Montana Bible College

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Uniqueeness

We evangelical American Christians oftentimes fail, I suspect, to appreciate God’s uniqueness. Because so much of our way of life and our experience is linked to identifiable systems, paradigms or “transferable methods,” we easily conclude that God’s ways, agenda or thought patterns can be predicted and therefore, duplicated.

We read a book or hear a speaker relate how an effective evangelistic or ministry strategy has put his church on the map or into “mega” status, and automatically conclude that what worked for him will surely work for us. How many church and ministry leaders, having attended a seminar or read a book about an exciting ministry some place, returned home to do the same himself, only to become frustrated when the expected results just didn’t materialize?

What’s sauce for the goose isn’t necessarily sauce for the gander, at least not in the work of the Kingdom. At least not in the Bible. Remember, for example, the conquest of Jericho. What an amazing set of instructions God gave before “them walls come a-tumblin’ down”: March around the city in silence, carrying the ark of God, once a day for six days. On the seventh day march around six times in silence, but on the seventh lap, make as big a racket as you can! Down came the walls, in swept the forces of Israel – voila! City conquered!

Now there’s as specific a formula as we’re going to find for the conquering of a hostile city. Interesting, isn’t it, that Jericho was the only time such a method was used? Ever. In all recorded history. Obviously, God’s plan for Jericho was not to be applied at every city in need of being conquered. Largely, I suggest, because the God of the Bible is unique. Christians should bear in mind that at the core of the character of the God of the Bible is His holiness (see Isaiah 6.3), which basically means He is separate, set apart, in a class by Himself or, in a word, “unique.” God’s uniqueness, expressed through His wisdom, His sovereignty and His goodness surfaces variously in our human experience. We see it in the natural world, in the orchestration of history, in the variations among people, and in His building of the Kingdom. The Spirit “blows” where He wills, leaving a trail that is traceable to a degree, but never predictable (see John 3.8).

Clearly the Bible contains transferable principles, non-negotiable truths that always apply and that have been embraced as doctrinal positions. For example, Jesus will always be God, repentance and trust will always be necessary to be right with God, the Bible will always be God’s Word, and eternity awaits both the saved and the lost. While these truths cannot be compromised, the methods of their application are varied. Here is where the uniqueness of God is seen through the people and ministries He raises up.

Montana Bible College reflects that uniqueness. Here in Bozeman we borrow office and classroom space, courtesy of Grace Bible Church, but we own our dormitories, library and student union. We deliberately train disciple-makers with a view toward church leadership in town-and-country settings. We intentionally deploy our students in the local harvest field, while encouraging and participating in the global, cross-cultural front. We are delighted to employ active pastors as adjunct teachers, while “farming out” general education courses across the road to Montana State University. We are able to teach such subjects as rhetoric, Greek and Hebrew, and offer six concentrations to 125 students. And, we’re committed to a no-debt, no government funding policy.

In all His uniqueness, God has indeed raised up this ministry, and we are pleased to be a “special” part of His Kingdom. Please enjoy reading about it in this Profile!
God encourages His children to ask. It displays our dependence and His supply; our faith and His grace. “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” – Philippians 4:6-7

This looks to me like thanksgiving on the front end, before the need is met! Yet how beautiful is the whole picture, because when God’s supply meets our need, we spring forth in grateful praise—praise for the back side! And we have just such a praise to share—appropriate because the biblical concept of praise is load and public!

God brought a 15-passenger van to MBC to aid in the ministry He’s given to ServantSong, our music ministry ensemble. He supplied through a fellow believer at Karst Stage in Bozeman who was able to gift a portion of the van to make it affordable to us. Thank You, Lord!

Yet, as bearer of this good news, I have to share just a little more. Guess what? That’s not the only request God has granted at MBC! It just happens to be one need we highlighted publicly, which seems to call for an equally public response. And perhaps it’s also because that large white machine is so tangible. Kick the tires and look under the hood if you like. That stands in contrast to so many truly amazing, yet intangible, things God is doing in the lives of our students. It’s hard to take a picture of a changed heart, yet it’s no less real! Sins are conquered. Trust is deepened. Faith is strengthened. Passion is ignited for ministry to others. These are the areas where God’s activity is really spectacular among us. Maybe the van can serve as a tangible symbol of God’s answers to many prayers.

What about your ministry? Are your disciples making disciples? I ask that, because your task of disciple-making isn’t finished until they are reproduction-ready. They know they were entrusted with the GOOD news that is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes.

What do you think so far? Is this story an occasion for gladness or sorrow? Gladness, you say? Hear now the end of the story. The couple longed for someone to come and carry on their ministry. They were older. Their energy wasn’t what it used to be. They couldn’t keep this up forever. And no one was there to take their place. Sorrow has crept into this story uninvited!

And what is the point of the parable? Be careful lest your sorrow is misplaced. How so? Just this. We’re tempted to think the tragedy in this story lies at the feet of some workers who have not shown up at the harvest field. But I believe rather that this is a tragedy of lack of discipleship. People had served faithfully, valiantly, for forty years, but apparently the disciples of their ministry hadn’t reproduced. 2 Timothy 2:2 had not happened here. Think of it! Four generations of disciples in a single verse: Paul, Timothy, faithful men, others. But here, the disciples that were made never became disciple-makers.

They were untaught in the face of challenges. They knew they were entrusted with the GOOD news that is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes.

I want to tell you a true story with a poignant lesson—call it a modern parable if you will. Here’s what happened: A husband and wife minister ensemble. He supplied through a fellow believer at Karst Stage in Bozeman who was able to gift a portion of the van to make it affordable to us. Thank You, Lord!

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In Fall 2007, I moved to Bozeman from Minnesota to attend Montana Bible College and focus on missions. In the first of my four years, I met a beautiful and godly woman. Beth and I married the summer before my junior year, and we now have Emma, our beautiful baby girl. After graduation we will return to Minnesota where I will intern with my home church. This will be a good opportunity for our family to build relationships with the congregation. We want this to be our sending church when we go into missions full time. Our latest idea is to be involved in rural church planting.

The training I received at MBC challenged my thinking and caused me to work through ideas regarding issues that may arise in ministry. Lectures and assignments caused me to rely on God’s word, think through what I believe, and examine the practicality of it. A constant emphasis at MBC is the sufficiency of Scriptures. I was impacted at MBC as I lived among Christians. Their example, attitude, actions and words to those that would honor the Lord and bring glory to our Great God. My plans for MBC did not extend beyond the one-year certificate, but God had other plans for me. Three years ago He drew me back to finish my degree. After several years in the working world, I saw my need to learn how to apply His Word to everyday life and to grow more in my relationship with Him. The Lord has grown me in these areas and many more during the past three years and has given me the desire to continue to learn and grow in the future.

As my time at MBC comes to an end, my prayer is that by God’s grace the Lord would be glorified in my life as I resolve to walk worthy of His calling. (2 Thess. 1:12, ESV)
Focus on the MBC Board of Directors

Bill and Robert

I was undergoing cancer treatment at the Bozeman Deaconess Cancer Center, when Robert Hershey, a sophomore at Montana Bible College, walked into my room. MBC encourages all students to give back to the community by volunteering at local church, nursing home, hospitals, nursing centers, and volunteering to serve as visitors to patients, whether young or old. I was a child when I experienced cancer, so I don’t remember much about my cancer treatment, but now it enveloped my mind and stirred my blood—God was calling me to serve patients in the cancer community.

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How do we discern the will of God and respond to that call? We ask questions about the purpose God had for me to serve patients in the cancer community. One of the questions we ask is: What is the purpose of life?

It is absurd to hold that a man ought to be ashamed of being an evil man a rhetorician, but rather a tyrant. Secondly, it has come in the form of, dare I say it, rhetoric! Sadly, rhetoric, once the backbone of education in Western culture, has become a language spoken by those who believe there is no truth or meaning. Rhetoric is often used to mislead, manipulate, or actually ensnare. As a result, its most important lesson in training students to be clear, effective, persuasive speakers has been lost on modernity.

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In 1995, our lives took a big turn as we followed God’s call to Cardwell, Montana. It is amazing to think we have been in Cardwell fourteen years. God has graciously continued to teach, bless, and use us. The privilege of teaching God’s word and shepherding His people continues to be a source of joy and amazement. There is so much to learn from being with God’s people and watching them grow in Christ. He is so faithful to complete the work He began.

It seems a strange thing to me to be on the board of directors of a Bible college, since my own path to teaching ministry didn’t involve much formal training.

After college, God continued to train me in many ways as I taught elementary students, served a year as a pastoral ministry at Julie’s home church in Cardwell, Montana. It is amazing to think we have been in Cardwell fourteen years. God has graciously continued to teach, bless, and use us. The privilege of teaching God’s word and shepherding His people continues to be a source of joy and amazement. There is so much to learn from being with God’s people and watching them grow in Christ. He is so faithful to complete the work He began.

This is most unfortunate for several reasons. First of all, a true rhetorician has always been, by definition, a person of high moral character. The ancients would not have considered an evil man a rhetorician, but rather a tyrant. Secondly, the popular idea that rhetoric is just empty words substituted for God’s word as the source of truth for life and knowing beyond. The training was very “hands-on” and, most importantly, I learned that God put many godly people in my life—people who discipled and taught me through my college years and beyond.

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