



# CONNECTED

January—March 2021

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My son Mark and I hunted American buffalo on this ranch in Montana

**SOME THINGS ARE JUST BETTER LEFT UNSAID; I HAVE OFTEN REALIZED THAT FACT RIGHT AFTER I SAID THEM.**

## MY LAST QUARTER AS THE PASTOR OF A CHURCH

The gospel ministry has been my life. I publicly committed my life to the ministry on Sunday morning, May 1, 1955 at the Fairview Baptist Church a few miles south of Lufkin, Texas. I was 13. Later that month I would turn 14, and 3 months later I would accept the pastorate of Prairie Grove Baptist Church just out of the Diboll, Texas. Most of the next 65 years of my life would be spent as a pastor, six churches in all.

You'd think the ministry would get old. That is not the case. Even with COVID-19 playing havoc, the last 3 months were a joy and delight. One of the highlights was the ordination of Bro. Darren Simpson to the gospel ministry. On Saturday, October 10, a group of us met at the [Northeast Baptist Church](#) in Southlake, Texas. After the ordination, Mrs. Hutson and I drove to Houston. I preached both messages at [Northwest Baptist Church](#) on Sunday before driving to Crossett, Arkansas for the Monday funeral of a dear friend, [Bro. Gene Hazlewood](#). After the funeral we drove home; it was a long weekend. The following Monday we had a funeral service for Bro. Frank Jones, and the following Friday we had a memorial service for Vickie Bell our dear sister in

the Lord of many years. The gospel ministry is full of blessings and joy, but it's also full of loss and much sorrow. I have been a firsthand observer for 65 years.

As this final quarter of 2020 and my final quarter as the pastor of one of the Lord's churches rolled by, we established our 2021 church budget, recertified our children's workers and the celebrated the 56<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Northwest Baptist Church. Before the quarter ended, I had resigned the church, preached my final sermon as a pastor and spent my final day as a senior pastor. Would I do it again? Yes! An emphatic yes! I cannot imagine my life doing any other thing.

On a personal note, Mrs. Hutson and I were able to visit our son and daughter-in-law in Durango, Colorado. Mark and I drove on to Ekalaka, Montana for an American Buffalo hunt. Each of us took a bison, but for me the real value of this trip was the private week I was able to spend with my son. It was priceless.

On Monday, December 7 I faced my 3<sup>rd</sup> surgery of 2020. Since prostate cancer surgery in 2007, I have faced a progression of urological issues. Thankfully none of them have been life-threatening, and I have high

hopes that this 3<sup>rd</sup> surgery in the series will solve my problems.

This final quarter of pastoral ministry for me has been a fairly typical slice of a lifetime of gospel ministry. What a privilege and delight it has been doing, but it will still matter when heaven and earth have passed away! I suspect that in some ways I will miss the lifestyle which has been mine since I was barely a teenager; however, I am merely changing from one area of ministry to another. In a different sort of way, I hope to be sprinting when I cross the finish line.

*After a church service on Sunday morning, a young boy suddenly announced to his mother,*

*" Mom, I've decided to become a minister when I grow up."*

*"That's okay with us, but what made you decide that?"*

*" Well," said the little boy, "I have to go to church on Sunday anyway And I figure it will be more fun to stand up and yell, than to sit and listen."*

**"PUT ME FIRST"**  
God

## YOUR FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY DOES NOT END WHEN YOU DIE

In October I conducted my 432<sup>nd</sup> funeral. I have watched a lot of people come and go. Some more focused Christians; some made no pretense. All this time around that death has made a few things pretty obvious to me: (1) sooner or later everybody dies, (2) every one of them leaves every material thing right here and (3) somebody pays the undertaker.

I have been repeatedly appalled by the blatant denial of reality which I have personally observed. I have also been absolutely shocked at some of the people who ignored reality and fundamental responsibility. Yes, “*good, upstanding, well-respected*” Christian people who *sat in the Amen corner* at church.

Knowing full well that death is not an option and with *the handwriting all over the wall*, too many whom I have known did little or nothing to prepare. No burial policy, no burial plot, no insurance policy to cover expenses, no or insufficient resources and no instructions. Only a surprisingly small number have a will. That’s right! A simple *will* which has the potential of saving lots of survivors untold agony.

Whether by Christians or those who do not believe, there’s something fundamentally wrong about *kicking the can down the road* right into the lap of a mate, a child or the county.

When a person dies, somebody is going to pay. Yes, real dollars. Funeral homes are not in the burial business for free. It takes money to embalm bodies, provide caskets, dig holes in the ground and do all it takes to put a person away. The cheapest, bare-bones funeral which I have observed in several years cost almost \$8,000.00. Most “*ordinary*” funerals these days are going to eat up \$15,000.00. It’s pretty shocking to have that kind of debt dumped in your lap, especially by a parent or by some other good *Christian* who was close to you.

Contrary to the shallow thinking of too many, a person’s financial responsibility does not end with his death. The responsible thing to do is see that there are enough resources to cover all of your indebtedness including burial costs. There is something fundamentally wrong, irresponsible and immoral about dumping your financial responsibilities on to somebody else. Where shortfalls exist, burial policies can be purchased and other arrangements made. One of the most unchristian things anybody can do is simply ignore it and make it somebody else’s problem.



## MY POST-PASTORATE LIFE

What does a preacher do when he gets old and gray, and unable to get around as well as he did a half a century ago? I do not have all the answers to that question; but one thing is certain with me, I don’t intend to play dead until I die. Everywhere I look I see opportunity to serve the Lord, and I intend to do just that to the best of my ability.

Most of you know that my number one objective is the continued writing of good Christian materials. The Bible speaks of Abel who “*being dead yet speaketh,*” **Hebrews 11:4**. I have observed that those who have left good materials keep on speaking to the generations to come. For example, James Strong has ministered to tens of thousands of God’s servants for many years since he went to heaven. It’s hard for me to calculate the value of godly men like W. E. Vine, Watchman Nee, Ravi Zacharias and Henry Morris.

I have also observed it has been the things that have been written that have moved and influenced men. For the better or the worse! Things that are never recorded soon vanish away, and have little impact upon humanity. God recorded His Word; that’s how it got to us. The Greek philosophers wrote down what they thought. So did Charles Darwin, and Karl Marx, and those who gave humanity the Humanist Manifesto. I believe *the pen is still mightier than the sword*. I have personally observed that the written word will go where you cannot go, and speak to people who will never know you personally. *Basic Bible Truths* has made that vividly clear to me. I do not know how much time I have left, but I intend to use it to record information that I think can have a bearing for the better on those who follow me.

Writing is not all I plan to do. Hopefully there will be enough fire in the furnace for me to occasionally preach here and there. Yes, it’s in my blood. I suspect that health and demand will dictate how much preaching is left in me. These days there are many means of expression; my heart is to reach as many people as possible.

Some wisecrack I said, “*The mind can absorb only what the seat can endure.*” There’s a good much truth to that statement; not only in the pulpit, but in how you take care of *this ole house*, this mortal body which we’re encased. Like most people I have used my fair share of excuses for not taking better care of myself, especially that I have been *too busy*. Honesty has taught me that even good, godly people like King Josiah are not immune to natural law. Neglect your body, and you’ll pay. For a long time, in the name of the service of God I have failed to do enough physical exercise and proper eating. It’s a little late, but in the days I have left I intend to take better care of myself.

The fact is, I intend to enjoy every remaining day that I have. I’m not nearly as interested in how many I have left as I am in using every one of them well. I’d far rather have a few good, happy, productive days than I had a bucket full of bitter, angry, negative wasted days. I would appreciate your prayers that I will be a living testimony of the grace of God until that day when I see him face-to-face.

## A FAITHFUL SOLDIER OF THE CROSS

What a personal champion [Larry Adkisson](#) was to me! Respect and trust are earned; Larry earned mine.

He was one of those PKs. His whole life he was in a preacher's house; Larry embraced the gospel ministry knowing full well what he was doing. His dad, Hugh, has set the bar mighty high.



Larry was a gifted and truly infectious music pastor. And, a youth pastor! In his later years he served faithfully on the staff of Pastor Jerry Power at Friendship Baptist Church in Hurst.

Some of Bro. Larry's best work was done in South Africa. He spent many years there as a missionary, and won lots of people to the Lord. He won well over 100 to the Lord using *Basic Bible Truths*. I considered it a personal honor to be one of his financial supporters for his entire stay on the mission field. When Bro. Hugh Adkisson died,

Bro. Larry came off the mission field to become the pastor of [Metropolitan Baptist Church](#) in Fort Worth.

God gave Bro. Larry 73 mortal years. He used them extraordinarily well. He was a faithful yoke-fellow in the Lord, a dear personal friend and one of my heroes. I am so thankful to the Lord for affording me the privilege of knowing and working with a man of his caliber.

## GIVE THE ROSES WHILE YOU CAN

On Sunday, July 5 we were preparing the Northwest Baptist Church auditorium for the Monday funeral of Linda Jones. Because of COVID-19 our church custodian of many years, Gwen Thomas was leading the effort to make sure everything was fully sterilized. Gwen began to feel very bad, and had to sit down. Her husband Bob took her home. She told him that she would lie down in their bedroom. A few moments later he heard heavy breathing. He called 911. Within a few hours Gwen was in heaven.

What a shock! Just like that what appeared to be a healthy and reasonably young lady was gone.

I can't tell you how many times I've heard people talking about what they wish they had done or said. Oh for just one more moment, just one more opportunity to say what I wanted to say, but didn't! Those moments just before the casket is lowered into the ground can be pretty gut-wrenching, particularly for those who didn't say what they should have said before it was too late.



Friends, don't take your blessings for granted; the good things you have and the good people in your life. Stay current! Tell them that you care. Treat them right. Express your thanksgiving!

The old adage, "*Give them their roses while they are living*" shouldn't be merely lofty talk.

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Our primary method of communications: books, appointments, questions, news, distribution list, website, etc.

## A BOOK I HAVE RECENTLY READ & HIGHLY RECOMMEND

### *Amish Grace:*

#### *How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy*

Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt and David L. Weaver-Zercher

The Wiley Foundation

March 22, 2010

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This book will probe your soul, challenge what you really believe on one of the most fundamental, foundational of all subjects: forgiveness; and on many other "Christian" beliefs. If you are afraid to be tested, one who falls in line because your Pied Piper parent or preacher said it's true, don't read this book.

*Amish Grace* revolves around the Nickel Mines school massacre that unfolded on October 2, 2006, but it far eclipses that tragic story in which Charles Roberts brutally murdered five Amish school girls before killing himself. The event captured the attention of the world. The response of the Amish world was strikingly different from the usual angry revenge reflex customarily witnessed at crime scenes of evil and great injustice. The world was stunned and shocked. From the immediate families of the victims to the entire Amish community across America and Canada, the Amish people responded with immediate forgiveness. *Amish Grace* tells that story quite well, but that's only the tip of the iceberg.

Worldwide reaction to the Amish was mixed and passionate. In a world where genuine forgiveness is quite rare, many people were deeply moved by how the Amish forgave this killer; and by how they personally handled this tragedy and their grief. Many questioned the genuineness of the forgiveness, but upon deeper investigation found it to be very real. Deep probing into Amish life found forgiveness at the very core of who Amish people are. They didn't forgive Charles Roberts as an exception or to gain the favor of bystanders; the massacre simply exposed their culture, how they normally behave. Many in the press attacked them for having no concern about justice and the punishment of evil-doers. Some do not understand or appreciate the Amish commitment to a literal interpretation of the Scriptures where God is the ultimate avenger of evil.

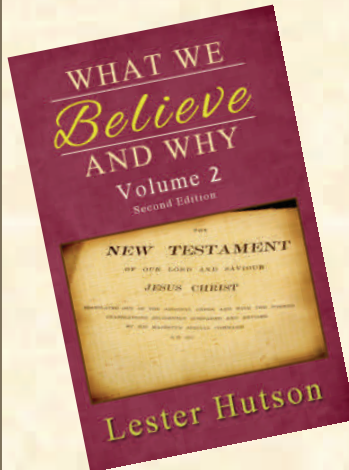
The authors connect the Amish to their historical Anabaptist ancestors; although their conclusion that Anabaptists originated with the Protestant Reformation is highly flawed. An Anabaptist named Menno Simmons split from the Anabaptists giving birth to the Mennonites who became too wayward for Jakob Ammann. Ammann broke with the Mennonites to form the more separated Amish order. The Amish made forgiveness their core issue even to the point of denying salvation or eternal life to anyone who refuses or fails to forgive. The Amish deny eternal security and do not believe anyone can have assurance of salvation. It is virtually impossible to read *Amish Grace* without getting a quite substantial education on Amish theology including church and community life.

*Amish Grace* will probe you about what you really believe about forgiveness. What is forgiveness, and what is not forgiveness? What's the difference between *forgiveness* and *pardon*? If full restoration of fellowship is not restored, have you really forgiven? Does the State have the right to take the life of a capital offender? Do you have a right to self-defense? Do the Scriptures justify pacifism? Should Christians have no insurance and opt out of Social Security? The Amish people have very definite and strong opinions on these and many other issues. It's not as simple as it seems. Without sitting in judgment, *Amish Grace* tackles many such issues.

I highly recommend this book. It will open your eyes and stretch your thinking. You won't like everything you read or agree with the Amish on many issues; but *Amish Grace* will make you think about what they believe and practice and why you don't see things the same way they do. After all, the Amish do a much better job of practicing what they preach than most others who call themselves Christians. That's probably why their response to the massacre at Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania was so shocking and hard to understand for most people including Christians.

## WHAT WE BELIEVE AND WHY 2 COMPLETELY RE-EDITED

Not all books are created equal. Not to mention subject matter, writing style, genre and author, there are huge differences in the quality of writing in books. A chief measure of the quality of any book is *consistency*. A book should be consistent from beginning to end. For example, if *italics* are used in a certain way in one place in the book, they should be used in the same way in every place in the book where the same circumstances exist. That's also true with the use of modifiers, figures of speech and the style of emphasis. There is a whole forest of other considerations when it comes to quality writing.



By no means do I think I have arrived, but I can say that I have tried very hard to add quality at many turns to this currently revised edition of *What We Believe and Why 2*. With lots of good help over a long period of time, I have gone and re-gone through this book in a concerted effort to say things better and clear, improve the language and give it a fresh power of expression. I have revisited subject-verb agreement in time, number and tense. I have given careful attention to moods such as subjunctive, indicative and imperative. Being an East Texan, I have had to spend lots of time on modifiers; where they belong, before or after a noun, pronoun or verb. I have looked at sentence structure and length, paragraphing and conciseness of expressions. You know what they say about preachers, "*Why use 5 words when you could use 5000?*"

Of course, my main concern has always been scriptural soundness. No doctrinal positions from previous editions has been changed. I did add one chapter giving this addition of *What We Believe and Why 2* a total of 53 chapters (421 pages). The book remains in annotated outline format, and is ideal for Bible study and for teaching. It is basically an anthology dealing with a collage of Bible doctrinal issues. In the book I not only state what I believe; I also explain why I believe it including hundreds upon hundreds of pertinent Bible references.

*What We Believe and Why 2* is now available from Amazon. You can buy it there for \$14.99 for paperback copies which is the cheapest price Amazon would allow. The book is available in both [paperback](#) (\$14.99) and [electronic](#) (\$7.99) formats.

On Amazon you will also find *What We Believe and Why 1*. These 2 volumes make excellent study material for serious Bible students. There are many answers there to difficult Bible questions. In combination, these 2 books provide 105 chapters of Bible teaching material.

### AN APPROACH TO LIFE THAT VIOLATES THE VERY HEART OF CHRISTIANITY

Most kindergarten Christians know that *forgiveness* is at the very heart of biblical Christianity. "*Our father which art in heaven . . . forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,*" **Matthew 6:12**. "*If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses,*" **Matthew 6:14-15**. Jesus not only taught His followers to make forgiveness a lifestyle (**Matthew 18**), He practiced what He preached: "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,*" **Luke 23:34**.

*That'll preach*. It really sounds good in the pulpit, and will unloose the "*Amens*." Practicing forgiveness is a *horse of a very different color*, even for preachers. Most of us *smarten up* pretty quick. "*You may hurt me once, but you won't get that chance again.*" I personally have to fight it every day; I don't like getting hurt, and I do my best to make sure it doesn't happen very often.

How many people do you know who've been hurt by a loved one, perhaps a mate or friend or even some family member. At some point they opened up and gave their heart to another person. Now, the guard is up. They're not about to let themselves become vulnerable again. The day of deep love and risky relationships is gone. They can't get over the pain of a deal gone sour. They never forgave or took it to God for Him to handle. People who call themselves Christians are really good at boxing themselves into small rooms.

We all fail and get hurt. Refusal to forgive and try again is to lock yourself into a limited future. To know love, you have to give love. To hold back your love and fail to open up to the possibility of being hurt again is to put yourself into an unseen prison. It produces bitter and lonely people. Moving forward in the Christian way of forgiveness always involves a certain degree of risk. Where does the Bible allow us to close our hearts because something went wrong and we got hurt? Nowhere! No-where! We have to keep on doing right and trying again, regardless of how many times we are rejected, abused and hurt.

I have spent the last year investing my life in a young man intended to take my place as the pastor of Northwest Baptist Church. It has been called to my attention that I did something very similar to this 12 years ago, and it didn't work out so well. Few things in my life can match the hurt I knew as I watched things unravel. My wisdom and sanity have been questioned.

Maybe the results will be better this time. I think that it will, but it is not within my power to guarantee it. As I have repeatedly labored over the teachings of Jesus Christ, I know I have to turn loose of the past and go forward doing what I know is right before God. I know that the mentoring of men is as biblical as it gets. There's no escaping Moses and Joshua, Elijah and Elisha, Paul and Timothy and Jesus and the apostles. I can't get around **2 Timothy 2:2**, "*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also.*" I don't want to bypass the clear teachings of God's Word. I cannot quit trying to do the right thing just because along the way I fail and get hurt in the process. I know that every older preacher should do everything within his power to train and mentor younger Men of God. I know a pastor should think about the church where he is, and do all within his power to ensure the welfare of that church beyond his personal time as pastor. He should never unduly influence the church, and impose his wishes upon it; but neither should he ignore its future needs. Sooner or later, one way or another, every pastor will vacate the pulpit. Let him do all within his power to prepare the church for that certainty, and then trust the great hand of God to do what he cannot do.

Thanks to every one of you who is praying for us here at Northwest Baptist Church in Houston, Texas. Pray for Darren Simpson who by the time you read these lines will have taken my place. My prayer is that he and Northwest Baptist will move forward in one of the greatest eras of spiritual prosperity this church has ever known.

*Merry Christmas and a Great New Year from Lester and Margaret Hutson*