

► GEORGE BARNA

# ► Revolution

■ BARNA 



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# ➤ DAVID AND MICHAEL

THE SUN WAS ALREADY heating up the morning air, drying the dew on the clipped grass at the sixth hole of the Winston Estates Country Club golf course. Two men in their mid-thirties were reveling in the beauty of the day and the pure enjoyment of playing the sport they loved. For one of them, this was usually the highlight of the week.

With his head down and his eyes focused on the ball, David slowly swung his two-wood back and forth behind the tiny white sphere nestled on the tee. He then took a full swing and launched the puckered ball a good 250 yards down the middle of the fairway. Grinning with competitive confidence, he turned to his companion and challenged him. “Beat that, Mr. Long Ball!”

Michael grinned and brushed past his friend, jammed a gold-plated tee into the turf, and placed his ball atop the tiny holder. Taking a few moments to get lined up and ready, he sprang into his swing, smacking the ball as hard as he could. Both men stood silent for a few seconds, watching as the miniscule white speck sliced through the air, getting smaller

and smaller before it hit the ground and rolled to a stop just a few feet from David's ball—a few feet *past* it.

Looking David in the eye, Michael pursed his lips and quietly replied, “Challenge accepted. Mission accomplished.” He playfully shoved David out of his path as they retreated to the edge of the fairway to retrieve their golf bags. Both men laughed as they shouldered their bags and trekked across the manicured lawn toward their next swing.

The duo had known each other for more than a decade, initially meeting at a church barbecue. There were many similarities in their lives: each had two daughters (who were roughly the same age), each was the CEO of a mid-sized corporation experiencing solid growth, each got married to a loving and supportive wife soon after graduating from college, and both were born-again Christians who had eliminated church life from their busy schedules, albeit with very different subsequent paths.

Initially they took identical steps of disengagement. Driven out of their longtime church by boredom and the inability to serve in ways that made use of their considerable skills and knowledge, each man spent some time exploring other churches. After months of honest effort, neither found a ministry that was sufficiently stimulating and having an impact on the surrounding community. David, entrepreneurial to a fault, decided to develop his own regimen of spiritual practices and activities in order to retain a vibrant spiritual life. Michael, disheartened by his unfulfilled quest, chose to call a truce with God and simply get on with life, sans church.

The businessmen unexpectedly reconnected some time later at a business function. Upon discovering their similar frustrations in trying to find a satisfying spiritual home, they sought an opportunity to get together and continue their conversation. That task revealed that the only overlapping gap in their schedules was Sunday mornings. And thus the “Church on the Green,” as they jokingly referred to their biweekly rendezvous, was born.

David and Michael thought of themselves as “deeply spiritual” people. Their irregular attendance at church services—each attended on occasion with their families, who remained more or less regulars at a nearby church—failed to dampen their enthusiasm for God. They believed that the Bible is God’s true and reliable Word for life. They each gave money generously to causes they felt were trustworthy and significantly helped people. They prayed before meals and had shared a number of stories with each other about how pastors and other Christians had chastised them for their failure to be involved in church life.

Although both men thought of themselves as Christians and were considered by those who knew them best to be ethical and decent human beings, their spiritual trajectories were far from identical.

“Look at those mountains over there,” David entreated his friend as they marched toward their next spot on the fairway. “They are absolutely stunning, don’t you think?” He stopped for a moment and wistfully stared at the evergreen-covered landmass rising high above the course. “Awesome,” he exclaimed loudly, hurrying to catch up with his deter-

mined compatriot. “Every time I see them my batteries get recharged. God’s handiwork gets to me every time. Aren’t they something?” Michael grunted a sign of agreement but seemed more intent upon adding up their scores through the first half-dozen holes. His indifference did not deter David.

“Hey, remember I was telling you a couple of weeks ago about that short-term missions trip I signed up our family for, the one in Central America scheduled for this fall? Well, I called the lady running the event and talked to her about the needs of the people we’d be serving down there. She had all kinds of great ideas, and I decided to see if I could get the prayer group at work to fund a pallet of clothes we could send in advance of our arrival.” David was talking faster now, excited about the project he was describing. “It doesn’t cost that much, and it’d make a huge difference in their lives, especially the kids down there. I wanted to give the others at work a chance to participate in it, so we’re pooling some money to cover the costs. I’ve got a couple of people supervising the purchasing and shipping. You want in on this?”

Michael glanced at his longtime friend, shook his head with a grin, and said, “Yup, that’s you, Mr. You-Got-Problems-I-Got-Solutions. Sure, why not, put me down for whatever you think makes sense. You still slinging hash in the serving line down at the homeless shelter every week?”

David nodded his affirmation and added, “It’s part of my someday-to-be-ex-CEO social reentry plan. I want to be sure that when the board fires me I have alternatives lined up.”

The duo laughed at David’s self-effacing comment before he continued. “By the way, Michael, remind me to give

you a book I have in the car that I've been saving for you. It's been really helpful to me, and I thought about you when I read it. It's about biblical principles on leadership. It challenged me, so I know it'll be a challenge to you."

Again, both men playfully slapped at each other before Michael drew a four-iron from his bag, tossed the case on the ground at his partner's feet, and lightly threw down the gauntlet as well. "Now, tell me, you don't honestly think you're gonna take me on this hole, do you?"

Two minutes later, after hitting their approach shots, the pair strode toward the green to get in their final strokes on the hole. En route, David picked up the conversation.

"You read anything revealing in the Bible lately?"

Michael glanced at his partner and sighed. "Man, with the merger and that big board meeting coming up, I've been lucky to eat, much less read the Book. How about you?"

David's face took on a ponderous look. "Oh, you know how it is, there's so much. I think this past week the big insight for me was in Romans 11, the part that says we have nothing to lose by living in flagrant opposition to the world. It can strip us of our stuff, but it can never remove God's anointing and blessings. We can only lose His favor willfully—by choosing to turn our back on God and His Kingdom and pursuing other outcomes besides those He calls us to. I guess I felt a new sense of release to passionately seek holiness amidst the opposition of the world, remembering that I can lose only if I abandon my focus on God. It's also affected my relationship with Bill, that guy in shipping whom I befriended after his wife and kids left him. He really needs

6 Jesus, but he's been hurt by the church before, so I've been trying to take things slowly with him. As always," he summarized, "God seems to know just what I need when I need it, and studying Romans has been so helpful for me."

Michael acknowledged the importance of David's words but seemed distracted. Challenged by David, the younger of the two believers admitted, "You know, I focus on my faith as much as I can, but it's a struggle, you know that. All the pressures—the office, home, community responsibilities, my health—man, I marvel that you find time to squeeze in some Bible and all the outreach stuff you do. No matter what I've said about you publicly, you're really a pretty decent guy."

David mockingly smacked his peer across the head, disturbing the perfect alignment of his hair. "You meathead, your faith needs to be a priority, not an add-on. That's what you never seem to get. It's not about trying to shoehorn God into your packed schedule; it's about building your schedule around Him. That's a whole different perspective, my man, a whole different perspective."

Michael appeared to be reflecting on those words when David changed the subject. "Hey, I almost forgot. The wife wanted me to invite you and your clan over next week to celebrate Jenny's birthday. We're having friends over, but you're welcome, too. During one of our family prayer times last week, Joelle felt as if the Lord wanted us to have you guys join the festivities. Must be a sign from the Lord that He still loves you, you unremorseful backslider." David jumped back just as Michael teasingly swung his club at the taller man's midsection.

“Birthday party?” yelled Michael in mock astonishment. “That’s something the heathens do. How the mighty have fallen, O holy one of God. But sure. Free food and drink? Count us in.” He looked over the fairway, took a deep breath of the clean morning air, and flashed a toothy grin at his buddy. “Now, get ready to pay homage to the true king of the fairway. This baby’s rollin’ to center cup. Move over, amateur, and take notes on how it’s done.”



You probably know people like David and Michael. You might even be like one of them. David, you see, is a Revolutionary Christian. His life reflects the very ideals and principles that characterized the life and purpose of Jesus Christ and that advance the Kingdom of God—despite the fact that David rarely attends church services. He is typical of a new breed of disciples of Jesus Christ. They are not willing to play religious games and aren’t interested in being part of a religious community that is not intentionally and aggressively advancing God’s Kingdom. They are people who want more of God—much more—in their lives. And they are doing whatever it takes to get it.

Michael, for all his good qualities and wonderful intentions, is a “backsliding” Christian—a believer who is losing touch with God, the Bible, the community of faith, and his spiritual responsibilities. That’s easy to do in our society: so many distractions and alternatives confront us every day, it’s miraculous that anyone even remembers God. But Michael’s

frustration with life can ultimately be traced to his willingness to become a spiritual victim rather than a spiritual warrior. He loves God, has prayed that Jesus Christ would save him from his sins, and believes many biblical doctrines. But Michael's life is more about living for Michael than it is about living for God.

The United States is home to an increasing number of Revolutionaries. These people are devout followers of Jesus Christ who are serious about their faith, who are constantly worshipping and interacting with God, and whose lives are centered on their belief in Christ. Some of them are aligned with a congregational church, but many of them are not. The key to understanding Revolutionaries is not what church they attend, or even if they attend. Instead, it's their complete dedication to being thoroughly Christian by viewing every moment of life through a spiritual lens and making every decision in light of biblical principles. These are individuals who are determined to glorify God every day through every thought, word, and deed in their lives.

This book is about the new breed of Christian Revolutionaries emerging in America and the spiritual Revolution they are bringing with them.