

Del-Haven Banquet Message

October 27, 2006

I want to share a few thoughts with you this evening that hopefully will give some broad historical perspective to the reason that God raised up the ministry of Del-Haven some 54 years ago, and why its ongoing ministry is now more needed and more important than ever.

I would beg your indulgence at the outset because I want to begin way back at the very formative stages of our nation. When the United States of America was born, the industrial revolution was still nearly 60 years away, and colonial society functioned largely around skilled crafts, family trades and agriculture.

[It was then that Millers really were those who worked at mills, whether it was lumber mills or grain mills. The Carpenters were who you contacted if you wanted to build something because they were known for their building skills, and masons worked with stone. Today we have Millers, Carpenters, and Masons who only carry the name, but those names no longer identify unique family trades.]

But beginning in the 1830's, machines introduced dramatic changes into life in both Europe and America. The engines of mass production and the early versions of factories began to make their appearance, and its impact on the family slowly began to unfold and that impact was staggering!

In pre-industrial, colonial times, children were viewed as an economic asset, so families were typically much larger. As a child grew, he or she learned to work and to contribute to the economic welfare of the family. Each child had his chores. And in the case of the very poor during colonial times, parents were often known to contract their children out to work for others in order to pay off family debts.

But the industrial revolution began the introduction of a whole new set of family values. It eroded the family as an economic unit, and it eventually destroyed the home as the place where children were educated. You see, in a pre-industrial world, children were trained primarily by their parents and given the skills to carry on the family business or trade, whatever it was. In that setting, the church and the village may also have had roles in child training and education, but the home was primary.

But with the rise of an industrial economy, family trades disappeared, villages shrunk as the industrialized cities grew, and younger generations slowly began to take jobs in these new urban centers, and a middle class was born. The result was that education became less and less a family thing, and more and more a government thing. So shortly

after the Civil War, the US Office of Education was created, and by 1920, all the states had enacted compulsory education laws.

One of the tensions that arose in the early stages of the industrial revolution was whether children should be educated, or made a source of cheap labor. Industry seemed to have this insatiable appetite for cheap labor, and the fact that children as young as age seven were already working in factories and coal mines led Congress over a 30 year period to pass several child labor laws to protect children from conditions that were very nearly child slavery.

As the industrial revolution gained momentum, a slow shift began to occur in the way children were viewed in the family. Where before they had been viewed as an **economic asset**, now they began to be viewed as an **economic liability**. *Can we afford to have kids* became a question that was privately discussed at kitchen tables, and the stage was gradually being set for a subtle devaluing of children that would eventually give rise to child neglect and abuse that would emerge in the last half of the 20th century.

Interestingly, it was clear back in the 1870's that we have the first recorded case of child abuse. It occurred in New York State, and it was so shocking to the public conscience that it led to the founding of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Ironically, this new organization was patterned after the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, which had been founded nine years earlier.

In this new industrial society, parental neglect of children began to appear in large cities, as reflected in the action of the Illinois legislature in the closing years of the 19th century. They passed a law that established the first juvenile court in Cook County, Chicago, recognizing that the county government was going to have to take a role in controlling juvenile crime.

Then in the first half of the twentieth century, the stability and cohesiveness of the American family took a major hit with two devastating world wars. World Wars I and II took thousands of American men, many of whom were husbands and fathers, and put them in uniform on foreign soil where many lost their lives. The disruptions especially caused by WW II also forced thousands of American mothers into the workforce, causing Congress during the war to pass legislation providing for child care assistance to working mothers, and day care centers made their first appearance on the American family landscape.

The end of the war brought a sense of euphoria and renewed hope to American life, but it also spelled a new era in parent-child relationships. Dr. Spock gave parents permission to be more permissive. And permissive parenting translated into parental neglect, which resulted in children beginning to raise themselves, and the streets became an increasing part of their upbringing.

What took place in the 50's was hardly full-scale child abuse at the level that we see it now, but there was a profound disconnect between parents and their kids that a decade later in the 60's began to be called "the generation gap." Kids went their own way without much guidance from parents, and the operative phrase used to describe the growing crime problem among the nation's youth was "juvenile delinquency." In the decade following World War II, juvenile crime stats shot through the roof, and it was in that very decade and for that very reason that Don Carpenter and others with a vision to reach this new and troubled generation of kids met and began to pray about raising up a camp ministry to address head-on the mounting social problem of juvenile delinquency, and Del-Haven was born in 1952. The name Del-Haven was short hand for Delinquent Haven, and the motto became "turning kids from crime to Christ."

However, as we moved into the second decade following the war, something else began to happen. Through the 50's and into the 60's, doctors began reporting to authorities injuries to children received at the hands of their parents, and legislators began to address the role that government should play in the protection of children in their own homes. A soaring divorce rate, step parents and so-called blended families created unstable environments, and children found themselves more and more in difficult and often unsafe situations living with step parents, new daddies and mommies, and made a part of new families with new, but unrelated, siblings. And the stage was set for what we have now tragically come to see as home settings marked by verbal, physical and sexual abuse.

There were other de-stabilizing forces that made their appearance in the last half of the twentieth century that we can now look at and see that America was sowing to the wind and is now reaping the whirlwind. When Del-Haven was first formed, no one had ever heard of Elvis Presley. A year later he was singing southern gospel music in a little make-shift studio in Memphis with what later became known as the Million Dollar Quartet, with Elvis, Jerry Lee Lewis, Johnny Cash and Carl Perkins. But four years later (1956) he was paired with the Jordanaires, recorded *Heartbreak Hotel*, appeared on the Ed Sullivan Show, and rock and roll was born.

The social message that was programmed into early rock and roll matched up well with the new Dr. Spock-created family. Youth were encouraged to break free of old-fashioned restraints, to become your own person, do your own thing. Your choices don't have to conform to anybody else's standards, especially the older generation's. It didn't take long to discover that these weren't just innocent little soundings of a call to an upcoming generation to discover who they were.

These messages very quickly became the growing place in the 60's of a revolution that Janis Joplin and Jimi Hendrix championed as sex, drugs and rock and roll, and that Timothy Leary of Harvard sanctioned as a call to tune in (rock and roll), turn on (free

sex), and drop out (drugs). The hippie movement was born in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco, and the free speech movement and the Black Panthers with their clearly Marxist agenda emerged at Berkeley. And a generation, politely neglected by their parents, had begun to make outrageous choices that were shocking their parents who had poured out their life-blood to protect American values through two world wars.

Then slowly these baby boomers, as they were called, grew up and became parents themselves, and a whole new set of social problems began to manifest. The 60's forever changed American life, and the Supreme Court and Hollywood became the radical change agents in recasting a totally new image of what America should become. The sexual revolution now became mainstream, Christian values were specifically rejected. Prayer was removed from the classroom, and abortion on demand became the law of the land. America was now clearly a post-Christian culture. And in a world regulated only by secular, humanistic values, children it turned out weren't safe from the adult generation that had given them life. America's taste for sex and violence, both nurtured and pandered to by Hollywood, gave rise to a whole new culture of sex and violence that was not a safe place for children. Child abuse reports began to fill newscasts.

Legislation up to the mid-1980s attempted to address the problems directly related to the growing chaos in families by creating social agencies to step into "after the fact" cases of child abuse to try to keep it from happening again. However, these government-created agencies proved totally ineffective in dealing with the problem, and child abuse continued to grow into an epidemic. So in the mid-80's it was deemed a "before-the-fact" approach was needed, to stop the abuse before it started. Legislation was passed aiming at prevention, and giving child protective services discretionary authority to invade homes and seize children deemed at risk, creating a whole new category of horror stories about government invasion of homes and families. And thus was born the situation of near chaos with which we now live, without clear boundaries of where government authority begins and parental authority ends.

What all these social and legal trends have meant is that the problem we have had to learn to face is no longer best described as simply "juvenile delinquency" created by parental neglect. For years now, kids that have come to camp have been kids born into and raised in situations that are high risk for them emotionally, psychologically, physically and sexually, to say nothing of the dark spiritual dynamics that have shaped them in a world of drugs and the occult. Adults in their lives have become abusers and predators of one kind or another, as opposed to the passive neglectors of the past.

The bottom line is that the segment of our population that is now at greatest risk is our children. The internet has created a whole new monster. The unchecked proliferation of internet pornography, and the growth of child pornography, is feeding sexual addictions that are creating an epidemic of pedophilia, and is giving rise to a

whole host of websites that have become the vehicles for the exploitation of children of nearly all ages. And all the legislative attempts to build walls of protection around the very vulnerable in our society are failing.

The consequences of child abuse, whether it be through violence or sex (or both), are well documented. Children who are emotionally, physically, or sexually abused are damaged for life, and they struggle to become stable and productive and compassionate adults. The vast majority of people convicted of violent crimes were abused as children. The picture is bleak indeed. We are witnessing a moral meltdown in our culture!

Is there any hope in a setting like this? Yes, but it's not in our government. It's not in the Republican party. Our hope is the very same one that was the foundational reason for the forming of Camp Del-Haven in 1952. It is the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to redeem, to rescue, to heal, to transform.

When Jesus returned to Nazareth for the first time following the inauguration of His public ministry, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and took a scroll of the prophet Isaiah, and stood and read the opening words of Isaiah 61. He declared that the Spirit of the Lord was upon Him, and His Father had anointed Him to preach good tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and to announce a perpetual Jubilee of release from the great debt of our sins and transgressions.

And Christ, the Anointed One of Isaiah 61, has entrusted to us the same gospel that He proclaimed that gives hope to those with nothing, that brings healing to the broken, and proclaims liberty to those in bonds created by the powers of darkness, and He gave us His authority to deal with all those dark realms who are behind this massive assault now under way on the next generation.

True Christianity is always generational in its focus and labor, and it is a particularly distinguishing mark of the calling that rests on Del-Haven. This ministry has been raised up to stay trained on the spiritual well-being of the next generation. And we are at a critical moment in our history!

Let me tell you what Del-Haven needs right now more than anything else from all of you who have been its faithful supporters for many years. Del-Haven needs fervent, unceasing prayer. Ministries that God raises up with this kind of specific calling must learn to catch the fresh winds of the Spirit so that we stay in touch with the new and shifting directions that God appoints, so that future ministry endeavors remain as fruitful as they have been in the past, and then that they may grow to even greater elevations of effectiveness under the Lord's direction.

Speaking of catching the winds of the Spirit reminds me of a short piece I read nearly three years ago, back in December, 2003, written commemorating the 100 year anniversary of the Wright brothers history-making flight at Kitty Hawk, NC.

The Wright brothers were not the only ones trying to build a flying machine. But most of those involved in the quest believed that the key to flying was to perfect the shape of the aircraft. So endless designs were drawn up and prototypes built, all of which failed. The perfect shape seemed to elude them.

But the Wright brothers came up with a new idea. They were first of all bicycle makers, and they realized something about bicycles. They did not work because of some perfect shape. Many bicycle designs were on the market. But what they noticed as they studied the bicycle is that the bicycle worked because it was possible to manipulate its shape once it was moving over the ground. Once velocity was achieved by peddling, the key was to constantly change the direction of the front wheel to maintain balance. Manipulating the shape of the bicycle, particularly the positioning of the front wheel in relation to the back wheel, was what made cycling possible. When we are on a bike, we are not even conscious of the micro-adjustments we are making every few seconds to the trajectory of the front wheel by using our handle bars to keep the cycle upright, along with small shifts in our body weight from side to side to counterbalance the effects of gravity. You can prove this the next time you're on a bike, if there ever is a next time. When you're riding, try holding the handle bars perfectly still without these micro-adjustments. You will quickly find out that you will be able to go only a few feet before falling to the right or the left.

The big breakthrough for Wilbur and Orville came when they applied what they knew about bicycles to airplanes. They realized that perhaps there was no perfect shape that would keep a flying machine stable in the air, but rather that the shape had to be constantly adjusted and manipulated. Then perhaps the problems of balance, stability, lift and control could be overcome. So they experimented. Wilbur laid down on the lower wing head-first, with ropes attached to his hands and feet and the wing, which he used to manipulate the shape of the wing as he was airborne. Much to their delight, it worked and flying machines were born!

Today we have computerized wing flaps, but the principle is still the same. The shape of the wing has to be manipulated in the air to make flight possible. We've all seen this in window seats by wings on commercial aircraft. We can actually watch the dramatic reshaping of the wing on take-off, during flight, and on landing. We can't control the thermals or the wind, but we can reconfigure the shape of the wing to maintain control while we're in flight.

I couldn't help but think of how this picture applied to churches and ministries. We have all these books and manuals today that advise us regarding the best shape that

ministries must take if we are going to address effectively and successfully a postmodern, post-Christian society. And we keep looking for the perfect shape for ministry to be effective, when in fact there is no perfect shape. Rather, what needs to happen is the shape must change to adjust to the wind that is blowing. Jesus compared the mysterious work of the Spirit to a wind. We can't discern where it comes from or where it is going, and we can't adjust its velocity or direction. However, what we can do is remain sensitive to its direction and velocity, and reconfigure the shape of our wings to take maximum advantage of the season we're in, and of the weather patterns of the Spirit that are designed to direct us into the fulfillment of God's purposes.

The book of Acts is full of illustrations of the early church adjusting to the winds of the Spirit. Look at the church at Antioch in Acts 13. They were in prayer and fasting, and the Spirit moved upon them to set apart Barnabas and Saul for the beginning of missionary journeys that altered the course of history. But this takes staying ready and a boldness to flex what is often very inflexible in the way we have done things in the past. Like Wilbur and Orville, once in awhile we will crash. They did, in fact, some 200 times in their 1902 glider. But the crashes weren't bad. They learned valuable lessons that eventually resulted in breakthrough and success. God still uses trial and error to teach us, so that we are always kept at a distance from trusting ourselves. But eventually by being bold enough to take the lowest posture of faith and lie down on the wing, we sense the wind directly, and we can alter the shape of our ministry endeavors to capture the wind of the Spirit and gain altitude.

This is why Del-Haven needs your prayers. Those who have accepted the mantle and calling to lead this ministry need the renewed grace of heaven to be in a place of elevated sensitivity to the fresh directions of the Spirit that will enlarge the ministry as a channel for the distribution of heaven's gift of living waters that will satisfy the desperate thirst of yet another generation of young people that is dry and parched.

The picture of need at camp right now in the realm of the natural is also a picture in the realm of the spirit. Water to be useful must have channels for delivery and collecting places where it can be used. You have heard described tonight the difficult straits the camp is in where water resources are concerned—from the system by which it is delivered to houses and kitchens and bathrooms, to places where it can be reservoired and used for swimming and fishing and other water activities.

The calling of Del-Haven has been to bring that living water to every renewing generation, and the promise of the Lord Christ is that He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of His belly will flow rivers of living water. And we want to give heart-felt thanks to all of you for your faithfulness to sustain that calling to give living water to a thirsty generation. We honor you as God's instrument through the years to keep us going as long as our God appoints. -- Steve Carpenter