

...FOR THOSE SEEKING THE EMPOWERING PRESENCE OF THE *Holy Spirit*

# LutheranRenewal

## I Don't Look Back

by Paul Anderson

I was visiting my sister Ruth, twisted up at sixty-six with Parkinsons disease, unable to walk or use her hands. When it was time for a pain pill, I retrieved it and placed it in her mouth. Then I put a glass of water with the straw to her lips. She followed this grueling procedure daily. "She's too young for this," I thought.

I asked her as she sat in her wheelchair, "Ruth, how do you look back on the events of your past?" She responded without reflection, "I don't look back." Then she added, "I did once to get my head together but not anymore." I inquired about her former husband, a pastor, who left her and their four kids for another woman almost three decades before. I wondered if any of them had any contact with their father: "Really, only one. He sure has suffered."

I sat stunned by what I had just heard. My oldest sibling had just told me that she doesn't look back, though she had much less of a recognizable future than most people I know. She also expressed sorrow on behalf of the man who traded her in for a newer model. She was offering him mercy rather than judgment. On another occasion when we talked about her ex, she said, "Every person has the right to receive the grace of God." Such a beautiful woman, inside and out, and yet snarled up with pain. It remains a mystery to our extended family, as all suffering like this is.



At her request, I gently wiped her eyes. Before I left, I thanked God for my sister, more than a survivor, a champion, a conqueror, beating what many stumble over: resentment. That's the poison that keeps us looking back and wishing it were different, wondering why it isn't, blaming others for our condition, and paralyzed like the invalid Jesus visited at the pool of Bethesda.

The angels who were rescuing Lot and his family from impending judgment said to them, "Flee for your lives! Don't look back, and don't stop anywhere in the plain!" (Genesis 19:17). Seven verses later we read, "But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt." Looking back can rob us of a future! Why did she look back? She probably didn't want to go. Even Lot hesitated when the angels first came to lead them out. And his future sons-in-law thought Lot was joking when he told them they needed to leave. So they all must have had reasons for wanting to stay, even though Sodom was a wicked city. Sounds like they compromised their values sufficiently to at least tolerate the sinful environment. And even after leaving, Lot bargained with the angels about the city to which they should flee. But he had a painful reminder the rest of his life about the cost of looking back.

### Lutheran Renewal

(Independent of North Heights Lutheran Church)

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### Alliance of Renewal Churches

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Jesus taught that *“No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God”* (Luke 9:62). Looking back damages us more than we might have thought. It disqualifies us for service. Jesus said this to a man who had higher priorities, who had to first go back and say good-bye to his family (v.61). The important word is “first.” If other things than the kingdom rank first, we will make poor kingdom servants. Double duties plague our mind and make it impossible for us to be decisive. Like Lot’s wife, we will wonder the rest of our lives how things could have been had we not left our comfortable home.

It remains physically and spiritually impossible to look back and look ahead at the same time. The writer of Hebrews exhorts us to *“throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles”* (Hebrews 12:1) in order to do two things: run a good race and look to Jesus. Runners know that looking back can mean losing a race. In *Chariots of Fire*, Abraham’s coach demonstrated graphically that turning around throws a runner off balance and costs precious fractions of a second. Instead, we fix our eyes on the goal. And as Christians we look to Jesus, the one who has gone before us.



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Paul likewise shared with the Philippians his outlook. *“One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize...”* (Philippians 3:14,15). Paul didn’t look back because what he saw wasn’t that attractive to him. When he spoke about himself as the chief of sinners, it wasn’t in the past tense. It was a continual reminder to him of the mighty grace of God, but he had to be careful lest he beat himself up in the process. We can look back with pain at our failures, or we can look back at the so-called good old days. In reality, the good old days usually weren’t that good. If we are struggling in the present, we live in deception when we paint the past red and orange, when, in fact, we should probably color it with shades of gray and brown.

This at least proved true for the Israelites. They lived in misery while in bondage, but compared to the desert even slavery didn’t look that bad. Stop and figure; they never made it to their destination, because their destination became Egypt, not the Promised Land. People who trade in their future for their past just lost their future.

## Why shouldn’t we look back?

- We can’t go back.
- Nostalgia keeps us from faith.
- We cannot reproduce the past. The past is past. It will never happen again.
- We cannot live in yesterday and tomorrow at the same time.
- Faith projects us toward the future. It is *“being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see”* (Hebrews 11:1).
- We are commanded to deal with the past, not live there.
- We set a bad example for those around us. Those running the race need positive examples.
- Looking back paralyzes us into inactivity. We quit growing and slide backwards instead.
- Living in the past turns faith into fate: *“Whatever will be will be.”* And without faith, we cannot please God.

## Why must we look ahead?

- Because that is where we are going. No one drives by focusing where he has been.
- Because faith propels us forward.
- Because we encourage others in the same race.

Imagine the discouragement of Lot to see his immovable wife.

“One thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize...”

(Philippians 3:14,15)

One of the shortest verses in the Bible says simply, *“Remember Lot’s wife!”* (Luke 17:32). She stands as a reminder to those who have misplaced priorities, to those who think they can go forward and back at the same time. Jesus says, *“On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything”* (17:31). In other words, when the kingdom of God is breaking in, either through judgment or mercy, looking back, going back, or otherwise being confused about what is ultimately important can cost you your life. It hardly makes sense to run back into a burning house for the family scrapbook if you burn to death in the process. Kingdom priorities must trump every other relationship, every other value, every other potential god.

So I have kept my strong sister’s words before me lately as a good reminder of how to live: I don’t look back!



**Congregational missions.** Our busiest time of the year comes in late fall, late winter and spring. We're out every weekend for a while. We go to all kinds of churches, traditional or renewal-based, usually Lutheran, though not exclusively. Most connect with us because of receiving our newsletters. Others make contact by way of one of the conferences or by word of mouth. Besides the LR staff, we have other teams ready to serve congregations in a variety of ways. Some of our weekend themes include "Finding Your Destiny," "Healing" and "Prayer Ministry." Currently, the two most popular are the "Holy Spirit Workshop" and the "Dream Day" seminar.

**Conferences.** Our February Equipping Conference has become a regular feature. This year we featured Francis Frangipane and Greg Boyd under the theme, "This Day We Fight." We have also been hosting smaller seminars from time to time. In the fall we had strategic visits from Wolfgang Simson of Germany and Michael Frost of Australia. We just finished a seminar with Paul Kaak called "Organic Church." Our brochures for the summer Holy Spirit Conference come out in May.

**International Lutheran Renewal.** LR was founded as an international organization, and the LR staff often travel abroad. Dan Siemens, Coordinator of Ministry for LR, will head for Iceland in May. As well as doing teaching, the Lutheran church there with whom we have had much contact will be welcomed into the ARC by Fred Thoni, a member of the ARC leadership team who will accompany Dan. Paul Anderson will speak at Sweden's Holy Spirit Conference in July, then return to Scandinavia and Eastern Europe the end of September. This trip will include two pastors' conferences and two or more congregational missions. Last October over 50 Lutheran renewal leaders from around the world came to Latvia for a powerful and strategic leadership conference. The next one is scheduled for the fall of 2007.

**Days of Refreshing for Pastors.** The next scheduled day is Friday, April 21, in Southern California from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. We have conducted these retreat days around the country for the last three years. We'll come to your site if you want to bring together a group of pastors.



*Day of Refreshing for pastors and spouses. Dave Housholder and Joe Johnson in foreground.*

**Alliance of Renewal Churches (ARC) and the Master's Institute (MI) Connections.** LR was used to birth two other ministries, one a network of churches and pastors, the other a seminary and training center. Many of the trips we take involve all three ministries on a single weekend. Churches hear about the ARC and ask about involvement, and potential students consider the value of a seminary that includes leadership training and character formation along with the academic studies.

**Newsletters.** We love hearing the reports that our LR newsletter continues to build and encourage individuals and congregations. Paul also writes a monthly pastors' newsletter that is read by over 150 leaders from around the world. Biblical and practical articles help keep pastors grounded and relevant.



**New Resources.** Paul's latest books, *The Father's Gift* and *Dare To Dream*, are being used for small groups as well as for individual study and inspiration. We have updated the *Prayer Ministry* booklet. We also continue to offer CDs and DVDs of our seminars and conferences.

## Lutheran Renewal has been thinking outside of its traditional box...



**Young Adults.** Forty young adults gather regularly at Paul & Karen Anderson's home for worship and teaching, all of which is now done by the young people themselves. The leaders are being disciplined one-on-one and in small

group settings. The vision from the start has been to raise up gatherings around the Twin Cities and beyond that are used to train and release young people into their destiny and into the harvest. It's already happening! Groups are forming! Pray for us; the long-term vision includes the planting of churches and the sending out of young people all over the world.

**Alternative Structures.** Someone said recently, "Don't believe everything you think." But if we're thinking it, we usually believe it—until we start thinking outside the box, our box that is. So LR has been thinking outside of its traditional box, believing that God has other structures by which renewal and mission can take place, like house churches for instance. A group of fifteen or so pastors are meeting monthly to ask what this might mean for the future of the church—and not just the Lutheran Church. It's exciting—and disarming. We continue to host monthly fellowship meetings of pastors, as well as smaller meetings for younger pastors being mentored by the LR team. Investing in the future of leaders ranks high on our list of priorities.

*Thank you for your prayers as we seek to follow the Lord in all we do.*

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Arden Hills, MN

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Ellel Ministries is a world-wide Christian deliverance and inner healing organization based in the UK, but with training centers around the world.



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"If people do not come to church, we need to bring the church to the



# Coming Home:

## Loving Others Into the Kingdom Through Your Front Door

featuring  
**Wolfgang Simson and Erich Reber**  
May 6, 2006 • 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

people  
by  
the  
millions."

How many people have you introduced to Jesus in the last year? What about the last five years? Are you still counting the number on one hand? If so, then you're like most of us in the Western world. We've made the sharing of the gospel so complicated that we've paralyzed ourselves in the process.

Did you know that the vast majority of people come into relationship with Jesus through a friend or relative? Do you have any friends or relatives? Then this seminar is for you! You may not be ready to plant a house church, but we know you want to share Jesus with your friends and family.

Wolf Simson will give a practical "how to" approach to evangelism and to the house church phenomenon. (See the February edition of *Time Magazine*.) He will go through some very practical steps that he calls "The Toolbox." He will also speak on the "Luke 10" model of evangelism.

In Luke Chapter 10 Jesus commissions his disciples and "72 others" for the very first time to carry out a special mission: to find "houses of peace" and prepare the place for his coming. The goal of "Luke 10" is to implant and transmit an apostolic and prophetic virus: the spiritual genetical code of God's apostolic passion for the lost, and the simple but profound ability to hear God's voice and do what he says. It is designed both for brand-new believers as well as for older Christians who want to be refocused and equipped to be ardent, radical and healthy disciples of Jesus.

Erich Reber will share about the role of the prophetic in this context. He will also share developments he has prophetically seen concerning the U.S.



**Wolfgang Simson** author of *Houses that Change the World: The Return of the House Church*, functions as an international strategy consultant and researcher within global strategy think tanks. Through his research on growing churches, church planting movements, and revival and mission breakthroughs, he is a widely sought-after speaker, focusing on issues of completing

the Great Commission by discipling nations through multiplying churches. He is currently on the apostolic team of Kingdom Ministries, a team that works in seven countries or people groups. (See: [www.kministries.ch/english.html](http://www.kministries.ch/english.html))

**Erich Reber**, also on the apostolic team of Kingdom Ministries, experienced a dramatic conversion to Jesus in 1983 from the drug scene. He is probably the most well known prophetic figure in Switzerland, and possibly in the German-speaking world. Healing and other miracles frequently accompany his prophetic words.



### Coming Home Registration

May 6, 2006 • 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Please note: The Conference will be held at North Heights Lutheran Church  
2701 Rice Street • Roseville MN

You may make copies of this form to share with others. **One family per form, please.**

No food will be sold on-site. We will supply a list of area restaurants upon your arrival.

Cost: \$20 per person if postmarked before April 29  
\$25 per person if postmarked after April 29

The cost remains the same whether you attend one or all of the sessions.

*Please print.*

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Church \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

We regret that no children under the age of 12 years will be admitted to this Seminar. Exception: nursing infants. Sorry, childcare is not available.

### Seminar Payments

Postmarked before April 29  
Number of Registrants: \_\_\_\_\_ X \$20 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(US Funds)

Postmarked after April 29  
or on-site registration  
Number of Registrants: \_\_\_\_\_ X \$25 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(US Funds)

On-site registrations will be dependent on seat availability.

### Registration fees are non-refundable.

Please make checks payable to:  
**Lutheran Renewal**  
2701 Rice Street; St. Paul, MN 55113-2200

We're sorry, but we cannot accept phone, fax, or e-mail registrations.

## February 10-11, 2006 Equipping Conference Order Form

Order online at [www.ecom.north-heights.org](http://www.ecom.north-heights.org)

Questions? Contact North Heights Lutheran Church. Phone: 651-582-3771; E-mail: [tapes@nhlc.org](mailto:tapes@nhlc.org)

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**Francis Frangipane**



**Greg Boyd**

	Speaker	Title	CD	Cassette	DVD
<b>Friday, 9:30 a.m.</b>	Francis Frangipane	"If We Do Not Lose Heart"			
<b>Friday, 2:00 p.m.</b>	Greg Boyd	"Is God to Blame?"			
<b>Friday, 7:00 p.m.</b>	Francis Frangipane	"The Accuser of the Brethren"			
<b>Saturday, 9:30 a.m.</b>	Greg Boyd	"Job and the Problem of Evil"			
<b>Saturday, 2:00 p.m.</b>	Francis Frangipane	"Your Appointment Awaits You"			
<b>Friday, 12 noon</b>	Francis Frangipane	Pastors' Lunch Q and A			
<b>Saturday, 12 noon</b>	Greg Boyd	Pastors' Lunch Q and A			

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\$81 +	\$8.00

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