

Transcript

Episode 30: "BHHM Workshop," with Dr. Neil Franks & Dr. Rodney Harrison

Dr. Andy Braams: In this month's episode of *Biblical Perspectives on Aging*, we are going to continue to give you a glimpse into the recent workshop that we did for the leaders of Baptist Homes & Healthcare Ministries. By leaders, I mean the executive team, our administrators at each of our campuses, and all of the supervisors, or directors, as we call them. We gathered together in Jefferson City in early June to discuss many things, little bit of a pep rally, maybe some might say, but also to get some good and honest feedback.

In last month's episode, you heard Dr. David Sundeen provide some thoughts about how problems can be overcome. He talked about culture, which is a part of his new role with Baptist Homes in helping us to form a stronger and a [more] Christ-like organizational culture and provide that kind of care that we want.

That happened in the afternoon. But before that, we began with a time of devotion. That time of devotion was led by Dr. Neil Franks, a local pastor and also the President of the Missouri Baptist Foundation who shared what it means to be made in the image of God. In just a moment, I'm going to let you listen to much of that time that we had together before then moving into a later time where Dr. Rodney Harrison shared about the lowest stave. And if you think about what a stave of a bucket is, it's that wood that holds it up. So, I'll come back and I'll introduce that momentarily. But first, take a listen to what Dr. Neil Franks shared as a part of us being made in the image of God.

Dr. Neil Franks: What is the ideal age? If you could go back and choose an age to be, what would that be?

For the majority in this room, it looks like all of us would prefer maybe to be younger.

Interesting, especially since what you do is love, and take care of, and provide for, those that are what we would consider older. Right? Because our culture is not one that appreciates age. We honor and promote youngness and beauty and vibrancy. But there's a secret to those people who are us as well and will be that even though the culture does not honor and promote them, there is something special about the people that you manage.

And that is that they bear the image of God. The image of God is innate in all human beings, given to us from conception to the end of this natural life; from the womb, until the tomb. The scriptures tell us that in Genesis chapter one, it says, then God said, "Let us," both a plural of majesty in the Hebrew and also a Trinitarian concept.

"Let us make man and woman," by the way, ladies is included in the language, "in our image after our likeness and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created a man in his own image, in the image of God, he created him, male and female."

He created him, created them. Now I don't understand everything that the image of God means in order for us to understand everything, the image of God means, would mean that we understood everything about God, which we do not. We are finite trying to hold the infinite. And sometimes we err in our thoughts in one way and sometimes in the other ways, but this image of God is very unique and very different.

And that comes with humanity. It comes with personhood. The people, whether they lie in the bed all day long, or are a little forgetful or are in fact angry and mad all the time, are different than the inanimate objects on your campus. They are not a chair. They're not a table. They're not a wall. They're an image bearer of God.

And they deserve the respect and the honor that that brings with it. Neither are they just like all the other creations, even the things that creep, I don't like this translation, 'cause I'm not a big fan of creepy things, are you? But he says even the creepy and the creepy things are created by God, but they are not in the same way as we are and as our clients are, as our residents are, as our family is.

So let me say a couple of things first. [Number one,] Thank you. Number two, hang in there. It's tough. It is tough.

Well, in Psalms 71, I'm sure it's a passage you're familiar with. How can you not be familiar with Psalm 71 in the career that you [are] in? The Psalmist writes, "Do not cast me off in time of old age; forsake me not. When my strength is spent for my enemies speak concerning me. Those who watch for my life consult together and say, God has forsaken him pursue and seize him for there is none to deliver him."

Most of you are taking care of people that they were probably already old before you were born. If you think about it and the people that are taking [care of], going [to] take care of you one day, they may not have been born yet either. And yet God, in his sovereignty, and God, in His planning, knew all of those things.

And He continues to create people in His image to take care of the people who have already gone before, who He created in their image, so that we might continue this holy transaction, this holy transition from generation to generation to generation. And you are an answer to some people's prayer because you're taking care of their mama or you're taking care of their granddad.

A person's prayer when you're cooking meals, when you're administrating, when you're moving paper from paper, whatever it is that you're doing, you are a part of answering God's prayer and the prayer that people have asked God to answer. You are participating in that. So never forget that, but maybe most importantly, and I'm done with this, that image of God that I've talked about is actually in you as well.

Dr. Andy Braams: After Dr. Franks shared those thoughts from scripture with us, we had a couple of other items, including a message from one of our vendors as a part of a new transition that we have had; a software transition that we have had. And then, most of the

rest of the morning was spent around the idea of us improving different aspects of our ministry, the different departments of our ministry.

Dr. Harrison kicked that off by talking about various things and by then encouraging us to break into different departments, to talk about the aspects of each department as collective departments from each of our campuses, getting together and talking about the different challenges that they were facing on a daily or weekly or monthly basis.

He did that by using the idea of a stove as I mentioned earlier, and you will hear that as a part of what he is going to be describing in these next several minutes of this clip from our workshop on that day.

As a part of what Dr. Harrison shared, he reminded those who were a part of this workshop the prior year, that their feedback was taken directly to heart and plans were implemented to make changes. Now, some of those changes are ongoing. Some of those changes did not perhaps have the impact that we thought they might have and they need to be tweaked, but others were substantial changes that have made a difference in the ministry and within each campus of Baptist Homes & Healthcare Ministries.

So, this year, it was about identifying new and different items. And after the time of sharing in the groups that took place after Dr. Harrison shares here, then we came together. We allowed each of the groups to share their top three items. We recorded all of those. And then we began to break those down in subsequent meetings over the next two and a half days to determine how we could improve and continue to improve the ministry as we desire to set the standard, to be the standard of Christ-like care for the aging.

So, for the next several minutes, you will hear Dr. Harrison setting up this time for the departments to come together and discuss those ideas that would be helpful to them that they could then share with the group and that we would all come together collectively and then in smaller teams to discuss how we could make a difference in many, most, and potentially all, of these different areas.

Dr. Rodney Harrison: So everybody's going [to] get an opportunity to kind of share who you are, what you do, and what campus that you are serving from. Part of our goal of this meeting is to be able to take time and look at opportunities for improvement. And so, we're going [to] be kind of going through some training right now, and then you're going [to] be breaking up into some small groups.

These small groups are going to be by department. So, if you are in, for example, nursing, the nurses will get together and you'll take a table or two. Same thing with housekeeping, same thing with the social services, activities, maintenance and facilities.

Probably one of the greatest frustrations is to go to a meeting and suddenly realize, "Was anything actually accomplished? Did we actually do anything as a result of that meeting?"

So the first thing I want us to do is kind of look at where we went from last year. So last year in this meeting, you, we, focused on something called a SWOT. So when you all got

together, as your teams, you were looking at by department, by division, what were the strengths of your area?

Whether it be housekeeping, maintenance, whether it be nursing, but you're looking at the strengths. What were the strengths? And then were there some weaknesses? What were the weaknesses that were possibly those that were causing some challenges [and] keeping you from being all that you needed to be.

Then you were looking at, what were some opportunities? What were some opportunities on the horizon that would allow your area to grow, to thrive, to be functional and effective, to bring maybe greater, you might say, satisfaction with your work. And then also you looked at what might be some upcoming threats.

And so, when you went through this exercise and you looked at the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, you shared that information with us and as a group. And part of what we did is say, "Okay, well, what are we going [to] do with all of that information?"

Well, first of all, we decided to say, "Hmm, okay, we heard some common themes here." And so, initiative number one is that we wanted to make sure as an organization, we leaned into recruiting and retaining a quality staff. And, you know, there are several things that we did last year to focus on that very activity. One of the things was kind of a mid-year salary increase.

You know, you take someone like a CAN, a kind of an entry level position on many of our campuses. When I became the interim president at Baptist Homes, that was a sub-\$10 an hour position. Today, it's \$15. That's a pretty big increase in just over two years. We have gone to several resources to be able to retain employees such as a retention idea that came from the Ozark campus.

And they said, "Could we do this?" And we implemented that system-wide. And so, we started leaning into some of the things that you were saying we need to do. We also focused on building the census. One of the reasons for building the census, because a threat at Baptist Homes had been that during Covid, shock, our census went down.

In fact, during COVID we saw our census go from an average of about 88%. We saw it drop below 80. It was about 78%. That's a significant drop. In fact, what that meant is what we should have [done is] just cut 10% of your salary [and] cut expenses 10%, because we dropped 10% in revenue. And that's what many, many companies did across America.

But we said, "No. Okay. We need to really focus on let's rebuild that census. Let's dig into the reserves and let's build the census." And I am pleased to say that our census is improving and we continue to see increases in census because we are intentionally focusing on that. And we're doing things to improve that process.

We're talking about increasing teamwork and communication across the organization. And we look at that and I'm looking at how we are doing teamwork. Well, this is actually one of those expressions. This meeting is increasing our teamwork. It's helping us to get to know

one another. As administration, we now have meetings that are on a weekly basis where we get together and we seek to improve what we do because there's always room for improvement.

But we started looking at that. We started looking at some operations policies and procedures. That was a fun process. When we found out that you know, at the time, we had a year ago, five campuses and about, oh, nine applications, nine forms to do one thing. And so, we're starting that process of trying to make sure that we have common policies and procedures and that when someone calls our HR department, that they're going [to] get the same answer from Corporate as they do at the campus level.

And so, we started working on "How can we make sure that in addition to having great communication, that we do a much better job of having consistent policies and procedures system wide?" And then we talked about our expansion efforts because we are a growing ministry, you know, it's hard to believe.

It's only been a year since we brought the campus at Independence online. It was just a year ago that we opened up the congregant living apartments over in Ashland. Now we have a major construction project taking place in Smithville. And this last week we received our very first resident at Adrian.

Wow. We've got a lot going on.

And so, Ron [Pence], congratulations. Now you're the administrator for more than just staff. Okay. So before, he had a one member staff: the maintenance facilities. Now, you have a staff member and a resident to care for. Wow. Okay. I mean, hey, we're growing. But, you know, we've got other plans to grow.

We're going [to] be seeing some expansion in Chillicothe, expansion over at the Ozark campus that we're really excited about. And yes, expansion at Arcadia Valley. One of the commitments I made early on was that no, we're not abandoning the AV campus. And we're looking forward to even now work is taking place on the second, and then, eventually, the third floors of the Riggs-Scott building to make sure that they are fulfilling the mission that God has given us. Why is that important? Because every empty bed is a missed ministry opportunity for us. And so, that is what we're leaning into. And so, when I think about what we did last year, it was tremendous.

What we did is we took your feedback and put it into action. And that's exactly what we're going [to] be doing again this year. So, looking at this diagram. We're going [to] be talking this year on identifying the limiting factors or fixing the lowest stave of our departments. Now, right there. You see a bucket.

Okay. And in that bucket, notice that there there's something that's not right on some of those wooden staves. What's wrong with them? Yeah. They're missing or they're broken. Okay. So when we take a look at those missing staves there's a reminder here because really where that lowest stave is, that's the maximum of your capacity.

And that can be pretty frustrating because if I go out and I buy a five-gallon bucket, I want it to be able to hold five gallons of fluid. And so, I could sit there all day long and go and go. Hold it. That's not right. I've got a broken stave. And my bucket only holds two gallons. I have a defective bucket.

I want my money back. I can complain about it. Or I can start fixing it so that it actually fulfills what it should be in the first place. You know, the other thing that a stave that is low does, it means that really oftentimes you've got resources that are just kind of wasted. They just flow out on the ground.

So, for example, if you have five gallons of resources and you put it into a five-gallon bucket that has a stave, that's broken at the three-gallon mark, you've got two gallons that probably just flow out on the ground or they're wasted. And so, a low stave can waste resources.

You may have, for example, the best nursing care in the county or in your part of the state. But you know what? If there's a low stave in the onboarding process, well, you'll never get to realize that wonderful care that you're providing.

So as a team in our team building, we're going [to] be identifying the limiting factors to excellence. So that would be the limiting factors in your area.

It could be housekeeping, it could be nursing, it could be social services, activities, the operations of the facility administration, the business office. This is the opportunity where, what we do is, we start saying, "Okay, what are those limiting factors?" And notice that we're doing it by department, not by campus, because we want each department to have ownership over the Baptist Home system of saying, "You know, here's some things that we can do. "And here's some kind of common areas that if we could just fix that one stave, there's so much that we're doing right."

And that's what I've found in most of our ministries, most of our departments, most of our areas of service, we actually are doing really well in many areas. And if we can just start building those lowest staves and kind of fixing them, we're going [to] find that our capacity is growing to what God intends it to be and what we ought to do.

Dr. Andy Braams: I know that just receiving clips of what took place that day does not allow you to fully capture the essence of what I believe was a time of cooperation; what I believe was a time of honesty; what I believe was a time, in fact, a comment that was made to me, was that it showed vulnerability on behalf of the leadership to allow for those comments to be shared publicly.

And again, you may not have heard those comments here, and I understand that, but they were made, they were received, they have been discussed, and plans have been made accordingly. In next month's episode, we are going to continue by sharing part of what happened in the afternoon prior to Dr. Sundeen taking the microphone and sharing the information that you heard on last month's [episode].

In next month's episode, you will hear a little bit about the new capital campaign that we are going to be doing. You will hear about why that needs to be happening and how Dr. Harrison distinguishes between faithfulness and loyalty, before hearing the closing prayer from our time, which included a portion of saying thank you and yet in a way, goodbye to someone who has served with us for a year in a high leadership capacity, as we have brought on new facilities and transitioned them to the Baptist Homes model.

So, I hope you will tune in again next month to hear the third and final part of this series that we have been doing from this workshop that took place in early June. To give you an idea, the listener, an idea of the importance that we have in listening to our team, in taking their thoughts, encouraging them along the way, bringing them together, investing in them as individuals, as a part of this organization, that we could take that information to improve the ministry, not just for today and not just for tomorrow, but hopefully, Lord willing, for years to come.

So, tune in next month for the final portion of this three-part series related to the workshop from early June.