

Pleasant Valley
Church of Christ

3317 Amidon
Wichita KS 67204
(316) 838-4195
www.letjesusleadus.org

Schedule of Services

Sunday

Classes 9:30 am
Worship 10:30 am
Evening 6:00 pm

Wednesday

Classes 7:30 pm

The Pleasant Valley Church of Christ is a non-denominational group of believers who are committed to following Jesus in our attitudes, our relationships, and our worship. If you want the same thing in your life, please contact us. We'd like to help.

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture quotations are from the New King James Version Bible, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Wings



*"But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength;
they shall mount up with wings like eagles" (Isaiah 40:31)*

October 14, 2007

Tribute to Robert Turner

by David King

On Friday, I received news that Robert F. Turner, a long-time Texas preacher passed away. In the early 1970s, when I was a green young preacher trying to get my feet on the ground, the writings of Robert Turner, through his monthly church newsletter *Plain Talk*, did more than anything else to help me steer through the wrangling that passed for "defending the faith" in those days.

Turner's writing was unique. He was a deep thinker, probably the finest scholar on church history in his generation. Yet his writing was profoundly simple. He sprinkled his articles with home-spun humor and clever illustrations that never failed to make the point. When you read one of his articles, you really learned something about the Truth.

He began writing *Plain Talk* in 1964, in the midst of a boiling controversy that eventually tore the churches of Christ apart. While others tried to debate these issues using legal arguments that would make a Philadelphia lawyer proud, Turner took a different approach. He pointed to a faulty concept of the nature of the church as the root of the controversy. In article after article, he patiently exposed the misguided thinking of brethren who saw the church as a confederation of local congregations, a worldwide institution that had to "organize" in order to get things done, often using carnal tactics to achieve the mission.

Turner called on people to consider a more scriptural concept of the church as simply the sum total of all those who have accepted the challenge to follow Jesus Christ in their lives —

a collection of individuals, not congregations. In his thinking, the "true church" was defined by personal character and fidelity, not institutional loyalty and party affiliation. The work, worship, and organization of the local church are important subjects, but only as instruments to a greater purpose: to "present every man complete in Christ Jesus" (Col. 1:28).

While this may seem like a minor distinction, the implications are far-reaching. This approach makes my salvation a function of the entirety of my spiritual and moral life, not merely "belonging to the right church." This approach puts Jesus Christ at the center of our spiritual universe, not the prevailing opinions of "the majority of faithful brethren." When I hear conservative brethren today issue dire warnings against departing from "what faithful brethren have always believed," I realize that we still need more teaching on this subject. The temptation to replace faithfulness to the Lord with loyalty to the party runs strong and deep in the human psyche. Turner understood that threat, and devoted his life to educating people on how to deal with it.

Plain Talk ceased publication in 1984, after a twenty year run. The entire series was later published in hard bound books. Those five volumes are the crown jewels in my personal library. The complete set of articles are also available on the internet (<http://www.cedarparkchurchofchrist.org/ptalk/index.html>).

Am I a disciple of Robert Turner? If so, then I obviously didn't listen to what he was teaching, did I?