

# The Marks of a Revolutionary ...

## Dr. Greg Bourgond

I know you're probably wondering, "Does this guy have a life?" What am I doing on Christmas day writing a posting for my blog? I'll tell you why. As I was reading Scripture this morning I was reminded once again that truly devoted followers of Christ live in bold relief. According to *George Barna* in his latest book, *Revolution*, examination of key Biblical passages about the nature of the church (*Acts 2:42-47; 4:24, 31-35; 5:17-18, 27-29, 40-42*), [seven passions](#) marked its vibrancy and power in the first century. He suggests that these characteristics mark the Revolutionary, the modern day Christian who chooses to live their faith in bold relief. In a later chapter he presents some unflattering research regarding the current state of contemporary Christians pertaining to these same characteristics. Do the following [passions](#) mark your life?

### 1. Intimate Worship

He defines such worship as holistic in that it isn't relegated to formal worship on Sunday mornings alone. He describes 'intimate worship' as a commitment to (1) feel the awe of God's magnificence around us, (2) express gratitude for His love and authority, (3) acknowledge His control and power, (4) follow Him with dedication, and (5) enjoy the miracle of His relationship with us. Sometime ago I taught an extensive lesson on worship the main point of which was that worship is public, private, and personal. Everything we think, say and do can be an act of worship. Meditation on the things of God is worship. Appreciation of the beauty around us is worship. Service to others, regardless of their response, is an act of worship. Prayer and devotions are acts of worship. How we treat our wives and children should qualify as an act of worship. Awareness and acknowledgement of His presence is an act of worship. Dr. Bruce Leafblad of Southern Baptist Seminary put it this way. *"Worship is active communion with God in which believers by grace and through faith focus their hearts affection and minds' attention on humbly glorifying God in response to His character, His acts, and His Word."*

**Startling Statistic:** *Half of all believers say they do not feel they have entered into the presence of God or experienced a genuine connection with Him during the past year (Barna).*

### 2. Faith-Based Conversations

Early Christians were no shy about sharing their faith. They were excited about inviting others into a "sacred and priceless" relationship with their Creator through God's redemptive plan realized at the Cross. Evangelism wasn't an option, it was a lifestyle. We shouldn't be afraid to talk about our faith. Regardless of our ethnicity, our culture, our country of origin, our language, our circumstances, our generation, our gender—we all come into this world with a common malady and

lingering symptom. Augustine, an early church theologian said, *“Man is one of your creatures, Lord, and his instinct is to praise you. He bears about him the mark of death...But still, since he is a part of your creation, he wishes to praise you. The thought of you stirs him so deeply that he cannot be content unless he praises you, because you made us for yourself and our hearts find no peace until they rest in you.”* Blaise Pascal, a famous French mathematician and philosopher, said, *“What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself.”* Jean-Paul Satre, an existential philosopher who didn't believe in God described 'modern' culture as possessing *“a God-shaped hole.”* The Bible says that God *“has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end (Eccl 3:11).”* Every human being is born with a sense of the eternal—a God-shaped void—that can only be filled by Jesus Christ.

***Startling Statistic:*** *The typical church member will die without leading a single person to a lifesaving knowledge of and relationship with Jesus Christ (Barna).*

### **3. Intentional Spiritual Growth**

Early Christians placed their faith “at the center of their lives.” They derived their sense of “meaning, purpose, and direction from their connection to God and His commands.” I'm not sure we can say that today for many claim the fame but are embarrassed by the Name. When I took Neil T. Anderson to the airport after speaking at our first Heart of a Warrior Advance, he said he has witnessed the death of discipleship in many churches across the land. Pluralism marks many followers—a hodge podge of beliefs strung together resulting in a discordant faith. Vance Havner, a passive mentor of mine, called it 'smorgasbord' Christianity where you go along the line and pick what you want and leave the rest. One warrior leaned into his fear and came to me admitting his ignorance regarding the foundations of his faith. We have been in a one-on-one discipleship relationship since. He is growing by leaps and bounds. It is essentially because of the growing ignorance and illiteracy about the foundations of our faith **Heart of a Warrior Ministries** will be launching a new ministry called the **Foundations of a Warrior** in 2006. Evangelism may begin our journey with Christ—discipleship continues the journey that will hopefully lead to spiritual health and maturity. It's a continuum not two separate events.

***Startling Statistic:*** *Although the typical believer contends that the Bible is accurate in what it teaches, he or she spends less time reading the Bible in a*

*year than watching television, listening to music, reading other books and publications, or conversing about personal hobbies and leisure interests (Barna).*

#### **4. Servanthood**

Barna says that “the early Church (the body of Christ universal) fostered the notion that serving other people was the best means of demonstrating the example the Jesus had set for them—servanthood ... showed the transformation that their faith had wrought within them.” Hebrew scholars have long said true faith is beliefs in action. In the Bible James makes this point clear. *“If one of you says to him, “Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, “You have faith; I have deeds.” Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do. You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that-and shudder. You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God's friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction? As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead (James 2:16-26).” You see, nobody really cares about what we have to say regarding our faith until they observe how we live. A verbally articulated faith without validating service to others is dead.*

***Startling Statistic:*** *The typical believer would rather give money to an organization to allow it to do good deeds in society than personally assist in alleviating the needs of disadvantaged people (Barna).*

#### **5. Resource Investment**

Barna tells us that the passages cited in the footnote “specifically tell us that they shared everything with those in need, and that they used the variety of resources at their disposal—money, food, clothing, housing, relationships, influence, skills, time—for the benefit of all believers.” We define “stewardship” too narrowly I think. Biblical stewardship entails time, talent, and treasure. Maybe writing a check to some organization that will minister to others for us is not all God requires of us. Maybe He is asking us to personally deliver our resources (time, talent, and treasure) to others. The ‘tithe’ was first addressed in the Old Testament—a tenth. The New Testament doesn’t use the term. Instead it encourages us to give generously. A tithe might be too little too late. If you are committed to ‘tithing’ then tithe not only your income but also your time and your talents. Who are you giving yourself to? What are you giving yourself to? How

are you giving—joyously, sacrificially, as an act of worship? I know you might think I'm meddling at this point. I'm merely reminding us that we have more to give than just our finances. If finances are limited than we have time and talents to give. Put feet to you giving! Don't just hide behind a checkbook. Heart of a Warrior is all about engagement. Where are you engaged for the cause of Christ? What are you giving yourself to for the Lord?

***Startling Statistic:*** *When asked to explain their understanding of Biblical stewardship, less than one out of every twenty includes resources such as time, relationships, ideas, or skills in their assessment (Barna).*

## 6. Spiritual Friendships

Barna points out that the early Church “was all about relationships.” Friendships with others “provided not only encouragement but also loving accountability for spiritual integrity.” Men, we are as accountable as we want to be. There is no guarantee of accountability just because we join an accountability group. How accountable are you? To whom have you given the authority to ask the hard questions of you? Who, in your life, has permission to talk straight with you and ask you potentially embarrassing questions? I find it amazing that friendship today was yesterday's acquaintance. Many of us hide behind the tyranny of the urgent to justify the lack of initiative in developing true friendships with others that goes beyond superficial conversation. Just because you hang out with other guys doesn't mean they are truly friends. Abraham was called a friend of God because he was willing to sacrifice all that meant anything to him to prove his friendship. Who would you go to the battle line with? Who would you give your life for? Who would you call in the middle of the night if you were in trouble? Who would you share your deepest thoughts and struggles? Who do you have in your life that knows you and loves you regardless?

***Startling Statistic:*** *Fewer than one out of every six churched believers has a relationship with another believer through which spiritual accountability is provided (Barna).*

## 7. Family Faith

Barna reminds us that in the early Church “families taught the ways of God in their homes every day. Parents were expected to model a Spirit-led lifestyle for their children, and families were to make their home a sanctuary for God.” In my office proudly displayed is a painting by my grandson. When he was five years old he presented it to me. It depicted me with a microphone and a Bible speaking to men about Jesus. This is how he saw me at that tender age. How do you children see you? Do you talk to them about your faith? Do you pray with them? Do you live out your faith in front of them? Do they see you reading the Bible? Does your life bear the imprint of God's Son? Are you raising your children to be followers of Christ? I have given all six grandchildren two values

each that I hope will positively mark their lives. These Biblical values were carefully chosen after prayer and observation of them over time. Our 3-year old is truth and wisdom, 4-year old is goodness and integrity, 5-year old is courage and valor, 6-year old is love and joy, 7-year old is strength and honor, and our 8-year old is peace and justice. Every opportunity I have will be directed to enforcing those values in their lives so that their internal compass, the heart, will point to true North, Jesus Christ, in the midst of the storms they will surely face. My prayer is that their lives will bring honor to the Lord and that they will stand in bold relief for His name.

***Startling Statistic:*** *Apart from church-based programs, the typical Christian family spends less than three hours per month in endeavors designed to jointly develop or apply their faith (Barna).*