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Dear Biola University Community,

What follows is “An Open Abortion Letter to Biola University.” The Biola University newspaper has refused to publish it as a paid ad. The school’s insistence that only one side of the debate regarding Biola’s abortion policies be heard was first evident on June 14, 2013, when the university updated a press release naming former staff member La Verne Tolbert its spokeswoman on the school’s recent abortion controversy. The following day, Dr. Tolbert circulated a widely distributed email message in which she declared “I cannot express how much I so appreciate this thoughtful dialogue” regarding the abortion dispute. But she apparently misspoke when using the term “dialogue.” A monologue was all she would tolerate and she would be the only speaker. Each time we posted on her website our rebuttals to her misstatements of fact and lapses of logic, she immediately removed our refutations. This lack of intellectual honesty and academic freedom is a long-running problem at Biola.

My name is Gregg Cunningham. I direct the anti-abortion Center For Bio-Ethical Reform (CBR). Last May, Diana Jimenez, then a senior Biola University nursing student, was mistreated by several Biola administrators who harshly threatened and punished her for publicly displaying abortion photos -- abortion photos which saved the life of a Biola sophomore student’s preborn child. Ms. Jimenez had earlier partnered with our organization to jointly sponsor an outdoor abortion photo display on campus. The administration denied her application as it has done for years.

Ms. Jimenez, therefore, decided to exhibit the photos without permission, and the university responded as though she were a criminal. Some of the administration’s more scandalous behavior was captured on video which was later posted on YouTube under the title “Biola University Threatens Pro-Life Student.” The video has attracted more than 19,000 viewers, with the “Like” / “Dislike” ratio running four-to-one against the university. More than 500 video comments are also overwhelmingly critical of Biola’s handling of the controversy. The film provoked substantial news coverage which depicted the university in a highly unflattering light. The school badly mishandled the resulting fallout, and the consequence has been a public relations train wreck.

Biola, of course, does have the *legal* authority to declare, no matter how absurdly, that its own students are trespassers when they display abortion photos in public. This is essentially what Biola did to Ms. Jimenez. Biola can also demand that offending students to be hauled off by sheriff’s deputies and prosecuted as common criminals. This is what Biola threatened to do to Ms. Jimenez.

No Christian school, however, has the *Biblical* authority to impose man-made rules which guarantee the commission of preventable abortions. Ordering that the horror of abortion be largely concealed guarantees the commission of preventable abortions. And no student has any Biblical obligation to obey school rules which conflict with God’s laws. God’s law regarding injustice mandates that we intervene in defense of its victims (Isaiah 59:15-16). Ephesians 5:11 prescribes intervention by “exposing” the “deeds of darkness” -- not covering up those deeds, which has been Biola’s consistent practice. Why this cover-up? The first school

official to confront Ms. Jimenez over her abortion photo display was from the school's marketing and public relations office, and the administrator declared, "You're making us look bad!"

Exodus 1:15-17 explains why Ms. Jimenez cared more how we look to God than how we look to man: "Then Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, gave this order to the Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah: 'When you help the Hebrew women as they give birth, watch as they deliver. If the baby is a boy, kill him; if it is a girl, let her live.' But because the midwives feared God, they refused to obey the king's orders." The Hebrew midwives defied an order to slaughter male babies. Ms. Jimenez defied an order to permit the slaughter of those babies whose mothers will not choose life unless they are shown death. Such mothers abound, and we meet them all the time. They will not come to us. We must go to them. By covering up the full magnitude of abortion's evil, Biola has forsaken these women and their children.

Jesus repeatedly faced down the same kinds of pharisaic legalists who tormented Ms. Jimenez at Biola. In Mark 3:4 Christ asks rhetorically whether it is lawful to break rules to save lives. His question answers itself. Jesus frequently and confrontationally broke rules to save lives by, for instance, healing on the Sabbath. (See John 5, Luke 13, Matthew 12, Mark 3, John 9.) In Matthew 23:23 He criticized legalistic religious leaders who cared more about rules than justice. In Matthew 15:8-9 Christ rebukes religious leaders who dishonestly misrepresent the rules of man as though they were the laws of God. He says of such frauds, "They honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me."

Arguably farthest from the heart of God was Susan Elliott, the director of Biola's nursing program. Dr. Elliott was so outraged by Ms. Jimenez's abortion photo display that she sabotaged her own student's job prospects by ordering faculty members to deny Ms. Jimenez's requests for standard letters of reference. Under legal pressure from CBR the university eventually overruled Dr. Elliott, but by then the damage had been done. The cumulative effect of all this bullying, compounded when Ms. Jimenez was berated during a stressful face-to-face meeting with Dr. Elliott, left Ms. Jimenez too shaken to adequately prepare for her nursing licensing exam, which she understandably failed. In this and other misconduct, Biola has almost certainly violated the law. Dr. Elliott wasn't fired. Incredibly, she still has her job. Where's the accountability?

Attorneys for Ms. Jimenez (and CBR) have now received and reviewed Biola President Barry Corey's "apology" letter. Dr. Corey's attorneys sent this letter to CBR's attorneys in response to a CBR letter asking three things of Biola: A public apology for the university's profoundly un-Christian behavior toward Ms. Jimenez, the granting of recognition of First Amendment speech rights to all students (limited only by the school's statement of faith), and curricular reforms which would offer entire majors designed to equip students for full-time professions in anti-abortion ministry.

I am frequently asked why Ms. Jimenez and CBR are communicating with Biola exclusively through the press and our respective legal counsel. The unfortunate answer is that Barry Corey has consistently refused to meet with me. Nor will he take or return my phone calls. He also refuses to reply to my email messages. He has additionally declined to meet with Ms. Jimenez because she insists on having me present. He refuses to even mention CBR's name in any public statement regarding this matter, as though the conflict involves only one random act by a now-graduated student and has no organizational context whatsoever. He refers to CBR only in the abstract, despite the fact that six of our staff members are Biola or Talbot graduates. Our only means of establishing a dialogue with Dr. Corey was, therefore, to direct our lawyers to send his lawyers a letter proposing that if we can't come to terms out of court, we will seek judicial review of Biola's students' rights violations. The adversarial nature of this exchange is certainly not our preference, but it is preferable to no dialogue at all. There needs to be accountability and reform before there can be closure.

It is also lamentable that it took three months of damaging publicity and the prospect of a lawsuit before Dr. Corey was finally willing to break his silence and express regret for Ms. Jimenez's disproportionately punitive treatment. But his "apology" letter is filled with ambiguities and evasions regarding his willingness to expand

students' expressive rights. It contains many equivocations and qualifications concerning his openness to the implementation of curricular reforms. Our attorneys find Dr. Corey's letter largely meaningless as an offer of reliable commitments. I share their doubts.

During these three months of stonewalling, Dr. Corey's staff issued a defiant June 5, 2013 press release titled "Biola University Response to Recent YouTube Video of Student Demonstration." The statement stubbornly persisted in the school's contention that "The public displaying of very graphic, disturbing images ... is *not* an appropriate venue [sic] of student expression on our campus." The release went on to preposterously allege that Ms. Jimenez had "baited" the police (how's that for blaming the victim) and that "... the photos were not allowed because they would be disruptive to campus activity." The most significant activity which abortion photos disrupt, however, is abortions. Biola has worked harder to stop Ms. Jimenez than it has ever worked to stop an abortionist. Biola's photo censorship may protect students' feelings but it imperils babies' lives.

Our skepticism concerning Biola's sincerity was only heightened when Irene Neller, Biola's vice president for public relations, recently organized a large group of Biola demonstrators for the purpose of disrupting a CBR abortion photo display on the public sidewalks at the entrances to campus. We were conducting an informational picket during "move-in" weekend at the start of the fall 2013 semester. Under Ms. Neller's direction, Biola's demonstrators positioned their own large signs nearly against and directly in front of CBR's signs, in an obvious attempt to prevent our abortion photos from being viewed by arriving students. We have video which documents this juvenile interference with our exhibition. CBR was forced to call the police and responding officers quickly acted on our complaint, moving Biola's demonstrators away from CBR's signs. If Biola can't tolerate abortion photos on the public sidewalk *outside* its campus, why should we believe the school's promises to permit abortion photos to be meaningfully displayed *inside* its campus?

Heightening our misgivings was a disturbing article posted by Barry Corey on September 4, 2013, at "Corey's Corner" in the *Chimes* campus newspaper. He made reference to the foregoing picketing incident but conveniently omitted any mention of his staff's attempts to block our signs. He instead claimed that "We graciously extended hospitality and treated ... [CBR sign-holders] as our guests." He apparently means that violating our expressive rights is somehow less reprehensible if Biola offers warm greetings while covering up our signs. To some, this may seem a trifling matter, but this sort of duplicity is endemic at Biola. Ms. Jimenez felt deeply betrayed by the frequency with which administrators smiled and spoke reassuringly while they conspired to mistreat her. She called this treacherous pattern "the Judas kiss," and it clearly hasn't gone away.

In the same *Chimes* post, Barry Corey said he found it "strange" that CBR would "protest" at a school which "believes in the sanctity of human life." We find it stranger still that Dr. Corey doesn't care more about saving the babies whose mothers will kill them if these women aren't shown that portion of abortion's evil which cannot be expressed in words. Abortion is almost entirely invisible at Biola. It is a secret sin whose darkness is occasionally mentioned but seldom shown. Biola's "beliefs" may be "pro-life" but policies which help abortionists deceive students are not.

The result is moral confusion in which many students accept the contention that abortion is evil but mistakenly assume that it is a nominal evil, perhaps merely the lesser of two evils. This leads to abortions which might otherwise have been prevented. These butchered babies aren't real to Dr. Corey. He makes no reference to the baby saved by Ms. Jimenez's abortion photo display. We intend to make these real to him.

As an aside, CBR does not "protest" abortion. We expose abortion. We are exposing abortion at Biola because Biola has been helping Planned Parenthood hide the magnitude of the evil abortion represents. We come to Biola as friends. Were it our intention to protest, we could flood the sidewalks with hundreds of demonstrators from all over the country. Dr. Corey attempts to trivialize our presence by dismissively referring to the small size of our picketing team, as though we don't need to be taken seriously because we are not present in full

force. We pray it doesn't come to that, but rest assured that we are capable of bringing a far more substantial presence to Biola's sidewalks if this conflict escalates.

It must also have seemed "strange" to religious leaders when God, in Jeremiah 7:1-7, commanded his prophet to "Stand in the gate of the Lord's house ..." (verse 2) for the purpose of warning the Israelites against the sin of "shedding innocent blood." God's people were committing and permitting child sacrifice (verse 6) and God's people are still sacrificing their children -- even at Biola. Anyone who naively doubts that abortion is child sacrifice would be well advised to read the book *The Sacrament of Abortion*, by pagan author Ginette Paris (Spring Publications, 1992), available on Amazon. In fact, the Guttmacher Institute reports that one out of every five abortions is performed on a woman identifying herself as a born-again or evangelical Christian. In some years, that would mean a quarter-million evangelical abortions. It is not enough to merely express opinions and state conclusions about abortion. Is Biola taking child sacrifice as seriously as God takes child sacrifice?

Some women can be dissuaded from aborting by merely hearing or reading facts and arguments. Others can be converted by merely seeing prenatal development imagery. But many more in this highly visual culture must see abortion to reject abortion. As noted above, Christ-followers are not only prohibited from shedding innocent blood (Mark 10:17-22), they are commanded to intervene on behalf of those whose innocent blood is being shed (Luke 10:30-37). Intervention by every means but the one means which could save a particular life is tragically inadequate. Inadequate intervention violates the spirit of James 2:15-16, which asks, "Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?" Biola isn't doing "nothing," but it is refusing to do the one thing which really matters for women who will not carry to term unless they are shown the terrible fate to which abortion will condemn their children. Biola has utterly forsaken these women -- and their children.

Dr. Corey's "apology" letter is quintessentially Clintonesque: Mistakes were made, apologies were issued, lessons were learned, reforms will (perhaps) be forthcoming, and now let's all just move on. Indeed, five prominent pro-life advocates have taken the bait and hailed Dr. Corey's "apology" letter as a noble *mea culpa* which should lay the entire controversy to rest. They want CBR to take "yes" for an answer and return to business as usual. With all due respect, our friends' cease-fire proposals are wildly premature. Let's wait to see what expressive rights and curricular reforms Dr. Corey will approve before we absolve him of wrongdoing. We would like nothing better than for Dr. Corey's "yes" to actually mean "yes," but slippery promises won't save babies. In their zeal to exonerate and rehabilitate Dr. Corey, these well-meaning pro-life friends (whom we admire and with whom we have collaborated on many important projects) are apparently unaware that we may have seen this movie before.

Martin Luther King allowed himself to be lured into a humiliating betrayal when he naively suspended his civil rights demonstrations in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1963, on the strength of meaningless promises from white city leaders who had no intention of honoring their commitments to treat blacks fairly.

Dr. King was under immense pressure from his appeasement-inclined associates to back off and stand down at the first sign of "concessions" from Birmingham's power structure. In his "Letter from the Birmingham Jail" Dr. King derided these capitulationists as ineffectual "civil rights moderates," but he eventually yielded to their compulsive desire to avoid conflict. They wanted him to end his marches and leave the city on the flimsiest "evidence" of progress -- little more than wishful thinking -- and wearied, he drank the Kool-Aid and declared victory where there was none. This was a colossal blunder he would bitterly regret. When Dr. King prematurely terminated his demonstrations, his activists drifted away. It was clear to city officials that he would never regain the momentum he had so painfully gathered, and they eventually abrogated every supposed "commitment."

Had Dr. King kept the pressure on until white businesses established an irreversible pattern of hiring black employees and serving black customers, he might have secured victory. He instead suffered a self-inflicted defeat. Attempts to negotiate without the sustained application of force generally lead to an ignominious rout. Many pro-life advocates just want the tension with Biola to stop, and they are willing to accept even a fictitious happy ending in their rush to reach Kumbaya. CBR, however, is not an organization of pro-life advocates. We are anti-abortion activists. We do not intend to repeat Dr. King's mistake at Biola. Here is why:

Despite its supposed contrition, Biola is still trying to rationalize its indefensible misconduct. In his *Chimes* post, Dr. Corey says of the Diana Jimenez scandal, "We had a moment on campus when a Biola student in good standing was asked to remove graphic depictions of aborted babies." That propaganda spin is shockingly untruthful. Ms. Jimenez wasn't merely "asked," she was repeatedly threatened with arrest, expulsion, and exclusion from her own graduation ceremony. And she didn't suffer "a moment" of abuse. Her mistreatment went on for weeks. Dr. Corey says "some missteps were made" as though this mistreatment was accidental instead of calculated. Five senior administrators repeatedly roughed up and defamed Ms. Jimenez. They are all still there -- save one, who has made a seamless, lateral move to another school! Biola's trustees should ask how Dr. Corey could have created such a toxic environment in which so many on his management team could behave in a harsh, legalistic and insensitive manner, and do so with relative impunity. They should also ask why nearly all of these thugs are still on the payroll.

Dr. Corey also has repeatedly complained that the damaging YouTube video was "selectively edited." His implied accusation that we misrepresented the events depicted in a video involving the abuse of a student is a defamatory allegation. It amounts to a charge of fraud. We demand that Dr. Corey publicly state which element or elements of this incident would have made Ms. Jimenez's mistreatment seem justified had they been included in the video.

Then Biola's president suggests disapproval of the public display of abortion photos by strangely comparing them to various forms of pornography. Pornography dehumanizes females. Abortion photos humanize preborn babies. Pornography victimizes females. Abortion photos help stop the victimization of human embryos and fetuses. No one needs to see rape to understand the magnitude of the evil it represents. Many, however, underestimate abortion's evil if they haven't seen it.

Dr. Corey asks "at what point might images be deemed too graphic or distasteful?" Our abortion photos are "graphic and distasteful" precisely because abortion is graphic and distasteful. If he restricts our displays to the use of only less disturbing photos, Dr. Corey will convey the mistaken impression that abortion is less evil than it really is. Censoring the most disturbing aspects of the abortion procedure takes Biola right back into the school's long-running concealment partnership with the abortion industry.

Dr. Corey next invokes the need to make certain that our photos are "displayed thoughtfully, ethically and effectively." For fifteen years, we have exhibited these pictures on the campuses of hundreds of huge public universities, often in co-sponsorship with campus ministry groups, and have always done so "ethically." We announce the dates and locations of our scheduled displays. We locate the displays in the most heavily trafficked areas of every campus -- that is non-negotiable -- but we post warning signs around our exhibit so parents of young children or sensitive viewers can choose a different route or simply avert their gaze as they pass. Imposing an obligation to look away is hardly an unreasonable burden to ask of passersby who wish to avoid photos which save lives every minute they are displayed on campus. We also coordinate with local crisis pregnancy centers to ensure the presence, or at least the nearby availability, of crisis pregnancy and post-abortion counselors. The "ethical" use of these photos may be new to Biola; it is standard operating procedure with us.

In that same vein, Dr. Corey asks essentially whether it is respectful to display photos of aborted babies "who have a soul and dignity and are made in the image of God." These photos save babies' lives, Dr. Corey! Does

Biola's president really believe God cares more about a dead child's "dignity" than He cares about a living child's life? Would he have the temerity to criticize Jews for decades of images depicting the naked, tortured bodies of Holocaust victims? Does he doubt that Jews also have souls and dignity and are made in the image of God?

Dr. Corey questions the wisdom of publicly displaying abortion photos because they might disturb post-abortive women. He speculates that such women "will most likely be driven deeper into their shame, into their depression and quite possibly away from their Savior." When we sin, God protects us from any repetition of that transgression by arousing appropriate feelings of guilt. Guilt is especially important for post-abortive women (and men) because the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) report that nearly half of all abortions are performed on women who have already had one or more previous abortions. That means that post-abortive women are the women who are most at risk of aborting -- and therefore the very women who most need to see the truth which will stimulate the guilt required to prevent a repetition of this sin. Many will otherwise continue to defend a decision whose consequences they must see before they can understand how indefensible it is. A high percentage of post-abortive women kill again precisely because they aren't sufficiently disturbed by abortion. They still don't think abortion is as terrible as it actually is. When Biola helps Planned Parenthood conceal the evidence that abortion is unimaginably evil, ignorant students trivialize abortion as a nominal evil and savable babies perish. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6).

As for abortion photos driving women away from Christ, in Mark 10:17-30 Jesus intentionally drove a rich, young ruler away from the Kingdom by confronting him with the one sin He *knew* would keep him from salvation. No one at Biola is smarter than Jesus. It is a form of fraud to deceive unbelievers by hiding from them any fact about Jesus which might push them away from our Savior -- particularly when that concealment dramatically increases the risk that a baby will be tortured to death. Abortion photos help explain why God hates child sacrifice.

Then Dr. Corey says, "I hope and pray that reasoned minds will prevail through our conversations and the result will be a framework to allow students to speak their convictions and do so in a way that will not result in more situations like this student faced in May." But the fact is that Dr. Corey refuses to have any conversation with us whatsoever. That may be why a potentially resolvable dispute continues to escalate. It is we who have been pressing Biola to expand its expressive rights policies for more than a decade.

The best evidence that Dr. Corey still doesn't understand this controversy is his in-your-face remark that "As it relates to random or unapproved graphic images on campus, we will continue our practice of having the place and content approved by Student Development." And CBR will continue its practice of recruiting Biola students who are willing to face academic and criminal sanctions if necessary to challenge any unreasonable refusal to approve abortion photo displays. How many more public relations disasters is Biola willing to suffer? We know all the tricks administrators can play to compromise the effectiveness of our abortion displays. We still recall the games played ten years ago when then Biola president Clyde Cook allowed students to bring CBR's abortion photo display -- and then required that the signs be placed near the exterior wall of a building, facing in. That amounted to a ban on the signs and were Dr. Corey to play those kinds of charades, our student co-sponsors will again defy the ban, as Christ defied the Pharisees' ban on Sabbath healing. We have seen this sort of gamesmanship over and over again at secular schools. We also know how to deal with it. Biola's expressive rights policies are going to change and change meaningfully, or we are going to continue relentlessly challenging them, in court and out.

In Luke 16:20-21 the friends of Lazarus carry this poor, sick, disabled vagrant to the gates of a rich man. They took him there in the hope that the rich man would take pity on their pathetic friend. The rich man had attempted to create a "safe" place, behind gates, on private property, in which he and his family would not be troubled by "disruptive" sights such as hungry beggars dying with open wounds. Depositing Lazarus at the rich man's gate made his plight impossible for the rich man to trivialize or ignore. This confrontational gesture was

an annoying, disruptive, cry for help. The rich man would have banned it had he been able. But Jesus seems to have approved. It was in that spirit that Diana Jimenez carried pictures of aborted babies to the center of her Christian college campus. Biola is rich but is not using those riches to fully defend life.

By God's grace, on *public* university campuses, our Center For Bio-Ethical Reform (CBR) has saved countless babies (view the testimonies at AbortionNO.org) of students who told us that nothing less shocking than our abortion photos would have sufficed to dissuade them from aborting. Few, if any, would have come to see our photos had they been displayed at an even slightly less conspicuous location. Many of these pregnant students claimed the Name of Christ but mistakenly underestimated abortion's evil.

Finally, Dr. Corey says, "We have begun to consider additional ways to emphasize the tragedy and trauma of abortion so that our students not only embrace the convictions like this student championed but also understand there's help for them in times when they need it." That is a sadly small ball agenda.

Our campaign to expand expressive rights on Christian college campuses is critically important because the pro-life movement cannot outlaw abortion without mobilizing the church. The church cannot be mobilized if pastors refuse to provide serious leadership in defense of life. We aren't going to get that sort of leadership as long as Christian Bible colleges and seminaries deemphasize abortion training and teach pastors that the best approach to abortion is to cover it up. We need these schools to embrace curricular reform characterized by the offering of entire majors dedicated to inspiring and equipping the right kinds of students for careers in professional pro-life ministry. Secular schools have women's studies departments which crank out abortion industry activists by the thousands. Winning the right to display abortion photos on Christian college campuses is the first step in creating the sense of urgency required to implement curricular reforms and motivate students to enroll in anti-abortion majors.

In Revelation 3:1-2 Christ criticizes the ministry of a church whose agenda wasn't broad enough: "I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive, but ... I have not found your deeds complete in the sight of God." In Revelation 3:13-22 Jesus says, "I know your deeds ... So because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth." Opposing abortion only with inoffensive tactics creates the impression that abortion is an inoffensive act.

Biola asks how we can question its pro-life position. Beginning in Matthew 25:31, Jesus does not say He will number us among His sheep if we are "pro-nutrition." He says He will ask if we fed the hungry. It won't be enough to say, "I'm pro-hydration." He will ask if we gave drink to the thirsty. It won't suffice for us to say, "I'm pro-life." Jesus will want to know what we did for women who will embrace abortion if we don't expose its evil. And for those women, Biola is doing nothing that matters -- and more darkly, persecuting students who are willing to do what matters. Is Biola willing to take the kinds of risks and make the sorts of sacrifices made by the Good Samaritan?

In a June 13, 2013 email message, Biola spokeswoman La Verne Tolbert said "If students can do whatever they want without clearing their material, imagine what students who might be homosexual could do!" Laying aside our confidence that a Christian school's statement of faith would still prohibit un-biblical student conduct, I recently heard the same shocking argument against granting Christian college students the expressive rights necessary to display abortion photos when I attended a meeting of nearly every pro-family organization with representatives in Washington. Biola should not claim to be truly pro-life if the school would rather allow babies to die than risk the distribution of some gay marriage brochures on a Christian college campus. I am as opposed to gay marriage as the next Christian (despite it being a way lost cause) but this sort of moral confusion leaves no doubt why we are losing the abortion wars.

Christian schools don't belong exclusively to their own student bodies, alumni, faculties and staffs. These colleges, universities and seminaries are the moral and spiritual property of Christ-followers everywhere. We

have every right, and indeed a long-neglected responsibility, to urge that our schools produce better leadership than the church has been receiving for decades. It is long past time for serious accountability in Christian higher education because Christian higher education has failed the church. The Body of Christ is in desperate need of leadership and schools such as Biola are not doing enough to produce church leaders who are actually equipped to lead.

The Barna Research Group, Ltd. reported that in one of the largest studies of pastors ever conducted in America, and arguably the most extensive independent survey of Protestant senior pastors on record, *only 6% of the 1,033 clergy sampled believed that they had the gift of leadership.* Leaders can be made. They are not merely born.

Christianity Today, August, 2002, published a remarkable analysis of the quality of leadership in the evangelical church headlined “The Third Coming of George Barna.” It described Mr. Barna as the “evangelicals’ most quoted statistician,” and a pollster who “is to evangelicals what George Gallup is to the larger culture.” The article reports that Mr. Barna has spent years trying to persuade Christian leaders to “revitalize” the church. His goal is for the church “to begin to affect the culture instead of being affected by it.” He thought he would see real change in ten years. He now thinks it could take as long as thirty.

His pointed criticisms of church leadership have placed him at swords’ points with many pastors. Why? Mr. Barna said “‘Because it gets interpreted through the lens of ‘I’m a failure.’ That’s not what I’m saying. A lot of pastors don’t want to have anything to do with me, because they think I’m against them. I’m not against them. I’m not saying they shouldn’t be in the ministry.’” What then is Mr. Barna saying which would make so many pastors so defensive?

“‘The assumption was that the people in [church] leadership are actually leaders. [I thought] all I need to do is give them the right information and they can draw the right conclusions ... Most people who are in positions of leadership in local churches aren’t leaders. They’re great people, but they’re not really leaders.’” He says “... when we needed great leadership, we didn’t have any guts.” Our pastors are failing the church because Christian higher education is failing our pastors.

Let’s have a real dialogue about these issues and let it begin with a university-wide debate with Dr. Corey and me exchanging countervailing perspectives in a well-attended, open forum. Let’s be willing to subject our views to public examination in a give-and-take context which invites faculty, staff and students to ask questions and make comments. Then give CBR a voice in the planning discussions you have proposed. It’s the Christian thing to do -- and not surprisingly, it’s also sound management.

Dr. Corey shouldn’t fall into the trap described in 1 Kings 22 where Ahab, the King of Israel, was reluctant to seek the counsel of the prophet Micaiah because Micaiah wouldn’t flatter the king by offering the false claim that the king’s flawed strategy was going to succeed -- when it was certain to fail. Am I comparing Dr. Corey’s heart with that of the evil Ahab? Of course not. But they do share an aversion to disfavored counsel. Dr. Corey needs at least one person at the table who is willing to tell him things he doesn’t want to hear. I am not a “yes man.” Pastors have anathematized and marginalized George Barna because he is not a yes man. Please don’t repeat that mistake with me. Bring me to the table Dr. Corey and let’s transform an adversarial relationship into a collaborative partnership.

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