A Priceless Heritage

A Personal Story, A Valuable School
CANCER, THE CROSS
AND A CALL

“Pastors’ College.”

Those are the words that formed in my mind as I stood at the foot of the cross.

“Pastors’ College.”

Just a few weeks before, I had been diagnosed with prostate cancer. To have some time to pray and process what was ahead, my wife, Linda, and I traveled to Mt. Hermon Christian Conference Center near Santa Cruz, California. I often call Mt. Hermon my “favourite place on the planet.” Over the years, I’ve had many significant spiritual encounters with God at Mt. Hermon—at conferences and family camps.

This time would be no exception. On February 25, 2011, I hiked the trail leading to a twenty-foot cross at the top a of tree-lined hill. I stood alone, beneath the cross, and prayed. I dedicated the rest of my life to serving Christ. As I prayed, the words “Pastors’ College” kept coming to my mind, along with a sense that I was to invest time and energy in training pastors, missionaries and church leaders.

I went back to the cabin and wrote these words in my journal: “Felt the deep stirring of a calling to train pastors, leaders and missionaries. Drawn to the need in Canada but also more globally. The words ‘pastors’ college’ came into my thinking. Not sure all that it means, but I returned with a sense of having a significant moment with God at Mt. Hermon.”

After the week at Mt. Hermon, we returned home to Canada. In the coming months, God brought me through two surgeries and six weeks of radiation. When I resumed ministry at the Metropolitan Bible Church, I continued to sense a calling to invest more time in the training of future spiritual leaders.

This calling to equip ministry leaders was not a new one for me. Over twenty five years ago, Linda and I were appointed to serve as missionaries in Brazil. I was to teach in a seminary and help develop pastors, missionaries and spiritual leaders. Linda, who trained with Wycliffe Bible Translators, would assist in reaching and teaching Brazilian women.

We were commissioned to go to Brazil but we never were able to go. We didn’t receive the necessary visas even though we waited almost two years. It was a confusing time; we were left with many unanswered questions. Unable to go
to Brazil, we stayed active in ministry, happily serving a church in California and later, coming to serve at the Met in Ottawa.

After my cancer treatments in 2011, I returned to my pastoral role at the Met. The church leaders affirmed my desire to intentionally invest in training other ministry leaders; the following year they sent us overseas to equip national pastors and gave me freedom to do some teaching for Heritage.

A year after my morning at the cross at Mt. Hermon, I received another call. This time it was a phone call from a Heritage Board member. He asked if I would prayerfully consider coming to serve as the school’s next president.

While neither Linda nor I wanted to leave the Met, I knew I had to take this invitation seriously. Something deep in my soul was stirred by the thought of doing in Canada what I had thought I would do in Brazil—training men and women to serve Christ in ministry; helping to raise up godly pastors for churches across the country; training believers to live on mission at home and to go as missionaries around the world.

Linda and I love the church we served in Ottawa. But we love the Church in cities, towns and villages around the world. It’s our passion to see men and women trained at Heritage to serve Christ as spiritual leaders wherever God takes them.

At our good-bye service at the Met, one of the elders gave me a gift that I have hanging in our home. It’s a picture of the cross at Mt. Hermon. On the back he wrote these words: “The cross has altered the course of your life once again. What a wonderful place to stand and surrender.”

That’s the short version of the road we’ve traveled from the cross to this “Pastors’ College” in Cambridge. Along the journey from Mt. Hermon to Heritage, there was another significant stop at a rather surprising spot: Harvard University. It was there I saw “the writing on the wall.”
Coming to serve at Heritage is the fulfillment of a long-term calling, but making the decision to come took months of prayer, conversation and counsel. In the midst of the deliberations, our family spent a weekend in Boston for our daughter’s graduation. After walking through the historic downtown, we took the train over to Harvard.

Established in 1636 by Puritan leaders, Harvard is the oldest institution of higher learning in the United States. I had never visited Harvard before and wanted to visit its historic grounds. As we came to the main entrance on Massachusetts Avenue, we paused to read a large plaque embedded on the red brick walls at the main gate. The plaque contains the words of the school’s founding fathers; it gives their original mission for Harvard:

After God had carried us safe to New England, and we had built our houses, provided necessaries for our livelihood, reared convenient places for God’s worship, and settled the Civil Government: One of the next things we longed for, and looked after was to advance learning, and perpetuate it to posterity, dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the churches, when our present ministers shall lie in the dust.

Reading these words left me feeling stunned, perhaps a bit like Belshazzar felt when he saw the writing appear on his palace walls (Daniel 5:5-6). I was struck by the foresight of the Puritan leaders who founded Harvard. They realized the necessity of establishing a “Pastors’ College” to ensure the churches would have a continual supply of equipped pastors and leaders. They understood the mortality of their present leaders. They felt the urgency of developing future leaders. They dreaded the thought of leaving the churches in the hands of ill-equipped ministers “when our present ministers shall lie in the dust.”

I have not been able to get the “writing on the wall” out of my mind. I have a similar sense of urgency for training future spiritual leaders. Cancer has reminded me of my own mortality. I know the day is coming when I (and our “present ministers”) will lie in the dust. I dread what will happen to our churches, and the overall mission of reaching a lost world, if we fail to equip men and women to provide spiritual leadership in the coming years.
Several years ago, while I was still pastoring at the Met, I heard a sobering projection. Some denominational leaders estimate that within fifteen years, the number of qualified pastoral candidates will be dwarfed by the number of churches looking for pastoral leadership.

There is a growing need for godly, equipped spiritual leaders. And that’s just to maintain the churches we presently have. It doesn’t take into account the great need for church planting in Canada. According to Impact Canada, no single city or province in Canada has a greater percentage of churched people than a decade ago. When it comes to planting to new churches in Canada, we are not even keeping pace with the population growth.

Add to that the need for missionaries to take the gospel to the least-reached places in our world. The Joshua Project estimates that there are still almost 4,000 unreached people groups in our world. To put it another way, over 40% of the world’s population is virtually unreached.

Harvard is no longer focused on fulfilling the vision of its founders. Its mission has changed over the years. But the need for schools to carry on the vision of raising up qualified spiritual leaders for the Church and global missions is as pressing now as it has ever been.

At Heritage we have a clear vision and understanding of our mission: “Heritage College and Seminary exists to glorify God by partnering with churches in providing a biblically-based education, equipping people for life and ministry in the church and in the world.”

Our mission is not just posted on our walls, it’s written on our hearts.

This mission of training servants for Christ’s church was also written deeply on the heart of a man who impacted his entire country through his preaching and by starting a “Pastors’ College.” I’ll tell you some of his story in the next chapter.
Charles Spurgeon was a pastor with a God-sized vision. He pastored the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London for over forty years in the mid-nineteenth century. Under his preaching, thousands were regularly fed and challenged from God’s Word. Under his leadership, the church launched a wide-variety of ministries.

On his fiftieth birthday, in 1884, the church hosted a Jubilee Celebration for Charles and his wife, Susannah. As part of the festivities, a colleague read the list of the ministries connected to the church. Spurgeon had a hand in starting and overseeing most of them.

There was the Pastor’s Aid Fund; the Colportage Association; Mrs. Spurgeon’s Book Fund; the Evangelists’ association; the Ladies’ Benevolent Society; the Gospel Temperance Society; the Coffee-House Mission; the mission to Policeman; the Stockwell Orphanage; the Sword and Trowel magazine. And that’s just the start of the list. In total, there were well over sixty ministries.

But of all the worthy ministries Spurgeon helped start and maintain, there was one ministry he held most closely to his heart. That was one ministry he prized above all others. That was the Pastors’ College.

In 1882, after starting and supporting a wide-array of ministries, Spurgeon indicated the priority he placed on the Pastors’ College when he wrote:

When we think of the value of a well-instructed minister of the gospel, and of all the beneficent institutions which are sure to spring up around him, we sometimes think the work of training ministers to be superior to all other services done to the Lord and his church. (Sword and Trowel, 1882, “Annual Report”)

Spurgeon liked to recount how Adoniram Judson, the well-known missionary to Burma, had once told a friend that if he had $1,000 dollars to invest in the Lord’s work, he would put it into planting colleges to train those serious about ministry.
Spurgeon expressed his enthusiastic agreement with Judson by saying, “to this we have labored with all our heart, and soul, and strength to make the Pastors’ College a seed-garden for the church and for the world” (S&T, April 1881).

Spurgeon started the Pastors’ College in 1856 out of his desire to see a school dedicated to training what he called “unmistakable gospel ministers.” He was clear on the kind of training his students should receive: “The Scriptures must be their chief class-book, theology their main science, the art of teaching their practical study, and the proclamation and exposition of the gospel their first business” (S&T, June 1875).

He was equally clear on the kind of teachers needed in his school: “The tutors should be men of equal learning and grace, sound scholars, but much more sound divines, men of culture, but even more decidedly men of God” (S&T, June 1875).

He generously gave of his time and finances to teach and support the students in the Pastors’ College. He was also unashamed to call on other believers to give liberally to the support of the school and it students.

We wonder not that such Colleges should be liberally supported, but rather we marvel that more lovers of the Lord do not devote their substance to this superior purpose, in which the deed is done more fully unto the Lord himself than in almost any other form of doing good. (S&T, 1882, “Annual Report”)

I believe Spurgeon was right in his assessment of the supreme importance of a school dedicated to training up future servants for Christ’s Church and His global mission. Heritage is focused being a “seed-garden” for the church—training men and women who will be spiritual leaders in the years to come.

You may wonder, “What kind of spiritual leaders are you seeking to develop?” To answer that question, I need to draw you a picture. That’s what I’ll seek to do next.
I’ve never been accused of being a great artist. But that hasn’t stopped me from doing some drawing. In fact, I sketched an impromptu picture during the first course I taught after coming to Heritage. The class was on the Pastoral Epistles, three books written by the apostle Paul (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus). One of the reasons I love these books is because they help provide us with a picture of what a godly, effective minister looks like.

So one day in class, I put a drawing pad on an easel and sketched out a picture of a godly minister. It’s far from a masterpiece, but it does represent the kind of spiritual leaders God wants for His church. It also gives a portrait of the kind of graduates we want to develop at Heritage.

### STAND STRONG

Two legs, like pillars, give solid footing to a minister. One leg represents spiritual vibrancy—life-giving union and communion with Christ. The other leg stands for godly character—personal credibility in life and ministry. Without godly character and a vibrant spiritual life, a minister is shaky and will eventually stumble and fall.

That’s why Paul keeps calling Timothy to draw close and stay close to Christ. That’s why we call our students at Heritage to the same thing.

### LOVE THE SHEEP

The heart of an effective minister is a shepherd’s heart. That’s because to be fruitful in ministry you have to love people with the love of Christ. No wonder Paul told Timothy to set an example in showing love (1 Timothy 4:12). That’s why we want our students to develop and deepen their ability to express Christ’s love for those they serve.
**PREACH THE WORD**

In my sketch, you’ll notice the Bible in one hand. Here’s a reminder that effective ministers hold to God’s Word firmly and teach it faithfully. Paul told Timothy “Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction” (2 Timothy 4:2). We want our grads to be known as faithful expositors of God’s Word.

**LEAD THE WAY**

The minister has a Bible in one hand and a compass in the other. The compass pictures another core competency required of spiritual leaders—they must know how to lead people in God’s ways. Timothy may have been somewhat of a reluctant leader who battled with “timidity” (1 Timothy 1:7). So Paul reminded Him of God’s provision and challenged him to step into his leadership role. Every Christian worker is a leader on some level so we seek to help our students develop the ability to lead wisely and well.

**SEE THE MISSION**

In my profile of an effective minister, I drew a set of glasses. The glasses are a reminder of the essential need to have a clear view of the Church’s mission. Paul called Timothy to be a witness for the gospel (2 Timothy 1:8) and to do the work of an evangelist (2 Timothy 4:5). We call our students to do the same. We want every student to be spiritually “near-sighted” (seeing the needs of the lost people locally) and “far-sighted” (seeing the needs of lost people globally).

My sketch is rather simple but it communicates something very significant. At Heritage, we are committed to developing genuine, spiritual leaders who shepherd, preach and lead with a vision for Christ’s mission. That picture is priceless.
Put yourself in Ezra’s place.

You are in charge of a group of 5,000 people: grandpas and grandmas, dad, moms and kids of all ages. You are about to lead them on a five hundred mile journey (on foot!) from Babylon to Jerusalem. You know the trip will be dangerous and difficult. Hostile tribes and marauding armies could attack you. Your group is a soft target, especially since you are carrying a fortune in “silver, gold and sacred articles” for the Temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 8:30).

Did I mention you have no military escort for the trip? The Persian king offered to provide one but you turned him down. You said God would have your back. Bold words!

As you pray and prepare to set out on the journey, you come to a sobering realization: there are no Levites. Everyone in your group has volunteered to go. Evidently, no Levites signed up.

You’re willing to travel without a military escort, but you can’t leave without Levites. You know your mission of restoring spiritual vibrancy to the Jews in Jerusalem will be hobbled without Levites to oversee the worship of the nation. This is a crisis moment.

So put yourself in Ezra’s place. What are you going to do?

Ezra 8:15-20 records what Ezra did. He delayed the departure and devised a plan to enlist Levites for the trip. He summoned a group of eleven recognized leaders and sent them on a recruitment mission to the village of Casiphia.

How did it turn out? Listen to Ezra’s own words: “Because the gracious hand of our God was on us, they brought us Sherebiah, a capable man…” With Sherebiah came almost forty other Levites and 200 Temple servants.

Sherebiah turned out to be worth his weight in Temple gold. He is described as a “capable man.” The Hebrew word translated “capable” often speaks of spiritual insight and wisdom. He also proved to be a man of high commitment—he was willing to take on a long journey and a difficult assignment.
It’s not surprising that Sherebiah became a key player in the spiritual reformation that Ezra helped lead in Jerusalem (see Nehemiah 8:7; 9:4-5).

As I reflect on this biblical account, I see parallels between Ezra’s day and ours. We too have a need for godly, capable, committed spiritual leaders for churches in Canada. Without them, our hopes of seeing a spiritual renewal and resurgence will be greatly crippled. Capable spiritual leaders are not a luxury for our journey of faith; they are a necessity.

So how do we find the individuals who will give leadership to our churches and help advance the gospel locally and globally? Here are some lessons I take from Sherebiah’s story:

1. Sherebiahs are best identified by seasoned, spiritual leaders. Ezra knew that spiritual leaders are best recognized and recruited by other spiritual leaders. That’s why we must have seasoned spiritual leaders—men and women who have walked closely with God and served Him well for years—on the lookout for upcoming Sherebiahs.

2. Sherebiahs give evidence that they are “capable.” Sherebiah had shown signs of spiritual insight, wisdom and high capacity. The Sherebiahs we need will be those who demonstrate this same kind of spiritual capability. Faithful in little precedes faithful in much.

3. Sherebiahs need to be challenged to take on the role God has designed them to fill. Without the challenge he received, Sherebiah may have stayed in Babylon. He may have never stepped into a place of spiritual leadership. That’s still the case today. There are many capable men and women in our churches who need to be personally challenged to take spiritual leadership in God’s kingdom.

4. Sherebiahs are found and enlisted because of the “gracious hand of our God” (Ezra 8:18). Like Ezra, we can have a plan to find and recruit Sherebiahs. However, unless God’s hand is on our efforts, we won’t succeed.

Sherebiah’s story reminds me of one that hits much closer to home: the story of my own father. I’d like to tell you his story.
He took me to the very spot where it happened. We walked together into an empty church sanctuary in Everett, Washington. We made our way towards the front of the church, somewhere about the fourth or fifth row of seats.

It was here my dad told me about a conversation that God used to significantly change the course of his life. And mine too.

The conversation he told me about had happened decades before, but the memories of it were still vivid to him. Two older women in his church—women known for their devotion to Christ and their faithful prayers—had pulled him aside after a Sunday service.

“Maynor,” they said, “we’ve been watching you. And we think God may want you to be a pastor.”

My father had been active in ministry over the years. He led a Christian club at Everett High School and was significantly involved in serving at the church. These two women had seen in him the kind character and capabilities needed for fruitful ministry. Though he didn’t know it, they had been praying for him. And they had been praying about this conversation. One Sunday after church they approached him and challenged him to consider vocational service.

That conversation changed the course of my dad’s life. While the thought of Christian ministry had crossed his mind, he was still unsure, uncertain he was cut out to be a pastor. The affirmation of two respected, praying women gave him courage to take the next step.

After finishing an undergraduate degree, he headed off to Multnomah School of the Bible in Portland, Oregon. He went there to prepare for a lifetime of ministry as a pastor or missionary. At Multnomah, he not only received quality theological preparation, he also met the woman who would be his partner in life and ministry.

My dad and mom served the Lord in four churches over the next four decades.
He finished his ministry as a pastor to pastors for his denomination. The churches my dad pastored flourished under his teaching, leading and shepherding. His example shaped me and helped prepare me for a lifetime pastoral ministry.

In 2005, my dad was given the sobering news that he had Alzheimer’s disease. Over the ensuing years, he walk through the valley of the shadow. It was a difficult journey, filled with grief but strengthened by grace.

One morning, when dad was in hospice, I was alone with him in his room. I picked up a thick, binder filled with letters of appreciation from people in a church he had pastored for over twenty years. I read through dozens of the letters. Some thanked him for faithfully teaching God’s Word, week after week, year after year. Many expressed gratitude for the way he and my mother lived out the truth they taught to others. There were many references to his sense of humor, his devotion to prayer, his hospital and home visits. Some wrote to thank him for helping them work through marriage problems; others for helping them come to know Christ in a personal, life-changing way.

I was moved at the stories of how God had used a faithful servant to impact the lives of many people. Not just for time but for eternity.

As I write this, I’m also moved at the impact of the two women who affirmed my dad’s gifts and challenged him to consider ministry so many years ago. I wonder if the story of his life would have been different without that conversation. Only God knows.

I can’t help thinking that there are still men and women who need a personal word of encouragement and challenge to affirm and strengthen a sense of God’s calling on their lives.

I believe there are others like my dad, modern-day Sherebiahs, who need godly, respected spiritual leaders to speak into their lives and affirm their gifts and calling.

God uses those conversations to change lives in a way we won’t fully know until heaven. Is there someone you need to have a conversation with?

Or let me ask another question: Could you become a “gospel patron” for future pastors? In the closing chapter, I’ll explain what this means.
Have you ever heard of Humphrey Monmouth?

Until recently, I hadn’t either.

But if you’ve read your English Bible, you owe him a hearty thanks in heaven.

Monmouth was a business man who risked his life, his business and his bank account to support a young scholar by the name of William Tyndale. He had heard that Tyndale wanted to translate the Bible into English, in spite of the fact that doing so could get him killed as a heretic. He realized Tyndale wouldn’t survive on his own and came to his defense.

Monmouth provided financial support for Tyndale and housed him in secrecy for six months while he did his work. When the translation was completed, Monmouth used his business connections to convince shipping merchants to smuggle English Bibles throughout England.

Tyndale would eventually be captured and killed for his work. Monmouth would do time in jail. But together, they gave the English speaking world a gift that has changed the course of history. It’s changed your life and mine.

Monmouth is one of the “gospel patrons” that John Rinehart profiles in his book Gospel Patrons: People Whose Generosity Changed the World. By “gospel patrons” he is talking about ‘people who resource and come alongside others to help them proclaim the gospel.”

Monmouth is not the only gospel patron whose story is told in Rinehart’s book. There’s also Lady Huntingdon, a captivating and colourful woman who used her considerable wealth to expand the preaching ministry of George Whitefield. And there’s John Thornton who used the resources God had given him to enlarge the ministry of John Newton (pastor and author of “Amazing Grace”).

Monmouth, Huntingdon and Thornton don’t typically get a lot of attention. Certainly not as much as William Tyndale, George Whitefield or John Newton. But without them, the ministries of all three men would have been greatly hampered and reduced.
I believe God is still raising up men and women to be Gospel patrons for His kingdom work today. Gospel patrons don’t all have the same financial portfolio or the same ministry passion. But they share a commitment to investing their God-given resources to support some aspect of kingdom ministry.

I believe God has some gospel patrons who share the concern of the Puritans who founded Harvard and do not want to see the churches left without qualified spiritual leaders when the present ministers “lie in the dust.” These gospel patrons agree with Charles Spurgeon about the supreme importance of supporting schools that train up “unmistakable gospel ministers.” They want to ensure that modern-day Sherebiahs have the support they need to launch out on a life-time journey of ministry.

I’m praying that God will raise up some gospel patrons who resonate with the need for a Bible school devoted to training men and women for life and ministry. I’m asking the Lord for Christians who see the vital need for a seminary like Heritage that is focused on supplying churches with godly, well-trained leaders. I’m looking for men like Humphrey Monmouth and John Thornton and women like Lady Huntingdon who will use some of the resources God has given them to assist Heritage.

Would you join me in praying for these gospel patrons? Will you consider being part of the answer to that prayer?

For more information or to invest in the ministry of Heritage visit us online at discoverheritage.com/donate

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Dr. Rick Reed became the President of Heritage College and Seminary on January 1, 2013. Prior to coming to Heritage, he served as the senior pastor at the Metropolitan Bible Church in Ottawa. Dr. Reed has been a plenary and seminar presenter for the Billy Graham School of Evangelism and a guest professor at Nassa Theological College in Mwanza, Tanzania.

Dr. Reed received his Bachelor of Arts from Biola University, Master of Theology from Dallas Theological Seminary and a Doctor of Ministry from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. Dr. Reed is committed to honouring Christ by training men and women to serve the Church and Christ’s mission in the world. He teaches homiletics at Heritage, helping train preachers to teach God’s Word in a life-changing way.

He is married to Linda who heads up The Heritage Centre for Women in Ministry. Linda received her Bachelor of Arts from Biola University, Master of Arts from the University of Texas at Arlington and is currently enrolled in a Doctor of Educational Ministry degree at Southern Seminary.