

Psalm 119:89–97

The Psalter, 1912

Forever settled in the heavens,
Thy Word, O Lord, shall firmly stand;
Thy faithfulness shall never fail;
The earth abides at thy command.

Thy word and works unmoved remain,
Thine every purpose to fulfill;
All things are thine and thee obey,
And all as servants wait thy will.

I should have perished in my woe
Had not I loved thy law divine;
That law I never can forget;
O save me, Lord, for I am thine.

The wicked would destroy my soul,
But in thy truth is refuge sure;
Exceeding broad is thy command,
And in perfection shall endure.

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

*In the Nick of Time***In Memoriam: Jerry Tetreau***Michael and Alicia Riley*

Early this week, Jerry Tetreau, longtime president and chancellor of International Baptist College in Chandler, Arizona, entered his eternal rest. I had the joy of serving under and with him at IBC for four years; my wife was there for five, most of which as Dr. Tetreau's secretary. It is a joy for us to be able to devote this edition of *In the Nick of Time* to honor his life and ministry.

Although Dr. Tetreau's family had been posting updates about his health and hospitalization on social media, neither my wife nor I really expected to hear Monday's news. Not only did Dr. Tetreau's condition seem to be improving, but it seemed impossible that a man who had led annual hikes down and back out of the Grand Canyon—in his 70s!—would ever slow down, much less be stopped. Dr. Tetreau defied any normal model of aging. I suppose that I expected him to be out-hiking college kids forever.

Everyone on campus called him Dr. T. He shaped us all by his words, but perhaps more so by his deeds. As is true of many of his generation, he was committed to the virtue of thrift and sought to inculcate that virtue into others. He abhorred the thought of ordering anything other than water to drink at restaurants. His shirt pocket often contained a list of the produce on sale at each of the area supermarkets, so that he might catch each store's sale items every week.

His frugality was not to enrich himself. If you were invited to his home for a meal, he was going to use his full pantry to make sure that you could not possibly leave hungry. Alicia tells me that in his travels for the college, he often paid many of his own expenses. His thrift genuinely was a virtue. It was not pursued for his own profit, but as a tool to enable him to bless others.

In so many ways, Dr. Tetreau was a model of moral virtue. But he would be deeply upset, and rightly so, if that were the main thing that anyone remembered about him. It was impossible to spend any time with Dr. Tetreau without seeing his devotion to his God and the Word of his God.



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He admonished us all, students and faculty alike, to meditate on the Word and I do not believe I have known anyone who did so like he did. Kevin DeYoung wrote that Psalm 119 is a love letter to the Bible and asks his readers whether they could, in full conscience, say that they loved the Word the way the psalmist writes. This is a penetrating question.

I believe that Jerry Tetreau could have recited Psalm 119 with undiluted honesty: “How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth! ...Your testimonies are my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart” (vv. 103, 111). You knew that Dr. Tetreau found God’s words sweet, because he kept them in his mouth all the time. He loved to tell you about what he had just read in his devotions. A verse would strike him and he would continue to speak about it for months, turning it over and over in his mind and making it a theme of his conversation, teaching, and preaching.

I have no doubt that Dr. Tetreau loved all the Bible, but his heart was in the wisdom books. It is no wonder, then, that Dr. Tetreau became himself a fountain of wisdom. I had the privilege of traveling with him to an education convention one year. The highlight was not the convention, but the time to converse with Dr. Tetreau. The trip occurred the month before I proposed to Alicia, at a junction of my life in which I was facing several major decisions. To receive counsel at that time from a saint so thoroughly immersed in the wisdom of God is a privilege for which I will continually thank God.

It is difficult for me, even now looking back, to explain how Dr. Tetreau brought his influence to bear on the institutions he served for so long. Dr. Tetreau was not a natural leader, and I intend the word *natural* to be read in the Pauline sense. A natural leader sways people by force of overwhelming personality or charisma, by imposition of his will or subtle politicking. Dr. Tetreau did none of those things. He shaped International Baptist College for nearly three decades, but as a Spiritual rather than natural leader. His leadership was not domineering. He was never a bully, even in an era that often rewarded such tactics in church leaders.

That inexplicable leadership is a mark of the Spirit. I’m reminded of Paul’s words to the Corinthians: “And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God” (1 Cor 2:1-5).

The Word of God was always in Dr. Tetreau’s mouth. And he lived and led in such a way as to draw our gaze, not to him, but to his God, so that our faith would not rest in the wisdom of men. The author of Hebrews admon-

ishes us, “Let us therefore strive to enter that rest” (Heb 4:11). Dr. Tetreau, a man of countless hikes, has reached the end of his earthly pilgrimage. He has labored faithfully, has entered the joy of his Master, and enjoys that rest.



This essay is by Michael P. Riley, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church of Wakefield, Michigan. Since 2011, he has served Central Seminary as managing editor of *In the Nick of Time*. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
