Belhaven College
Kickoff Dinner Address 1999
Dr. Roger Parrott
Transcript

Jesus Christ is the Same Yesterday, Today, and Forever

A month ago the best of my Reformed theology was shaken to the core, by way of my Macintosh computer.

For eleven years I've started a school year giving a major address to the faculty, staff, and board in a setting like this -- although never as nice as this before, so we're coming along I think.

I've always prepared that speech, working months in advance, keeping stacks of notes of issues I want to consider, priorities I want to highlight, and challenges I want to share. After all, this is my only opportunity each year to talk to all of you who make the College a success.

And this year was no different. So throughout the past many months I've collected ideas, listened to every conversation in terms of what it means for Belhaven's future, carefully selected a verse of the year that frames my ideas, and then hopefully I could articulate all of what I'm thinking into three major points, like good preachers do.

Well, in mid-July I had a day were it all came together. And writing with a flurry, the ideas flowed, the structure came, and all the points I wanted to share with you seemed to find their way together into my jigsaw puzzle. So without interruption I wrote for hours and hours, tossing my notes as I went along, until the huge packet of reference material, and scraps of paper holding miscellaneous ideas filled my waste basket.

I felt great when I turned off the computer that night, for I was 90% ready to share with you the ideas and challenges that I've been thinking about. And my plan was to let it sit for a week to make sure I hadn't missed anything, and then come back and spend a couple days polishing it up to try to make it as short as possible.

But then I discovered what a corrupted logic board will do to the world's best plans, for everything on my computer was gone when I tried to turn on the lap top early the next morning. And I came hurrying back to the office to find our housekeeping staff was much more efficient than I wished they were that day, for they had emptied the waste basket and all the notes were gone.

In a state of desperation, my mind could barely recall the three points which seemed so clear and bold the day before. And as many times as I've sat down at the keyboard since that day, the words and ideas just seem to be lost forever.

Now, from a Reformed perspective, if God is working in every aspect of our lives, why doesn't he

care about logic boards in lap top computers? And if he does care about them, why did he allow it to crash AFTER all my ideas were typed in? And if anything, shouldn't an all knowing God protect a clever three point outline where all the key issues, the verbs, and the solutions all begin with the same letter?

But in God's predestination, all my stuff was lost for good in the bites and bits of a Macintosh. I feel like the old joke about the Presbyterian minister who fell down the basement steps, picked himself up and said, "I'm glad that's over."

Well, I couldn't understand why all this came about until three days ago. That was when, a clear as a bell, God said that tonight I should tell you three things: the first two are short and simple -- (1) everyone should back up your computer! and (2) don't assume it's a made up story when students tell you they lost their assignment when their computer crashed. (Although I will point out I still made the deadline.)

The third is: Share with them your heart, not just your ideas.
Share with them your heart not a strategic plan.
Share with them out of your convictions, not a memorable outline.
Share with them out of your convictions, not your notes.

I've always tried to make this occasion a time to challenge the faculty, reassure the board, and encourage the staff. And achieving those mixed goals calls for a carefully prepared stew. It demands a bit of higher education theory, a dash of financial management, and sprinkle of New Testament promises. And since I know what I say is scrutinized, I try to chose my words carefully, not talk about anything that I haven't thought through completely, and attempt to challenge us without overwhelming us.

Tonight, you're not going to get that, for God said to share what's in my heart, not just what's in my head. It won't fit neatly into our verse of the year as did the first speech I wrote. And what I want to share won't show up in my landscape plan, for I'm not sure I'm ready for this to go to SACS.

But I want to tell you where I am in the journey.

Scared to Death Every Day

I spent five days in early August with eighteen Christian College presidents, where we had nine new presidents and nine of us who have been doing this longer, in a mentoring relationship.

And in a moment of extreme candor on about day four, one of the most senior presidents, from one of our most prestigious Christian Colleges said, I go to work scared to death every day. And I said to myself "amen."

I do go to work every day, scared to death -- but I would quickly add that since coming here, I also go to work full of optimism. Because I am completely convinced that today Belhaven

College has an opportunity to be totally different from the rest of Higher Education.

I believe that right now Belhaven has a window of opportunity to be America's leader in making a significant impact in Christian higher education.

And I'm so convinced, that last week when an inquiry came from an executive search firm about the one leadership position, that for 15 years I have always thought is the greatest job in the Christian world -- I tossed the letter into the trash, for I don't want to miss where God is going to lead Belhaven College.

So tonight I want to share with you why I believe we have the potential to be the nation's most significant instrument of God in preparing men and women academically and spiritually to serve Christ Jesus in their careers, in human relationships, and in the world of ideas.

But I also believe that we will not reach the world for Christ if we simply ride in the current of higher education. For I'm scared to death of where that current is pulling us:

The Future of Higher Education

Our nation is at risk as the gulf grows between the educated and the under prepared. While the world has grown increasingly complex, education has become increasingly simple to assure that students can get over the bar.

Maybe more importantly, the most influential educational institution in the world --television -- has set the pattern for how we learn and what we learn. So that in 1999, too many now see the world through the eyes of the FOX network, rather than though the eyes of the Lamb of Christ.

We can't undo the energizing or numbing connections in our brains that mesmerize us as dozens of images flash during a 30 second commercial targeted at GenXers. And I'm not one who believes that the media is the big bad enemy for I want my 50 channel cable box just as much as anyone does for there is lots of good stuff in there too.

- But I do know that students learn differently than they did just a few short years ago. So distributed learning will most likely be one of our future paths to a student's mind. We will need to help students learn through traditional classroom methods, as well as the media, and the computer.

- I do know that only 10% of entering freshmen and 20% of their parents can define the liberal arts or care what it means to their education. So we could be driving a car on it's last leg if we don't put new life back into it. And I'm thrilled we are starting to do that through our new general education World-View curriculum beginning this fall.

- I do know that our graduates will have four to seven careers (not just seven jobs) during their lifetime. And one study predicts that up to 40% of the population will change jobs in a single year in the new millennium. So we will be most successful if we will prepare students for stability in the midst of a lifetime of constant change.

- I do know that students who pass entrance tests are not necessarily prepared for college level work because there are too many good ACT score students and high GPA transfer students who fail. So we need to provide concentrated studies in the basics if they are to succeed at Belhaven's academic standards, which we are not about to lower. And I was thanking God for our faculty last spring when I held a series of discussions and nearly unanimously they were advocating an aggressive concentrated studies effort to help our under prepared students. And yes, we must go this direction and go there quickly.

  But providing additional preparation work doesn't mean we water down what we do in the classroom. For contrary to the assumption of some, all the research shows that students want to be challenged. But what they want is to be assured of help all along the way as we push them to become their best.

- I do know that the behavioral standards of the television network executives have shaped the lifestyle patterns of our students. So we have a responsibility to teach students that in Christ there is an alternative for the major choices they make, as well as the civility of day to day living.

- I do know that marketers have created in Americans a new wave of elitism, so that brand prestige has become more important than the quality behind it. And as more and more students see college only as a credential for the job market, they find it safer to choose a "brand name" institution. So if we want to be a College of influence, we will only do so if our reach is broad and our "brand" is known, understood, and respected.

- And I do know that television's window to the world has bombarded students with so many choices, that the largest number of inquires for higher education come students who are undecided in their major. And those students, who do not yet have the internal motivation of a clear direction, see a small college as a disadvantage since the number of majors is limited. So to be successful in reaching these students, they must have clear signs of encouragement if they are to select a school like ours, rather than seeing all the attention directed at those who have selected a major field of study.

Here is the bare truth: we have before us the hard choice which is facing most of higher education square in the face. Do we try to manipulate the bar to somehow recapture an idealized student body of the past, or do we retool what we do to address the student needs of today?

The wealthy schools are taking the first option for they have gone out to buy the gifted and refined students who come as freshmen and live in their residence halls.

The Stock Market Growth and "Willingness to Pay"

I believe that the landscape of higher education has changed more dramatically in the past 5 years than in any other time in modern history because the stock market has gone up 200%. An endowment that was worth $100 million in 1995 is now worth $300 million or more.

The heavily endowed schools can now buy the students who come well prepared, are highly motivated, have all the right diverse interests, and are good alumni long before they ever enroll. And they are doing it with a vengeance as they use the endowments that have tripled to pour millions into new financial aid.

And in a shrinking market of well prepared students, those prime prospect students will not fill a freshman class at any institution without lots money. Because we've also discovered a new concept in higher education called "willingness to pay."

Today, the financial ability of a family often runs counter to the family's financial contribution to college. The bright students come from the families where they have had opportunities for experiences and educational support. But now those families judge the merit of their worth, on the size of their scholarship award letter, rather than the value of the education they are about to receive.

And for the less well to do, many families could not afford college without substantial financial aid, since the personal savings rate has dropped in the past 15 years from 10% of disposable income into the negative savings range.

Here is the reality of this economic gulf: at Belhaven we discount tuition about 25%, while across the street and around the nation the wealthy schools are doubling that amount of financial aid. For example, one study shows that counting only the actual dollars paid out of their pocket, a student can go to Stanford University in San Francisco for less money than they can go to Westmont College in Santa Barbara, one of the nation's premier Christian Colleges.

And there are probably many students who can go to Vanderbilt for less money out of their pocket than what they will spend to come to Belhaven College. And all can go to Ole Miss for less than what they will pay us. And with the pull of "brand name" recognition, they are going by the bus load.

The facts of the market are frightening. This year there will be 80,000 freshmen in America who scored 21 or better on the ACT and who come from families that make $70,000 or more annually. But only 18% of all college students will attend a private college, which leaves us a pool of 14,400 students.

But to cut it down further, only 44% of these students will be traditional age residential students, so we are down to 6,400 students. And to further understand our market, only 15% of all college students are evangelical Christians.

Thus, the theoretical market pool of gifted students from moderately affluent families who are interested in a Christ-center education is only 960 students nationwide. And many of them received a big scholarship someplace.

Add to this that students with ACT scores of 24, the average of our freshman class this year, will

receive unsolicited direct mail from about 120 different colleges and universities. Plus we must factor into this depressing equation that today, it takes an average of $1,700 to recruit each freshman.

Thus, as we look ahead, we must simultaneously hold solid our standards of an educated Belhaven graduate while providing the support and help needed for our state's high school graduates. For if we are not willing to work with students who need a bit more help, who have a bit farther to go, who need more focus because their major is undecided, and who may need more external motivation than what we've seen in the past, we will have empty classrooms. Because the dwindling number of high achieving high school graduates are literally riding the wave of this stock market to discounted education at the brand name institutions.

And to answer your question before you ask it, yes, we are working diligently to build our endowment fund thanks to a start up grant from the Irby Foundation, because building our endowment is critical to our long term success.

But building an endowment is a process which comes over years and decades of work. And no matter what level of success we have, we started this 100 mile race about 94 miles behind, so with the stock market surge of the late 1990's it's unlikely we could ever catch up.

I Am Optimistic About Belhaven's Future

But rather than being discouraged by this dramatic shift in higher education, I'm optimistic about Belhaven College for five compelling reasons:

(1) I am optimistic because of the opportunity we have to significantly change the lives of our students:

I am convinced that we have in place the right faculty, staff, and board to make a significant difference in the lives of our students.

- I believe that in those students who God is sending us, Belhaven College can be THE pivotal turning point of their life, not simply the next step on the ladder. For many of our students we will either help them to turn on the light for excellence and service, or we will allow them to drift off into mediocrity and self-centeredness.

- I believe in the concept of "value added" education first developed by Sandy Aston at UCLA. Because our greatest fulfillment should not be found in guiding a top flight freshman class toward graduation, but in graduating a well prepared student who really needed our help when they walked in our door.

- I believe our investment in the lives of students will redeem from the cultural tide those who would otherwise be lost -- and that is the real joy of Christian education because that is what Christ did for us. Although money is not the only benchmark of success, one of our nation's Christian colleges has four self-made billionaires in their alumni roles. And all four are now

providing national influence for Christian endeavors, but the president told me that none of the four was an outstanding student during their time at the College.

The passage of scripture which contains our verse of the year reminds us to entertain strangers. And sometimes, we may look at our students and feel like we have strangers in our living room.

But among those strangers are many angels who God is preparing to change the world if we do our part. We just need to help them to discover the special combination of strengths God gave to them, that he didn't give to anyone else. We must enable them to find direction, and then encourage them to develop the motivation and discipline to excel.

What gives me the most hope is that Jesus himself handpicked from all the people of his day, a classroom of students who were ill prepared, crudely mannered, often misguided, and poorly motivated. And throughout the three years of his educational program with them, the results were sometimes far short of the mark of excellence.

But he did not give up on them and all but one eventually succeeded. Through the power of Christ and in God's timing, they became ready to change the entire world.

And one other very important fact gives me hope for these less than ideal students. And that is -- God loves them just as much as he does the student who scored a 36 on their ACT and is captain of the debate team and the football team. You bet we are going to continue to work to attract to Belhaven every one of those enjoyable to teach students we can find. And I would never suggest throwing open the front door, for we are not good stewards if we bring to the College those students who do not have the capacity to succeed at our level of education.

But whether the students in your class or on your team are the brightest that has ever set foot on our campus, or the least prepared, God loves them equally and wants a life of service and fruitfulness from all of them. And our responsibility is to add value to their lives during their education at Belhaven, no matter the level of abilities they bring to us.

Our future as a College is most importantly dependent on our outlook and attitude than it simply is our admissions standards. I believe that like the pastor of a little church which never grows, if we spend more time on Sunday morning worrying about the caliber people who didn't show up for Sunday School, than we do teaching the ones who did come, negative projections will always become reality.

For our standard of Belhaven's quality should not be measured simply by the characteristics of the students who come to freshman orientation, but by growth within the students who walk across our graduation platform.

While I fear for the future of higher education, I believe that the faculty and staff of Belhaven has a vision for value added education -- taking the precious lives God has entrusted to us, and through Christ molding and making them into people who are equipped to change the world.

And I just wonder, if we really understood what God could do with any consecrated life, and if we followed Christ's example of value added education and mentoring, could we also graduate 11 out of every 12 students God sends to us?

(2) I am optimistic in the midst of fear because Belhaven has not been drawn into the pitfalls of most Christian Colleges.

I believe that many Christian colleges have become marginalized at best, and more likely ignored in the selection choices of prospective students, and in the discussion of the academy. And most try to blame the culture for minimizing the attractiveness of Christian education.

But I believe they have become that way because most of Christian higher education has followed the nature of secular education and has drifted from focus on its mission, to focus on political infighting and suspicion, the dilution of truth in teaching, and the self-interest of departments and offices over the good of the institution.

And when Christian higher education looks no different from the rest of higher education in the way it treats one another, it doesn't deserve respect and recognition.

Whether driven by inferiority in the reflection of elite and state institutions, or by sinful selfishness, I believe that too many of our Christian Colleges have turned their energy inward and they are dying from the cancer that has taken root.

The water cooler discussion on too many campuses is not about service opportunities, enriching students, or equipping the Church with leaders, but rather it has moved to the topics that define the distinctive between disagreeing factions, the assumption and assignment of motives to those who are not trusted, and the struggle for power and control.

One of my great hopes for Belhaven is that we are and will always be different. Let us have the courage to not follow the trend that has engulfed so many of our sister institutions.

- I believe this can be the place where we can trust one another in Christian fellowship.

- I believe this can be a place where the board respects the faculty, and the faculty allows the board to provide the leadership.

- I believe this can be a place where administrators and staff can be servants to the educational progress, and those on the front line of education say thank you to the support team.

- I believe this can be a place where what is best for students will always come before any personal ambition.

Now let me be clear, it is not avoiding disagreement that is the goal, for healthy discussion and challenging of ideas will make us all stronger. In fact, my goal is that we create opportunities for everyone to have the right to influence the decisions that affect them, and the right to understand

every decision after it is made.

But it is the spirit behind the process that we must treasure. As Spencer Perkins preached in his last sermon on our campus, may God give us a culture of grace. And if the grace of Christ surrounds every interaction, then we can deal with any difficult issue that comes our way.

Folks, we cannot afford to get swept into the splintering division that has taken over most of Higher Education and even Christian higher education.

If our campus was to become a place where the liberal arts purest live in moral superiority to the vocational faculty, or spiritual piety is expressed through divisions over worship styles or social issue litmus tests, or grumbling and gossip replaces the discussion of scholarly ideas, then we lose all authority to lift up Christ to the world.

Let me say that again -- we cannot afford to get swept into the splintering division that has taken over most of Christian higher education.

- If our campus was to become a place where the liberal arts purest live in moral superiority to the vocational faculty,
- or spiritual piety is expressed through divisions over worship styles or social issue litmus tests,
- or grumbling and gossip replaces the discussion of scholarly ideas,

then we lose all authority to lift up Christ to the world.

If mistrust develops between the board, faculty, and administration in any combination, or if pressure causes people to retreat and protect rather than to dream and expand, then we will become just like most of the 3,600 campuses in our country. And if we ever become arrogant in the classroom, or are disrespectful and demeaning in the administrative process, we should not expect families to go into debt to pay for a Belhaven education.

My single biggest concern as we grow, is that what has become the negative nature of most Christian colleges will also gradually sweep over Belhaven. Organizational theory says that this is likely to happen as we grow in size and scope. And when I realize we have 41% more employees than we did when I arrived 3 1/2 years ago, I know we could step outside of a culture of grace much easier than we could stay in.

So I want to ask you to join me in doing one thing this year. Will you pray for each other? Nothing will keep us together more than praying for each other by name. Pray for the people you work closest with, and for those you don't know.

And especially pray for those with whom you have the most personal difficulty. I really like how it was said in a wonderful letter this summer from Geof Acker, our language and culture professor, who was sharing some insights. Geof said, "It is impossible to tear down people for whom I am praying, at least if I hope to have any integrity about my prayers."

Our campus will stay close to Jesus only when we pray.

And to guide our prayers, Sheila Skipper has helped me create a booklet called praying across the campus. In it, I have some background on the concept and how to use it. But I hope you will keep it close and use it daily.

(3) <u>I am optimistic in the midst of fear because Belhaven is achieving high levels of quality all across our campus</u>.

There is no question in my mind, that if you remove the bells and whistles, what we provide undergraduates is stronger than any of the state universities. I'm resisting the very strong temptation to name names, for as I look through each of our academic majors, athletic teams, and residence life I see quality people providing quality education.

I see aggressive faculty who are not afraid to roll up their sleeves and build their department rather than sit back and wait to see who admissions brings to sit at their feet.

I see an adult program and graduate degrees that are as innovative in their delivery as they are effective in their impact. I see coaches who care as much about building character than they do winning games. I see a student life team that wants to draw out the potential in every student, and a library staff that does things right.

But I also see across our campus a support staff that desires to make life easier rather than to create obstacles of power. I see experienced senior administrators who have a clear vision for Belhaven. I see a maintenance team that has worked wonders on our campus in the past three years.

I see recruiters for our traditional program and Excel, a development team, and public information specialists who work endless hours without much appreciation because they can present Belhaven with integrity. I see a cafeteria staff, business office, security team, and registrar's office where a caring ear and smile can make up for the frustrations of reality.

I see a board who carries their responsibility with care and the weight it deserves. And I see a host of friends who are turning dreams into reality through their generous gifts which are launching new programs, providing scholarships, and constructing buildings.

And you know what, after ten years on the drawing board, we ARE going to build that student center. Which I know will lift us to a whole new platform in recruiting and serving students.

And tonight, I want you to join me in thanking two special friends of the College who made a commitment just last week that pushed us much closer to our goal. Warren and Elsie Hood, would you stand so we could thank you for what you have done.

Last Friday these wonderful friends of the College who have cared for and led this institution for 40 years made a commitment of $2 million dollars -- $1 million for the new Student Union, and $1 million for scholarships.

(recognition of Mr. and Mrs. Hood)

As of today, we have $6.7 million committed toward our $11.5 million goal for the Student Union, the Gymnasium expansion, and ballet studios. And with this gift from the Hoods, I know we can make it -- and we're going to give everyone in this room an opportunity to help build these vital facilities.

I'm so proud of Belhaven, for we have quality all across our campus and in our newer programs in Memphis and Orlando. But we can still do better. Yes, we need to drill down in some areas for we need to add some faculty in enhancing positions, we need a major infusion of new science equipment, and our fine arts program will also have to work extra hard until we can get a facility.

But the bottom line of excellence is that our overall quality will never be better than what each of us does individually. And I hope you'll join with me in turning up another notch your personal commitment to quality. For it has been recommended by the experts that one way of thinking about quality is for every person on campus to be faithful in the little things.

I hope you're so concerned with quality that you are sometimes ...

- troubled when ... every class session isn't the very best it can be,
- troubled when ... trash is not picked up on campus,
- troubled when ... practice for the team is not well planned,
- troubled when ... advisees don't show up for preregistration,
- troubled when ... phones are not answered with a happy spirit,
- troubled when ... supporters are not presented with our best request,
- troubled when ... a student is not given every opportunity to succeed academically,
- troubled when ... interested prospective students are not contacted promptly,
- and I hope you are troubled if any student is not treated with respect in every situation.

All of us are responsible for quality. And in the competitive climate of higher education, only schools of quality will thrive in the years ahead.

(4) I am optimistic because, second only to our faith, Belhaven has the single most important attribute necessary for a college to succeed in the new millennium -- the ability to change quickly.

A major New York based market and research firm reports, "successful small colleges are those that are adaptable. These colleges recognize that the era of colleges populated only with traditional 18-year-olds is over. But the adaptable college will appeal to a variety of groups.

"Earnie Boyer of the Carnegie Commission calls these colleges the New American College, which will look quite different from small colleges of the past. The staff and faculty of these colleges will not only judge success by their traditional undergraduate population, but by their ability to provide a quality education to a variety of publics. In a nutshell, the new American small college will have these six attributes:

1. The new American college will be suburban or suburban like. Students may avoid the urban colleges because of the sense of danger. Rural college will have difficulty because there will not be a population base to support important non-traditional programs.

2. The new American college will enroll a blend of age groups. Along with traditional-age students will be a strong population of adult students.

3. The new American college will have a combination of programs. Traditional 18-year-olds will share the classrooms with full and part-time adult students. Graduate programs will flourish.

4. The new American college will be open virtually 24 hours a day. Day and evening classes as well as weekend programs will keep classrooms filled.

5. The new American college will have a minority population of 20-35 percent of their enrollment. No college will exist at its present size that caters only to a white population.

6. The new American college will enroll an increased number of international students. As American higher education becomes more popular, international students will seek colleges that offer practical, career oriented programs that genuinely appreciate the contribution of foreign students to the campus."

So is Belhaven on the cutting edge or what?? <u>That is a fairly good description of Belhaven College today</u>.

Our adaptability to new delivery systems for higher education has made all the difference in our outlook as we face the fear of higher education's future.

Remember, higher education is the only major industry in America which did not downsize voluntarily or involuntarily during the 1990s, and our time will come. And although there is a strong temptation to stop and catch our breath, or just take care of what we've got in place and hold steady, or even worse, attempt to turn back the clock, we must stay on a course which keeps us pushing.

As the quoted report says, "any College that falls prey to the view that things will improve and then we can go back to the 'good old days' may be listed among the group who will struggle at best or close all together.

I think we are doing great and according to this report we are. But already this analysis is out of date, for higher education began within the past two years may be its most dramatic change yet as distance education is becoming a viable quality alternative.

So, I'm going to push us to take a fast and hard look at the next step, for what we have always called non-traditional education has now become traditional education. And what we call a

residential campus of 18 year olds, I guess we now call a wonderful luxury.

But the next big future is distance education. And through a series of discussions, research, and open doors, I am convinced that those schools that move aggressively within the next year will lock in a large part of the market, and those who wait any longer will be left on the outside looking in.

Dan Fredericks and I have been studying in detail our options for what is called distributed education, which is a combination of delivery by Internet, video, CD-ROM, text, and classroom discussion. And I am going to be asking the faculty and the board to carefully examine a unique open door that could broaden Belhaven's reach many times over, and provide the avenue which takes to a very large audience, the Belhaven Brand of Christian Education.

If we were to take this step, it will call for aggressiveness, courage, and sound judgment. In fact, this step would call for throwing off the life preservers that keep us floating, to enable us to swim against the current with the big fish.

(5) <u>Finally, I am optimistic because I am convinced that despite the tidal wave of postmodernism, Belhaven has a faculty, board, and staff that will assure that God's Truth will be lifted up in all we do</u>.

There are lots of definitions of the post modern era in which we live. But essentially postmodernism is characterized by the belief that truth does not exist in our objective sense, but it is created rather than discovered. Things like reason, rationality, and confidence are cultural biases. And truth should be created by a specific culture and exists only in that culture. And all of this created truth should be valued equally.

But I can best grasp postmodernism in the definition from Millard Erickson when he put this dramatic cultural shift in terms of a test in the music department.

In 1930 the question on the exam question read, "define rhythm"

In 1960 the exam question was, "the movement of music in time, including tempo and meter is called _____"

In 1990 the question on the exam read, "the movement of music in time, including tempo and meter is called" -- and then four multiple choice options were given, (a) melody, (b) harmony, (c) rhythm, and (d) interval.

In 2000 the exam question is, "the movement of music in time, including tempo and meter make you feel: and then four multiple choice options were given,

a) I don't understand the question
b) I think this is an unfair question
c) I don't know what the word rhythm means so I chose to skip this question and not have it counted against my grade

d) It doesn't matter how I feel as long as it's my own authentic feeling and everyone respects it and accepts it to be as valid as their own feeling.

We are losing to the post modern era -- when feelings are as valid as ideas and truth, when there is no hierarchy of validity of one viewpoint over another, and when absolute truth is considered mean spirited and a play for power and domination.

If you and I teach that some beliefs and behaviors are right or wrong, for all people, in all cultures, at all times, then in the post modern culture we are intolerant and considered an appropriate target for the intolerance of others. As the Dean of Stanford University in California said to a group of Church leaders, "in approaching someone with the Gospel you are implying that the person's beliefs are inferior to your own. Such an implication is unacceptable because it is self-righteous, biased, and intolerant."

In the final minutes of this evening, I can't begin to build a complete argument for the demand for us to teach Truth on our campus. But I don't need to because you already believe it.

But I do know it is easy for us all to have our edges ground down by the waves of a powerful culture. And if we don't understand the depth of the problem, we will be ineffective in convincing our students of the imperative to challenge post modern thinking.

So I want to offer you a book again this year. If you read it, I'll pay for it, and like last year, if you take one and don't read it by thanksgiving, you have to come back to the bookstore and pay for it yourself.

Eighteen months ago I heard Josh McDowell speak at a breakfast where he laid out the most wonderful contrast between our commitment to Truth and our post modern culture. And afterwards I told him that in the Christian higher education world we desperately needed to have in print his ideas, and fortunately he already had the book underway.

So this spring it was published: "The New Tolerance: How a cultural movement threatens to destroy you, your faith, and your children."

If you are teaching in the classroom you need to read this book. If you are coaching or working with students directly you need to read this book. If you are representing the college to our constituency, you need to read this book.

If you are a board member responsible for the mission and policies of the College, you need to read this book. And if you are a parent, or a grandparent, or one who wants to be an effective Christian in this world, you *must* read this book.

As we face a new millennium, there is so much that is against us culturally, academically, and financially. But Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And I am hopeful for Belhaven College and for society, for I know that in us, God's Truth can march on into the century ahead.

We don't have to make the Y2K computer bug the focus of the year 2000. For although the computer, which has given such fuel to post modern culture, seems to be the center of the universe at the turn of the millennium, it is 2000 years of God's Truth in Jesus, which we should be celebrating.

I hope that tonight, you will join me in recommitting ourselves to grounding everything we do in the transforming power of Christ as we enter this special year in history.

And in the spirit of Christ --

- May his transforming Truth march though our campus so that it is present in discussions with students and colleagues.

- May it march through every classroom experience so that God's Truth is clear and bold.

- May God's transforming Truth march through every athletic event or cultural activity so that his Truth is visible and demonstrated.

- May Truth march ahead of the Belhaven name into every constituency interaction in Jackson, Memphis, and Orlando and around the nation and world.

- May God's Truth march into the new millennium through the lives of our students, so that His Truth shapes vocations, local churches, marriages, and community life.

May this be our prayer and our commitment.

As our nation was engaged in a civil war, a song of taunting was written by some of the men around a campfire one night. It was first written to make fun of one of their number named John Brown who was a bit slower than the rest, but as the tune was passed from camp to camp it was sung to taunt the followers of the abolitionist John Brown.

But one night as a couple and their pastor were returning from a gathering, their carriage was surrounded and delayed by the marching regiments who happen to be singing the tune. The pastor suggested to the woman who was a poet, that the song needed words which would uplift, rather than tear down.

So that night, Juliet Ward Howe awoke from a sleep and scrawled the words down on a piece of paper without even enough light to see what she was writing.

Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord ...
... with the emphasis throughout that "His Truth is marching on."

He has sounded forth the trumpet that shall never call retreat;
He is sifting out the hearts of men before His judgment-seat:
Oh, be swift, my soul, to answer Him! be jubilant, my feet!
Our God is marching on.

While a post modern culture might say our Christian commitment is antiquated, intolerant, and invalid, our God is marching on. And his Truth will triumph if you and I will be faithful carriers of his Truth into our classrooms, relationships, homes, and communities.

Lester Senter Wilson, along with Darcie Bishop, 1st Trumpet of the Mississippi Symphony is going to share with us this wonderful song, and as you listen to the words remember that it was first written as a song of taunting. And like the words of the original song the message of postmodernism's taunting and division must be replaced in our student's lives by a song of unification and healing in Christ.

(Battle Hymn of the Republic)

<u>This is NOT the Higher Education Journey We Expected</u>

There are days when many of us who have been in higher education a while feel like I got in line for "It's A Small World" and instead ended up on "Space Mountain." We wanted happy faces in many languages all singing the same song, but we got twists and drops in the dark instead.

It was 20 years ago this month that I defended my dissertation to complete my doctorate in higher education administration. Although I didn't care much for the hours of the defense itself, when it was over I was proud to have graduated from one of the top cutting edge higher education administration programs in America.

We had studied the history and philosophy of higher education. We had evaluated the components of successful curriculum and building the orchestra we call faculty. We had studied learning theory and testing, student services and finance, board governance and the trends in higher education.

I felt like I was as prepared as I could be to enter the great tradition of the academy. But on that day, neither my doctoral committee, nor any of us in this room could have imagined what has happened to higher education in the past 20 years.

At that point the critical issues were whether or not to take three hours from the general core to shift it over to a vocational focus, or if we could dare substitute a computer language for a real language, or should the typing lab be in the library or could we consider putting one in what was then called a dormitory and is now called a residence hall?

In those days junior colleges were not of interest other than as a novelty, for they were considered the "junior" they were. And we knew for sure that the way to learn was on a Monday-Wednesday-Friday between 7:30 am and 1:00 pm from a full-time faculty member.

And we were positive the best students would come if we just offered quality in the classroom; positive that people would always cherish the liberal arts if they wanted a degree that employers would respect; and positive that graduate school was only for the academically gifted,

Twenty years ago when I signed onto this ride called Higher Education, we'd never heard the terms "distributed learning," "merit scholarship," "value added education," or "willingness to pay." In those days we didn't have a plan for recruitment and retention, for the far reaching impact of the military draft assured that classrooms were filled to the brim.

We never could imagine the University of Phoenix and the Internet would change the face of Higher Education. And we assumed that students would always see College as a great privilege rather than a right.

Higher Education has changed dramatically in the last twenty years, and I believe we have only seen the tip of the iceberg of where we are headed in the next twenty years.

But as we walk with some fear into the unknown of the future, we do so with the solid confidence that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. And I pray we will hold tightly to the assurance of his Truth as we begin the new millennium.

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.