A TSUNAMI OF GRACE

The RTS family responds to the devastation in Japan.
In a military battle, catching the enemy surprised and unprepared is often a key to victory. For example, in the war for American independence, Ethan Allen and the “Green Mountain Boys” captured Fort Ticonderoga in 1775 largely because of their success in making a sneak attack on the sleeping British soldiers. Countless other examples like these abound throughout military history.

Such historical events can remind us, the church universal, of a spiritual principle: the necessity to be “prepared for the unexpected.” This is demonstrated in Paul’s exhortation to Timothy to, among other instructions, “be ready in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2) to discharge the duties of his ministry. Also consider that we are often reminded to be prepared for the Lord’s return, as we do not know the day or the hour of his promised occurrence.

With this in mind, *semper paratus* (“always ready”), the motto of the U.S. Coast Guard, can also serve as a helpful motto for the gospel minister. The need for God’s servants to be prepared for the unexpected has been tested recently and prominently by the earthquakes and resulting tsunami in Japan. RTS alumni and even some students have been part of the humanitarian response to that crisis (“A Tsunami of Grace,” page 8), as well as the opportunities it has opened to proclaim the gospel message.

Those responding to the Japanese crisis serve as examples of reliance upon God each day and in each step we take in life. Our lives are but a vapor in the depth of eternity, and tragedy can strike at any moment. Oftentimes these tragedies introduce unprepared, unrepentant sinners to a sudden, unexpected eternal punishment in the reality of hell, as Dr. Ligon Duncan discusses in “An Unpopular Doctrine” (page 6).

The reality of unexpected tragedy and the reality of hell should help drive our faithfulness in proclaiming the gospel to the lost. We do not know how many perished without Christ in Japan, but people die without Him all around us every moment of every day. We should be ready to help reach out to those around us while there is still time for them.

Be assured, though, that the condition of human souls and the seemingly unexpected circumstances of life do not take our sovereign Lord by surprise. He is the embodiment of *semper paratus*, “not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

At times like these, what an opportunity we have at RTS to help prepare men and women for gospel ministry. How thankful I am for help from leaders like Dr. Don Sweeting, recently inaugurated as the president of our Orlando campus (page 16), and Chuck Colson (“State of the Church,” page 14), who helped mentor him as a young man unsure of his life’s calling. May we all work together toward a new Reformation and with the joyful hope of the New Heavens and the New Earth to come.

---

**Chancellor’s Message**

Robert C. Cannaday
Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer

---

**Contents**

3 RTS AT WORK
4 HIT BY FRIENDLY FIRE
    by Dr. Mike Milton
6 AN UNPOPULAR DOCTRINE
    by Dr. Ligon Duncan
8 A TSUNAMI OF GRACE
    The RTS family responds to the devastation in Japan.
12 A NEW PHASE FOR DR. K
    Dr. Simon Kistemaker is making a complete retirement from teaching.
14 THE STATE OF THE CHURCH
    Interview with Chuck Colson
16 DR. DON SWEETING INAUGURATION

---

**WHO WE ARE**

Reformed Theological Seminary exists to serve the church by preparing its leaders through a globally accessible program of theological education based on the authority of the inerrant Word of God and committed to the Reformed faith. This program promotes biblical fidelity, confessional integrity and academic excellence, and seeks to prepare students marked by “A mind for truth. A heart for God.”

As such, Ministry & Leadership exists to show how God is working through the ministries of its graduates, faculty members and students.
PUBLICATIONS

Dr. John Frame wrote the foreword to Ian A. Hewittson’s Trust and Obey (Next Step Resources, due 2011).

Dr. Andrew Hofecker, emeritus, edited Dr. John Frame, Dr. John Currid and former RTS professor Michael Payne.

Dr. Bob Orner wrote the article “Can the Church Adapt to Demographic Reality?” for ByFaith magazine (Aug. 2009).

Dr. Miles Van Pelt has written Basics of Biblical Aramaic: Complete Grammar, Lexicon, and Annotated Text (Zondervan, May). He is also working on the book Theology of the Pastoral Epistles (P&R).

Dr. Reggie Kidd is one of four contributors to the book Perspectives on Tithing (Broadman & Holman, May). He is also working on the book Sacred Assembly: A Biblical Vision for the Church Today (P&R, May), Songs in the Night (due summer) and The 12 Most Common Mistakes Made in Communication and How to Overcome Them (Fortress Books, fall). Hit by Friendly Fire will be reprinted (EP Books, June).

Dr. Don Sweeting wrote a commentary titled “How Jesus Has Not Failed Me” and recorded for an April 14 airing of the Carroll McKenney Foundation for Public Media program Central Florida Matters.

Dr. Dan Timmer wrote “A Compassionate and Graceful God”: Mission, salvation, and spirituality in Jonah (U.S. release: WIP Academic, July 3).

Dr. Guy Waters reviewed Thomas R. Schreiner’s Galatians for Reformation 21.

TRAVELS

Dr. James Anderson spoke about John Knox, the Scottish Reformer, at “Banquet and Biography,” a men’s dinner organized by Uptown Church, Charlotte, N.C., in February.

Dr. Bruce Baugus will teach apologetics at RTS-Memphis, July 11-13.

Dr. Steve Brown will preach in the worship service at Perimeter Church, John’s Creek, Ga., June 11-12, then teach a class at RTS-Atlanta, June 20-24.

Dr. Ric Cannada preached at a missions conference at First Presbyterian Church, Greenville, Ala., in February, and participated in the meeting of the Council of the Gospel Coalition and National Conference for the Gospel Coalition, Chicago, in April.

Dr. Steve Childers spoke at the national Global Church Advancement Church Planting and Renewal Conference in Orlando in January. In March, he spoke at the World Missions Conference at First Presbyterian Church, Augusta, Ga., on “What in the World is God Doing?” He also spoke at a meeting of the regional Reformed University Ministries leaders. In April, he spoke at the World Missions Conference at Lookout Mountain Presbyterian Church in Tennessee on “Summon the Nations.”

Dr. John Frame will lecture during a series on biblical inerrancy titled “N.T. Wright and the Authority of Scripture” at the PCA General Assembly, Virginia Beach, Va., in June. For more information, visit www.rts.edu/newsevents/ doctrineofscripture.html.

Dr. Mark Futato taught Old Testament Survey at Campus Crusade for Christ headquarters in Orlando in February, as part of creating an online Old Testament Survey to be used globally.

Dr. Chuck Hill spoke at the Christian Study Center, Gainesville, Fla., April 8.

Dr. Reggie Kidd led a breakout session along with Vernon Rainwater of Northland on “Worship” at the Resurgence Conference at CrossPointe Church, Orlando, in February. He will teach on “Sacred Actions and Pastoral Ministry” at the Robert E. Webber Institute for Worship Studies, Jacksonville, Fla., June 8-15. From June 27-July 1 he will team-teach the D.Min. “Worship” cohort at Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, then lead seminars on “Jesus Christ, Our Worship Leader” and “Going to Church in Jerusalem in the 4th Century” at the National Worship Leaders Conference, Kansas City, Mo., July 19-21.

Dr. Mike Milton taped the Faith for Living TV program at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Rock Hill, N.C., in February and March; spoke in chapel at

A big thanks to Mike Copening, institutional director of technology, for his hard work getting the new Web site launched. Also thanks to Brad Haden Design for the site design, as well as the committee members, Lyn Perez, John Sowell and Andy Peterson. Thanks also go to staff who contributed: Thomas Nelson, Kim Trouten, Stephane Jeannenaud, Holley Gregory, Brian Gault; Matt Koehn, Hugh Wheelchel, Geoff Sackett, Jim McAlhaney, Mike Garvey, Josh Drake, David Braddy, Robert Erneot, and many others. The web address is www.rts.edu.
Hit by Friendly Fire

Genesis 50:15-21 instructs Christians on what to do when other Christians hurt them.

WALKING WOUNDED
One second. One mistake. One firing of the missile in the midst of the war. The missile cannot come back. The weapon is now headed for you. And the one who fired it is on your side. It is war. Hit by friendly fire.

And this is not Baghdad or the Battle of the Bulge or Pork Chop Hill. I am speaking of the many walking wounded in the body of Christ who have been hurt by other believers, people who have been hit by the betrayal of a Christian.

But this is no mistake. She meant to say those words. He meant to plot against you. They meant to bring you down. And you will never be the same. You will suffer with this for the rest of your life. You will not go back to any church. You will lick your wounds. Pain will possess you for the rest of your life. And over time the pain turns to bitterness.

Do you know anyone like that? Or is that your story? Are you the victim of a wound inflicted by someone you love? A victim?

It does not have to be that way. Remember the story of Joseph and how he said these words to his brothers as they stood before him:

“Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.” Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them (Genesis 50:15-21).

WHEN THE CLOCK STOPS
I once sold insurance door to door in poor areas of Louisiana. One of my clients was a family that lived in an old house on the other side of the tracks. Every month I would go to collect the insurance money, and we would sit in their living room and talk. One day I noticed that the clock was wrong. It said nine o’clock when, in fact, it was noon. I said nothing. But I saw the same thing the next month and then the next month. Finally, I said something to the husband and wife. Tears came to their eyes. “That was the moment our boy died 10 years ago,” they told me. The clock had stopped in their lives.

The pain of friendly fire is like that. It can stop the clock in your heart. This happens to Christians whom other Christians hurt and who fail to identify their pain with Christ. The clock stops. They go through life, month after month, year after year, and often church after church, but the clock stopped in their lives way back when they were hurt. Today it is popular to be a victim, but being a victim is not a good way to live because life cannot go forward when the clock has stopped at the point of your last betrayal.

Yet I wonder: Are you living your life with the clock stopped?

There is another answer. There is a way to healing. But I warn you, it will involve another kind of pain — the pain of Christ’s cross. Christ’s cross will bring resurrection, and the new life He brings will also make the clock start ticking again.

This is what we see in Joseph’s ability to forgive his brothers after they literally ditched him. Joseph identified his pain with God. In God the pain was intended to bring bless-
ing. Being hurt by his brothers made sense. The pain of false accusation made sense. The trial of unjust imprisonment was good. The years of separation from his father were good for him. He was saying with David, “Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us, and for as many years as we have seen evil” (Psalm 90:15).

The power at work in the life of Joseph is what you need in order to get past this hurt. It is the power that was present in Paul when he said, “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). By embracing the pain that comes at him as a means of identification with Jesus Christ, Paul moves from victim to victor.

This is for anyone who is a believer hurt by another believer, for a loved one hurt by another loved one, for anyone feeling like a victim of another person, or maybe just feeling betrayed by life. In order for you to move from victim to victor in dealing with the pain of betrayal or suffering of any kind, drastic steps must be taken.

The hurt person, who is not embracing that pain as a means for God to do something in his life, is the person who is stuck and for whom the clock has stopped. He is not denying himself. In fact, the very thing he wants to do is feed his pain: “They hurt me, they said this about me, and I was offended.” But Jesus says, “Take up your cross, follow Me, deny yourself, whoever seeks to save his life will lose it, whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.”

We want to think about cross-bearing as physical pain, and it is. We also want to think about taking up our cross as standing up for truth and maybe taking some hits for it, maybe even being a martyr for it. Throughout church history many have done so.

But the context of the cross is betrayal. The context of the cross is the pain of being hurt by those close to us. Zechariah 13:6 speaks of “the wounds I received in the house of my friends.” This is the pain you may feel in your heart. This may be where you are living today.

God does not call us to live in distrust, but to live by faith in Christ. It is not that I implicitly trust all men; it is that I trust God in all situations. And this makes life sweet.

Will you say, “I want to know Him and the power of His resurrection, and share in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that by any means possible I may rise again”? Will you believe that though “they” meant it for evil, God meant it for good? Will you go on and live this risen life that Christ offers you right now?

Dr. Milton is the chancellor elect and chief executive officer elect at RTS. He will assume the chancellor and CEO positions in June 2012.

This article is excerpted from Dr. Milton’s booklet Hit by Friendly Fire: What to Do When Christians Hurt You, which can be ordered at mindandheart.com.
Devotional

An Unpopular Doctrine

Our attitude toward eternal suffering reveals the condition of our heart.

It was a stirring moment. John Piper was standing before a crowd of thousands in Cape Town, South Africa, at the Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization. Lausanne is a movement started by Billy Graham and John Stott to promote evangelical cooperation in the spread of the Good News to the ends of the earth. This was the third world congress sponsored by Lausanne and may well have been one of the largest and most diverse gatherings of Christians in history.

As we listened in rapt attention, John Piper unfolded a dilemma familiar to many involved in mission, evangelism, mercy ministry and social responsibility work. Should the Christian give precedence to the proclamation of the gospel even over working for the well-being of profoundly needy people in this life? Or should our ministry to the present, pressing needs of the hungry, oppressed, enslaved and disadvantaged mean that the ministry of “deeds” and mercy should take precedence over gospel proclamation?

To put it even more pointedly, is the Great Commission to make disciples or to love our neighbor? Is there a priority on sharing the gospel or on ministering to the urgent and manifold needs of millions worldwide? Should we care about people’s eternal destiny or their present predicament?

Now most conservative evangelicals would want to quickly say that we are not prepared to give an either/or answer to “Should we preach the gospel or care for the needy?” We are both (1) to proclaim the good news of salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone; and (2) to love our neighbor, treat every human as made in the image of God, and seek to be a blessing to the nations (to mention just three of the biblical bases for Christians caring about and for the needs of all people).

But is there a priority to the gospel and its proclamation? Does the eternal reality of hell factor into our thinking even in the face of colossal disasters like the tsunami in Japan? Yes. Emphatically yes. And that is why John Piper had us sitting on the edge of our seats as he spoke about this great conundrum.

You see, many would say that evangelicals have been wrong to care more about saving souls from hell than ministering to bodies here on earth. Indeed, some have charged evangelicals with having a view of hell and the afterlife that has made us complacent about the needs of desperate people in the world around us. The argument goes that because we believe in hell and are concerned for people’s finally destiny, we don’t adequately care for people’s plight in the here and now.

But this is not the case, either theologically or historically. It was the great Reformation doctrine of justification by grace through faith that fueled John Newton’s determination to see slavery abolished and that informed his discipleship of William Wilberforce. His belief in heaven, hell and the urgency of the final judgment did not hinder but rather impelled his passion to advocate for freedom for the enslaved in the here and now. And this is the historical stance and record of Reformed, evangelical Christianity.

So there John Piper stood. He said, “Christians care about all suffering now, especially eternal suffering,” then explained, “If we don’t, we either have a defective heart or a defective view of hell.”
want other people to receive the mercy you’ve received. You want to show the mercy you’ve been shown. And so you become concerned for all suffering, especially eternal suffering.

If there is no such concern in your heart, John Piper is arguing, then your heart is defective. You’ve missed something. You haven’t adequately grasped the results of grace in your life.

Or maybe you do have a big heart for human suffering, but you are not as concerned about eternal suffering. You care about justice and life and wholeness and peace and poverty relief and decent standards of living now, but you aren’t as burdened by the thought of millions upon millions dying without Christ and plunging into a lost eternity. Then, Piper would say, you have a defective view of hell.

And that is not infrequently the case in evangelicism today. Hell is an unpopular doctrine (has it ever been popular?). And prominent teachers, as well as many young people, are questioning it, if not denying it outright.

But hell is a doctrine we learn from the lips of Jesus. No one is more responsible for laying out the main lines of the Bible’s teaching on hell, so despised in our day, than our Lord himself. He addressed the subject more than anyone else, and gave it more attention in the scope of his ministry than many other important themes. And it’s no wonder He spoke of it so often, in deadly earnest. He created it, and he alone of redeemed humanity has experienced its torment. So in the final analysis, we believe in hell, because we believe — and believe in — Jesus.

And Jesus’ teaching on hell, and the reality of those lost in sin and under the just wrath and condemnation of God, should inform us and spur us on in our evangelistic fervor for the salvation of sinners, especially in the face of catastrophes like we have witnessed in Japan. There, in short duration and on massive scale, we have seen horrific human suffering and thousands swept into a Christless eternity.

In the face of this, we whose hearts have been changed by grace and who embrace Jesus’ teaching on hell want to do all in our power to relieve human suffering now and to proclaim the gospel with all our might, so that as many as possible will hear, and turn and flee the wrath to come. In other words, we will care about all suffering now, especially eternal suffering.

Hell, rightly understood, doesn’t make us hard; it makes us tender. Hell, rightly understood, doesn’t make us complacent; it moves us to action. Hell, rightly understood, gives us perspective — a perspective that refuses merely to work for the good of people now, but always and especially for their everlasting good.

As A.A. Hodge once said: “A man who realizes in any measure the awful force of the words eternal hell won’t shut up about it, but will speak with all tenderness.”

Dr. Ligon Duncan teaches theology at RTS-Jackson and is senior minister at First Presbyterian Church in Jackson. He is president of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals, has served as moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America, is a co-founder of Together for the Gospel and is a council member of The Gospel Coalition.
The RTS family responds to the devastation in Japan.

WHAT USED TO BE A rice field had become what resembled a garbage dump. That’s one of the first things Kent Muhling saw upon arriving in Sendai, Japan, just a few days after a series of events that riveted the world’s attention. The RTS alumnus and church planting associate in Osaka, Japan, with Asia Access gazed upon a sad morass of uprooted trees, broken wood from buildings, cars, a pair of shoes, a computer box, a photo album — “and that was only the edge of the mess,” he reports.

by Paul Schwarz

Photo by Roger Lowther
The cause of the mess has been well-documented. On March 11 an earthquake measuring a staggering 9.0 on the Richter scale and with an epicenter just 45 miles from the coast of Japan triggered a tsunami with waves more than 120 feet high. According to Japanese officials, the wall of water claimed more than 12,000 lives and injured nearly 3,000 others, with another 15,000-plus people being reported missing.

The toll of the catastrophe, of course, cannot be quantified in mere numbers, and the aftershocks have been all-encompassing, even touching a seminary situated on the other side of the world. Currently, 27 RTS alumni and students live in Japan, serving as church planters and in other ministry roles. Their lives have been rocked just as tumultuously as the landmasses surrounding the epicenter of the earthquake.

The Muhlings illustrate this quite vividly, as Kent’s wife, Yuko, is a Japanese native who came stateside to RTS to pursue a Master of Arts in Counseling degree. Kent and Yuko met at RTS, eventually married, and now live and minister in Yuko’s homeland. They are among those in the RTS family helping respond to the Japanese tsunami in the name of Jesus and, in so doing, helping proclaim His gospel.

One family that’s likely more invested in the lives of the Japanese outside of the Japanese themselves would be the Iversons. This year, Dan and Carol Iverson celebrate their silver anniversary as church planters in Japan with Mission to the World (Dan, an RTS alumnus, directs the MTW ministry throughout the nation). In that quarter-century they have seen their family grow to encompass nine children and 11 grandchildren, with one of those children (Jonathan) being a fellow RTS alumnus, and another (Danny) being a current student. Danny recently led an eight-person team that traveled to Japan to help with the response (see “Not Shrinking Away in Fear” on page 10).

Some 200 miles away from the epicenter, yet still feeling the aftershocks from the earthquake, Dan Iverson sensed that he had received an answer to prayer. “We keep praying for God to send whatever needed to shake Japan and wake [it up from its] spiritual slumber,” he says. Dan reports that the areas hardest hit by the earthquake and tsunamis are among the least churched area in all of Japan, a nation already known as one of the least-churched people groups in the world.

As the news of the devastation began to reach the Iversons, they sprang into action. They mobilized a team of missionaries and Japanese nationals to rent trucks and vans, and load them with as much food, water and other supplies as they could accumulate. After an 18-hour journey that would normally take far less time, Dan and two co-workers reached a town called Iwaki, 30 miles away from the site of the nuclear power plants that eventually gained most of the public attention.

“People were so desperate for water,” Dan reports, “that when we ran out, they wanted the not-so-clean spillover can water. It was very sad to run out with people still coming with plastic bags and trash cans and anything they could bring to get water. I could not help but think, may the Japanese people come to thirst like this spiritually, and be this desperate seeking Living Water; may they flee to higher ground, to the High Rock; and may a

Continued on Page 11
Dan Iverson’s son Danny is an RTS-Orlando student who led a group that traveled to Japan from March 21-31 to help with his father’s response to the tsunami. The day before he left, with the threat of radiation looming in the Japanese air, Danny posted this blog entry, simply and aptly titled “Why We Are Still Going . . .”

Many have been wondering if we are still going despite the nuclear scare. The answer is “yes.” God is leading us to go and bring resources to assist Japan and proclaim the gospel to the lost. We are trusting that He has a plan much better than ours. There are so many people there who don’t know Jesus and His saving power, people who could die without ever even hearing of the hope found in the gospel. I find myself weeping often as I think about this, as I wonder if I would be willing to sacrifice so others might have hope.

This is one of the hardest decisions I have ever made, but what I believe to be the right one. You see, the love of Jesus for the human race continues to amaze me, that the God of the universe would put on skin and enter into a world “radiating” with sin, a world that would reject Him and crucify Him, a world He loved more than Himself. If such a love as this can’t inspire the human race to love each other and join in this redemption story, then nothing can . . .

In the midst of preparing to go I find myself humming old hymns that are running through my head. It got so bad that this morning I spent some good time by myself in the RTS chapel, just singing hymns from the pew Bible and reflecting and praying on the upcoming adventure. This line from one hymn stuck in my mind, so I thought I would share it below to encourage any others struggling right now with whether to go, or stay or flee . . .

I do believe there is a time to flee, but only if the Spirit of God leads. May fear never drive us and may our own comfort never be the compelling force of our decisions. I am thankful that many heroes of the past have not shrunk away from the dangers that assail in this fallen world, but have pressed on in the power of Christ for the redemption of this planet. May we have such faith in such a time as this, whether we are going, staying, sending or praying . . .

RTS alumnus Mike Costanzo (who took the photo below) joined the team formed by current student Danny Iverson to help the Japanese meet the needs of their people.

May we not be those who shrink away in fear, counting their own temporal lives worth more than the glorious eternal redemption purchased for us by the blood of Christ.

No strength of our own and no goodness we claim, Yet, since we have known of the Savior’s great name. In this our strong tower for Safety we hide. The Lord is our power, the Lord will provide.

Isaiah 43 has brought me great strength today . . . Check it out and meditate deeply on God’s promises.  

The blog where Danny posted this, www.spendyourself.org, contains many other reports on the gospel response to the crisis in Japan, including updates from representatives of his father.
Moved by both the physical and spiritual tsunami, Mike Costanzo traveled to Japan to join the short-term team organized by Danny Iverson to help alongside Danny’s father. The RTS alumnus (who, like Yuko Muhling, has a counseling degree) and his wife, Jen, plan to serve in Japan full time as MTW missionaries.

“Tsunami of grace, wave after wave, flood Japan.”

“The damage defied description,” Mike reported later on his blog. “There were cars wrapped in fishing nets, torn pieces of peoples’ photo albums littering the ground, and even childrens’ toys coated in grime laying on trash heaps. But most disturbing of all was the remains of a scarecrow we found with an all-too human face laying serenely amid the rubble. This captured the real cost of these disasters, that of tens of thousands of human souls.

Mike’s comments continued by reflecting on cultural issues that motivate him to put his counseling training to work in full-time ministry in Japan: “It also [made] me think of all those [in Japan] who [choose] to end their suffering by committing suicide — over 30,000 every year. I have to remind myself that this physical devastation is only a shadow of the spiritual devastation that has plagued this country for many long years, and only Christ, whose ‘appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind,’ can restore the image of God in man and offer true healing to [the] people.”

The physical restoration of Japan will undoubtedly take many years. Many in the RTS family plan to be there to help not only with that restoration, but also with the eternal restoration project that can never be reduced to rubble.

Dan and Carol Iverson provide updates on the situation in Japan at www.iversonjapan.com. You can also view Mike Costanzo’s commentary and photographs of the devastation there at www.mikejencostanzo.com. One way to donate to the relief efforts is by visiting www.mtw.org.

“I Just Felt Like Praying to Something”

by Dr. Hikari Ishido

I was actually outside Japan when the earthquake happened, as I am now based in Singapore, spending my sabbatical year away from the university I work for near Tokyo. So I am a half outsider and, as Japanese, half insider with respect to this incident. On that day I had received a few unusual e-mails from my usual friends and family in Japan, all stating to the effect that they were safe in the Tokyo area. Eventually the “fairly big earthquake” in Tokyo area turned out to have been unprecedentedly big, ever since the one with almost the same epicenter and magnitude that hit Japan some 1,000 years ago. Now we face an ongoing process of identifying unnoticed damages both for Japan and the surrounding region (or for the entire globe), along with the physical as well as emotional stress.

We sense the fact that Japan’s economy will be significantly reshaped while avoiding nuclear dependence, and that Japan’s map will be reshaped due to the coastal sedimentation caused by the Pacific plate-tectonic movement and ensuing tsunami. These environmental aspects aside, we Christians also sense that the mindset of most Japanese people (the vast majority being non-Christians) is being shaken, as they now look for unshaken spiritual ground, though they might not easily acknowledge such a need.

Even here in Singapore, the local Japanese Christian fellowship I attend had welcomed several non-Christian Japanese expatriate workers and their families to the morning service (albeit just once). Each of them said something like “I just felt like praying to something after that horrifying quake in Japan.”

I wish to pray to our Lord that He gives those suffering people in Japan physical ease first, and then the occasion to reshape their mindset ready for acquiring true peace in Christ.

Dr. Hikari Ishido, an RTS-Virtual student and Presbyterian ruling elder, is an associate professor of economics at Chiba University in Japan.
A New Phase for Dr. K

Dr. Simon Kistemaker is making a complete retirement from teaching.

THE PASSPORT MUST BE WELL WORN BY NOW — seven trips to Indonesia, three or four excursions to Brazil, six or seven times in Mexico. Dr. Simon Kistemaker has a keen mind even at age 80, but he has lost count of how many times he’s been to how many countries. His international travels have been part of a seminary-teaching ministry that spans more than half a century, with 40 of those years coming at RTS.

Today, though, to quote Dr. K himself in his gentle, matter-of-fact manner, “that has now come to an end.” The RTS-Orlando professor emeritus is retiring completely from the classroom and will take on a new role with the Virtual Campus.

The stress of travel has finally caught up to the otherwise seemingly indefatigable “Dr. K,” as the RTS family lovingly refers to him. Two years ago he began experiencing chest pains after returning from one of his trips to Mexico. His son, a physician’s assistant, had told him to call him if he ever experienced such pain. Upon making the call, son urged father to call 911 right away, which landed Dr. K in the hospital for eight days.

Rest and medication alleviated the symptoms, but he received a clear message. “To me that was a warning: ‘Don’t go through that anymore; you’re too old,’” says Dr. K from the quiet comfort of his RTS-Orlando office.

He may not have the physical heart for teaching anymore, but Dr. K’s spiritual heart continues to beat in prime time for RTS students. “I say, ‘Yes, Lord — if You have extra work for me, I will gladly do so,’” he declares. “And the Lord always answers that prayer.”

The answer appears to have come at the behest of one of his former students. Donn DeHart, director of course development at RTS-Virtual, has asked Dr. K to help supervise student coursework. With the miracle of modern technology, he will be able to assume his new duties without any of the globetrotting with
which he had become accustomed.

Both in his international travels and in his own office, Dr. K has left a formidable legacy. In Indonesia, for example, he has taught at two different Reformed seminaries at which former students of his at RTS have taken on prominent leadership roles. Closer to home, though, Dr. K has also made a mark through his writing ministry. He inherited his most significant work, the New Testament Commentary, when the original author, Dr. William Hendrickson, died before being able to complete the project. Dr. K eventually wrote the final seven volumes in the commentary series, with four of them receiving Gold Medalion Evangelical Book of the Year awards.

But “teaching has been my line all along,” he acknowledged, clarifying that his calling has not only included preparing pastors for ministry, but also equipping future generations of seminary professors. To that end, Dr. K has made a point in his teaching career to encourage students with scholarly inclinations to pursue advanced degrees so that after being in pastoral ministry for a time, they can later transition into the pastor/scholar role that defines RTS’ approach to identifying potential professors.

Dr. K has also identified the growing emphasis on biblical counseling as a positive trend in his 40 years at RTS. “When I first started teaching,” he recalls, “the emphasis was always on dogmatics and exegesis — the pastoral aspect, you just had to pick this up as you went along. That’s all changed. First we saw a need for Christian education — that is, for people who could come alongside pastors and help them in their ministry. Now that has expanded to include counseling.” Part of his response to this has been to encourage students to continue on to receive additional degrees in counseling to prepare them to help people think biblically about various societal issues.

The relationship between scholarship and ministry has led Dr. K down a distinct path. “If I look back on my life and how the Lord has directed me,” he says, “He first put in my heart a desire to get a doctorate. The reason I started teaching was that I had graduated from college with a major in Greek and another in Latin, and the college needed somebody to teach because of the influx of students at the time. But once I had a taste of teaching, I found it to fit me — I felt at home in the classroom. Preaching is an enjoyable experience, but my heart is in teaching.”

God might be redirecting where Dr. K’s teaching will take place from now on, but with 40 years at RTS behind him, he continues to look forward to where He leads him next. M.

B ack in November, RTS-Orlando president Dr. Don Sweeting paid a visit to Dr. Roger Nicole, long-time RTS-Orlando professor emeritus, at Dr. Nicole’s assisted-living facility. Dr. Nicole spoke that day of everything he had lost in life as his 95th birthday approached — including his wife, his hearing acuity and his ease of access to his library of theological books. “But then he stopped,” Dr. Sweeting recalled later, “and in that French accent he said emphatically, ‘But I have joy!’” Dr. Sweeting continued on to read Psalm 16 out loud, upon which Dr. Nicole recited along from memory.

A few weeks after that encounter, Earth’s loss became heaven’s gain, as Dr. Nicole went to be with the Lord on December 11, one day after that aforementioned 95th birthday. The Sorbonne- and Harvard-educated Swiss Reformed professor has long been regarded as one of the preeminent theologians in America. His evangelical résumé includes being associate editor for the New Geneva Study Bible, corresponding editor for Christianity Today, assistant in the translation of the New International version of the Bible, past president of the Evangelical Theological Society and founding member of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy.

Those who ministered alongside Dr. Nicole, though, have a broader perspective on the man. “What impressed me most about Dr. Nicole is that he indeed was a gentle giant of the faith,” said Dr. Joel Breidenbaugh, senior pastor of First Baptist Church Sweetwater in Longwood, Fla., where Dr. Nicole was a member and where his memorial service took place. Dr. Breidenbaugh and others who spoke at the memorial service noted the gracious manner in which Dr. Nicole, a theological expert in his own right, would provide feedback on their sermons.

Dr. Nicole’s legacy at RTS will live on to a significant extent at the RTS-Orlando library. The holdings there contain a special collection comprising more than 20,000 volumes from his personal theological library. M.
Interview: Chuck Colson

The State of the Church

Chuck Colson’s journey from his role in the Watergate scandal to prominent evangelical leader has been well documented. On February 10, the founder of Prison Fellowship and author of many influential books made a different kind of journey — to RTS-Orlando to speak at the inauguration of Dr. Don Sweeting as the campus president (see pages 16-18). After the ceremony, Mr. Colson met briefly with Ministry & Leadership managing editor Paul Schwarz to address key issues facing the contemporary church.

C

You get a lot of speaking invitations — more than you can accept, I imagine. Why speak at the inauguration of Dr. Sweeting?
He used to work with me, and I’ve followed his career; I’m very proud of what he’s done. We’re friends, and I like this seminary very much. I’m very fond of what RTS does.

Q

You’ve said, “One of the problems in the church today is that we don’t know what we believe, why we believe it, and why it matters.” What do you mean by that?
I elaborate on that in my book The Faith, where I talk about the fact that we simply haven’t been catechized in the basic doctrines. On his 80th birthday, J.I. Packer said the weakness of the evangelical church in America today is that it hasn’t been catechized. We don’t understand the basic truths and doctrines that constitute the Christian faith, nor do we understand why they’re so important — the Trinity being a classic example. Nor do we understand how to explain them and why they provide a worldview that people could be drawn to if they really understood them.

Q

By extension, the church has become more theologically illiterate as time goes on. How does the church combat this?
By equipping the saints so they understand what the world believes, so they also understand what they believe, and so they understand the difference and how to make that connection. In other words, how to engage the secular world with a winsome presentation of the biblical worldview. But you don’t know how to do that unless the people in the pews are being grounded in doctrine and a worldview that reflects their faith so they can present that winsomely to their secular neighbors.

Q

People are becoming less interested in spiritual principles and more interested in learning pragmatic solutions for life. Where does this focus on pragmatism lead us?
It’s deadly, because pragmatism is the opposite of idealism, and the highest ideal for us is to love and worship God, to see His glory. With pragmatism, you do that which works. I would argue that the Christian worldview gives the most ra-
tional explanation of reality, and therefore it does work. But you don’t follow it because it works; you follow it because it’s true.

*Q.* Christians are becoming more ingrown and less outreach-oriented with the gospel, while at the same time becoming more participatory in community action. What has contributed to this situation, and how does the church address that?

I think what has contributed to it is that the church does not distinguish ideology from revelation. Ideology is a man-made formulation, and I’m suspicious of any and all ideologies. I want to guide my life by revelation. So if Christians can separate out what they believe — what’s ideology on the one hand and what’s dogma or doctrine from biblical revelation on the other, we will see that we have picked up some very heavy baggage along the way. And I think the distinction between ideology and revelation is critical.

*Q.* What goes into making the gospel winsome and appealing to nonbelievers, so as to help them see, as you’ve said, “what a wonderful proposal God gives us through the good news of Jesus Christ”? Nobody is making anybody believe anything. We can’t impose if we wanted to — we can only propose. But my thesis is the same one that Cornelius Van Til advanced, that “God is” is the only rational explanation of reality, and all other explanations of reality can be demonstrated to be false. You can’t prove that “God is” is true, but you can prove that any other formulation or explanation or presupposition about life is false, simply by how it works out in practice.

*Q.* The postmodern insistence on tolerance appears to be winning the day even in the church. What has to happen to reverse that trend?

But it’s not tolerance. It’s the reverse of tolerance. It is saying only one point of view is acceptable for public discourse. Tolerance means everybody’s point of view is going to be respectfully listened to. That is not the case today. Tolerance has been defined as “Here is the creed by which we, the cultural elite, think you should live, and if you’re opposed to that, you’re intolerant.” That’s exactly what they’re saying.

For example, with the Manhattan Declaration I helped write, the iPhone app for it was taken down because of criticism from the gay community that it was deemed offensive. It’s the most irenic, winsome document you could write — 4,700 words that I think is the finest worldview statement today. But the very fact that we make a truth claim caused it to be an offense to people. So now you’re suppressing free speech in the interest of one side of an agenda. That’s exactly what tolerance has become. M.

For information on the Chuck Colson Center for Christian Worldview, visit www.joincolson.com.
as the new president of RTS-Orlando, Dr. Don Sweeting heard Scottish sounds call to him for courage to take on the task. First he heard the bagpipes and drums in the processional, and then later heard the voice of his own father.

Photos by Allison Rossouw
Dr. George Sweeting, the longtime president of Moody Bible Institute, told the assembled multitude a story about his mother, who came to the United States from Scotland in 1923 along with his father. She would often give George this rallying cry to courage: “Laddie, the blood of the Covenanters is in your veins!” In that spirit, father went on to charge his son to be a watchman, like Ezekiel to the house of Israel, and a workman, who correctly handles the Word of truth.

So marked two days of celebration on the Orlando campus in February for the formal introduction of Don Sweeting as campus president. Prominent evangelical leader Chuck Colson (see pages 14-15) gave the keynote address at the main inauguration ceremony. He reminded the audience that Christians need to become missionaries to the culture and must understand the conflict of worldviews, identifying three conflicting worldviews: naturalism, Islam and biblical truth.

“The job of the church today is to see how to apply biblical truth to every walk of life,” Mr. Colson said. “It takes courage to speak the truth in today’s world. If the church declines, it is because of our lack of courage.” He then paraphrased another historically noteworthy seminary president, J. Gresham Machen, in telling the RTS-Orlando family that “You have chosen a president who is a man of another type.”

Mr. Colson would know — he accepted the invitation to speak at Dr. Sweeting’s inauguration because of his close connection with the Sweeting family over the years. The relationship between the two men dates back to Dr. Sweeting’s 1980s internship with Prison Fellowship, which Mr. Colson founded.

The inauguration ceremony also included a tribute to the past presidents of RTS-Orlando by Dr. Mark Futato, academic dean and Robert L. Maclellan professor of Old Testament at the campus. He identified Dr. Luder Whitlock, Dr. Ric Cannada and Dr. Frank James as Moses figures, especially noting Dr. Whitlock’s work in founding the campus during his time as RTS president. “Humanly speaking,” Dr. Futato declared, “we would not be here without you,” at which the audience rose to give Dr. Whitlock a standing ovation.

The reception that followed the inauguration ceremony capped off two days of events on campus. The festivities kicked off with an inaugural chapel service at which Jere-my Casella of the Indelible Grace worship music movement led in the singing of traditional hymns set to contemporary melodies and arrangements. Dr. Sweeting’s own son James accompanied Casella on guitar and harmonized with him.

Dr. Bruce Ware, a professor at Southern Baptist Theologi-cal Seminary in Louisville, Ky., spoke from Jeremiah 9:23-24 on “Knowing God: The Sum and Substance of Life.” “Examine your own heart for idolatry,” he said, “meditate on the majesty and the mercy of God, and then repeat steps one and two over and over again.”

Casella and Dr. Ware then joined Dr. Sweeting for a question-and-answer session that highlighted a luncheon in the RTS-Orlando fellowship hall. Dr. Sweeting smoothly showed off his skills as a moderator by leading Casella through a description of the contemporary movement to reinvigorate traditional gospel hymns. Casella used the terms “roots and wings” and “theology on fire” to describe the movement. Later that afternoon he led a hymn seminar in the fellowship hall at which these issues were discussed in greater detail.

Shortly before the inauguration ceremony the next after-noon, Dr. Sweeting moderated a Scholars Forum conversa-tion on “The Future of the New Calvinism and Evangelical-ism in the 21st Century.” Dr. Ware and RTS-Orlando’s own Dr. Scott Swain were joined on the chapel podium by Dr. John Woodbridge from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Dr. Michael Allen from Knox Theological Seminary, and Justin Taylor from Crossway Books.

The six men tackled a freewheeling range of issues, such as...
how evangelicalism can be defined, the strengths and weaknesses of evangelicalism, and the origins of the so-called “New Calvinism.” Dr. Woodbridge’s inclusion on the panel was especially noteworthy because Dr. Sweeting had him as a professor when he studied at Trinity (the longtime professor began his remarks by insisting that Dr. Sweeting had been a good student).

Agreeing that the current resurgence of interest in Calvinism stems from a reaction to the shallowness characterizing much of modern evangelicalism, the panelists commented in a variety of ways. Dr. Allen pointed out the wise, disproportionate use of popular media, particularly blogs, in promoting the “new Calvinism”; Dr. Ware observed that “we are tiring of not being fed”; Taylor noted how “it’s always a challenge to preach the whole counsel of God”; Dr. Woodbridge discussed the influence of Jonathan Edwards on the movement and the danger of arrogance toward sincerely believing Arminians; and Dr. Swain warned against the danger of theological and cultural insularity among those embracing Calvinism.

Dr. Woodbridge found another avenue for humorous byplay with his former student when he expressed his outlook on the future of evangelicalism: “I’m an optimist — I’m a Chicago Cubs fan.” Without missing a beat, Dr. Sweeting (a fellow longsuffering Cubs fan) replied, “You know what they say about the Cubs? Any team can have a bad century.”

This exchange about the Cubs’ failure to win the World Series since 1908 illustrated the sense of collegiality that characterized the inauguration festivities. Many seminaries, denominations and Christian organizations sent representatives, with many others sending letters of congratulations. Dr. Sweeting’s RTS-Orlando presidency has become something that not only can the RTS family celebrate, but also the entire body of Christ.

Recordings of all the inauguration events may be found on RTS at iTunes U by opening iTunes and searching for Sweeting Inauguration.
Continued from Page 3

RTS-Jackson and RTS-Orlando in March, with a Q&A afterward; and also in March hosted an evening for the wives of RTS students in his home and spoke on “The Role of the Pastor’s Wife.” He will be the keynote speaker for the National Conference on Preaching, May 9-11, speaking on “The Power of the Cross”; will preach at the New Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., May 28-30; and will lead evening worship at the ARP Family Bible Conference, Bonclarken Conference Center in North Carolina, July 25-28.

Rev. Tim McKeown preached in both English and Spanish at Oak Lawn Presbyterian Church, Houston, March 20.

Dr. Robert Orner spoke at the World Missions Conference at Lake Morton Community Church, Lakeland, Fla., in February, and participated in an MMA Church Planter Readiness Seminar in Orlando, April 15-16. He will speak at the Global Church Advancement (GCA) Church Planting and Renewal Conference, Erskine Seminary, Due West, S.C., July 19-22.

Dr. Andrew J. Peterson spoke on “Trends in Accreditation Standards and Social Media for Distance Education” at the Distance Education Roundtable, Trinity Evangelical Divinity Seminary, Deerfield, Ill., March 7; and (with Brandon Cozart) spoke on “Using iTunes U and iPhone Apps in a Seminary Program” for the ACCESS 40th Annual Meeting at Moody Bible Institute, Chicago, March 10. He will participate in the ATS task force on Redesigned Accreditation Standards, May 16-17, then speak on “Fraud and Resolution in the Public Company” at the Conference on Christian Business Ethics Today, Union League Conference Center, Philadelphia, June 10.

Dr. Don Sweeting will speak at the commencement of the Geneva School, Orlando, May 27, and on “A Pastor’s Perspective on Christian Education K-12” at a breakfast at Front Range Christian School, Littleton, Colo., June 16.

Dr. Derek Thomas will speak at the RTS-Washington, D.C. commencement, June 2.

Dr. Guy Waters will teach “Acts and Romans” at RTS-Charlotte in June and “Greek Exegesis” at RTS-Orlando in August.

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

Dr. Donald Fortson lectured on the Protestant Reformation during the RTS Church History Tour to Scotland, England and France, March 10-22.

Prof. Mike Gilo will preach at the Lucaya Presbyterian Kirk, Freeport, Bahamas, May 1.

Dr. Andrew Hoffecker taught two seminars on worldview (Singapore, March 12; Jakarta, Indonesia, March 13), and an intensive class on worldview at the Reformed Evangelical Seminary, Jakarta. The class used his book Building a Christian Worldview, which had been previously translated into Indonesian.

Dr. Dan Timmer will teach a course on “Old Testament Poetic and Wisdom Books” at Faculté de théologie réformée Farel, Montréal, May 30-June 10.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Donald (Chuck) Frost has been appointed special assistant to the chancellor for planned giving. He has been the senior pastor of Westminster Presbyterian Church, Atlanta, for 11 years. He received both his master’s and doctorate degree from RTS and previously pastored four other churches in Georgia, Mississippi and Florida. His military service spans 31 years, serving as a chaplain in Georgia and Mississippi, and retiring as a colonel. His decorations include the Legion of Merit and three Army Commendation Medals.

Dr. Dennis Fusaro will become vice president of development at RTS-Washington, D.C. He has been the executive director of the National Right to Work Committee for the state of Iowa since 2007 and before that the executive director and director of communications of that committee for Delaware. He graduated from George Mason University, Fairfax, Va., with a B.S. in economics.

In February, Dr. Bruce Baugus was installed as a ruling elder at Trinity Presbyterian Church, Jackson, and was licensed to preach in the Mississippi Valley Presbytery.

Dr. Charles E. Hill, New Testament professor, RTS-Orlando, has received the prestigious Henry Luce III Fellowship in Theology, funded by the Luce Foundation and administered by the Association of Theological Schools. He is the first RTS professor in the 17-year history of the fellowship to receive the award. This fellowship, open to faculty members at any of the over 250 ATS member schools and awarded as a grant of up to $75,000, provides for recipients to work for a year on an approved research project benefiting the academy and the church. Dr. Hill’s project, “Many Antichrists Have Come: Dissent and the Beginnings of the Johannine Corpus,” refers to the schism mentioned in 1 John.

Dr. Donald Sweingten was added to the board of the National Association of Evangelicals at its March 10 board meeting. He was also appointed the James Woodrow Hassell professor of church history during his Feb. 10 inauguration as RTS-Orlando president.

Dr. Dan Timmer received an ATS Lilly Research Expense Grant to support research on a thematic-coherence approach to the Minor Prophets in dialogue with the synchronic/diachronic spectrum, in cooperation with Dr. Aaron Schart, Universitat Duisburg-Essen.

ALUMNI PUBLICATIONS

Justin Holcomb (MATS ‘97, MACT ‘97), on staff at Mars Hill Church, Seattle, and an RTS adjunct faculty member, has written (with his wife, Lindsey) Rid of My Disgrace: Hope and Healing for Sexual Assault Victims (Crosstown, January). The book is an application of Reformed theology to sexual abuse victims.

CAMPUS EVENTS

Atlanta

The campus family is excited to hold the first commencement in its new building, 1508 Terrell Mill Road, Marietta, Ga., on Saturday, May 21, at 10 a.m. Speaking will be Rev. Steve Wallace, RTS chief operations officer.

Charlotte

Commencement will be held May 21 at 11 a.m. at Christ Covenant Church, Matthews, N.C. Speaking will be Marvin Olasky, senior editor and publisher of World magazine, and author of 20 books, including Compassionate Conservatism and The American Leadership Tradition.

Jackson

Commencement will take place Saturday, May 21, at 10 a.m. at First Presbyterian Church, Jackson. Speaking will be Dr. Paul B. Long Sr., professor of missions emeritus at RTS-Jackson. He served nearly 10 years as a missionary in Africa and almost 20 years in Brazil planting churches throughout the Amazon. A reception will follow at Miller Hall.

Orlando

Commencement will be held May 20 at 7:30 p.m. at First Presbyterian Church, Orlando. Dr. Ric Cannada, chancellor and CEO, will speak. The president’s reception will be held on campus, May 19, at 5:30 p.m.

Washington, D.C.

Commencement will take place June 2 at 7:30 p.m. at McLean Presbyterian Church. Dr. Derek Thomas, John Richards professor of practical and systematic theology, will speak. Dr. Michael Milton will give the charge.
One of the best ways to support RTS and your other favorite organizations is through our Mind & Heart Donor Advised Fund℠.

Contributors receive immediate income tax deductions, avoid capital gains tax and retain the ability to recommend grants from the fund now and in future years. You may set up your fund as an endowment and make grants from the annual income.

The fund offers convenience and flexibility, including many of the benefits of establishing a private foundation but without the costs, headaches, paperwork, filings and compliance issues. Also, tax savings using the Mind & Heart Donor Advised Fund℠ are often greater than through a private foundation.

Other benefits include grants to approved charities being delayed until the future, favorable rules, professional management and investment, avoiding dealing directly with charities and fund raisers, and many more. Our staff will even research and screen organizations you may wish to support. You can make gifts of appreciated securities, taking the higher value of them now but delaying specifying what charities you recommend supporting until later. You may even “bunch” several years’ worth of charitable deductions into a year of high income. Make your grants in future years but enjoy your large deduction now.

Contact us to receive our excellent brochure that describes the many advantages of the Mind & Heart Donor Advised Fund℠.

The RTS Foundation, Inc., 1231 Reformation Drive, Oviedo, FL 32765, 866-366-4787 or rbridges@rtsfoundation.org.