

# The Playbook

Five Strategic Plays to Restore the Prophetic  
Voice of the Church in America

Carlton C. McLeod

CCMCLEOD  
MINISTRIES  
SOLA SCRIPTURA

Chesapeake, Virginia

First Printing: March 2015

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Published in Chesapeake, Virginia by CCMCLEOD Ministries

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ISBN: 978-1-633184-06-0

Play art by Rodney Wilson

Cover art and typography by Justin Turley

Printed in the United States of America

To Christ my King . . . who saw fit to teach me.  
Anything good in this book is only by Your Grace.

I love you Lord.



# Acknowledgements

To my beautiful wife, Donna, my helpmeet for life: thank you for loving me and supporting me. I'm still amazed at your beauty, grace, and love for me. You are stuck with me woman! ☺

To my children: Dori, Aryanna, and Jonathan, what does daddy want for you more than anything else? That's right, to love Christ with all your heart and to serve Him. Daddy loves those babies!

To my family: my mother, Sandra Frazier... "For the nine months you carried me, NO CHARGE!" I'm so glad you raised and prayed for this "momma's boy." I love you. To my dad who's with the Lord, Deacon Ernest Frazier III...miss you terribly daddy. Can't wait to see you again. To my father, Johnny McLeod, love you sir. To my brother-in-law and sister, Emmanuel and Kimberly Fields, you mean the world to me.

To my pastors and mentors who've taught me, trained me, and put up with me over the years: B. Courtney McBath, Ricky E. Carr, and John E. Maddox...thank you. I've always wanted you all to be proud of me.

To our church leaders: Pastors Dennis (Rev. James Evans!) Meeks, Bobby (Bdub) White, Jamal (Period!) Hill and Rodney (LaForge) Wilson...to Elders Sam Moore, Rod Vonner, Wilson Rose and Randall Anderson...to the Ministers and to all the Diaconate and men of our church...BROTHERHOOD!

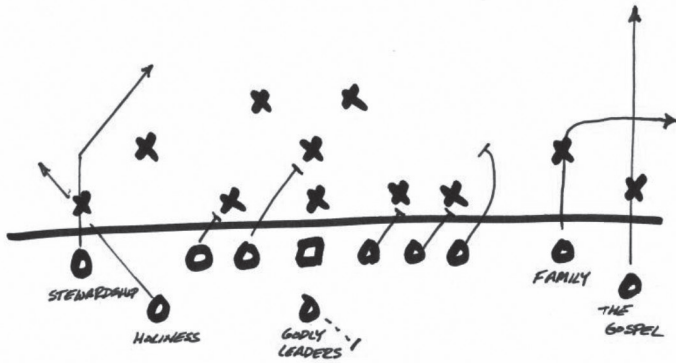
To all of our valiant ladies and "Titus 2" church mothers, if y'all had not been on my side...where-ith would I be!?!? ☺

## Acknowledgements

To the editing team for this book, I'm eternally grateful for your tireless efforts. Thank you so much.

To our entire church: words simply cannot express the honor I feel to serve you. I love you all so very much. Thank you all for your prayers, faithfulness, love for the Word, and heartfelt service to our King. May Christ alone be glorified in our church!

# KINGDOM OF DARKNESS



Note to self:  
Strengthen your  
offensive lineament:  
A.K.A. Biblical Warfare!

THE ARMY OF  
THE LORD!





## Words from a Mentor

**F**or as long as I can remember, Carlton McLeod has been on the cutting edge, doing anything and everything to rescue the souls of the young and disciple the young at heart. Trust me, edgy is not a new position for Carlton. He has at all times and in every way been willing to buck the system, defy the odds and resist the norms and status quo in order to promote change.

The book you hold in your hand is yet another tribute to this young man's commitment to find ways to rescue the lost and enlighten the believer to the plan of the Father to bring us into His purpose and free us from the deceptive schemes of the enemy. In his first book, *Jesus is Enough*, he re-established the fundamental truths of the faith and helped us recover the definitions of biblical salvation and godly living. *The Playbook* takes us a step further. Set in the context of athletic conquest, we begin to see how Satan plots to destroy the influence of the Church and paralyze our potential to reach those in darkness. *The Playbook* sets forth the strategies needed to recover men and fathers, restore families and bring the Church back from impotency to power.

Be prepared to be challenged, angered, and encouraged all at the same time. Carlton pulls no punches and I need to tell you that unless you plan on "getting in the game," *The Playbook* is not for you! However, if you are a believer who believes we can be more than just a shell of what once was, more than just prosperity seekers, more than just

“teenage Christians” who want the benefits but can’t pay the price...this is the book you have been waiting for.

Ultimately, the goal of the book is to lay out a biblical plan for moving the church back to Scripture in some key areas. When we return to biblical patterns, not man made preferences, we will release the power of the Holy Spirit through the Church like never before.

Thank you Carlton for the courage to write what most would not and the humility to do it with so much love!

B. Courtney McBath  
Senior Pastor  
Calvary Revival Church  
Norfolk, Virginia

## Words from a Friend

What kept Carlton up late at night writing this book? It is the health and welfare of the church of Jesus Christ. Carlton loves God's church. He sees the household of God in ruins and cannot bear to see her walls broken down. He longs for a glorious church clothed in the beauty of her savior and in her right mind and he cannot tolerate conditions where people are not being healed. *The Playbook* identifies the ailments of the church in our day and directs us where to find the cure.

What Carlton does in *The Playbook* reminds me of Isaiah as he weeps for his people. They are so sick that they cannot even see their own maladies so God sends them a prophet because they need help from heaven. Carlton sees the church “overrun by pragmatism, postmodernism, relativism, carnality and misconceptions about love.” Like Judah in the days of Isaiah, the people would rather continue with business as usual when they should be repenting. Isaiah asks, “what ails you now?” (Isaiah 22:1). This is equivalent to asking “What’s up with you?” “Are you serious?” “What is the matter with you?”

Carlton feels the urgency of the sickness of the church in America and deals with what is actually ailing the modern church. She is like the people of Judah in the days of Isaiah who had created a culture of laughing it off, going with the flow. “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die!” (Isaiah 22:13). Isaiah marvels, “Can’t you see what is going on?

Don't you realize how foolish it is to go your own way?" Isaiah speaks to a people who have lived in the "valley of vision," yet have fixed their eyes on the wrong things. While there are times to rejoice, Judah was rejoicing when she should have been mourning. Carlton knows what Isaiah knew: the options set before the church are either to be healed from worldliness and set free, or to continue suffering the rot of disease and captivity.

Isaiah did not simply drop the bombs of truth and go back to the safety of his house. He led the way. He put on sackcloth in his mourning for the people, but God took him beyond sackcloth. He commanded him to walk naked and barefoot in order to illustrate the nakedness of the people (Isaiah 20:2). God uses Isaiah, through a gripping, dramatic, and very personal illustration to summarize God's warning about the folly of trusting in Egypt. He argues with Judah saying, "do not go down to Egypt for advice, or for horses." It is Isaiah's clothing – and the lack of it – that serves as an illustration to tell Judah to trust in God alone lest they be stripped bare. By humbling himself and going naked for three years, Isaiah became a spectacle of trusting in the world. Isaiah warns those who trust in the well-worn thinking of the world and what state they will be in if they do not turn to the Word of God alone. This same theme runs through *The Playbook*—trust the word of God alone and do not look to worldly sources for advice and help.

You should read this book because Carlton McLeod exposes some of the most pressing problems that afflict the modern church. It is a gift from the Lord when physicians find the wound, but it is even more blessed when they also understand the reason for the wound. Like any compassionate doctor, Carlton does not stop there, for he carefully administers the various medicines for the healing.

Over and over, *The Playbook* pictures a shepherd before the sheep, with the Sword of the Spirit in one hand and the shepherd's crook in the other. With the humble precision of a brain surgeon, he wields the sword, cutting away the cancers. With the tenderness of a shepherd, he patiently seeks and saves the sheep who were hurt and frightened and driven away (Ezekiel 34).

I have seen Carlton in action and I can tell you that he is a unique admixture of prophet, comforter, teacher, counselor and encourager. Why does he wear these many hats? Simply for the restoration of love, repentance, the Gospel, holiness, the family, stewardship, biblical church leadership and a Christian worldview.

This book is not the result of Carlton's creative thinking. It is not the result of a mere individual's personal vision for the church. He has an aversion to thinking that way. Something has happened to Carlton, such that he does not care about his own vision, but rather God's vision communicated through His inerrant, sufficient Word. This book has arisen out of constant wrestling with the Word of God and how it applies to the situations he has personally faced as a pastor. Its points are extracted from Scripture alone, and have been applied to real life.

This book is full of Scripture and is thus no self-help book. Instead, it is a book dedicated to the proposition that man cannot help himself by himself, and that all men and women need the Word of God more than anything else. It is a testimony that the most powerful force at work in the world today is the Word of God.

I recommend three ways to study *The Playbook*. First, pastors should consider taking their congregations on a ten-week journey through this book. This book would be helpful for any church on the path of reformation. Second, you could use this book like your own personal training conference. Each chapter is applicable for the individual who is serious about the only institution the Lord Jesus Christ established. Third, perhaps you should study it with a small group of friends and read the Scriptures and wrestle with the implications. I cannot imagine how anyone could read this book and not come out a different person.

I am confident that this book will be used of the Lord to repair walls, heal wounds and bind up the broken hearted. This book is a labor of love for the church of Jesus Christ, straight from the heart of a pastor who loves both that church and her King.

Scott Brown  
Elder, Hope Baptist Church  
The National Center for Family-Integrated Churches  
Wake Forest, North Carolina



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# Preface

*For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. —Romans 12:3*

## **“*The Playbook?*” Isn’t That Title a Bit Presumptuous?**

**W**ell I hope not! By *playbook*, I simply mean a strategy, and prayerfully, a biblical Christ-honoring one. My goal is to help the body of Christ recover and reform the church in America to be more in line with Scripture in some critical areas. Yes, *The Playbook* sounds a bit like I think I know it all; I surely do not! However, I am confident that anyone who reads this book with a mind focused on the Scriptures and some knowledge of current cultural mores will most likely understand what I am trying to say.

Paul wrote, “An athlete is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.” (2 Ti 2:5) He also wrote, “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I discipline my body

and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.” (1 Co 9:24–27) My desire is to encourage the church to “compete according to the rules.” In other words, we must get back to *God’s Playbook*: Holy Scripture! My goal is to exhort a vigorous and self-controlled “running” according to God’s mandates in key places.

In keeping with the athletic metaphors, this book can rightfully be called a playbook to the extent that it:

- Lines up with the precepts, principles, and patterns of Scripture
- Motivates you to run hard towards Christ
- Calls “plays” that move you towards discipline and holiness

In other words, besides being a catchy title, *The Playbook* implies the setting forth of a scriptural plan...a set of biblical solutions to what ails us. I pray you take this book in that spirit. This is not about doing things exactly like we do. It also is not about increasing attendance and offerings or building a bigger building. This is about a solid return to the anchor of Scripture in key areas; areas that are right in the heart of enemy territory. Trust me. . .if you go in, you will take enemy flak. Nevertheless, this book is about “running plays” that move us towards faithfulness to Christ and His Word.

Dear reader, our church is no better than any other. We are fallible, mistake prone sinners saved only by grace. In fact, much of what is written in this book we are still working on! So I pray you are blessed and encouraged to “run the plays” Christ has commanded for His holy church, and may this book, in some small way, assist in that.

Carlton C. McLeod  
June, 2014

# Introduction

*Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter! —Isaiah 5:20*

**W**hat in the world happened to the church? Where is her clarion call for righteousness? Where is her authority? Where is her courage to speak boldly into the critical issues of our day? Where is her faith that the Word of God will not return empty? “For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.” (Isa 55:10–11)

*I submit, dear reader, that the church has lost her prophetic voice.*

We are at the point now where we can hardly discern the impact of righteousness on the nation. As I write, over 53 million babies have been aborted in the United States of America since 1973.<sup>1</sup> States are enthusiastically voting for gay “marriage” as easily as viewers vote for their favorite American Idol. Humanism and her first cousin, Paganism, seem to reign supreme. Government schools indoctrinate over 90 percent of American children to embrace perversity, evolution, ungodly

sexuality, and immodest dress. Television and radio are as raunchy as ever, and even Christian music and entertainment seem to have this love affair with the world.

Consider this: There are about 300,000 churches in America; 300,000 army outposts for Christ, the King and Ruler of the universe; 300,000 groups of elders who are boldly declaring God's Words, right? How in the world can 300,000 churches in a country of 30 million be doing this badly? Has God abandoned us? I don't think He has. Perhaps, we have abandoned Him.

## **Ah, the Good Old Days**

There was a day where one could count on God's holy church to speak what thus says the Lord. Sure, it may not have been popular, may not have been accepted, and may have even produced animosity in the hearts of the hearer...but the church spoke the Words of the Master nevertheless. That reality, in large part, has lessened considerably. Overrun by pragmatism, postmodernism, relativism, carnality, and misconceptions about love, the modern church has lost both her nerve and her faith in a God who still saves to the uttermost!

Strong words, I know. However, those words come from a pastor (me) who participated in this nightmare as well. I began my church in 1997 thinking that the more I could identify with the culture and make Christ attractive, the more people would get saved. How wrong-headed I was. My motives were good; my doctrine was pretty good too, I think; my orthopraxy...not so much. In minimizing Scriptural models, I minimized Scripture. In minimizing Scripture, I tended to cherry pick verses that pleased my hearers:

*I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. (2 Ti 4:1-5)*

I intuitively knew that people would be turned off by any mention of wrath, sin, or judgment. Little did I realize that by doing this I made the call to come to Christ's grace more circumstantial (life's problems) and less about the forgiveness of personal sin. I was never extreme on the "Gospel-lite" side; I always preached the text in context as best I could. Yet, I did that with a view towards pleasing my hearers and lessened the prophetic voice in our church. I truly repent for that.

Somewhere around 2004-2005, my eyes began to open. Having a few years under my belt, I had seen enough sin overrun the lives of people who were supposed to be born again that it shook some assumptions about ministry I had allowed to form. I had seen "Christian" husbands leave their wives for other women; "Christian" wives do the same for other men; "Christian" couples flat out refuse to obey Scripture so their marriages would be healed; children who had made a confession of faith totally abandon Christ and His church and turn to paganism; an embracing of homosexuality as normative in the minds of many; continual self-inflicted money problems by people hearing God's commands on money over and over; pastors running after every new leadership theory; and the message of grace trampled on Sunday after Sunday by many who walked our aisles and signed our decision cards but who demonstrated no long term consistent desire to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which [they] had been called." (Eph 4:1) What in the world?

## **Jesus is Enough!**

I began to discover that Jesus is enough; that He is the source of all joy and comfort, that He alone saves, and that His Word is given for His own glory. I began to see that the only way to turn things around was to run back to God's Word. I began to see Scripture as *sufficient*, and I realized that the further the church moves away from God's mandates, society would follow and the worse things would become. I began to see God's Law as the foundation for civil government and ethics. I began to see God's precepts for governing family as the only way to reformation. I finally saw that the church does not have the right to invent itself. The creator of the church has already done that! This mindset started a redemptive and reformative journey for our little church, one that has transformed our families and church from the inside out.

## What We Mean by “Prophetic”

It is important to establish that by *prophetic*, I do not mean *fore-telling*. This is not a book about the unexpected check “thou shalt receive next Tuesday.” The thrust of this book is about encouraging *forth-telling*, declaring God’s Word (His precepts, principles, and patterns) in every area of life and lovingly obeying them. This book is about understanding the signs of the times (Mt 16:3). This book is about seeing God’s Word as *sufficient*; it is about applying Scripture; it is about waking up to the fact that the more we get away from the Word, the more devastating the results. It is about encouraging the church to declare what God says and do what God says!

In a blog post I wrote on our website several years ago, I noted that based upon the lives of the Bible prophets like Samuel, Elijah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Paul, John, and of course THE Prophet, Christ Himself, a pattern emerges. It seems to me that they:

1. Were **Called** by God
2. Cried out during times of **Compromise**
3. **Confronted** more than Comforted
4. Were **Criticized** by current authority
5. Were **Cared** for by God
6. Had a **Cross** of suffering to bear
7. **Cast** a vision of obedience

In His love and mercy, God often sent a prophet to warn His people and encourage them to turn back from evil. The primary message of the prophet was along the lines of, “Repent! Turn back to God! Wake up before disaster comes upon you! Open your eyes! Look and see! Obey God! Trust not in chariots! Forget not His commands and precepts!” Here are a few Scriptures illustrating the point:

*If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (2 Ch 7:14)*

*Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness. But rebels and sinners shall be broken together, and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed. (Isa 1:27–28)*



*Run to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, look and take note! Search her squares to see if you can find a man, one who does justice and seeks truth, that I may pardon her. Though they say, "As the LORD lives," yet they swear falsely. O LORD, do not your eyes look for truth? You have struck them down, but they felt no anguish; you have consumed them, but they refused to take correction. They have made their faces harder than rock; they have refused to repent. (Jer 5:1–3)*

*Therefore say to the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord GOD: Repent and turn away from your idols, and turn away your faces from all your abominations. (Eze 14:6)*

*In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Mt 3:1–2)*

*From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Mt 4:17)*

*Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. (Ac 3:17–21)*

*The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead. (Ac 17:30–31)*

*I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. (Re 2:4–5)*

*So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. (Re 3:16–19)*

The goal of this book is the same. It is to say, in love, to America and American churches... **turn back! Repent!** Just as John the Baptist made straight the paths of the Lord, our desire is to help pave the way for a return to Christ and His commandments in family and church life, and also to inspire courage in churches to not just pray for kings and those in authority, but to boldly speak to them as well. This is a clear mission of the prophet (cf. 2 Sa 12:1-13; Mt 14:1-5). Society has steadily pushed any righteous, Moral Law-declaring voices to the sidelines by calling them outdated, hateful, and judgmental. The predominant narrative seems to indicate that God's Word has no place in our politics, ethics, education, economics, and judicial systems. This must be news to God, the creator of all those things! Biblically, the prophet spoke to them all.

In a nutshell, this book is about *Reclaiming the Gospel Message, Reestablishing Holiness, Reforming the Family, Readyng the Church through Stewardship, and Reestablishing Trust in Church Leadership* (the Five R's). It is also about building a *Biblical Worldview* in all the major areas of life. It is about addressing sins biblically with the prayer that God would save individuals, families, and indeed our beloved nation from darkness. **Ultimately, it's about exalting Christ our King in everything!**

He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. (Col 1:13–18)

Of course, this book is one church's journey. I recognize that many who read this are not there yet. I am not saying that I speak with some kind of church-wide authority; far from it. I acknowledge our sin and need for a Savior. I just want to throw our hard-earned perspective into the mix. I also know that some of what is written and advocated in this book will clash with popular church thinking. I ask for your grace and love anyway and your forgiveness if this book pushes too far. My desire isn't to be controversial; it is to simply be honest with Scripture. I believe "what thus says the Lord" must make a fervent, loving return if the ship is to be righted. We are also encouraged because over the last several years, we have met many churches and pastors on a similar journey. In that vein, I cannot help but acknowledge here at the outset the men (and books, films, and tools) that have greatly formed my prophetic thinking and helped me see a bit clearer. You'll find a list of these materials at the end of the book.

## Two Essentials!

I'd also like to say here at the beginning, that this book is focused on the "doing" areas...things we need to actually change and carry out practically. **However**, let it be clear that we can do nothing without the power and anointing of our God. There will be no revival without an outpouring of the Spirit of God. There will be no lasting transformation unless God Himself anoints our efforts. Woven into this process must be deep, passionate prayer and a fervent desire for the Holy Spirit's presence and activity! Indeed, if the *Five R's* and building a *Biblical Worldview* are the "practical plays" that we must call and run, then consistent, heartfelt prayer must be the field we play upon, and the anointing of God's Spirit must be the very uniform we wear! To miss these pieces is to totally miss everything. Imagine preaching without the Spirit or trying to reform family without His power or attempting to apply worldview without an intimate walk with Him. No way!

Precious reader, God is up to something! I believe that something is nothing short of a real, honest to goodness reformation. Will we see it in our generation? I'm not sure. But if our Lord carries, I pray it will come. Let it be so, Lord Jesus.