

FIRST OF ALL, PRAY!

BY BENJI BEILER

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Sermons in Rosedale Network of Churches

Continuing a multi-year theme of hearing how God is at work in our churches, the 2025 Feature Beacon articles focus on preaching within Rosedale Network of Churches. Each article features a recent sermon by a Rosedale Network pastor. May we all be encouraged by the faithful teaching of God's Word.

One of the amazing things about our neediness as humans is that in our need, we get to experience God's incredible provision. As I look back over the past ten years, I see my own weakness and neediness. Even more than that, I realize that I have had the privilege of seeing God's provision and care for me and my family. The way that God answers prayer is truly incredible; God's faithfulness to answer prayer just doesn't stop.

I Timothy 2:1-3 says, "First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior" (ESV).

Timothy received this letter from Paul, his mentor, while in Ephesus. Timothy had a lot of responsibility in the church at Ephesus, and I can imagine that he would have felt his need for God's help acutely. In these verses, Paul instructs Timothy to pray.

What if prayer would be *first of all*?

I love the way the chapter begins: "First of all." Timothy has just been told to keep the faith and maintain a clear conscience, and that some have left the faith. What does Paul follow that up with? "First of all...pray!" Too often, I turn to prayer in desperation *after* hard things and failure, instead of praying *first*. I want to learn to pray *first*! Many times in the last year, I've been in the midst of some struggle, stressed out, when I remember to stop and get down on my knees and cry out to God. I'm learning that this is typically followed by a breakthrough. What if prayer would be *first of all*?

Verse 1 mentions supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving. "Supplication" is the idea of offering a request for a felt need. This is what many of us do in a prayer service; we have a need in our life and feel weak, so we cry out to God together in supplication. This is good, and we should continue to do this!

"Prayers" is the most common and comprehensive word for prayer in the New Testament. It refers to the sacred opportunity that we have to speak and relate to the Lord of the universe, the Creator, the One who loves us and has adopted us, even though we do not deserve it. Paul is encouraging us to converse with God.

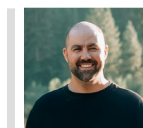
"Intercession" is the idea of praying for others. Prayer is about more than just us. In intercession, we bring others to God and ask Him to do His good work in their lives.

In "thanksgiving," we remember what God has done, look for what God is doing currently, and trust what God will do in the future. We take time to thank Him for His work past, present, and future.

Our neighbor, Señora Julia, recently became a part of our church family, and it reminded me of the way God moves when we pray. Three years ago, we moved to a new home in the city, and shortly after, there were some city detectives

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Benji lives in Los Angeles, California, with his wife, Maria, and six children. They desire to see Christ's kingdom come and His will be done, in Los Angeles as in Heaven.



Creative Purpose: Faith in Chaos

BY DARREN PEACHEY

Israel, a native of the Democratic Republic of Congo, loves the Lord and is a passionate worshipper of Jesus. Israel's mother gave birth to him in a refugee camp where he spent the first fourteen years of his life before traveling to the United States. Now a young man, Israel serves as a skilled worship leader in a Rosedale Network church plant in Texas.

Dale attends one of the original Rosedale Network churches in Michigan. Dale has benefitted from a Christian heritage of faith that has been both taught and experienced. Generations after Dale's ancestors came to the new America in the 1700s from Switzerland, Dale serves as an elder in his church and is investing in the mission of Rosedale International (RI), "Jesus to the World. The World to Jesus," by serving on the RI board.

Sandy would attend Bible studies and church services with her grandmother when she was a little girl. This Juarez, Mexico church plant was one piece of a long thread of events. In the 1960s and 70s, a vision began to emerge in Conservative Mennonite Conference to begin sharing the gospel in Central American countries. The young adults and families who were commissioned and sent from the US developed a love for the Latin people, and upon their return to the States, some began to plant churches in the southwest border cities. Jesus transformed lives, and Sandy is now married to a Rosedale Network pastor, continuing to multiply the Kingdom work that began several generations ago.

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is plenty of chaos and commotion...**

Aydiko and his family are one of many Ethiopian and Eritrean families that moved to Madison, Wisconsin, following the Eritrean-Ethiopian War in the late 1990s. Christians who immigrated started businesses, earned educational degrees, and began gathering in house fellowships according to their country of origin before forming more structured churches. Around 2017, some of the Ethiopian and Eritrean fellowships in Madison decided that the followers of Jesus

from these two countries in conflict needed to learn how to be the church together. Antioch International Church, a new congregation in Rosedale Network, is a beautiful example of "living at peace with one another" (Rom: 12:18 par.) and already has a vision of planting more international churches in cities across America. Aydiko serves on the pastoral team.

These little glimpses into the lives of Israel, Dale, Sandy, and Aydiko are the results of congregational visits across Rosedale Network that Caryn and I had the privilege of experiencing just this past January. They are a beautiful reminder of the Genesis to Revelation story of God's creative purpose.

The Creator blessed and gave a mandate to the man and woman created in His likeness and image in Genesis 1 to "...Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth" with the glory and likeness and image of the Creator (Gen. 1:28a). The proclamation in Revelation 5 reveals the fulfillment of God's creative purpose through the Lion of Judah, the Lamb who was slain—Jesus: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9).

God is a God of order and purpose, but from the human viewpoint, there is plenty of chaos and commotion that has been a reality in this masterplan of two people being commissioned to fill the earth with the likeness and image of God, culminating in people from every tribe, language, and nation, worshipping and serving King Jesus. A quick read through Hebrews chapter 11 will reveal that faith in God's

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Photo credit: Darren Peachey



Darren travels extensively with his wife, Caryn, visiting churches in his role as conference pastor of Rosedale Network of Churches. They live in Belleville, Pennsylvania, and attend Locust Grove Mennonite Church.



Anabaptism and the Vineyard

BY JON SHOWALTER

Anabaptism and Other Denominations

On this 500th anniversary of the beginnings of the Anabaptist movement, Rosedale Bible College's Beacon articles look at a wide variety of denominations within the household of faith. We hope to foster a humble, rooted, appreciation for how the gospel has come to us and to consider how Jesus might be calling us forward.

In 1993, *The Gospel Herald*, a periodical of the Mennonite church, published an article by Steve Dintaman entitled "The Spiritual Poverty of the Anabaptist Vision." It was widely commented upon and appreciated for its helpful critique of Harold Bender's articulation of the core of Anabaptist theology.

Dintaman pointed out that Bender's vision, 1) the Christian life as discipleship, 2) the church as community, and 3) the practice of nonresistant love, lacked some key points of emphasis that inevitably led to "spiritual poverty."

While Dintaman focused on several issues, one of his points was that "we [those disciplined in the Anabaptist vision] have been impoverished in our sense of the spiritual presence and power of the risen Christ. It was only when Christ's redeeming death and resurrection had taken place, and His empowering presence had been poured out through the Holy Spirit, that fruitful apostolic ministry began to happen."

Dintaman's article is short and to the point. It's still worth reading more than 30 years later! For me, it articulates why the Vineyard has been a friend to and a helpful church movement for many Anabaptists.

I grew up in a home that was deeply influenced by the Vineyard.

The Vineyard has its roots in the Jesus People movement of the 1960s and 70s. The anti-establishment sentiments of the hippies were causing consternation in broader society and the church. How should the church reach out to and love this generation of young people who were questioning all forms of authority and convention?

Chuck Smith was one pastor who took this call seriously. The Calvary Chapel movement grew from his efforts. John Wimber was another leader who looked to organize and build a movement during this era. What emerged under Wimber's leadership is known as the Vineyard. Today, there are about

500 Vineyard churches scattered throughout the United States. They claim a membership of around 130,000.

Whereas Calvary Chapel emphasized the Bible and expository preaching, the Vineyard was birthed with an emphasis on worship and the move of the Holy Spirit. During the early 80s, Wimber was helping to facilitate a class at Fuller Seminary called *Signs, Wonders, and Church Growth*. He would teach for the first part of the class and then say, "What good is it to teach about this stuff if we aren't doing it?" He proceeded to pray for and minister to students in his class. Various "signs and wonders" did indeed follow. During this season, Wimber was giving more time to evangelism and church planting than to seminary teaching.

This emphasis on the work of the Holy Spirit is still at the heart of the Vineyard churches. In the core values listed in their material, the first point of emphasis is *Partner with the Holy Spirit*. The second is *Experience and Worship God*. The rest of their vision, which latches on to an "already/not yet" view of the Kingdom, flows from these two points of emphasis. The Kingdom language that is used feels familiar to me as an Anabaptist.

I grew up in a home that was deeply influenced by the Vineyard. My parents sat in John Wimber's *Signs and Wonders* class at Fuller during the time the Vineyard movement was being

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Photo credit: [Math: "Green Tree Field"](#)



Matt is the academic dean at Rosedale Bible College. He and his wife, Colleen, live in Plain City, Ohio, and have five children. Matt has been an active leader and member of Agape Community Church of Hilliard for the past 13 years.



Eyes to See

by Rose Dale International

The following article was written by Dani, a worker in Thailand.

In the morning, when the people of the town got up, there was Baal's altar, demolished, with the Asherah pole beside it cut down and the second bull sacrificed on the newly built altar (Judges 6:28 ESV)!

If you ever visit Thailand, one of the first things you will notice is the number of shrines and idols that crowd daily life. Almost every home is accompanied by a spirit house, a shrine for protective spirits. Some trees, believed to be inhabited by spiritual beings, flow with colorful cloth, ribbons, and flowers. Taxi drivers paint symbols on the roofs of their cabs to ward off bad spirits. Street food vendors offer plates of food and incense in hopes that spirits will bring blessings. People wear amulets around their necks and place symbols above their doorways for protection.

When I pray over Bangkok, I often get a picture of a fat dragon coiling on top of the city, crushing the Thai people beneath it. Enslaved to this dragon, the people stumble, dragging heavy chains behind them. The dragon's hot breath stifles them, and smoke from its nose pollutes the air.

You may wonder: why don't the Thai people throw off these chains? Why do they continue appeasing the dragon? I think it is because they have been blinded. How can we open their eyes?

A friend recently visited a region of southern Asia. The believers there also face a culture filled with idol worship, and shared an insight from Judges 6:25-32. I will summarize the passage:

God tells Gideon to tear down his father's altar to Baal, cut down the Asherah pole beside it, and build an altar to the Lord on top of the rubble. On this altar, Gideon must offer his father's bull as a burnt offering, using the Asherah pole as fuel. Under the cover of night, Gideon takes ten servants to do as God said.

When the people of the town wake to discover Gideon's actions, they go to his father's house, demanding he hand over his son to be put to death. Gideon's father responds, "Are you defending Baal? If Baal really is a god, he can defend himself."

The believers in southern Asia noticed the difference in Gideon's father: before Baal's altar was destroyed, he was a staunch believer—blind to God. But with Baal's altar gone, he

had eyes to see that Baal was just stone, nothing more. This insight intrigues me.

With Baal's altar gone, he had eyes to see that Baal was just stone, nothing more.

A dear friend and her family favor a particular serpent dragon called Payanak, worshiping him in hopes that he will protect their family and bring them prosperity. I have shared my faith with them and they seemed open, but suddenly lost interest. When my husband visits our Buddhist neighbor, he feels the strong man there too, binding our friend up during long conversations. We know other Thai people who are reading the Bible and even seem to experience God working in their lives, yet cannot see the Truth. It's just out of their grasp.

Just like Baal, the idols in the houses of the Thai people are nothing more than stone and wood. And just like Gideon's father before his idol was destroyed, the Thai people are blinded to God. We cannot walk into our neighbors' houses and destroy their idols like Gideon did. So, what can we do? The believers my friend met with in South Asia are praying about this now.

Recently, my Thai Bible study has been studying the book of Revelation. One of the many things that has struck me during this study is that God wins. There is no question—Satan can only lose. I can rest assured that God will, in His perfect timing, open the eyes of the Thai people and set them free. One day, the dragon will be overthrown, and the Thai people will experience the incredible joy that comes from only their Creator.

Please join me as I pray for eyes to be opened, captives to be set free, and Christ's love to transform Thailand, southern Asia, and all unreached peoples of the world. 🙏

Photo credit: Ramiro Poggi.



RI is the mission arm of Rose Dale Network of Churches, working to take Jesus to the ends of the earth by fully engaging Rose Dale Network churches in maturing and multiplying disciples, especially among the least reached.

First of All, Pray! *cont'd from page 1*

outside looking for Señora Julia. They had come to tell her that her son had been killed. We didn't get a chance to interact with her much for the next while, but our church prayed for her to find Jesus. For three years, we didn't know what God was up to. But then, in the early part of this year, she started attending our church and shared with us that after her son had died, she had become a believer. God had answered our prayers and had spoken to her. He was at work, even though we couldn't see it at the time.

First of all, pray! Then, watch what our God will do. 🕊

Creative Purpose: Faith in Chaos *cont'd from page 2*

bigger story of redeeming humanity for God's glory requires living by faith in what appears to be plenty of chaos.

Setting sail in the 1700s from Switzerland, releasing and commissioning sons and daughters to live in Central and South America, leaving all that was familiar behind because of war, and sharing the gospel in unfamiliar places are all significant pieces of the past and present of Rosedale Network of Churches. Each story, each era, reveals living by faith in seasons of chaos and upheaval, each contributing to God's amazing mission that every tribe, language, and nation will be represented in His Kingdom as people are "being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor. 3:18).

Are we willing to embrace the chaos, by faith, in this season of Rosedale Network as we continue participating in God's creative purpose of filling the earth with the glory, likeness, and image of Himself?

A Song of Pilgrimage

*I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.*

*He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;
indeed he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.*

*The Lord watches over you—
the Lord is your shade at your right hand;
the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.*

*The Lord will keep you from harm—
he will watch over your life;
the Lord will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore" (Psa. 121). 🕊*

Anabaptism and the Vineyard *cont'd from page 3*

born. I remember both of my parents telling stories about the profound influence Wimber's ministry had in their lives. Some of this was formative for me as well. In college, I would "sneak off" to Vineyard worship services for times of ministry where the work of the Holy Spirit was emphasized.

During this time, the new "praise and worship" music was also beginning to find a place in Mennonite church services. In the 90s, many of the early praise and worship songs were flowing out of the Vineyard movement. God was using the Vineyard to breathe new spiritual vitality into churches across denominational lines. This movement coincided with the exact time that Dintaman was noting the "spiritual poverty of the Anabaptist Vision."

There is much that I appreciate about the Vineyard. It's inspirational to sense their serious emphasis on Kingdom building in the context of the work of the Spirit. This is broader than just "charismatic gifts." The Anabaptist movement, with its focus on the works of the Kingdom and serious discipleship/spiritual formation, has sometimes minimized the vital work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Dintaman called this "spiritual poverty." I believe the Vineyard has been a helpful and renewing movement that reminds us Anabaptists of the spiritual power and source of God's Kingdom. Though Bender's "Anabaptist Vision" articulates deeply held Mennonite values, the Vineyard has helped to breathe new life and spiritual vitality into that vision. And for that, I am grateful. 🕊