



Fall 2019

*The College of Bible and Ministry of Harding University seeks to lead all students to know, live and share God's Word and to understand, love and serve God's world through and beyond their chosen vocation.*

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## Flavil Yeakley Legacy: Carrier of God's Presence

By Dr. Randy Willingham

Flavil Ray Yeakley. What a unique name and man. Flavil Yeakley is a name some people cannot remember and cannot forget ... all at the same time. Shawn Daggett told me that even as his father was passing, he was given a drink of water and he said, "That tastes like a Flavil of Yeakley." My mind went right past that story to how Flavil Yeakley was, for me, an expression of John 7:38. He was like a drink of water to a thirsty man.

*Jesus said, "Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water'" (John 7:38, ESV).*

I would not be supporting and equipping ministers today were it not for Dr. Yeakley. Without the Spirit's flow through his life, I would not be in ministry at all. Flavil Yeakley is one reason I can never be cynical about church or surrender my faith. God used him at a turning point in my life. I have probably *understated* this claim.

His ministry lifted me from despair and deep pain to a ministry that could literally laugh at the struggles of my "pre-Flavil days." I loved his humor but I especially loved the humor he gave me. He showed me how to laugh at what used to make me cry.

**He Walked into My Failures.** Flavil Yeakley was the spiritual fireman who boldly walked into my disaster when others ran away. Although I had read his books, I first met him when I was being fired as a minister for the third time. My doctorate looked like it would be an unfinished project as my days in ministry were ending. I was starting to believe the church to be a cruel joke. I wondered why Dr. Yeakley never wrote a book entitled *Hell's Laughter: The Church*.



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**He Walked Me Out of My Failures.** Dr. Yeakley was aware of the goodness in me and the ugliness of the church. Yet, he was *also aware* of the beauty in the church and the ugliness in me! He opened my eyes to my need for grace, the church's need for grace, and this grace as the very reason and resource for ministry. He was a carrier for God's presence in a no-win situation. He always cared for me but he never let that care prevent care for the church.



He showed that to care for a single hurting sheep and to care for a flock are not incompatible. In fact, neither can be done without the other. He served on my doctoral committee, helped change my thesis to managing conflict, and helped our church embrace a new beginning. The church was blessed. I completed my doctoral work and **WE** won two awards for the thesis (including Abilene's highest award offered for outstanding doctoral thesis). He turned a situation around that could have been disastrous for me and the church. We are forever grateful and will give the life-giving ministry he gave us to others for the rest of our lives.

THANK GOD for the flow of God's life-giving River through Flavil Yeakley! I have since had great church experiences, more turn-around stories than I can count, worked with thousands of church leaders, and have not been fired since my "pre-Flavil" days! He provided ministry to us at personal cost to himself and with great sensitivity to our lack of resources. He was sacrificial in many ways.

**He Lifted Me to Shared Ministry.** Few mentors actually mentor someone to partnership. Jesus told his disciples at one point, "I no longer call you servants but call you friends" (John 15:5). Paul had his co-laborers. Flavil Yeakley did this with me. He served my needs and helped me meet my challenges. He then allowed me to watch him serve others. I eventually served as co-consultant while he served as the primary church consultant. The most challenging time was when he served as a co-consultant as I was the primary church consultant. He taught me to do for others what he did for me: enter their failures, walk them out of their failures at a pace they can stand, allow them to watch you assist others, and then encourage them to give what they have received. Sounds biblical!

I worked with many churches only to learn later that Dr. Yeakley had already served them. I was once asked to attend a homecoming for a church I served. I was then told Flavil Yeakley was coming. He was their first preacher! We made the trip together and were on the road for 18 hours due to many stops. I loved those 18 hours! We talked about everything from the hilarious love song he wrote (and sang for me) about a jilted lover, to specific churches, to Churches of Christ in general, to what we most deeply hoped for our future, to death, to the big social issues of our day, to him taking the role of grandfather, and scolding me for not paying attention while I drove.

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At the event, the church had some dates wrong on their history and he corrected them with accurate dates! Heading home, we drove past the exit for Tickfaw, Louisiana. Pointing to the sign, he began talking about how the church in that town fit into the overall story of the surrounding churches! He gave a detailed account of the history and impact of churches in that area and several surrounding counties. He knew an unbelievable amount of detail regarding way more churches than I could count.

He was broken hearted as he told of 1960's racism that compromised ministry. He showed me a restaurant he went to for breakfast that had ax handles at the counter. He asked why they were selling ax handles and was told they were not to sell but were for customers to use if blacks came into the restaurant. The KKK was a clear presence. He left two churches due to racism. He stood against racism before it was politically correct to be against racism. I respected him tremendously. I mentioned at the beginning of this article that I was fired three times. The second time I was literally put out on the street and fired for reaching out to African Americans with the Gospel.

**He Helped Me Understand Key Truths Beyond the Facts.** Dr. Yeakley was a numbers man, a statistician. His numbers were always tied to something helpful to the church. He was ultimately not concerned with "what is" but with "what could be." He wanted to offer insight based in realism *so we could have progress to what is yet to be*. His numbers were always in the service of improvement. He was brutally honest about the gap between what the church ought to be, what the church is, and what the church is becoming.

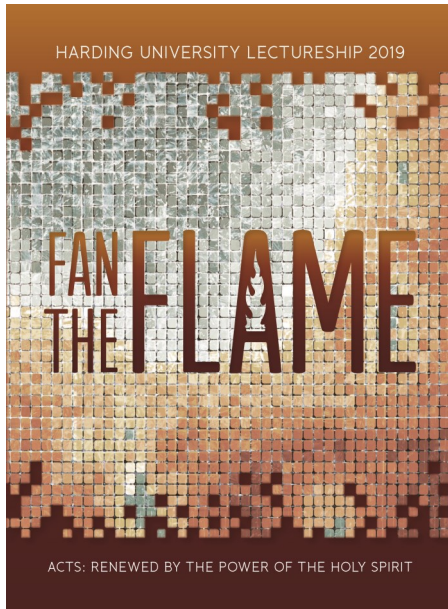
The tension inherent to that gap was at the heart of his work with churches. He wanted to close the gap. He encouraged us to see the goodness of the church while not being blind to the gap. The inability (or unwillingness) to see the gap between the *church as it ought to be* and the *church as it is* has claimed the spiritual lives of many church leaders. Seeing that gap creates anxiety and fear ... which is why some choose not to look. To voluntarily live in that gap with hope and trust is to know God's faithfulness and pruning ... essential for true ministry. The gift of helping someone care for others in that gap is a game changer. What a gift! What a blessing! Like Shawn's father, many of us need a "Flavil of Yeakley" and one of God's vessels is the life of Flavil Yeakley.





# 2019 HARDING BIBLE LECTURESHIP REPORT

The 96th annual Harding Bible Lectureship was held on September 29—October 2 and it once again received an enthusiastic reception from those participating. Our guests came from across the nation and around the world, including Canada, Africa, Alaska, Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Mississippi, Nicaragua, North Carolina, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Tanzania, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia.



The theme of the program was “FAN THE FLAME: Renewed By the Power of the Holy Spirit.” It was a study of the book of Acts, and especially of the dynamic Jerusalem church in the first six chapters of Acts. Keynote Speakers were David Young (Murfreesboro, Tennessee); Scott Adair (Searcy, Arkansas); Fate Hagood (Los Angeles, California); B. Chris Simpson (Memphis, Tennessee); Harold Shank (Edmond, Oklahoma); Juan Meza (Memphis, Tennessee) and Jesse Robertson (Searcy).

Harding Bible faculty making presentations included Scott Adair, Monte Cox, Shawn Daggett, Jason Darden, Jordan Guy, Alan Howell, Alexander Jamerison, Dale Manor, Bill Richardson, Jesse Robertson, Mac Sandlin, Dan Stockstill, Devin Swindle, Anessa Westbrook, Tim Westbrook, Dan Williams, Carl Williamson, and Randy Willingham. In addition, Dr. John Simmons, a member of Harding’s Board of Trustees, taught two classes on motivating and training men to serve as elders. Faculty from the Harding School of Theology in Memphis who participated included Allen Black, Matt Carter, Evertt Huffard, Jim Martin, and Rick Oster.

The Lectureship featured several new programs, including:

- ◆ A “Community of Mission” lecture series, in which professors from the various colleges around the university gave presentations reflecting how their particular discipline contributes to the kingdom of God;
- ◆ A Young Ministers’ Network, which provided an interactive track of events just for ministers 39 and under;
- ◆ And a Bible Forum in which Dan Chambers and Ralph Gilmore reviewed and contrasted their understandings regarding what the Scriptures reveal about the nature of our eternal home.

Audio recordings of all Lectureship presentations will be available to download free at [www.scholarworks.harding.edu/lectureship](http://www.scholarworks.harding.edu/lectureship).

## **AVA CONLEY RECEIVES DISTINGUISHED CHRISTIAN SERVICE AWARD**

**Ava Conley**, recently retired Professor of Spanish here at Harding University, received a Distinguished Christian Service Award for promoting mission work in South America. Since 1976 she has coordinated annual mission campaigns in Puerto Rico, Argentina, Venezuela, Mexico, Honduras, Colombia and Peru, leading to at least 16 church plants. Through her influence Professor Conley has involved many hundreds of Harding Spanish-speaking students from her classes, introducing them to mission work and leading over 40 to later chose to return to the field for an extended period of service. It is impossible to count the number of conversions that have resulted from these efforts.

Ava has served as a travel consultant, advisor, facilitator and resource person for hundreds of campaigners, missionaries, and mission groups; has employed her language skills to write, translate, and edit a wide variety of Spanish materials, including television programs, teaching resources, and a campaign songbook that has been used throughout many countries; and has tirelessly worked to raise awareness of the potential for spreading the gospel in Spanish-speaking countries.



## FACULTY NOTES

Our Bible faculty are serving the kingdom all over the world. Here are examples:

- ◆ **Dr. Dan Stockstill** spent June and most of July in Australia as part of a second phase for the Klesis program. Mission Tour Australia allowed him to conduct seminars in Sydney, Brisbane, Perth, and Melbourne. In addition, he worked with elders in each of the cities, spoke for six congregations (3 of the 4 largest in Australia), and conducted several small group and Bible classes. Dan also wrote two short articles for publications among the Australian congregations and has been invited to write an additional article for the Spring issue of *InterSections*, which is the largest circulating publication among Churches of Christ in Australia.
- ◆ **Dr. Scott Adair**, "Reading Scripture Baptismally," *Christian Studies* 31 (2019): 17-28. He presented a peer reviewed paper (reviewed by Mark Powell) also entitled "Reading Scripture Baptismally" (an expanded version of the above article) for the *Sola Scriptura and Prima Scriptura* session at the Christian Scholars' Conference at Lubbock Christian University in June 5-7, 2019. He also taught a class at *National Conference on Youth Ministries* in Colorado Springs (January 2-5, 2019) called "Teaching Theology to Teenagers."
- ◆ **Dr. Kevin Youngblood** conducted two classes last May at the Pepperdine Lectureship on "Power Relations in the Life of King David." He also did a nine lesson seminar on the Book of Revelation for the Valley View Church of Christ in Jonesboro. He is currently doing a series entitled "Behind a Frowning Providence: The Grace Behind the Gray in the Life of Joseph." Dr. Youngblood's ZECOT *Jonah* 2nd edition is set to come out this Fall. His *Jonah: A Video Study* came out this past year as part of Zondervan's "Beyond the Basics Video Series" featuring Kevin as the teacher. He also contributed a chapter to a Festschrift in honor of his doctoral supervisor, Peter J. Gentry, that is scheduled to come out next year. His chapter is entitled "Grapes of Wrath: Gleanings from the Greek Lamentations."
- ◆ **Dr. Alan Howell** is a new/returning faculty. Below are a couple of projects he published recently: "Conversation and Conversion: The Gospel of John and an Alternative Orality Strategy in Mozambique" with Arie De Kruijff in *Evangelical Missions Quarterly*, vol. 55, no. 3 (July-September 2019), 4-6. "Loaded Language: Missiological Considerations for Appropriating Political Rhetoric" with Jessica Markwood in *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, vol. 36, no. 2 (Summer 2019), 77-83.
- ◆ In June **Dr. Allen Diles** served as team chaplain on a medical mission trip in Montellano, Guatemala with Health Talents International. In July he presented three lectures at the Annual Caribbean Lectureship in Bermuda on: "It Was About Time--for Renewal: What Renewal Movements of the Past Have to Tell us Today," R. Allen Diles, "Arkansas College: A Civil War Casualty," in *Restoration Quarterly* 61/1 (2019): 39-52.



- ◆ **Dr. Jordan Guy** taught a one-week Isaiah Seminar for the Myrtle Beach, South Carolina Church of Christ.
- ◆ In July **Dr. Devin Swindle** hosted the sixth Kerusso Experience on the HU campus for 48 students.
- ◆ **Dr. Kraig Martin** recently had the following articles accepted for publication: Co-Authored with J. Caleb Clanton, “William of Ockham, Andrew of Neufchateau, and the Origins of Divine Command Theory,” accepted for publication in a forthcoming volume of *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*. Co-Authored with J. Caleb Clanton, “Understanding Aquinas on Natural Law,” accepted for publication in the Fall 2019 issue of *Journal of Faith and the Academy*. Co-Authored with J. Caleb “Aquinas and Scotus on the Metaphysical Foundations of Morality, *Religions*, 2019. Co-Authored with Nathan Guy, “Rationality & The Hiddenness of God,” in *Restoration and Philosophy: New Philosophical Engagements with the Stone-Campbell Tradition*, ed. Caleb Clanton, The University of Tennessee Press, 2019.



# MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THESE UPCOMING EVENTS:

## **Abundant Living Retreat**

Branson, Missouri

Oct. 14-17, 2019

## **Homecoming**

Oct. 17-19, 2019

## **Homecoming Musical**

“Matilda the Musical”

Oct. 18-19, 2019

## **2nd Annual Harding Preaching Conference**

“Preaching the Mind of Christ (Philippians)”

Feb. 18, 2020

## **Bloom Conference**

(formerly W.I.N.G.S.)

Feb. 21-22, 2020

## **Spring Sing**

April 9-11, 2020

## **Uplift I, II and III**

June 13-18, 20-25 and 27-July 2, 2020

## **Harding’s 97th Annual Bible Lectureship**

“OUR GOD IS SOVEREIGN:

Reasons for Hope from the Book of Daniel”

Sept. 27-30, 2020

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