



MAKING DISCIPLES IN THE MARKETPLACE



COURAGE IN THE MARKETPLACE

ROB GENIN, YBL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This year our YBL theme in Birmingham has been "Walking the Path of Courage". Simply put, we believe courage is "obeying Jesus when it is hard". Jesus set the expectation that following him would be difficult: "Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say..." (Mark 13:11). This seems to assume arrest for their faith would be a commonplace occurrence for believers. "Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also" (John 15:15). Followers of Jesus can expect opposition. The apostle Paul would later say, "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted," (2 Tim 3:12).

It is important to say this because there are some who suggest we should follow Jesus so life will get easier. That is not a likely outcome based on the verses above! However, it is appropriate that a Christian follow Jesus with hope and expectation of reward: "I have come that they might have life, and life abundantly" (John 10:10). "...they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life" (1 Tim 6:19). We have a good hope that the difficulties we face in following Jesus pale in comparison with the blessings we have and will receive in Him.



The marketplace can be a battleground for ideas – it is an amazing meeting place for all kinds of people. For this reason, it continues to be a crucial field of engagement for Christians. Remarkable and good things are being done every day in businesses and in the lives of men and women. YBL Ministries is grateful to be a part of that conversation. Come, see and read some of what God has done this year!



YBL has had a profound impact on my life. YBL has provided a structure for our small group Bible study that has been meeting for over ten years. This weekly Bible study has helped me to make a regular commitment to learning from the Bible and sharing my faith. – **Preston Martin**



YBL BIRMINGHAM 2023 MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS

ROB GENIN, YBL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This has been a good year for YBL Birmingham! We hosted several outreach events with Alabama Hall of Fame and NBA player Ennis Whatley and Army Ranger Major Jeff Struecker from the Blackhawk down incident. We saw thirteen men express a desire to commit their lives to Christ, and more than 40 men added to weekly discipleship groups. We have several dozen in the last twelve months who have been matched with mentors. Perhaps most significantly, we continue to train men to make disciples and to share their faith where they are, with regular coaching and a number of special discipleship training events this year. We desire to see 2 Timothy 2:1-2 fulfilled – that those in our ministry would teach the truth and way of Jesus to faithful men, who will in turn teach others. For forty-three years, God has enabled YBL to do that in Birmingham, and we thank Him!



I was introduced to YBL nearly 5 years ago when I attended one of their summer series breakfasts. The message and mission of bringing professional Christians together was very compelling to me at a time when I was navigating significant change in my career. Today's workplace is challenging to live into one's Christian values as well as discipling to others. The small group routines with professional peers and discussing those issues through God's word has been a blessing to my life. – **Beeland Nielsen**

YBL SECOND HALF

FINISHING WELL AND TRAINING THE NEXT GENERATION

We will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD, His power, and the wonders He has done.
(Psalm 78:4)

YBL Ministries continues its focus on men through the generations of their lives. We want to help young men start well in their families and careers. In time we pray they will transition from the marketplace as mentors and teachers to the next generation. The Second Half ministry exists so that men will not only begin their lives well – but also finish well. We continue to partner with others and hold events to coach men through important seasons of transition with topics like financial planning and care for aging parents and spouses, as well as providing small groups for encouragement and opportunities to invest in and mentor younger men as a part of the YBL ecosystem. We thank God for the gifted men who continue to “plant trees in whose shade they may never sit.”



YBL has been such a blessing in my life. I first met Rob and Phil through my now business partner Mark Achuff back in the summer of 2018. At the time I was going down a different career path but was considering a change. I joined Rob's group and the friendships I made in that group have made such a huge impact on the trajectory of my career. It has been the most consistent group I've ever been a part of as we have continued to meet every week the last 5 years. My group has been with me through some great times as I got married, became a dad, and made partner in my business, but they have also walked with me through some difficult times when I lost my grandfather and my aunt to cancer. I am so thankful that YBL has connected me with a group of men who are always there for me. – **Ethan Green**

In college I was involved in a small group through my fraternity that met weekly to study the Bible, hold each other accountable, and help each other navigate through life struggles. After I graduated, I was longing for the same level of connection as I grew as a young professional. I had convinced myself that I was never going to find the same accountability and community as before and was trying to come to terms with that. Then I was invited to go to the 2022 Fall Banquet and got to hear the stories of fellow professionals that have been in small groups with lifelong friends that they met through YBL for upwards of 30 years and immediately knew I had to sign up. Being right back in that same setting with new friends that I never would have met otherwise has been a blessing in my life, and I'm looking forward to seeing how God continues to move and work through YBL and through my small group. If there's anyone out there on the fence about joining a small group and getting plugged in, trust me, you'd be missing out on something great. - **Gibson Horne**



YBL JACKSON MINISTRY UPDATE

DOUG MCDANIEL, YBL JACKSON BOARD CHAIRMAN

As we reported in our letter last year in 2022, YBL Jackson hired Drew Narmour as our Executive Director and formed an agreement with Madison Heights to serve as our local church sponsor. We are pleased to report that both of these transitions have gone extremely well. We hosted two large outreach banquets in 2023. In May, we had 195 guests come and hear Dickson Perry share his story. In September, rather than a single speaker, we had a panel of three business leaders as our speakers. Drew did an outstanding job moderating this event. This concept proved to be quite successful, as we had 270 in attendance, the largest crowd to attend a YBL Jackson banquet in eight years. Our business panelists were Hu Meena, CEO of CSpire, Oscar Miskelly, CEO of Miskelly Furniture, and Robert Leard, Market Executive with Regions. From both of these events, new Concentrating on the Majors (COM) bible studies were formed.

We have added two new board members during the year, Kellon Lawrence and Will Martin. As many of us have served on the YBL board for many years, we are excited to bring in these two young men. We had a successful Sporting Clays shoot in August with 28 four-person teams participating. We also hosted a lunch for all YBL Jackson groups in March. It was great to have all of the men together in one place so we repeated the event a second time in October. We are grateful to see how the Lord has sustained and blessed YBL Jackson for 30 years. Our purpose is not simply to host events but to be used by God to point men to Jesus Christ. We continue to see God using this ministry to spread the gospel and change men's lives.





A WBL REFLECTION

SHARON HEAD, WBL DIRECTOR

*"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come!*

*Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
Because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.*

The words to this hymn were penned by Charlotte Elliott, born in 1789 and lived to the age of 82. It is said that though she was weak and feeble in body, an invalid for many years, she possessed a strong imagination, and a well-cultured and intellectual mind. Her hymns number about 150, a large percentage of which are in common use today. The above, "Just as I am, without one plea" (written in 1835) is among the most widely known. In spite of being raised in a Christian home, she reflected on her conflicts and doubts, felt unworthy of God's grace, and felt incapable of facing a righteous and perfect God. When a minister, Dr. Milan, visited her and asked if she was at peace with God, she hesitated. He then told her, "Come as you are."

And she did.

Then Charlotte penned these words of assurance about Jesus loving her "just as she was." She was never the same.

I meet frequently with women who also have conflicts, doubts, and feelings of unworthiness. The women I meet with have strong imaginations and are well-cultured and intellectual. Although Charlotte Elliott lived 200 years ago, the concerns of women (and men) remain the same today. In and of ourselves, we are incapable of facing a righteous and perfect God. As Dr. Milan did with Charlotte, there are times when people need to love us enough to ask us hard questions. He invested in her, shared the truth of God's word with her, and reminded her of her need to look outside herself and look to Christ. Through WBL, I have the privilege of asking women if they are at peace with God, reminding them to look to Christ, and 'come as they are.'

As a follower of Jesus, these lyrics remind me how important it is to always preach the gospel to myself. That is what Charlotte Elliott did through her many poems and lyrics. Clearly, she did not have the distraction of social media, television and the influences of 2023, but there were distractions in her day. We are all shaped by what we take in. If you read her hymns, it is obvious she was shaped by the Word of God. She knew that she could only come to Christ because His blood was shed for her, not because of anything she could offer Him, and she knew that because she knew the word of God.

As we draw near to a new year, may we keep ourselves from the distractions that are ever before us, so that we may fill our minds with that which is true, lovely, excellent, and worthy of praise – so that we can readily preach the gospel to ourselves and to others. Please pray that I will steward well the mind God has given me, for it is so connected to my heart. The Word of God tells me to "Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life" Proverbs 4:23.

*Weak and feeble, just as I am,
Oh Lamb of God, I come to Thee!*

The WBL Entrepreneurs group was started out of the desire to connect women in similar situations, women juggling the demands of full schedules yet feeling the need for deep relationships and for growth. As each monthly meeting arises on the calendar, so many things vie for that space of time. I am usually anxious about how I will be able to make it to the meeting as I routinely wonder where I will find the time and energy to attend since there never seems to be quite enough time in my schedule. The Lord has been so faithful to work things out for me to not only attend but to also multiply the effect of those two hours. I leave with my cup filled with much-needed fellowship, encouragement, and a reminder of why I do what I do. Such times remind me that we are not made to live life on our own but instead are made for the deep fellowship of living in community together as believers – just as it says in Hebrews 10:24-25: "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." – Holly Hollon



WBL ANNUAL REPORT

AMY MCMULLEN, WBL BOARD CHAIRPERSON

This year marked a pivotal moment for WBL as we welcomed our new director, Sharon Head, into our fold in late 2022. While the initial expectation was to approach this new journey as a marathon rather than a sprint, God had other plans for us. Under Sharon's guidance, our ministry has experienced wonderful growth and maturation in her first full year at the helm.

Sharon's dedication to the mission and vision of our organization has inspired our board to embrace new challenges and opportunities. She has ignited a fresh sense of enthusiasm and purpose within our ministry. She has prioritized the establishment of intentional and deep-rooted relationships with other ministry groups and individuals. Through this, WBL has forged a new partnership with Grace Klein Ministries, co-hosting a drop-in bible study and other gatherings intended to foster intentional conversations among women. New small groups have started throughout the area. WBL hosted a panel in March featuring four amazing women who shared their faith journey "Stories of Courage", in their faith journeys both in and outside the workplace. A new on-boarding study, developed by former interim director Anne Reddick, launched in the spring. We hosted a summer drop-in study at Samford, studying the work principles displayed in the lives of six Bible figures. In May, we gathered a group of women at the

Caroline House to talk about the importance of creating space in your home and life for what matters most. WBL once again co-hosted the last YBL Summer Series with a panel that featured one of our board members, Elizabeth Buchanan. And most recently, we hosted our annual Faith and Works Fall Luncheon that gathered nearly 300 women for fellowship and connection, with Julie Sparkman delivering a gospel centered message on the impact of personal transformation.

The consistent feedback from women with whom we engage is that they crave meaningful relationships with other Christian women. I personally sought out WBL at a point in my career when I realized I lacked other Christian women mentors and professional colleagues. Christian working women face many challenges in living out their calling and faith in the workplace and at home, and WBL seeks to support and encourage women in these challenges. Since being involved in WBL, the foundation of my professional life has radically changed as I now see my work as a part of God's plan and as a means of service to others and to Him – not just a means to an end. This serves as a testament to God's work in our ministry and in the lives of women in our community. The harvest is plentiful, and our work is only getting started. We thank God for what He is doing in our ministry and give Him all the glory.

In 2022, I was privileged to be promoted to Director of People and Culture at The Onin Group, prompting my relocation to Birmingham, Alabama. Joining WBL was invaluable in easing my transition to both a new city and a new role. WBL has provided me with a unique platform to connect with like-minded women who are committed to professional excellence and spiritual growth. The camaraderie within these groups has allowed me to be my authentic self and given me the support and safety to be vulnerable during our monthly fellowships. – **Rosalyn Lawson**





I was involved with Young Life through high school and college. It was a great encouragement to me when I moved to Birmingham to find a ministry that could help me to make disciples in the marketplace. YBL has been a part of my life through career growth and the birth of my children. I now lead a YBL small group at my office and it is exciting to watch new people growing and connecting to God through our study! - **Matt Jaeger**

YBL IN THE COMMUNITY

YBL Birmingham hosted Major Jeff Struecker at our fall breakfast. With such an inspirational figure, a member on our board suggested a special outreach to police and veterans. As a part of our outreach and invitation to the police, we visited 15 police precincts and Sheriffs' offices and built relationships with a number of our community officers. We took time at the breakfast to publicly thank our officers, deputies and veterans for their faithful service, especially in the last few, particularly challenging years. Through this, God appears to be building some bridges between our ministry and government in Birmingham. Please pray this friendship will grow and bear much fruit in the years to come!



YBL FIRST CONVERSATIONS STUDY



Young Business
Leaders

First Conversations

There is a lot of discussion about how the younger generation has a fear of commitment. Whether you call it FOMO (fear of missing out) or FOBO (fear of better offer) or something else, people today have to find a way to decide what they will focus on. The average person is bombarded with hundreds or even thousands of messages a day. To help break through the noise, YBL has developed

a new study to introduce people to the importance of marketplace discipleship.

This three week study helps enlighten a visitor to YBL to the "why" behind being a part of a marketplace small group. Over three weeks we study what the Bible says about the connection between God and the work we do, the priority of relationships with God and people, and the developing of consistent habits that shape who we are becoming every day. This "onboarding" tool is designed to help our small group leaders to be able to quickly integrate new members into their midst, or (with coaching and help) inspire these visitors to start marketplace groups of their own.



BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE YBL MINISTRIES TEAM

Rob's Book Reviews

Sacred Pace by Terry Looper

How do you practically learn to slow down and listen to God's will? Do you have a process for systematically thinking through decisions in a way that considers God's Word and His desires in a situation? How do we sort out our own desires and sift that which is flesh and fear, and what is honoring to God? Through his own personal story of burnout and healing, Terry Looper unpacks the process he learned and has used for close to forty years in making wise family decisions and business deals. This book is valuable to anyone who wants to grow in their decision making.

Parenting by Paul David Tripp

If you are a parent, or soon to be one, this could be a wonderfully important read. Paul David Tripp said this is the book he wished he would have written before *Shepherding a Child's Heart*, because it explains the reasons behind the practices he advises. It will challenge you to trust God for your children, to persevere in the daily work of being a parent, and also give you refreshing hope – because we need the same repentance and grace we want for our children.

Stick Figures Save the World by Pam Arlund

Are you looking for a way to refresh your outreach to others? This short little book teaches a simple strategy to share God's Word or your testimony in pictures. Pam has a lot of thoughtful reasons why pictures can be a powerful tool in sharing stories about God with others. I found it inspiring and it challenged me to keep looking for new ways to drip God into the lives of others.

Sharon's Book Review

Habits of Grace: Enjoying Jesus through the Spiritual Disciplines by David Mathis

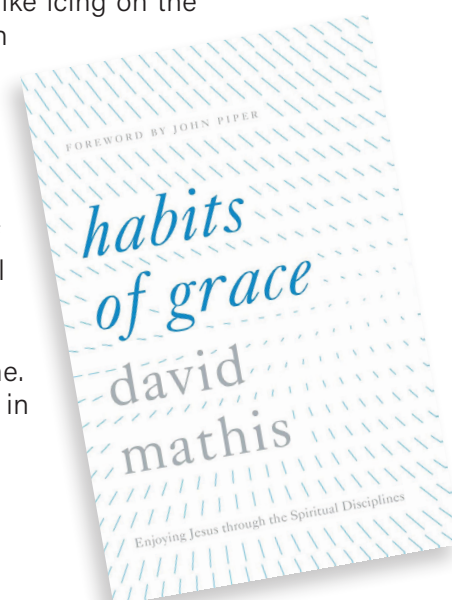
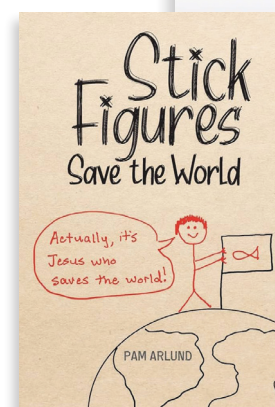
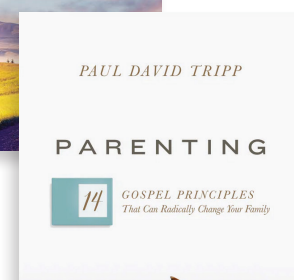
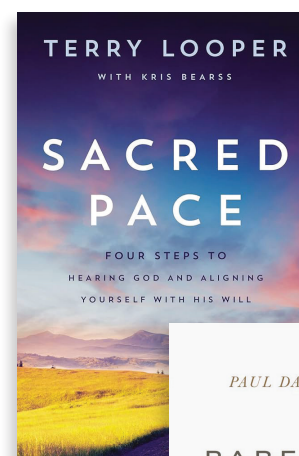
Simply because there is no way I could improve on what John Piper already said in the forward to the book about the book, here are his words:

"David is writing a book to help you enjoy Jesus. In doing that, he is not trying to be nice. He is trying to be nuclear. His way of thinking about enjoying Jesus is explosive. If you enjoy Jesus more than life (Matt 10:38), you will live with a radical abandon for Jesus that will make the world wonder. Enjoyment of Jesus is not like icing on the cake; it is like powder in the shell... Not only is enjoying Jesus explosively transforming in the way we live; it is also essential for making Jesus look great.

This book is about grace-empowered habits, and Spirit empowered disciples. These are the means God has given for drinking at the fountain of life. They don't earn the enjoyment. They receive it. They are not payments for pleasure; they are pipelines. The psalmist does not say, "You sell them drink," but, "You give them drink from the river of your delights" (Ps. 36:8). What is more, all of us leak and lose God's life-giving water. We all need inspiration and instruction for how to drink – again and again. Habitually.

If you have never read a book on "habits of grace" or "spiritual disciplines", start with this one. If you are a veteran lover of the river of God, but have recently been wandering aimlessly in the desert, this book will be a good way back."

Well said, Dr. Piper! Great read, Mr. Mathis.





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NEW PARTNERS IN THE MARKETPLACE

YBL & WBL are so grateful for our gospel centered and motivated ministry team. We recently welcomed two new team members, Johnny Presley and Teresa Stokes. Johnny joins us as our Communications/Social Media Assistant. He is a recent marketing graduate from Mississippi State and is working on a dual MBA/MDIV from Samford University. Teresa Stokes is our new Administrative Assistant & Event Coordinator. She has worked at the University of South Alabama and UAB, and we are excited to have her talents at YBL. Welcome Johnny & Teresa!

