

“FROM MY BRIEFCASE”
By David C. Gibbs, Jr.

Dr. Gibbs’ primary thesis for the book *From My Briefcase* is that the hope of America lies within its churches and Christians. His text carefully laid out chapters that were succinct, covering a variety of needful topics, offering helpful solutions, and encouraging the saints to be bold in dealing with the situations facing the church today.

The very first chapter dealt with a pastor wrongly accused of an offense against a child which strikes fear in the heart of any pastor. The devastation to the ministry and pastors family is immeasurable. Dr. Gibbs stated, “An offense against a child is a terrible, unspeakable wicked crime. For an offense against a child to take place in a ministry of the church is even more unbelievably wrong and offensive” (p. 5). Because of this, our church has implemented many safeguards to help prevent child abuse in regards to our ministry and staff and also to help protect from false allegations. Some of the precautions we have implemented include: staff members are not to be alone with a child; observation windows have been installed into the doors of all rooms; and background checks conducted through the Kansas Bureau of Investigation are required of all employees and volunteer staff. We have also issued a child protection manual and have arranged for annual training of all staff.

“Do you know why so few men have a great vision for God? It is because they want God to show them what to do without telling them what to be” (p. 7). The Bible makes the same point regarding deacons; they must first prove themselves. The church is often guilty of giving ministries to “warm bodies” who are unholy and do more damage to the cause of Christ. Opening this chapter, Proverbs 29:18 was given to the reader to

“catch a vision” (p. 7). When that verse is broken down it means, “where there is no vision (prophecy, revelation from God or word from God) the people perish (lose control or run wild), but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” It is understood that leaders need to be visionaries but it would have been better to choose another passage of Scripture to convey this point.

The illustrations and testimonies of George Greenfield and Dr. Barlow in chapter two were simple yet powerful. When I preached on commitment, I read the story to my congregation regarding Mr. Greenfield’s dedication of reaching the Congo people. After hearing how the natives sang “All Hail the Power of Jesus Name,” there was not a dry eye in the building. Illustrations like these further communicate the truth of the cost of denying self and following Christ. Mr. Greenfield’s testimony challenged the reader to totally commit to the cause of Christ, and Dr. Barlow encouraged us to maintain a proper motive for ministry, that being a genuine love for people and their souls.

In chapter 13, Dr. Gibbs illustrated the need to keep up our guard through his father’s stories in caring for cattle. Through his poignant “barnyard wisdom” Dr. Gibbs’ father explained, “I have seen experienced cattlemen get seriously injured by supposedly tame cattle” (p. 79). His purpose was to strongly encourage believers to keep up their guard lest they be conformed to the world. Even after a ministry is stabilized, we must not become comfortable nor compromising in our standards in order to please the congregation. This chapter contained many reminders to stay on top of things and not to look the other way. Chapter 13 also clearly identified how to detect the different stages of ministry, and I too have observed these phases.

Regarding Christian education, Dr. Gibbs explained that, “The Christian school

was Christian because of its philosophy” (p. 94). Each course is biblically based which is the real difference between a secular and Christian education. Being a young pastor, the initial thrust of the Christian school movement was before my time. But I found this chapter very informative, especially in revealing the true barb against Christian schools, that being the loss of state financing. In Kansas, the loss to the public school system per student is over \$5,000. Today we home school our children and it is not even questioned. This chapter helped me realize the sacrifice of those who have previously stood their ground in order to provide alternatives to public education.

Critiquing books like this one is difficult because each chapter is a short story in itself. Most chapters were moving and stirring accounts of the real life battles that rage in our society. The latter sections of the text seemed to invoke a greater urgency to get on board and to do battle for the Lord’s sake. After thoroughly reading the text, I personally contemplated my passion for the things of God, and I believe this book beseeches Christians to refocus on our God and our spiritual battles.