

A Rancher's Rumbblings, September 18, 2009

GETTING RID OF THE "JUNK IN THE MIDDLE" – AND FOCUSING ON JESUS

by David R. Currie

Executive Director, Texas Baptists Committed

The past 10 days have been wonderful on my part of the earth. We have had anywhere from 4 to 12 inches of rain, depending on where you live. Everything is green beyond belief, and we have cool weather, for the most part – mornings in the 60's and highs in the 80's.

It is also a busy time, as football has started. Last Friday night, my twin grandsons scored four touchdowns between them. On Saturday, Baylor won its opener, and my sons and I will be there this Saturday for the game. I promise you this, Baylor fans – this will be our best year in 15 years.

The deer have hard horns now, and yesterday morning a lovely 10-point buck ate corn 50 yards from the house. He needs to grow another year, so I need to get a picture of him to show everyone so they will be careful NOT to shoot him this year so that he can grow and breed. He is still young.

On Labor Day, I shot 13 dove – it's been at least 20 years since I got that many in just one night! You want the best meal in America? Then go eat a big plateful of dove gizzards and hearts!!!!!! Just little nuggets of flavor – like gold.

That reminds me of a funny story – funny, that is, if you weren't the victim! When I was at Howard Payne, I would bring guys to hunt all the time. I told them to make sure they kept the gizzards and hearts. I had a friend named Carl Douglas, a great young man from FBC, Pasadena, who was once youth minister at First Baptist, San Saba. I've lost touch with him through the years. But Carl – all 5'3" of him – loved to hunt. However, the first time he took my advice to eat the dove gizzards and hearts, he complained to me, "those were horrible!" My fault – I had forgotten to tell him to slit the gizzards and take out the green sack of junk in the middle!!!!!! That "junk" made all the difference.

And so it is with our lives as Baptists.

I cannot understand why so many Christians – Baptists in particular – waste so much time keeping the "junk in the middle." It's hard to put Jesus at the center when you insist on keeping the middle loaded down with all that junk. And you wind up missing great flavor and excitement by refusing to cut out the junk from your worldview. Not that we should ignore problems and difficult issues, but they should not be our central focus – at home, church, or anywhere else.

Texas Baptists have a lot to be excited about, and we shouldn't let junk get in the way of the reality of the work that's being carried out by the Baptist General Convention of Texas and its related institutions and ministries.

First of all, we should celebrate that we are a convention that is free of Fundamentalist control. It's a shame that we seem to take that for granted. Most state conventions have long since come under the thumb of Fundamentalist control, and their churches, institutions, and ministries

have suffered for it. But the churches, institutions, and ministries that relate to the BGCT are free to be faithful under the leading of the Holy Spirit.

That alone should be enough to unite us all. Tragically, however, there are some who have trouble celebrating that freedom – they still want to control Texas Baptists, if possible, or at least nitpick about our imperfections. So they lose the joy they could be experiencing, and they drag others down with them.

And what have Texas Baptists done with our freedom?

Well, we have three remarkable new seminaries at Truett, Logsdon, and B. H. Carroll. We have children's ministries and senior citizens ministries that are second to none. Our convention is unique in all of Baptist life, relating to what we call "affinity groups" – ethnic and niche churches (such as Cowboy churches) – that account for nearly 40% of our churches. And these churches are going to people where they are and reaching them for Christ.

We are blessed by a leader, Randel Everett, who has a heart for people and who is forward-thinking. Under his leadership, we have begun an exciting outreach program in TexasHope 2010, which is moving throughout Texas to offer both food and faith to hungry stomachs and hungry souls.

And I have not even mentioned our nine Texas Baptist universities, which are providing quality Christian-based education throughout our state! But we are also reaching students in over 100 colleges and universities across the state, through our Baptist Student Ministries and their directors.

Our church starting program has become a great success.

Finally, there's Buckner International, which – under the leadership of Ken Hall – has staff stationed throughout the world, caring for children and uniting them with families who will love them as they make them a part of their own families for the rest of their lives. Talk to some of the people who have adopted children through Buckner – you will hear some amazing testimonies, as we have here at TBC. It will bless your heart – and probably bring tears to your eyes – to hear about what Buckner is doing to bring children together with their new families.

And I've barely begun to tell you the story of Texas Baptists. This is just a fraction of what we're doing through the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

So let me ask you a few questions.

Are you excited about being a part of the important work that the BGCT is doing?

Or would you rather complain about its faults?

If you would rather complain and criticize, let me ask you this – Would you rather live and minister in a Fundamentalist-controlled state, such as Oklahoma, Missouri, Louisiana, or Georgia?

Is focusing on the "junk" – the faults, the disputes, the controversies – the mark of a mature faith or a childish one?

Isn't it time that we all "put away childish things" (1 Corinthians 13:11) – the "junk" that I talked about – and get involved in the exciting work that Texas Baptists are doing?

This is serious business, friends. It's all about being free and faithful Baptists – faithful in doing the work to which our Lord has called us. It's time for us to say with pride, "*We are Texas Baptists*," and get excited about what God is calling us to do, which is to be the most successful cooperative mission effort in the world. God has blessed us with the resources of our convention – but it's up to us to answer God's call.