dealings, said Thomas Berg, a church-state expert at St. Thomas School of Law in Minnesota. "Physical violence, rape, and other criminal acts are the kind of thing that, under any theory of religious freedom, the city has the authority to punish," he said. If such acts happen often enough, a city can rely on the doctrine of "general nuisance," which is what happened in the Mosaic case, he said.

Security is imperative in outreach to gangs, said Boston pastor Eugene Rivers. "If one is going to host quasi-secular events and entertainment, and be in the inner-city community, you've got to secure your space in the most literal sense," he said. "If you cannot guarantee the safety and security of people who participate in your program, you shouldn't do it."

Mosaic has the right goal, said Rivers, but finding effective strategies is difficult. "The [church's] current wineskins and paradigms are inadequate for meeting the needs of 20- to 40-year-old males in the inner city," he said. "I suspect [Reid] is in a period of trial and error where he's experimenting with ways to reach out to the lost."

Anyone experimenting with new models is going to make mistakes, but tactics cannot compromise integrity, he said. Sonny Arguinzoni Jr., senior pastor of Victory Outreach in Chino, California, agrees. Gang ministries walk a fine line between being accommodating and being prophetic.

"We're not just duplicating what's already out there in the world," he said. "Jesus didn't have to become a prostitute to reach a prostitute, or a drug addict to reach a drug addict. We don't want to make it so worldly that there is no difference between the light and darkness."

How you present the gospel is important, said Arguinzoni. "You can't make the gospel look gray or shady when Jesus says, 'You have to leave this and follow me.'"

Reid did not respond to requests for an interview. Mosaic pastor Chris Edwards told the Chattanooga Times Free Press, "We would do anything to be relevant with the culture; the lost are that important to us. We believe God can use anything."
See this guy? He's obviously new in church. He hasn't yet learned the fine art of sleeping with his eyes open.