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HEART-TO-HEART

May 2004
A Pastoral Letter from Richard Foster



Dear Friends,

A little over fifteen years ago now "with God and a laser printer" we took our first hesitant steps toward beginning what we today call RENOVARE. In the early days we didn't even have a name, just a passion that people be renovated in the deep subterranean chambers of the heart and know by experience the transforming power of Jesus in all of life. We were, of course, wrestling with the many issues surrounding spiritual formation—a topic much in vogue today, but back then it was hardly talked about, no less understood.

They were heady days; days of big dreams and heated debates and intense prayer. To be sure, we made our share of mistakes . . . and then some. But we also learned some valuable lessons that have guided our thinking ever since. So, in this fifteenth anniversary season I thought it might be helpful to share with you a few of the lessons we learned in those early days. But first let me add this small caveat; I would never want to turn these little lessons into anything like universal principles, nor would I pretend to know what is best for you and your situation and circumstances. These lessons are part of our story; if and how they might speak to your condition is a matter for you and God to discern together. Out of respect for your attention span I'll confine myself to seven simple lessons!

LESSON # 1 - ALWAYS STAY LIGHT ON YOUR FEET

In the early days I had the notion that in order to have a significant influence on the religious scene (not to mention the world scene) we would need some 300 employees and substantial properties and buildings. But as we waited on the Lord together and prayed and discussed and listened we were taught that perhaps, just perhaps, there *is* another way . . . a way of significant influence that is not necessarily tied to large staff and properties and buildings. And it seemed good to the Lord and us to explore that way. Hence, up to this point at least, we have chosen to own no land and no buildings and many of us are volunteer workers, earning our livelihood in other ways. This keeps our overhead to a bare minimum so that monies given can go as much as possible directly toward the nurture of precious people in their growth in grace.

Please do not misunderstand me; I'm all for properties and buildings and paid employees when having such things genuinely help further our mission and make our efforts more efficient. I work with many fine Christian ministries that have these things in abundance and I thank God that they have them. But I'm also keenly aware of the modern idolatry of "the edifice complex" that is a plague in contemporary society, and we want to do what we can to raise a standard against it. So, for us thus far, "light on our feet" seems to be the best policy.

LESSON # 2 - ALWAYS FOCUS ON BEING A MOVEMENT

We never want to become an institution that depersonalizes people, nor a machine that chews people up, nor a monument that focuses on the cult of personality. We work hard to be more like an organism than an organization. (In the early days we even debated whether we should file as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation.) But we are, in some measure, an organization simply because organization helps us get our work done. The Holy Spirit does not have to *ad hoc* his way through life! Even so, we never want to become bound by organization. A movement is always dynamic, always nimble, always responsive to every movement of the Spirit. So, when and where structure helps us, we're all for the structure; when and where structure hinders us, too bad for the structure.

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LESSON # 3 - ALWAYS ATTEND TO THE SOUL'S GROWTH IN GRACE

Today distraction is one of the greatest obstacles to spiritual growth. Including religious distraction. This is something I determined we would never do if we could possibly help it. So we are constantly evaluating everything we undertake with the simple question, "Will this help people grow in grace?" If not, it is not for us. And it is amazing how many times this simple question has protected us from wasting our energies on non-productive enterprises.

LESSON # 4 - ALWAYS CENTER ON LIFE IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The advance of Christ and his kingdom comes first. Always. In this regard we must decrease so that Jesus and his kingdom life may increase. Indeed, we must be prepared to let *RENOVARE* die if doing so will better promote the work of the kingdom of God. Our real task is to take people off an over-dependance upon human beings and human organizations (including us) and turn them to Christ, their present Teacher. Life with-Jesus is what people need and what we must focus upon. Always.

LESSON # 5 - ALWAYS PREFER PEOPLE OVER PROGRAMS

When we are putting on events—conferences and retreats and seminars—we are constantly evaluating to see that they help and enhance the lives of people. This includes our own team. If we are pushing too hard, we need to back off. The health of marriages, the health of children, the health of our own walk with Christ is too important to sacrifice them on the altar of programs. We should not have to disobey the way Christ taught us to live in order to do the work God has given us to do.

The building of relationships among our own team is one of our highest priorities. Frankly, developing relationships is more important to us than getting the job done. We have discovered, though, that when relationships are strong and healthy the work that needs to get done does in fact get done. And we've found that the things that don't get done we are able to live quite well without.

LESSON # 6 - ALWAYS TRUST THE SPIRIT; NEVER THE FLESH

Flesh is humanly initiated activity without any reference to God. I have seen many things done in the power of the flesh, including the building of whole churches. But we cannot do the work of the Spirit in the power of the flesh. Following times of ministry work we will often put this question to ourselves: "How much of what has happened this weekend cannot be explained by our skill or brain power, or how was our skill and brain power used in ways that is beyond us?"

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To GOD BE THE GLORY

2003 CONFERENCES

18 January—Gurnee, Illinois

Lakeland Evangelical Free Church in Gurnee, Illinois, was the site for this Local Conference. Over 100 people came together to learn and grow under the leadership of RENOVARÉ Team Member Roger Fredrikson. Roger, in his special, tender way, guided folks into the abundant life of God. Chairperson Jill Payne tirelessly worked to bring the conference together in a way that made room for the Holy Spirit to work in the lives of the attendees.

31 January-1 February—Jacksonville, Florida

Steering Committee Chair Steve Cooper brought together a unique body of churches for the RENOVARÉ Regional Conference in Jacksonville, Florida. The conference was hosted by Deermeadows Baptist Church and had over 500 people in attendance. Led by Team Members Glandion Carney, Richard Foster, and George Skramstad, special times of healing and reconciliation were experienced by many from different churches. Many praises have gone forward for the oneness of Body experienced that weekend!

8 February—West Olive, Michigan

In a wintry retreat environment on the east shore of Lake Michigan, Emilie Griffin led the folks at Haven Shores Community Church in West Olive, Michigan, in a weekend Local Conference. Just over 65 people gathered for the weekend. Emilie led them further into the transforming grace of God, gave instruction on the Spiritual Disciplines, and offered a vision for how small groups can lead to spiritually changed lives. Pastor David Bailey led the Steering Committee in preparation for this weekend journey of grace.



George Skramstad leads worship

21-22 February—Rolling Hills Estates, California

With a sellout crowd of just over 1,000 people in attendance, the transforming love of God came through the teaching of Dallas Willard and Richard Foster as well as the Spirit-led worship of George Skramstad and the worship team. Rolling Hills Covenant Church was the site of one of the strongest Regional Conferences in Southern California to date. Many thanks go to Carol Houston Gibbs and the Steering Committee for their hard work and extraordinary faithfulness.

7-8 March—Paoli, Pennsylvania

For the first time, a RENOVARÉ Regional Conference was hosted at an Episcopal Church. The wonderful people at Good Samaritan Episcopal Church, where Steering Committee chair Dave Tower attends, treated conference attendees from many surrounding churches to a very special weekend. RENOVARÉ Team Members Richard Foster, George Skramstad, and James Bryan Smith led a rich time of fun and fellowship while bringing teaching that changes lives forever. Special thanks go to the local Steering Committee for many innovative ideas for follow-up efforts to the sold-out conference at Good Samaritan.



Small group time

2-3 May—Fairfax, Virginia

Truro Episcopal Church hosted a sold-out Regional Conference in the Washington, DC, Metro area. Many thanks go to Phil Anderson, the Regional Conference Chairperson, and the fine folks at The C. S. Lewis Institute for all their efforts. Marked by a powerful prayer experience on Friday evening, a silly birthday song on Saturday morning, endless limericks on Saturday afternoon, robust worship led by George Skramstad, and the penetrating teaching of Richard Foster and Dallas Willard, this Regional Conference has many memories to boast of. May God continue to bless the 750 plus people in attendance!



Richard Foster & Dallas Willard

6 September—Ripon, California

In the words of RENOVARE Team Member Roger Fredrikson, "This conference went very deep." About 45 people from Calvary Church journeyed together with Roger into what it means to be a growing disciple of Jesus. Dan Kruse, a pastor at Calvary Church and the chairperson for the conference, led a Steering Committee that showed the character and warmth of Christ. May grace continue their way as they go forward in the work of the kingdom.

12 - 13 September—Louisville, Kentucky

St. Matthews Baptist Church in Louisville, Kentucky, was the site of the first RENOVARE VIM Conference. VIM, an acronym for Vision/Intention/Means taken from Dallas Willard's latest book, *Renovation of the Heart*, provides the structure for this new conference designed to follow-up and compliment other RENOVARE Conferences. Led by Team Members Marti Ensign and Keith Matthews, over 140 were led further into the VIM kingdom life with God. Special thanks go to Senior Pastor Les Hollon and Steering Committee Chair Skip Ford and their team for their leadership.

21 September—Birmingham, Alabama

Birmingham Memorial Baptist Church was the site for this Local Conference led by RENOVARE Team Member James Bryan Smith. Hosted all day Sunday, Jim preached the first session of the Local Conference to over 1,000 people and continued the rest of the Conference after lunch and throughout the day. Special thanks go to Neal Schooley and the rest of the Steering Committee for all their hard work. May the important work of spiritual growth continue there.

27 September—Jacksonville, Florida

Steering Committee Chairperson Anita Millar organized this Local Conference in part as a follow-up response to the Regional Conference in Jacksonville in January of 2003 and as an event that would help the people from the Jacksonville District United Methodist Church Christian Enrichment School. RENOVARE Team Member Glandion Carney led 120 people through the Balanced Vision and Practical Strategy of RENOVARE at Ortega United Methodist Church. As it turns out, this Local Conference has led to plans for another Regional Conference in the Jacksonville area in February of 2005.



Joshua Choon Min Kang

3-4 October—Los Angeles, California

As a next step in what is becoming a RENOVARE expression for the Korean Church here in the United States and, eventually and hopefully, Korea, RENOVARE held our second conference for a primarily Korean-speaking audience. Hosted by The Oriental Mission Church, this Regional Conference was presented in Korean and English-to-Korean translation. 400+ attended the Friday evening and all-day Saturday event. Presenters included Richard, Pastor Joshua Choon Min Kang, and Brian Kang, and worship was led by Jongwon Chung. The conference was preceded by a retreat for Korean leaders, many of whom provide guidance for the fledgling RENOVARE Korea movement.

16 October—Columbia, Maryland

Glandion Carney led this Local Conference for Columbia area pastors and leaders. In all, about 50 pastors attended the event hosted by Rolling Hills Baptist Church. Under Glandion's leadership, pastors and church leaders were able to explore together many important areas of the spiritual life of leaders. Spiritual Disciplines, prayer, authentic sharing, leading a balanced life, and spiritual formation communities were just a few of the many important subjects discussed. Thanks to Chairpersons Clarence Byerly and Steve Carter for bringing the logistics together.

17-18 October—Montrose, Colorado

This Regional Conference held at the Montrose Pavilion on the Western Slope (the west side of the Rockies), went far into the hearts of all who came. With just under 400 people in attendance, RENOVARE Team Members Marti Ensign and Richard Foster gave a faithful witness to the abundant life to be had in Jesus. The hospitality of the local Steering Committee, led by Chairperson Evan Howard, was evident to all. May God continue the good work he started in the minds and hearts of the folks on the Western Slope.



Montrose book tables



Modeling a RENOVARE Spiritual Formation Group

and institutions for the conference. With Christians from many traditions joining together in worship and fellowship, Team Members Glandion Carney, Emilie Griffin, and Richard Foster opened up the kingdom for all to celebrate. Many thanks to Conference Chairperson Alvin Smith and the warm and loving hearts of the Steering Committee for exemplifying the type of unity they had prayed about for their Region.

7-8 November—Baton Rouge, Louisiana

This was one of the most unique Regional Conferences ever held. It was hosted by an inner city school, Scotlandville Magnet High School, and attempted to build bridges across long-standing racial divides. Great success was achieved in this area through the wide diversity of co-sponsoring churches

21-22 November—Bradford, England & 28-29 November—Southampton, England

In England we held two back-to-back Regional Conferences with the UK Board retreat sandwiched in between. The first conference was held at the beautiful Bradford Cathedral in the north and the second at the famous Central Hall, Southampton, in the south. A speaking team of James Catford, Roy Searle, Elohor Knowles, and Richard Foster along with two worship teams from the Northumbria Community gave us a wonderful opportunity to preach and pray for several hundreds of British folk. The power of the Lord was over all and these events have set the stage for our next major mission which is to be in Scotland.

Registration Deadline

**for the August 17-21, 2004, RENOVARE Covenant Retreat is
June 1, 2004**

Visit www.renovare.org\cr for a registration form or call Lyle at 303-485-0670.

OUR FINANCIAL GUIDELINES

- We urge everyone to give first to their local church (or wherever they are being nurtured spiritually) and to the poor before ever giving to RENOVARÉ.
- An accountant oversees our financial records in accord with accepted accounting procedures and the highest professionalism.
- We will live within our means. One thing we refuse to do is overextend and overspend ourselves and then beg for God's people to bail us out. We believe that God will give us the money to do what we are being called to do. We feel it involves just as much faith to trust God for the money before a purchase as after a purchase. In fact, one way we discern God's will for the ministry of RENOVARÉ is through the financial support of his people.
- We believe in full disclosure at all times. Our financial reports are available to anyone upon request.
- We will receipt all donations.
- If we offer books, tapes, or other materials for a suggested contribution, we will receipt the amount given above the retail price of the product plus shipping and handling costs.
- When we make a purchase, we will pay the bill within thirty days. We refuse to subsidize this ministry on the backs of vendors.
- We will never sell or rent our mailing list.
- We are primarily a voluntary organization and as such we depend in large measure upon the sacrificial labors of many. If, however, we employ paid staff, they will receive equal pay for equal work.
- We will communicate our financial needs to our constituency as clearly and as truthfully as possible. We will not inflate or overstate our situation, nor create a crisis to boost income.
- We believe RENOVARÉ was initiated and continues to be sustained by God. While we are eager to follow the Divine whisper at every turn and work with all our might, it is God's business and not ours to prosper or end the work of RENOVARÉ. We rejoice either way.

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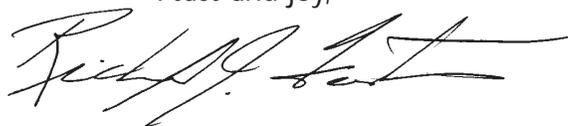
It is the Spirit that reaches into the heart, touching and transforming inward and unseen realities. We simply cannot program our own heart, or anybody else's heart for that matter. This is something only God can do. So we are constantly watching for evidence of the great work of heart formation and transformation in ourselves and in others.

Lesson # 7 - ALWAYS FOLLOW THE PASSION

Over the years I have learned something about the wisdom of waiting until an idea or project becomes someone's passion. This demands spiritual discipline . . . and patience. For some things we have waited prayerfully for eight, even ten years, waiting for the passion and the resources and the maturity to come together in just the right person. Then we step out trusting the God who gives the passion to uphold the person and prosper the work.

Well, these seven lessons from those exciting, energetic, early days. Simple lessons really, but they have become important for us over these fifteen years, shaping our thinking and ministry. I hope you will find them helpful in some small way. And may Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, guard you, guide you, and strengthen you in all you are and all you do.

Peace and joy,



Richard J. Foster

P.S. Lynda Graybeal, the RENOVARÉ Administrator since its inception, will be retiring June 30. We are having a reception in her honor Sunday, May 16, here at the RENOVARÉ office. You are welcome to attend, but if that's not possible, feel free to send a card or other best wishes.

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