

Fire in the Soul: A Few Reflections from Together for the Gospel 2018

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by David Schrock

For the last ten years, God has kindly provided me a season of refreshing every other April in the city of Louisville through a gathering known as [Together for the Gospel](#). When I began going, I lived in that city as I studied at [Southern Seminary](#). In 2010, our family moved fifty miles north to Southern Indiana. And in 2010, 2012, and 2014 I made the hour drive to attend the conference (Living in Northern Virginia, I now find it hard to believe you go 50-miles in under an hour). Twice in those years I drove that distance by myself to attend T4G. Like many who attended that conference, I rejoiced in the time together with many friends, but also lamented at the lack of interest from my church.

Fast forward to this year, and I stand amazed at God's kindness in letting me worship God with 12,000+ people from all over the world and with 20 people from our own church. For three days, it was a joy to hear messages from [Mark Dever](#), [H.B. Charles](#), [Ligon Duncan](#), [Matt Chandler](#), and others, but what was most encouraging—most amazing to me!—was sitting in Section 210 with 20 brothers from Occoquan Bible Church. As David sang, "the lines have fallen for me in pleasant places" (Psalm 16:5).

For this last week at T4G, I praise God for his kindness in surrounding me with so many like-minded brothers in Christ. I marvel that 20 men from age 16 to 60-something would be willing to make a 10-hour drive to spend 3 days worshiping God. Little could I have imagined such a fellowship a few years ago, which heightens all the more my anticipation for how God might use the seeds sown last week in the lives of our church.

Here is a sampling of the encouragement we received last week from some of the brothers who went from our church.

13 Testimonies of Grace and Thanksgiving



Rod Fillinger

The highlight was not the content of the conference itself, but how our church went together to T4G. Seven of the eight elders, plus Jonathan Matías, were able to travel a day early and spend the day together in prayer, devotions, and planning for how to better encourage and equip the congregation to proclaim the gospel and serve with boldness and joy.

The second day we were joined by 10 others, plus one elder's son and an Icelandic Viking (OBC's missionary Gunnar Ingi Gunnarsson). To have this large a group from a local church the size of OBC is a testimony to God's grace. To see men committed to learning, growing and serving together moved me to praise God for his mercy on OBC and me. To see so many brothers from years gone by and renew our friendships that were formed because we are together for the gospel, is surely like being able to sample a glorious dish as it is prepared while waiting in eager anticipation for the coming feast. The marriage feast of the Lamb will be glorious indeed! The voices raised in song by 12,000 reminded me that no one in Christ is alone, and yet that is but a miniscule ensemble compared to the choir we will join when Christ returns!

My prayer for each of my brothers in our group is that God stirs a "fire in the soul" to live distinctly from the world, as we pursue holiness *together* for the glory of God. May the Holy Spirit grant us a love for God (the first commandment) with a distinct, profound and deep love for our neighbors (the second commandment) beginning with OBC, then Lake Ridge, Eastern PWC, the DMV, the nation, and finally the nations of the world.

Dave Gilson

Going to T4G with no expectations, I left with very high ones for 2020. The opportunity to fellowship with OBC brothers was outstanding. The singing was heavenly and the teaching phenomenal! I walked away with a better understanding of scripture passages I have read more times than I can count, which just fills my soul with joy and a deeper desire to work on becoming more Christ like until he calls me home.

Lance Kim

I am thankful for time I spent in the car with Erik, Jakob, and Gary. I'm glad I got to build my relationship better with them. I stayed in the same room with Jakob and Jon. We would come back from the conference and talk about what spoke to us or discussed certain things the speakers talked about. I'm most thankful for God really speaking to my heart about holiness. Being created in the image and likeness of God we were meant to be holy because He is holy. We have to live what we believe. The words of Ligon Duncan have hauntingly put me in awe of God.

Kaleb Sullivan

This week was an incredible time for serious conviction from the Lord, a wonderful time of building on existing friendships and creating new ones. Sitting under the faithfully taught word of God was incredible. My personal favorites being Ligon Duncan and Kevin DeYoung. And the singing was also powerful. I'm looking forward to 2020.

Joella's Chicken

It was great to meet the guys from Occoquan Bible Church. The second time was twice as nice. While I was greatly flummoxed by the way they occupied the *whole patio* and rearranged all the furniture, I was appeased after I lured one of the younger members with flowing locks to try "Fire in the Da Hole." All attempts to cool the flame of Joella's heat are futile, but the combination of ranch dressing and banana pudding was memorable.

All was well again after his trial by fire. I will look forward to seeing them again in the near future. They said something about 2020. For any other poor soul willing to try the heat, I will have my flaming hot chicken ready for them.

Erik Duncan

It was such a privilege to be invited to spend several days steeped in Scripture and praise with so many strong brothers in Christ. I am so thankful for the fellowship of this local body of believers, and it was an honor to be humbled and challenged by so many thousands of servants of the Way. Last week was, for me, a brief glimpse of what I expect heaven to resemble. I'm still basking in the glow of the goodness of God's grace toward us. As regards the teaching, there was so much that it was a little overwhelming, but I find myself continually returning to the exhortation to love, particularly in the commitment to listen more than I speak.

Gary Kolomichuk

The one thing that really blessed me was the time spent with the brothers together through the week. I really felt like we had gotten to a deeper level of understanding of who we were and how to relate to one another. I was impressed by many of you with what the Lord is doing and has already done in your lives.

It was very encouraging for my heart to be able to spend this time in the Word, under sound doctrine and fantastic corporate worship. Even getting to change an alternator in Beckley WV with my brothers was a joy! Thank you all for taking a time out of your schedule to make room for this. It truly makes a difference.

Dave Ross

[Much of the content was not suitable for mass publication, but this highlight is noted]: "I was living an Old Spice commercial for several days in Louisville." (Let the reader understand, we don't know what this means).

Michael Longerbeam

I found Ligon Duncan's sermon the most compelling and afterwards to sing "Behold Our God" with 12,000 brothers and sisters was absolutely amazing. The bookstore was awesome, and I really enjoyed the time I got to spend with the men that went. Getting to know new people and getting to know some others better. I'm looking forward to T4G 2020!

Ron Comoglio

I am thankful for another opportunity to sit under the teaching on God's Word, but this year especially I am overwhelmed with the need to be holy before our God. I was reminded how our churches, because they are not transformed by God and his Word, are not impacting their surrounding communities as we ought. The following quotes sum up the impact points on me: "Instead of being transformed we think we can train sin like a lion—until it does what lions do! We are committing treason against God Most High." (Matt Chandler)
 "Sanctification is the primary task of pastoral ministry...the goal of the pastor is to make the sheep

more like Christ.” (John MacArthur)

Tom Rosner

I am so thankful that God has brought you brothers into my life. This week was a much needed spiritual recharge and a chance to get to know some of you better. I look forward to walking along side you on the path to sanctification and growing closer in Christ. I am so thankful that God sees value in someone that was as wretched as me and sent His Son to pay the price for that wretchedness.

Ken Sullivan

For me, one of the great moments was the singing after Ligon Duncan’s sermon. Twelve thousand voices lifted up in heart felt worship; the rafters at the Yum Center were shaking. The messages and singing were all great but that was a particularly inspiring moment.

It was great to get to know some of the men of the church better. It was even better to have my son there and to have so many men treat him as an equal and speak into his life. He even spent his own money on books! I am very proud of him.

Jeff Dionise

I enjoyed many moments of clarity sitting under the words of such great teachers. It was powerful to notice how different it is to be present and connected by the Spirit with others in the room as opposed to watching sermons of these men on Youtube—even though I am unrepentant in my Youtube sermon habit.

Being together with the OBC family in such a Christ-focused atmosphere for that period of time was very special indeed. I’m also thankful for the many edifying moments and discussions with brothers I met for the first time near the food trucks, pizza joints, and street corners. The instant bond and love was a profound reminder of how this is about God’s family, a family that transcends earthly understanding. Praise God for Ephesians 1:5: “He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will.”

A Final Word

If there’s any way to sum up Together for the Gospel 2018, it might be this: [Watch Ligon Duncan’s sermon](#) and set your calendar for 2020, when T4G comes again. Until then, fix your eyes on Christ and point others to do the same. Better: *Find a church and within that church a group of brothers or sisters whom you can do life together!* The Christian journey is meant to be shared, and I praise God that I get to share that journey with these brothers for more than 3 days every other April. The local church is God’s plan for discipleship, fellowship, and growth in godliness. I praise God when local churches send their members to events like Together for the Gospel. But all the more, I praise God to be a part of a local church that has men and women who long for the pure milk and meat of God’s Word.

May God strengthen his churches because of Together for the Gospel 2018, and may more lonely Christians find fellowship in local, gospel-centered churches.

Soli Deo Gloria, ds