



Paul W. Powell

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GEORGE W. TRUETT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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## A WORD FROM TRUETT

On March 30, 1981, President Ronald Reagan was leaving the Washington Hilton when he was shot by John W. Hinckley, Jr. Instantly, Secret Service agent Jerry Parr tackled President Reagan, pushing him toward the ground as agent Ray Shaddick forced both Reagan and Parr into the back of the Presidential limo and onto the floor. The two agents yelled orders to the driver to take the President to George Washington University Hospital.

The bullet, a hollow .22 caliber slug meant to explode in the body, was flattened like a dime, apparently because it had ricocheted off the bulletproof presidential limo before hitting one of Reagan's ribs and being redirected. It was an inch behind the heart. Dr. Benjamin Aaron, the senior surgeon and the hospital's chief of thoracic surgery, determined that surgery was necessary. Reagan's chest cavity was filled with blood, and he had lost almost half the blood in his body, 4 or 5 pints. He was dying, kept alive by transfusions of blood and other fluids. As he was being prepared for surgery, the president opened his eyes and quipped, "I hope you are a Republican."

Joseph Giordano, chief of the hospital's trauma unit, was not; however, he said, "Mr. President, we are all Republicans today." (*Reader's Digest*, "The President's Been Shot!" by Richard Reeves, p. 168, December 2005)

In times of crisis, political and religious differences need to be put aside, and we all become one. We are in such a time as Baptists. It's time to unite. The crisis of our times demands it.

On April 11, the President was dismissed from the hospital and returned to the White House amid cheering crowds. He went upstairs, collapsed into a chair, and that night in his diary, he wrote, "Whatever happens now, I owe my life to God, and I will try to serve Him in every way I can." (*Reader's Digest*, "The President's Been Shot!" by Richard Reeves, p. 184, December 2005)

May we do the same.

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## QUOTES

- "A dead end is just a good place to turn around." Naomi Judd
- "No matter how big or soft or warm your bed is, you still have to get out of it." Grace Slick

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## A SERMON

Title	A Guide for Christian Growth
Text	Acts 2:41-47
Author	Paul W. Powell
Introduction	"Any person who thinks the Christian life is easy hasn't tried to live it." Here are some guidelines that will help. It is virtually impossible if you neglect them.
I	Read the Bible faithfully. It is the original soul food.
II	Pray fervently. If you are too busy to pray, you are too busy.
III	Attend church habitually. The gospels say of Jesus: "As was his habit he went to the Synagogue on the Sabbath day."
Conclusion	The Christian life is not rules or regulations or rituals but a relationship. These practices help us build and maintain that relationship with Christ.

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## LEADERSHIP

Churches need leadership. If your church or your classroom were in flames, you would not ask everyone to break-up into small groups and discuss the best way out of the room. The situation calls for someone to be in charge. Someone has to make a decision.

An article by Kent Roman, who was a chief executive officer of one of the largest advertising and communications companies, reminds us in *Directorship Magazine*, April 2001, "Boards don't run companies. That's an important thing to say to new directors. The board doesn't run the company. Committees can't run companies. My former boss, David Ogilvy, used to have a piece of doggerel he quoted which went like this, 'You can search the parks in all the cities, and you won't find statues to any committees. Committees can't run companies.'"

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When Moses went on the mountain to get the Ten Commandments, he did not take a committee with him. He would never have come down. He went by himself and got a word from God and then delivered it. You can take shared leadership and consensus seeking too far.

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## NEW BOOK AVAILABLE

I have published a new joke book titled *Laugh and Live Longer*. It will be available free of charge at the Truett booth at the BGCT annual meeting November 9-11, 2008, in Fort Worth. Please come by the Truett booth and say hello. I would love to talk with you and autograph a copy for you to take home.

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## ILLUSTRATION

Retired Baylor professor Jim Vardaman tells that he grew up in Dallas in a home with four children and a single mother. They lived on the outskirts of town and every Sunday morning the family walked five miles to attend First Baptist Church in Dallas to hear George W. Truett preach. They were not able to go every Wednesday night, but when they did they stood in the back of the fellowship hall because they could not afford to pay for the meal and eat. When George W. Truett learned this, he sent word that they should eat and he would pick up the bill.

I submit to you that this is George W. Truett at his best. Not when he was saving Baylor University from financial ruins; not when he was preaching to the troops in Europe; not when he was standing in the pulpit as a silver-tongued orator, but when he reached out to help widowed mothers and her children. This is George W. Truett at his best.

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## FOR PASTORS

In *Getting Away With Murder on the Texas Frontier: Notorious Killings and Celebrated Trials* (Texas Tech Press), Bill Neal has collected tales, memoirs, news reports, transcripts and other accounts of some of Texas' most famous and infamous murder trials from the 1880s to the early 1930s. There were cases where murderers escaped the noose because they owed someone money or a pair of boots, and collecting the debt was judged more important than executing the offender. In one well-witnessed Fort Worth shooting, the defendant was found not guilty of deliberate, cold-blooded murder "because," in the words of the jury foreman, "this is Texas."

Legal training and law degrees were rarities on the frontier, and criminal defense attorneys were the only lawyers who made money, the author notes. Not surprisingly, sharp-witted opportunists and flashy showmen soon were drawn to the courtroom stage to battle young, inexperienced, untrained prosecutors.... Juries frequently were stacked with the defendant's friends or with bribed jurors who faced violence or death if they voted to convict... Evidence usually was sparse to nonexistent. And sheriffs had no budgets, technology or manpower for investigations.

The West Texas settlers' basic sense of values also weighed heavily in how justice was dispensed. Mr. Neal points out, "Trials of livestock thefts usually drew bigger crowds of spectators than murder trials." Meanwhile, anyone caught stealing a horse was lucky to live long enough to have a trial.

Despite his book's "Texas" title, the author could not resist crossing into the Temple Houston Territory for one truly outrageous 1893 courtroom session. Sam Houston's young son was defending a cowboy who eyewitnesses said had murdered a prominent rancher, and worse, stolen his horse. When he discovered that the jury had been stacked with the victim's friends, he first drew them close with a spell-binding story, then suddenly whipped out his Colt revolver and opened fire on them at close range. He was shooting blanks, of course, but the stunt caused the terrified jurors to flee the jury box and also sent the judge diving for cover.

Rather than getting arrested, he got a mistrial for his client on a technicality: The jury was not supposed to leave the jury box. Then he got a new jury and an acquittal. The point: You don't always have to shoot to kill to win your case.

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## REMEMBER

George W. Truett Seminary is a Christ-centered, Bible-based seminary committed to our historic Baptist principles. Our vision is to be the premiere Baptist theological seminary of the world. Our mission is to serve the churches by training the next generation of ministers and missionaries.



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