

CLF National Conference Report

Mississauga, ON – September 27-30, 2007

**“Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith;
be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love.”**

- 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 -

When CLF staff selected the conference theme – *Above All, To Stand* – they could not have predicted its impact on the 2007 CLF National Conference. Compared to conference themes selected in recent years, this theme has probably been the most effectively woven throughout the conference and influential on the listeners.

Above All – A Call to Intentional Living

CLF was delighted to welcome 125 guests to the Delta Toronto Airport West hotel between September 27th and 30th to receive a specially designed message for Christians in the profession of law. Those attending were reminded that the position and influence of legal professionals can be used for more than temporal goals; they can be instrumental in spiritual battles. To be worthy of this higher calling, we must be equipped for the battle, understand the enemy's tactics and fight with perseverance.

At various moments throughout the conference, listeners were reminded of the need for a prayer covering, the protection of Ephesians 6 armour and the pursuit of excellence in every aspect of our personal lives – from marriage to the operation of God-honouring law practices or advocacy for the oppressed. Speakers reminded us that consistency and victory requires clarity of purpose and personal discipline. Indeed, we are engaged in a spiritual battle and Satan schemes to confound God's higher purpose through deception and distraction.

Some highlights in the area of intentional living were:

- ◇ Toronto Baptist Seminary's principal, **Dr. Michael Haykin**, unfolded the disciplined and perseverant life of William Wilberforce who struggled to abolish the slave trade in the British Empire in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Dr. Haykin showed how the roots of Wilberforce's political action lay in his walk with God and developed a case for spirituality having a profound impact on society.
- ◇ In Michael Chang's session, **Doing Battle Through Prayer**, Michael explored aspects of consistent and persevering prayer. From his extensive experience in praying and teaching others to pray, Michael explained how this spiritual discipline will provide protection, wisdom and guidance in all areas of our lives and the lives of others that we uphold in prayer.
- ◇ In the session **God's Global Agenda for Christian Lawyers**, Chantal Desloges explained how her specialized practice in Immigration Law and Refugee Law has been a mission field in Canada. Rachelle Dickinson encouraged workshop participants to look beyond our backyard for opportunity to use legal skills to fight for the rights of the abused and oppressed in third world countries. Rachelle shared her experience working as a volunteer lawyer in Uganda with International Justice Mission.
- ◇ Jews for Jesus' Executive Director, Jhan Moscowitz, articulately challenged guests to know what we believe and why we believe it. Jhan proved to us that his faith had been challenged and strengthened by opposition and that we must be prepared for similar battles.
- ◇ Cal Beresh and Nancy Toran Harbin challenged listeners to encourage young people to enter the profession of law. In their session, **Influencing the Next Generation of Christian Lawyers – Pre-Law Ministry**, they showed that we must cast the vision for more Christian young people to engage Canadian culture through the practice of law and consider a Christian-based law school in Canada.

Conference experiences such as this are ideal times to step away from the controlling responsibilities of work and family and evaluate where we are in relation to our life objectives and God Word. This periodic introspection is essential for maintaining balance, intentional living and realignment with the targets we intend to hit.

To Stand – A Call to Bold Engagement

With this foundation solidly laid, speakers also addressed our participation in the battle.

- ◇ The opening panel on Friday morning - **God's Truth Abideth Still: The Foundations & Future of Religious Freedom in the Democratic World** - set the tone for the weekend. Four battle-proven warriors Jhan Moskowitz (Jesus for Jesus), Dr. Michael Haykin (Toronto Baptist Seminary), Benjamin Bull (Alliance Defense Fund) and Tristan Emmanuel (ECP Centre) challenged guests to engage the culture through their descriptions of current or historic battles for religious freedom. Some battles are more overt – public expression of Christianity – and others less so – post-modernism – while others are rising to the surface – Islam. All are equally serious and demand our attention and informed opposition.
- ◇ A highlight was the dramatic presentation by John Pellowe titled **Leadership Lessons from Vimy Ridge**. In this powerful audio-visual show, John explained how the leadership style of Julian Byng and General Sir Arthur Currie enabled Canadian troops to take Vimy Ridge in three hours and earned Canada the right to sign the peace treaty and to sit at the League of Nations as an independent country.
- ◇ In his session, **Human Rights: What are They and Does God want us to Defend Them?**, Scott Kennedy explained the development of human rights legislation in Canada and showed its impact on the Christian community. He also explored human rights from the perspective of the Scriptures and showed how God's Word both addresses the subject and provides the church guidance in approaching human rights.
- ◇ From the forefront of the battle, Ruth Ross gave an overview of current cases and issues of interest to Christians and specifically examined the themes of religious freedom, sanctity of life and the traditional family in her workshop session, **Current Cases & Legal Issues**.
- ◇ In wrapping up the Friday sessions, **Benjamin Bull** provided an appropriately titled session – **The Challenge to Religious Freedom: A Call to Action**. As Senior Litigation Counsel with Alliance Defense Fund, Benjamin understands the threat to religious freedom and the need for mobilized soldiers at the front lines. It was not possible to hear him speak without feeling challenged to engage.

As an interlude to the sessions, conference guests traveled to downtown Toronto to watch the gallantry and pomp of the Medieval Times production. This visual demonstration of battle skills combined with abundant “medieval fare” in a highly developed medieval atmosphere created a memorable experience.

Arguably the strongest message came through at the banquet. After the superlative musical presentation of *High Praise* and touching student testimonies, guests were honoured to hear the passionate message of a real life example of someone who puts his life at risk to counter an insidious danger – the global infiltration of Islam. Our featured speaker explained that Islam is not a religion but an all-encompassing system of jurisprudence, economics, education, politics, and religious beliefs. He explained its impact on Britain and the forthcoming impact on Canada. At the culmination of his moving speech, he challenged guests to covenant to pray one minute every day for spiritual protection and the dissemination of light in the darkness. It was a powerful moment as many in the audience rose to covenant together to this end.

Ruth Ross' final exhortation in her Sunday morning message was “the battle belongs to the LORD!” What a fitting way to end this stirring conference. Indeed, no amount of human preparation, boldness or perseverance will supersede Satan's deception unless we move forward equipped with divine empowering.

**“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony;
and they loved not their lives unto the death.”**

- Revelation 12:11 -