Belhaven College Kickoff Dinner

"God alone knows the way -- knows the place where wisdom is found."
Job 28:23 -- 2003-04 Verse of the Year

Dr. Roger Parrott, President of the College
TRANSCRIPT

Fourteen months from now, nearly 2,000 church leaders will come together in Thailand for the culmination of a year-long process studying the most complex, urgent, and strategic issues facing world evangelization today.

This 2004 Forum for World Evangelization will only be the fourth time in the past thirty years that the Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization has called for a comprehensive global gathering. And never before has such a meeting sought to develop such specific action plans to combat the challenges facing the Church.

Wanting to develop action plans that capture how God is moving in the toughest areas of evangelism, the Forum is appointing 29 specific Issue Groups to address topics such as:

At Risk People,
Non-Traditional Families,
The Realities of Changing Expressions of Church,
Understanding Muslims,
Making Disciples of Oral Learners,
Reaching the Diaspora,
Effective Education for Evangelization, and
How 9/11 has Changed Evangelism Opportunities and Obstacles.

Each of these groups will begin working next month through electronic communication to develop insightful plans that will inspire evangelical leaders to action, and will compel the Church to work in cooperation.

Along with the 2004 Forum being a significant event for the Church worldwide, it is a marvelous opportunity for Belhaven College. Members of our community are plugged into this Form at a variety of key points.

Colin Harbinson, Dean of the Arts is the convener for the group, Redeeming the Arts, and David Potvin is the facilitator for that group.

Our Provost, Dan Fredericks, is the lead theologian for the group on Partnership and Collaboration.

Jeff Russell, Associate Professor of Sports Medicine, is an invited participant in the Holistic Mission group, bringing to the table his vision and experience in inspiring health care workers to use their professional role as an evangelistic tool.

Board member, Pete Hammond, is the convener of the Marketplace Ministry group.

Alumnus Chris Rice is the convener of the group called: Confronting Racial, Tribal and Ethnic Conflict Within the Christian Community.

Board member, Mike Aldrich, is a participant of the Funding for Evangelism and Mission group.

Darko is the featured musician and worship leader for the Forum Sunday evening focus on the Persecuted Church.

Along with these, seven of our Board of Reference members are deeply involved in the leadership of the Forum.

And God has privileged me to serve as chairman for the 2004 Forum for World Evangelization, and be the speaker for the opening service.

The way I count it up, it appears that the Belhaven College's group will be just a bit larger than the German delegation.

Deciding on these 29 topics and selecting their leaders has been a process that took over three years, included thousands of surveys among Christian leaders, dozens of international conference calls, and more emails than I thought the internet could carry.

And while most of the Forum topics were included that I'd hoped would make the final cut, there were 3 topics that I believe are critical to the future of evangelism that will not be addressed by a Forum Issue Group.

These are topics that are almost too threatening to even suggest, because they are so personally confrontive and call for a God initiated change of hearts of individuals, more than they do a strategic action plan. And these three topics are primarily problems of Evangelicals in America, more than they are global issues.

<u>The first concern I wanted to add to the Forum was that we need to stop the manipulation of our theology to create a sanctified excuse for self-centeredness</u>.

Serving God is NOT about what is in it for me. It is NOT a shopping list of the ways that Jesus will help us so that our troubles will be diminished. And most importantly, it is NOT about us being lifted up in the eyes of others.

Loving and serving God is about glorifying him. Faithful living is about Christ being honored in what we do. And being a Christian is about living in a way that assures that our Lord is the center of attention and praise.

In the past years I've watched one mega-church after another where pastors have left in disgrace. And when you study those churches, there is always a common characteristic -- the ministry was centered in the personality of the messenger, rather than the power of the message.

With too many spotlight grabbing Christian leaders on the loose today, I thought we might do more to move forward the cause of Christ in this country by adding an Issue Group for the 2004 Forum called: "Removing American Evangelical Spokespeople who Embarrass Us."

Because not only have self-aggrandizing Christians taken over many of our churches, but like the swarm gathered around a porch light on a humid Mississippi evening, they are especially drawn to television lights.

There are lots of things I like about the First Presbyterian Church and Dr. Ligon Duncan our pastor, but the thing I treasure the very most -- is that every Sunday when he preaches, it is never about him -- it is all about Jesus.

We will not have revival until we dismantle the American theology of self-focused faith.

<u>The second concern I have for American Evangelicals is our need to reclaim the understanding that Christian living and Christian work is all about perseverance.</u>

Most anyone can do well for a short time. It is fairly easy to make quick changes that bring about a tidy result. And whether in our personal faith or our work for a Christian ministry, we can energize ourselves to do it right for a short time.

But that is not the test of faith, because it is our perseverance over time that tells the real story.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus taught about the seed in the good soil, saying, "these are the ones who have heard the word with an honest and good heart, and hold it fast, and bear fruit with *perseverance*."

But again, our theology has become so intertwined with our American culture that we want our faith to mirror the nightly business report with focus on fast change, leading to fast results, so we can tout the next faith deal, product, or idea that is going to take us to a high water mark in our quarterly report for God.

My loudest soapbox speech in the Church these days is that our evangelical rallying cry has become the promotion of the next great new thing we are about to do, rather than celebration of what God has done. The message of today is, "it will be the NEXT evangelism tool, the NEXT campaign, or the NEXT new organization that is finally going to win the world for Christ." But we

don't talk much at all about accountability for the one we launched a few years ago with the same promised results.

If we would get back to perseverance, rather than allowing our priorities to be set by the sparkle of fund raising drives, we would not only be Biblically based, but we would learn the lessons of faith that only perseverance in Christ can teach.

I wanted to add to the 2004 Forum a topic called: "You Can't Start the Greatest Evangelism Program Ever, Unless You Give an Accountability Report For the Last Greatest Evangelism Program You Started."

Our serving Christ is about running the race -- which is several marathons strung together as the seasons of life change.

And that leads into my third problem of Evangelicals in America, and the concern I want to share with you in detail as it relates to our work together at Belhaven College. Namely, if we try to operate on our own power, even in trying to do good things in ministry, we may make progress, but we will miss catching the wind of God.

I wanted to add to the 2004 Forum and Issue Group called: "Christians Need to Stop Building Powerboats and Start Building Sail Boats," because I'm convinced one of the core problems Christians have in full time ministry is that we've stopped trying to catch the wind of God in our sails, and instead are focused on creating our own independent power to get God's work done.

I am thankful for the marvelous way the Lord is being lifted up on our campus, and as I thank God for the perseverance of years that has paid off in significant progress for the College. But my primary concern for our future is that we will try to operate on our own power, and in doing so, we will miss catching the wind of God.

There is a world of difference between powerboats and sailboats. And those differences are critical benchmarks for you and for me as we begin this school year. Tonight, I'd ask you to consider afresh, what you do every day on the campus in light of this question: Are you building a sail boat that will catch the wind of God, or are you only fine tuning the engine on your powerboat so that you can keep going no matter which way the wind of God is blowing?

No Bible character lost more of his power, strength, and ability than did Job. He was one who had the resources, faith, and insight to make most anything happen. But he desired to always fill his sails with the wind of God -- even when those winds blew him into a terrible storm.

In his final speech trying to explain his predicament, Job says,

> Where, then, is the source of wisdom? Where can we learn to understand? No living creature can see it, Not even a bird in flight. Even death and destruction admit they have heard only rumors. **God alone knows the way -- knows the place where wisdom is found**, because he sees the ends of the earth; sees everything under the sky. ***When God gave the wind its power***

> ***And determined the size of the sea;*** When God decided where the rain would fall, And the path that the thunderclouds travel; It was then he saw wisdom and tested its worth—He gave it his approval. God said to us humans, "To be wise, you must have reverence for the Lord." **Job 28:20-28**

If we are to catch the wind of God in our sails and go wherever those winds take us, we must begin with the unshakable understanding that **God alone knows the way -- knows the place where wisdom is found.** And in my search of the scripture, this verse, better than any other, encapsulates that guiding image of sailing on the wind of God.

When the founders of Belhaven College began in that house on Boyd Street, which just happen to be called Belhaven, I'm sure they never would have started if they knew where the wind of God was going to blow them in those first years. Losing the campus to fire twice, changing owners three times, and piling up a mountain of financial challenges was not what they dreamed for this young school.

But if they had not had the courage to catch the wind of God, we would have never become a distinctly Christ-centered College with a Presbyterian heritage. We would never have moved to this location that gives us a charming campus to serve students. And in those early days we would not have merged with McComb Female Institute, which gave the young Belhaven College the stability of enrollment and breadth of curriculum needed to become viable.

When we build sail boats to catch the wind of God we are never blown in the wrong direction. But the wind of God don't always blow in ways we understand.

Belhaven College was founded at about the same time as Vanderbilt, Temple, Stanford, and the University of Chicago -- why did they have their direction and we have ours?

> *God alone knows the way -- knows the place where wisdom is found.*

There were hundreds of other Colleges started at that same time of our beginnings, most of which have closed and are long forgotten -- why did they have their direction and we have ours?

> *God alone knows the way -- knows the place where wisdom is found.*

And in our most recent history, we are the only College in Mississippi that has NOT had major budget cuts and layoffs in the past few years -- why do they have their direction and we have ours?

> *God alone knows the way -- knows the place where wisdom is found.*

These are remarkable days for Belhaven because of you -- today God has brought to the College people capable of doing Christian Higher Education in the right ways. We have:

- A committed and talented group of evangelically mature faculty who are ministering through teaching and advising, and

- A team of mission dedicated administrators and staff who are skilled professionals in responsibilities outside the classroom.

Why do we have such a good team of people here, when I often see other presidents frustrated with the faculty and staff on their campuses?

God alone knows the way -- knows the place where wisdom is found.

And past you individually we celebrate God giving to us strengths like:

- A one-of-a-kind core curriculum,
- A full breadth of Arts offerings,
- A mainstreamed adult education program,
- A biblically grounded science division,
- A racially diverse student-body,
- An education department admired by school districts,
- A balanced athletic program,
- A growing group of alumni who are proud again of their alma mater

And this list can go on and on and on, because I could easily take the entire evening to thank the Lord for each one of you and how your area of the College is vital to all we do.

God has blessed us with strengths our peer Christian Colleges only dream about -- why do they have their direction and we have ours?

God alone knows the way -- knows the place where wisdom is found.

But as we look to Belhaven's future, I believe we have a fundamental choice to make every day in our work -- and although the answer is easy, the implementation is difficult:

→ Would we rather set out to achieve a set of sharply defined goals, by revving up the engines to create the best programs, the best educational concepts, and the best future our well-trained minds could imagine?

OR

→ Would we rather go *wherever* the wind of God might take us?

While the second choice is clearly our desire, too often, we live, plan, and too often, we live as if our direction is totally dependent on the power we can generate, and the best course we can envision.

The wind of God is always present -- even when we don't feel it, when it blows in a direction we don't understand.

So, do we follow the pattern of too many Christian ministries and build our powerboats that charge ahead, essentially ignore the wind of God -- at least until the wind becomes to strong that we capsize. Or can we prepare to catch the full wind of God by using our God given gifts to build a sailboat that will go only where the Lord leads us?

The most incredible example I've ever seen of the wind of God leading Belhaven is in what has happened to our Arts program. If eight years ago, we had pulled a team together to examine what academic program could we build that would distinguish us from every other Christian college in America and meet a desperate need of the Church, the last one I would have agreed to is the Arts.

In fact, I remember well, in my first months as president, the two most significant problems that were on the horizon were in the arts and I looked carefully at the sustainability of anything in the arts when there we so many other pressing needs. So at that time, had we examined the Arts with our best thinking, the report would have said:

- The arts is too expensive and will never be a financially self sustaining program.
- The students are too difficult to find and the enrollment will always struggle.
- The career options are too limited for graduates in the Arts.
- The facility costs are out of sight and we don't' have room to build them even if we could begin to afford them.
- The faculty are too specialized, too hard to find, too artsy, and too temperamental.
- And an arts program will be a constant battle with our Christ-centered mission.

The motor of planning would have driven our boat far away from developing the Arts. But by being attentive to the wind of God, we have been gently guided into an arts program that made all the best reasoning crumble.

In the Church, and in Christian higher education, we desire to be lead only by God, but too often we spend our days fine tuning the motors on our powerboats, rather than preparing sails to be filled with the wind of God -- and let the Lord determine our way.

Tonight I want to suggest to you a self-evaluation of your work at the College individually, and our work collectively. This evaluation works if you are the president, a housekeeper, a faculty member, an office manager, a coach, or any other position on the campus. It even works for Board members, spouses, and in our daily walk with Christ.

Look with me at a series of conflicting characteristics between powerboats and sailboats, as good benchmarks to examine how you carry out in the way God has called you to serve at Belhaven.

And I trust you might use THIS evaluation grid to regularly review your work, and use the insights from Ephesians to trigger your preparation for catching the wind of God.

First, to build any boat we have to begin with the core question of where we are placing our trust.

With a sailboat, everything is designed to completely trust the wind; in contrast, a powerboat is constructed because of trust in the motor.

This fundamental question is the starting point of the shipyard. You have to choose one way or the other. The powerboat's performance may be slightly impacted by the wind, and the sailboat may have a small motor for special use -- but primarily you either are a sailor who trusts the wind, or one who trusts the motor.

Are we followers of Christ who are going to primarily trust God or primarily trust what power we can generate?

If we look at the storms on the horizon for Christian Higher education, we would give up tomorrow if our trust is in only the power we can create by our own motor. We are in a small boat in a huge ocean, and we must trust the wind of God to fill our sails.

For years the challenge to Christ-Centered colleges was to define our value compared to secular schools and those institutions that are marginally spiritual. Then as Community Colleges gained in stature, we added to our challenges the inexpensive contrast of Community Colleges. But both of those pressures, are minor compared to the significant challenge of the years ahead that will come from the for-profit sector of higher education.

The University of Phoenix, the largest of these for-profit schools, now enrolls 180,000 students, with 60% of their potential student leads coming through the Internet.

Nearly half of their students are in their online program, and interestingly their retention rate is about the same between classroom and online. Their stock price, which increased 50% in the past year alone, took a jump this summer when they announced a program that lets students mix online classes and classroom courses freely.

And because they are in the North Central Accrediting region instead of SACS, their one billion annual gross revenues this year, are in-part possible because of their 17,000 faculty, only 1% of them are full time.

On a side note, since I'm the new chair of National Committee for Cutting Trees to Build Parking Lots, the president of the University of Phoenix, Sally Stroup, says that her research shows the most important characteristic adult students want in choosing a college is -- an easily accessible parking space.

Against the rough seas of higher education ahead, you and I do not have the POWER to take this boat where it needs to go. Only if we TRUST the wind, will we sail on these waters.

And IF we trust the wind, it demands that we be responsive to that wind rather than be self-determined.

In a sailboat, you don't go wherever you want to go, you only go where the wind allows you to go and thus we need to be responding to the wind rather than setting an unshakable course of self-determined direction.

For most of us, that's scary. We don't want to put our trust in what we can't control -- or even worse, what we tend to think is unpredictable. But the wind of God will not disappoint us. And we can be responsive to that wind when firmly grounded in our understanding of God's nature, and God's unchanging ways.

One of the many authors who has sailed around the word writes, "To know the laws that govern the winds (and to know that you know them,) will give you an easy mind on your voyage round the world; otherwise, you may tremble at the appearance of every cloud."

Do you tremble at the appearance of every cloud, and go running to tune up the motor on your powerboat? Or do you understand the laws that govern the wind of God and put your trust in him?

Trusting the wind instead of our own motor must be the starting point for everything.

Second, to catch the wind of God in a sailboat we have to correctly focus our attention.

With a sailboat we must listen to the wind and to how the boat responds; while in contrast the motor is all you can hear is a powerboat.

An experienced sailor, sails as much by hearing as by seeing. In listening to the sails, the ropes, the water against the keel, and the creeks of the boat, a good sailor can almost see the wind and know how it is blowing.

In contrast in a powerboat, you can't hear the wind, you can't hear the sea, you can't hear the boat….all you hear is the motor. Or as one famous sailor contrasted it, "A sailing vessel is alive in a way that no ship with mechanical power could ever be."

With higher education being the collecting of a bunch of well-educated people in one small strip of land, it is natural that we would look to our intellect, insights, experience, and ideas to guide this boat of ours. And our motor can get so loud in higher education that we can't begin to hear the wind, much less how the boat is responding to the wind.

Our motors -- the motors of a syllabus, policy, or structure -- can drown out our ability to hear the wind, and how the wind and boat are interacting. When our motor is cranked up at full speed we can't focus on the opportunities around us.

Dan Fredericks, who thinks about Christian higher education as creatively as anyone I know, said to me about a year ago -- I think we are asking the wrong question of our students. We all say to prospective students, and to our current students, "what is your major." Dan said, we need to get

to a point that we never ask what is your major, but the real question we should be asking is, "what does God want to do with your life?"

Dan believes that instead of a student being forced into choosing a major, only from our list of majority driven pre-determined offerings, we should find ways to focus on the wind of God in students and allow them to develop a course of study which matches how the Lord is directing them.

For example, Dan writes in his outline of this idea, "we have all the critical components for an advertising program already. Graphic design, sociology/statistics, marketing, creative writing, business courses, etc. But to send someone away who has a Christian vision for advertising because we currently do not have an "advertising box" for them to sit in, is a travesty. We can construct the curriculum for them, including an internship."

Another example would be, "Arts Administration, where we currently have degrees in the arts, but there are only so many spots for artists to make a living in the pure arts. But a hybrid major of business to include management, marketing, finance, entrepreneurship, as well an arts emphasis, would put Christian movers and shakers in the arts business world, making more of an impact than any pure artist might hope to achieve."

This Impact College, as Dan is calling it, would not only include cutting edge way of developing curriculum which is responsive to a student's strengths and calling, but would also include some creative learning opportunities that also don't get run by our normal higher education motors.

Let's not let the motors of higher education, keep students from catching the wind of God in their curriculum, their interactions with each other, and their developing a life of faith life to reach full sail.

<u>Along with focusing on the wind instead of the motor, we must focus on the vastness of the sky, rather than the power of our motor</u>.

One focus is looking out and up -- the other is looking in and down. The contrast couldn't be more stark, and this is a critical benchmark to examine if we are living and working in ways that are focused on the wind of God, instead of our motor.

When we focus on our motor we not only miss the wind of God, but we even forget that God gave us the gifts that allow us to build that motor in the first place. So we doubly miss the desire of God.

The Polish novelist and sailor, Joseph Conrad, wrote, "The true peace of God begins at any point 1,000 miles from the nearest land."

Have you ever gotten so far from land, that your focus had to be only on the vastness of the sky, because your motor wouldn't do you any good that far away from your points of security?

If we want to catch the wind of God, instead of looking to the power of our own motor, that will never allows us to stray far from our harbor, our focus must be on the unlimited nature of the wind.

Third, sailing requires intense and constant preparation.

The preparation of a sailboat is complex, while a powerboat gives immediate gratification. The sailboat demand meticulous maintenance, while, for the most part, the powerboat is a gas and go operation.

A power boating course required by the state of Mississippi can be done online -- and is free. A course to learn to sail off shore is three weeks long and costs $6,000.

The difference between getting behind the wheel of a sailboat and that of a powerboat is about like the difference between flying a plane and driving a car. Flying is initiated purposefully, with lots of planning, constant maintenance, and with unwavering attention to detail. While driving is so routine it can happen almost without thinking.

Many years ago before we had kids and life was … well, less stressful. MaryLou and I took a trip to the great barrier reef of Australia, to see the most dramatic underwater life in the world.

This was a real act of giving for MaryLou who doesn't swim, and who stayed on shore and prayed that a shark wouldn't' get me the entire time I was snorkeling among the giant clams as big as one of these tables.

But while there, I wanted to rent a little sailboat. It looked easy enough watching others sail from shore, and even though MaryLou was hesitant, the guy renting the boats assured us that it was simple. So off we went on a calm afternoon to sail the world famous barrier reef. It was like being in a movie to be sailing on the beautiful aqua water -- until the wind shifted, the water got choppy, and a giant sea turtle, which was nearly as big as our boat, came to inspect.

The wind was pushing us out to sea, the turtle was following, and I had no idea how to get that boat turned around. So I finally I beached it on a little strip of land and waited for the wind to shift, so that we could somehow get back to the dock -- while MaryLou waited patiently and graciously resisted a totally justified, "I told you so."

If we are to catch the wind of God we can't just jump in a sailboat and go like we can in a powerboat. But we must be prepared, and our preparation must be a continual part of our lives. If you feel like you're ready to do all you can do, if you couldn't do it any better, if what you bring to the College is so routine that you can do it almost without thinking -- you are not going to catch the wind of God.

I think part of the reason we are drawn to our own motor rather than to catch the wind of God is that, it somehow feels more productive.

- If we can go, rather than prepare, that must be more productive?

- If we are pushing so hard we're out of breath, what we do for God must be important?

- When we are desperately needed by those around us, how can we not be useful to God?

- The world may tell us that gas and go is more productive, but it will not prepare us to catch the wind of God. Sailing will take right preparation and maintenance must be ingrained into every day, every decision, ever step of what we do, or we will slip back to the immediate gratification of running on our own power.

Fourth, sailboats that catch the wind of God require a totally different type control than do our independent powerboats.

Do you know which school is the hardest to get into in the entire nation? Not Harvard, MIT, Yale, or Berkley -- it is the United States Coast Guard Academy, where less than 7% of the applicants are admitted.

One of the significant educational components of the Academy is every cadet's training aboard the U.S. Coast Guard Eagle, a 295 foot three masted sailing vessel. With 148-foot tall masts, the stacks of sails catch the wind to carry the cadets all around the world.

While it surely is a nice marketing edge to offer students months on one of the greatest ships in the world, the reason the Coast Guard continues to use 19th century technology to train officers who will never see a canvas sail in active duty, is to teach the value of teamwork over isolation, and to teach the nature of how a ship, or organization are intertwined, rather than individuals being self-contained. And so the Naval Academy also uses sailing as the backbone of their curriculum.

Service Academy materials explains it this way,

> Sailing stretches ability and endurance to the limit and allows character to emerge that can reach beyond those previous limits for that extra margin required for victory -- where decisions must be made instantly and where numerous variables must be integrated. And we send them to sea to learn the fundamental characteristic of the professional seaman: a deep-seated sense of humility in the face of nature and her master.
>
> The sea is the only place where it's doesn't matter if you are rich or poor, black or white. The only thing the sea cares about is whether you are prepared. The EAGLE is about preparing leaders by building character, self-confidence, communications, and problem solving skills. It is about leadership. It is about using the technology of the past to prepare young men and women to face the challenges of the future, and leaving them enthusiastic to try.

Like the coast guard, sailing on the wind of God demands teamwork and makes us constantly aware of how each part of the boat is intertwined with every other part -- every sail, rope, plank,

halyard, gunwale, ruder, tiller, shroud, cleat, stay, tack, beam, jib, batten, and the dozens of other parts of a sailing vessel are deeply dependent on each other, if the wind of God is to caught.

In the same way, at the College, every part is THE MOST important part, if we are to catch the wind of God. EVERY SINGLE ONE OF US is critical to God's plan for Belhaven, and while many students and the public see the masts and the sails of our ship, it is often the less visible parts, which assures that we are prepared to catch the wind of God.

This is what the scripture calls us to in Ephesians 4:

> We are all one body, we have the same Spirit, and we have all been called to the same glorious future. However, he has given each one of us a special gift according to the generosity of Christ. Until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ. Under his direction, the whole body is fitted together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

Fifth, the direction set by the wind of God in a sailboat, is totally different from the course we pre-determine for our powerboat.

There are tons of books about the romance of sailing around the world. But I can't find any books about those who drove their powerboat as far as they could on a tank of gas. Although, I saw at a marina on the gulf an annual award for the charter boat captain who ran out of gas the most times in a season and had to be towed to shore.

<u>The powerboats we build may go fast -- and that speed may impress others. In contrast, God's wind usually gets us there much more slowly than we might desire, although it always gets us there just in time</u>.

If there is one law of God's wind I've worked on the most to build into my life, it is that God's timing is never wrong. And the patience to wait for the wind of God is sometimes especially frustrating when I would rather build a powerboat and get there soon.

But I've seen so many times in my own life, and in others, that my plan may allow speed for a short time, but God's wind gives the boat limitless endurance.

I thank the Lord that I've grown into patience through the years, to wait for God's perfect timing.

And not only is the speed of a sailboat dramatically different, but even the way it turns is different.

Have you ever watched a sailboat race. They don't just turn the wheel and shift course. No, in response to the wind, the team plans far in advance when they are going to turn, with each person on board doing the preparation work necessary. And then, with one well-orchestrated movement, that has been practiced over and over, the boat changes course.

In contrast the powerboats we build, abruptly maneuver back and forth, chasing after the latest new opportunity, and tossing from side to side all those who are in the boat with us.

A century ago a young woman sat in a prayer meeting with a high level of despair and frustration because she believed God was calling her to Africa as a missionary. But she couldn't get there because she couldn't raise the money for the trip. And in that time of craving to build her own powerboat and go on what she believed was a God inspired course, she heard an elderly woman pray, "have thine own way Lord." That night the missionary to be understood that even when doing God's work, Christians can be self-centered, self-willed, and self-propelled.

And so that evening she committed to the Lord her surrender to his timing, his course, and her willingness to wait for God to have his way in her life. And out of that experience of catching the wind of God, she wrote the words to that hymn we love:

Have Thine own way, Lord, Have Thine own way;
Hold o're my being, Absolute sway.
Fill with Thy Spirit, Till all shall see
Christ only, always, Living in me.

And by the way, she did get to Africa. Although not as a missionary, but one who was able to visit missions in Africa and then speak in Churches all across America to inspire others to go.

Our direction must be grounded in the limitless endurance of the wind of God, even when the speed frustrates us. And our patience must be built into the orchestrated turns that God brings into our lives.

Sixth, the relationship of a sailboat to other boats and the environment is everything that a powerboat is not.

I was standing knee deep in calm water near the pass at Alabama point in Orange Beach fishing one day this summer. A quiet, peaceful, and very relaxing place to be.

But about three o'clock the first charter boat from Zeke's Marina began to head back to shore. And everything changed. The boat was the length of a football field away, but as it drove by it created huge waves that not only got me soaked, but scared away all the fish. It was noisy, it the reeked of diesel fuel, and no telling what it was putting into the water from the motor.

It impacted everything around, but the interesting thing about the disruption and pollution, is that if you are ON the boat, rather than NEAR the boat, you don't even notice the havoc you cause. Because by the time the wake you leave knocks everyone else around, you are long gone.

In contrast, have you ever been near the shore when a sailboat came by? Everyone wants to be near it. The wake a sailboat leaves doesn't disrupt anything around it. It gives off no pollution of noise or fuel. And the beauty of its gentle nature makes you relax just to have it come close.

As we catch the wind of God, rather than revving up our own powerboat, the Ephesians scripture calls us to that type of gentleness and beauty in how we relate to one another and to our students:

> *Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Always keep yourselves united in the Holy Spirit, and bind yourselves together with peace. So put away all falsehood and "tell your neighbor the truth" because we belong to each other. And "don't sin by letting anger gain control over you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a mighty foothold to the Devil. If you are a thief, stop stealing. Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them. Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of malicious behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.*

The scripture is clear enough about how we are to relate, but before I move on, I want to emphasize one image about the contrast of sailboats and powerboats that applies to how we relate to each other and to our students.

When a disruptive and polluting powerboat barges its way through the water its presence is felt long after it is gone. The wake is huge and often the boat is out of sight before the water becomes calm again. The noise scares away the fish for a span of time, and the pollutants create damage that we can't even see. For a while, a powerboat creates a dead zone.

And the same thing happens at the College when our relationships are like powerboats -- rough, self-centered, power based, and polluting -- rather than the gentleness of sailboats.

Nearly a year ago, I was at Church who should be sending us several students every year but hasn't. After much discussion, it was clear that the powerboat actions of one person from Belhaven toward a student many years ago had created a dead zone that still lingers even today. That experience started me looking carefully at the dead zones we create and the loss of ministry opportunity from each one.

When you have a bad interaction with a student, you can easily justify it because the student should have done the right thing, they should have been responsive to those in authority, they should have followed the policy, or they should have taken the time to understand their responsibility. You could write off that confrontation in your mind and push your boat on ahead, rather than working to find a grace-filled resolution. But in the process, you've created a dead zone that limits us for a long time to come.

A faculty member, coach, or staff member who has unreconciled conflict with a student doesn't hurt that one student alone. But that student tells every student they know, and every prospective student they know. They tell their mom and dad, who tell their friends. They tell their pastor, Sunday School teacher, or youth worker, and the wake of disruption caused by your one boat, will keep us from working with dozens of students who might have come to Belhaven had that experience been different.

I don't believe in keeping a record of wrongs, as the scripture teaches, but to help me understand this problem, after that time at the church a year ago, I kept track of the dead zones we created.

There were 11 of them that I know about last year, so I'm sure there were others. Conservatively, in each dead zone we lost 5, or more, potential students. So by the powerboat type actions of last year alone, we lost the ability to influence at least 55 students in the future. And then multiply that by the 5 or 10 years it takes to restore a dead zone and you can look behind the powerboat and see the vastness of the damage.

Of course, you and I won't always treat every student fairly. But every student needs the gentleness of the wind of God that will assure they are heard by us in their concern, and the beauty of a genuine apology when it is in order.

Herman Melville wrote in Moby Dick, *"whenever my hypos get such an upper hand on me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off -- then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can."*

Like Ishmill in the story, you can blame it on your hypos, you can blame it on your stress, you can blame it on too much to do, you can blame it on someone else, but it doesn't change the fact that when you start knocking off student's hats off and you create a dead zones that all the rest of us have to absorb. That is when it is high time you get to the sea and recapture the wind of God.

Lastly, a sailboat has completely different demands than a powerboat.

Sailing looks so relaxing, but nothing could be further from the truth. It is challenging constant work, which demands that you stay attentive, are always thinking, and use your best gifts. While in contrast, a powerboat is fairly comfortable, offering a relaxed day on the water.

The one that looks easy and appealing demands hard work, and the one that goes fast and looks powerful, demands little.

In our effort to be useful in God's service we build powerboats to go running around making plans on God's behalf. But in doing so, we take the easy way out.

I believe we build those powerboats because we are fearful that the sailboat that catches the wind of God does not really need us, and will only call for us to lounge around on the deck and wait for the wind.

And of course, we have it backwards.

Catching the wind of God will press us into the greatest service we can imagine and will push us harder than we ever thought we could go. But if we only stay in our powerboat, life's journey will not go too far, but it will always be fairly comfortable.

In the powerboat we may put on the right hat and look like a sailor, but the sailboat demands that we be genuine sailors. If we want to catch the wind of God, we must have a spiritual renewal that transforms us into the real thing.

Sometimes sailing on the wind of God is hanging on for dear life, and sometimes it is waiting patiently while no wind blows. But no matter the circumstance, might God allow us to be on that sailboat ready to catch his wind, rather than limited by the powerboats we create.

CONCLUSION

Next week on the gulf coast they are holding a major powerboat race. These huge boats, which barely have room for the two pilots, are fast and loud, and the crowd will be impressed as they skim over the top of the water. But if during the race, in the distance, the Coast Guard three masted schooner came along the horizon with all sails filled by the wind, every eye would be on the sailboat.

The power we can create, is insignificant in contrast to God filling our sails, and I pray for each of us, for our students, and for Belhaven College, that we will see that contrast so clearly that we will leave our powerboats in dry-dock for good, and do all we can to prepare to sail on the wind of God.

Last month, after a long battle with pulmonary fibrosis, one of the greatest evangelical leaders in history died at the age of 81. Bill Bright was a California businessman, who got a burden for those who don't know Christ. And so he wrote out a contract with God, promising that he would give up everything and go only where God sent him and do only what God asked. And out of that commitment came Campus Crusade for Christ, now the largest evangelical ministry in the world.

Bill was always a man of great action through the years, but there was never a question that he was sailing only on the wind of God and never under his own power.

During his 2 1/2 hour memorial service in Orlando, one of those who brought remembrances was Bob Record, head of the Southern Baptist Home Mission Board, Bob told about calling Bill three weeks before he died, and asking Bill, what's the best thing that happened to you today?

Bill Bright thought for moment and said, well, I guess that would be I had a call from the president. And Bob said, he paused for a moment and then added, "but when you're preparing to meet who I'm going to meet, even a call from the president of the United States fades by comparison"

May we live, work, teach, and relate to each other in such a way that we too would understand that the most impressive higher education powerboat we might build, fades in comparison to the sailboat Belhaven College can become as we catch the wind of God.

Let that be our prayer for the school year as Dr. Duncan leads us in a prayer of dedication.

Stand

Chris Shelt – Bless Be the Tie that Binds