

roaring lambs

a gentle plan to
radically change
your world

Bob Briner

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Roaring Lambs

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Requests for information should be addressed to:

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*For Rob, Leigh, and Lynn
and especially for Marty
who inspire me to attempt good things*

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—RAB Dallas, Texas

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the roaring lambs voice test

Take the following test by answering each statement yes or no, then check your score at the end.

1. I have attended a school board meeting within the last year.
2. I have as many close friends outside the church as within.
3. I own at least one original piece of art.
4. In the last year I have written a letter of praise to a network or sponsor of a television program.
5. I support decent movies by attending wholesome ones and avoiding unwholesome ones.
6. I consider careers in the arts, journalism, literature, film, and television to be as important for the kingdom as pastoral ministry, or foreign missions.
7. I have written at least one letter to the editor of my local newspaper in the last year.
8. I have read at least one book on the New York Times Bestseller List in the past year.
9. I am active in the civic affairs of my community.
10. I have talked with at least one non-Christian about my relationship with Christ and what it means to be His follower

If you answered yes to:

- 8–10 A bona fide Roaring Lamb!
- 5–7 Watch out, they're starting to listen.
- 2–4 Mouth open, no sound.
- 0–1 B-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a

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foreword

Bob Briner was a good friend of mine, and I consider him one of my mentors. The philosophy of *Roaring Lambs* is one I have made my own for a long time. I have tried to convey to people that we can live out our faith much more powerfully if we would talk less and live more.

Imagine a world full of world-class entertainers, movie directors, screenwriters, Broadway actors, journalists, and painters, all of whom have a passionate devotion to Christ. What's more, think of those people being recognized and respected in their professional worlds and in the broader culture, and the opportunities they would have to shout the good news of God's grace with the power of their lives, without a word being spoken. It would impact our culture more dramatically than we could imagine.

Roaring Lambs is a wake-up call from Bob to the church that he loved so dearly. It is a call from a man who lived the book's premise far beyond anyone's comprehension, and who wished passionately for more people to take God's call to shape the culture from within; to be salt and light—illuminating, flavoring, and preserving our culture's creative community with the good news of God's grace and redemption.

Roaring Lambs is as powerful today as it was groundbreaking in its first year of publication. Bob's fear that the church had abdicated its role as a force to shape modern culture is being realized more fully by the day. And yet Bob did not wish that the church would shrink from its place in culture. Instead, he challenged committed believers to run headlong into the culture with excellence, integrity, and

conviction. He challenges us still to not just shape culture, but to earn the right to roar in a community that has been ostracized from much of the church for far too long.

I miss Bob. And yet I know his legacy lives on in the hearts and actions of people who impact our culture by being a part of it: bands in clubs, singers on the radio, actors, directors, and journalists who pursue their craft with excellence—all giving credit to God’s gifts and adopting the charge of St. Francis of Assisi, to “preach the Gospel at all times, and, if necessary, use words.”

—*Michael W. Smith*

preface

The Shah of Iran had summoned me to meet with him during his international tennis tournament at the sprawling Imperial Country Club on the outskirts of Tehran. As I stood beside the U.S. ambassador awaiting the imminent arrival of the Shah and the Empress, one question continually came to mind: “What am I doing here?”

The same question occurred to me as I was flying over on Air Iran, one of the world’s most luxurious airlines in the pre-Ayatollah days. Mike Wallace of *60 Minutes* was on the flight on his way to interview the Shah, and we chatted about tennis, but mostly I kept pondering the question, “What am I doing here?”

This same question had presented itself often in the past. It came as I stood on the sidelines at Shea Stadium as a part of the Miami Dolphins’ front office staff before our game with the New York Jets. As I sat in the Royal Box at Wimbledon, it came to mind again. The same question arose as I rode with Akio Morita, the legendary founder of Sony, in his limousine through the streets of Tokyo. When the U.S. ambassador to Australia sent his plane to Sydney to fly a small group of us to the embassy in Canberra, I asked myself that question. And it certainly floated in and out of my mind when tennis great Jack Kramer and I entered the magnificent suite atop Caesars Palace in Las Vegas to negotiate with the hard men who ran the gambling empire. “What am I doing here?” “Why am I here?”

Naturally, everyone asks this question from time to time, but coming as I did from humble beginnings—the product of a modest public school system and two very small colleges, it seemed

totally preposterous that I should be flying all over the world, hobnobbing with the rich and famous, unless there was something more to life than just fate and chance. For me, the question “What am I doing here?” was more complex and urgent because of one fact. I am a Christian. I am committed to the cause of Christ. I want to serve Him. So what am I doing here? What am I doing on this jet to Paris where I will oversee television production for the great bicycle race, the Tour de France? Why am I doing what I do instead of pastoring a church or training missionaries?

As career opportunities took me from coaching six-man football at a tiny high school on the plains of Kansas to some of the most powerful positions in international sports and sports television, I found myself much better prepared to succeed both professionally and socially than I was prepared to succeed as an effective Christian. Even trying to live a life that integrated the Bible with all I was doing, I found myself progressing much more rapidly professionally and socially than spiritually—particularly in doing Christianity, in fulfilling the commands of Christ, in being salt in the world. As I look back it is easy to understand why this was so. Both in business and social settings, I had many mentors and role models, many patterns to follow. Many people were there to teach me and help me. On the other hand, the more I progressed in my sports business career, the more isolated and alone I felt as a Christian. Spiritually, I was a meek and lowly lamb in a world full of lions. The *real* Christians were people like my pastor, people working full-time for Campus Crusade, Youth for Christ, or Wheaton College, the countless missionaries sent out by my church, Billy Graham, Charles Stanley, Jerry Falwell, James Dobson. These were the ones changing the world. The best I could hope for was to support them in prayer and money.

At least that’s what I had been taught.

The wonderful people who had attracted me to a very small, very conservative church in Dallas, Texas, and who introduced me to the marvelous reality of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ seemed to be both intimidated by and skeptical about one of their own venturing out into the world of big-time professional sports. This just didn't square with their previous experiences. The emphasis in my church was on personal piety and separation from the world. The Miami Dolphins and network television seemed light years away from the small sanctuary in South Dallas. As I searched for help in combining Christian living with my world of professional sports and television, it didn't come from my church or denomination. And in fairness to this great group of believers, I have not found much help in this area from any of the other traditional evangelical groups.

At two small Christian colleges affiliated with the same denomination as that of my home church, I spent four wonderful years, received a high-quality education, and was further grounded in my commitment to the Christian faith. I made many wonderful friends and met a lovely young woman who became my wife. That, by itself, is a tremendous contribution, but in my opinion, my preparation to go out into the real world and live my faith effectively was lacking. Already planning on a career in sports management, I felt I was a sort of second-class campus citizen. My classmates who were preparing for the pulpit ministry or missionary service were the ones who were treated as if they would be doing the real work of the church. The rest of us were the supporting cast.

Almost nothing in my church or collegiate experiences presented possibilities for a dynamic, involved Christian life outside the professional ministry. If you were called to "full-time Christian service," there were very clear paths to follow. If not, you were

pretty much on your own. You heard about being salt and light, but no one told you how to do it, other than to get involved in a good local church.

I have since learned that my experiences are far from unique. I have met countless Christian lay men and women who also feel as if their professional careers are to be set aside in that category as “secular,” while their faith is relegated to the church. “Professional” Christians in full-time service do the real ministry of the church, while we follow along, not really sure what we are doing here.

At first, I was somewhat relieved to learn I wasn’t the only one to feel as if I had blown it by not going into full-time Christian service, but then I began to feel even worse. What a shame that so many of us feel sort of in a fog between our faith and our careers. I am convinced that most Christians have no idea about the possibilities of being lambs that roar—of being followers of God who know how to fully integrate their commitment to Christ into their daily lives. Maybe that’s why so many areas of modern life so clearly lack the preserving salt of the Gospel.

My agent, Sealy Yates, provides yet another example of how the church has somehow missed the mark. A leading literary and entertainment attorney in Southern California, Sealy grew up in rural Southern Baptist churches in West Texas. He heard and responded to the clear, beautiful call of the Gospel and went on to attend Baylor University, which at that time was one of the country’s leading Christian institutions of higher education. After graduating from Baylor he went on to get a law degree at UCLA.

Here was Sealy’s situation: He was a strongly committed Christian, was able to attend a major university where God’s Word was honored, became the first member of his family to obtain a college degree, had earned a law degree from a prestigious law

school, had married the girl of his dreams, had entered into a promising law practice, had a new baby boy, was teaching a Sunday school class in a Bible-believing church, and was extremely miserable! It would seem he had it all, but, in Sealy's mind, if what he had was all there was, it was far from enough.

In all those years in Southern Baptist churches, in four years at Baylor, in attending and working in a great Los Angeles area church, no one had ever told Sealy how he could make the dynamic of the Gospel reach into all areas of his life. Once he decided the professional ministry was not his calling, he pretty much resigned himself to being a compartmentalized Christian, an idea that seemed to be supported by the church. His profession was in one box, his life for Christ in the church in another. For Sealy, this type of Christian life was frustrating and discouraging.

Through God's grace, Sealy was not left in his misery. A small poster on the church bulletin board caught his eye. It said, "Come! Learn how to share your faith and live the abundant life Christ promised." With some skepticism but also with hope and excitement, he and his wife Susan attended these meetings sponsored by Campus Crusade for Christ, and for the first time he was told how he could live a fully integrated life, could make his profession as much a part of his service to God as his church activities, could obey the scriptural admonition to be salt in the world—could become a roaring lamb!

Sealy Yates now heads a successful law firm and literary agency. He serves both Christian and non-Christian clients but represents them all through a practice based on Christian principles. The contracts drawn by his firm cite scriptural imperatives. The opportunities to witness for Christ abound. The opportunities to help others proclaim the Gospel through their talents are there in great numbers.

In a profession not blessed these days with a sterling reputation, Sealy in many ways personifies what it means to be a roaring lamb. He will not single-handedly change the legal profession, but he will be an influence for good with all those he contacts. The leaders of the American Bar Association may never even know about him, but many will know more about his Lord because of the way he practices law. He is obeying Christ's command to be salt in the world. He shows on a daily basis, in the rough and tumble of an inherently contentious profession, that Christ is real and relevant, that His plan works. Anyone who has been represented by Sealy, or anyone who has opposed him in negotiation or litigation can testify to the fact that he is no namby-pamby. He is a strong, tough advocate and thoroughly professional. The difference is that his practice conforms not only to the rules of the California Bar but also, and more particularly, to the rules contained in God's Word.

Through all those years Sealy Yates grew up in the church, attended college and graduate school, was married, became a father, and was out in his profession before ever hearing anything practical and enabling about being salt in the world. It was pretty much the same for me. Plus, once I left the expected career path of college teaching and coaching to become a professional sports executive, I felt cut off, isolated and alone as a Christian.

I was taught how to be a lamb, but I was never taught to roar.

I'm writing this book because I think it's time for more lambs to roar. It's time for believers to confidently carry their faith with them into the marketplace so that our very culture feels the difference. I'm writing to parents and ministry professionals with the prayerful hope that they will begin more intensely and systematically to teach and model the reality that every one of us is called to be a minister in our own corner of the world. I am writing with

the hope that the dichotomy between professional Christians and Christians in the professions will be greatly lessened. I am writing with the hope that every reader will better understand how to carry out the scriptural admonition to be salt in a world that so desperately needs that preservative. And I am writing with the hope that Christian young people will choose careers and professions that will place them in the “culture shaping” venues of our world.

I don't pretend to have all the answers, but I'm beginning to learn from my own mistakes as well as the well-intentioned errors of my friends in the church. During the almost thirty years I have spent in professional football, professional basketball, professional tennis, and television production I have produced thousands of hours of television programming and written for such publications as the *New York Times*, *Sports Illustrated*, and the *Miami Herald*, to list only a few. My travels have taken me all over the globe, and I have developed wonderful friendships with the wealthy and well-known (being neither myself). Unfortunately, this book will recount more of opportunities missed than of opportunities taken. But I hope that even that will help you to take better advantage of your own daily opportunities to obey Christ's command to be salt and light in the world. I hope it will help you answer the question “What am I doing here?” with steadfast assurance. My prayer is that this book will be the beginning of a transformation in your own life that will help you become a roaring lamb.

God bless you.

—Bob Briner, Dallas, Texas 1992

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introduction

don't try this alone

You will see almost immediately that this is a book about doing, about action, about making things happen. It is about retaking lost territory, about winning, about conquest. But it is also a book in which I try very hard to base everything I say on biblical principles. And one of the most overriding and compelling principles of the Bible is the truth that in our own strength we can do nothing. Unless we have waited on the Lord in prayer and received His direction and blessing, what we do will be ineffective and futile.

As he usually does, author and pastor Chuck Swindoll has a good word for us in this regard. In a compelling sermon on Joshua and the walls of Jericho, Pastor Swindoll emphasizes the axiom “Consecration precedes conquest.” Before we can win, we must have committed our course of action to God. To consecrate means to set apart. We must put our own desires, goals, motives, and plans aside in favor of God’s direction. And to know His direction for us, we must devote ourselves to prayer and to the Word.

A good and wise friend recently pointed out to me the paramount role prayer played in the miraculous successes of the early church as recorded in the book of Acts. The key passage, one we often move past very quickly, is “These with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer” (Acts 1:14^{NAS}). As my friend said, the first thing the disciples did after Christ ascended into heaven was to devote themselves to prayer—not evangelism, healing, or preaching, but prayer. This became their pattern. Just consider all the references to prayer in Acts:

1:24 Then they prayed

- 2:42 They devoted themselves to . . . prayer
4:24 . . . raised their voices together in prayer
4:31 After they prayed
6:4 . . . will give our attention to prayer
7:59 Stephen prayed . . .
8:15 . . . they prayed for them
9:11 . . . for he is praying
10:9 Peter went up on the roof to pray
10:30 . . . I was in my house praying
12:5 . . . but the church was earnestly praying
12:12 . . . many people had gathered and were praying
13:3 So after they had fasted and prayed
14:23 . . . and, with prayer and fasting, committed them
to the Lord
16:13 . . . to find a place of prayer
16:16 . . . going to the place of prayer
16:25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying
20:36 . . . he knelt down with all of them and prayed
28:8 . . . after prayer

Prayer dominates the book of Acts!

So before *you* act, you must pray. The only way we can really change the world is to immerse our wills and desires so completely in the mind of Christ that we become extensions of His ministry to mankind. The best way to do that is to pray.

If our ambition is political (get the right party in office), social (create more compassionate structures), moral (clean up a sin-sick culture), or even “spiritual” (build bigger and more attractive churches and programs), we will surely fail. Instead, our ambition to become roaring lambs is to more completely serve and obey our Lord who has asked us to be salt and light. If we are not in a right relationship to Him, our own ambitions will get in the way.

So begin this journey on your knees. I will be asking you (as I continue to ask myself) to break out of the comfortable world you have created and stride boldly into the coliseum. To roar back at the lions, not in a fight to devour and destroy them, but with the voice of Christ who brings good news to all.

Don't try this alone. You'll never make it. You can become a roaring lamb only through the power and strength of the Master. May He be with you as you roar out into the darkness, bringing the light of the Gospel.

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Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, “Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace and all my people are to submit to your orders.”

Genesis 41:39–40

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Clear Your Throats, It's Time to Roar

Let's face it. Despite the fact that roughly 80 percent of Americans claim to believe in Jesus as the Son of God, we're not doing so hot. Collectively, as the church of Jesus Christ—the church against which the gates of hell shall not prevail—we're struggling.

I can almost hear the chorus of defense. What do you mean we're struggling! Church attendance is at its highest in decades. Look at all the big, active churches we've built. Consider the tremendous contributions of Christian television—networks that span the globe with the message of the Gospel. And what about the church-based antiabortion victories? Why, we've gotten so strong that the president listens to us on this and other issues.

The chorus continues.

Look at all the truly Christian colleges and universities that are turning out graduates who go into the world with the Gospel. And what about the Christian publishing industry? Why, almost every community has a Christian bookstore where people can buy Bibles and helpful Christian literature.

Okay, Bob, things might not be perfect, but don't blame the church.

Well, things are not even close to being perfect and to a certain extent, I do blame the church. For despite all the fancy buildings, sophisticated programs, and highly visible presence, it is my contention that the church is almost a nonentity when it comes to shaping culture. In the arts, entertainment, media, education, and other culture-shaping venues of our country, the church has abdicated its role as salt and light.

Culturally, we are lambs. Meek, lowly, easily dismissed cuddly creatures that are fun to watch but never a threat to the status quo.

It's time for those lambs to roar.

Remember the movie *Network*? There was a poignant scene where the character played by Peter Finch encourages viewers of his nightly newscast to open their windows and shout out to no one in particular, "I'm mad as h—, and I'm not going to take it anymore."

Well, I'm more sad than mad, but as the corporate body of the Prince of Peace and King of Kings, we don't have to take it anymore.

We don't need to take the rap that we're just a bunch of do-gooders who need to be placated now and then by highly publicized visits with the president or an occasional feature story in the local newspaper on one of our many conventions and crusades.

We don't need to take the palliatives from our leaders who tell us, "Don't expect too much" when we decide to get involved in positive, constructive ways in our communities.

We don't have to be satisfied with a half-page religion section once a week when in reality religion is so much more than an add-on feature to life.

We don't have to sit back and wring our hands at the way our culture is going down the drain.

We don't have to be content with a position on the sidelines when our Lord Himself has assigned us a starting role on the winning team.

My point is really quite simple. Look around you. Can you honestly say that Christian influence is felt in Hollywood? That a Christian presence is evident in the major art galleries and museums of our land? That when you turn on the television you are aware of an underlying foundation of Judeo-Christian values in that medium? That as you pick up the morning newspaper you see objective (not favorable, just objective) treatment of religion in your community? That when you browse through the best-sellers at the airport bookstores you will find even one novel written by an active, church-going, born-again Christian?

Do you honestly believe that our big churches and highly visible Christian leaders have brought about a movement that is taken seriously in this country?

We feel we are making a difference because we are so important to ourselves. We have created a phenomenal subculture with our own media, entertainment, educational system, and political hierarchy so that we have the sense that we're doing a lot. But what we've really done is create a ghetto that is easily dismissed by the rest of society. If you don't believe me, try this: Go into your office or place of business and ask how many of your colleagues understand the doctrine of inerrancy or know what the apostle Paul meant with the word *kephale* or whether the rapture will come before, after, or during the tribulation. Sound silly? Perhaps, but those are the issues we Christians are spending so much time and energy on. These things may be important to us (or at least to our leaders), but they aren't important to the rest of the world. Real people with real problems—your neighbors and mine—just don't care about the things we argue and fight

about. What's more, they see us arguing and fighting and decide they don't need what we have.

I'm afraid many in the world view us as a flock of lambs grazing in the safe pastures surrounding our churches that have been designed to blend right in with the neighborhood landscape. We're good neighbors. We look like everyone else. And except for Sunday morning, we follow the same patterns of behavior as those who have little or no interest in religion. Our lives are divided into sections labeled religious and secular, and neither category seems to affect the other. Consequently, our religious views are not taken very seriously.

I have a number of friends in network television, the business community, newspaper journalism, and the arts, and I've learned two things about them. First, they have little to do with Christianity, but second, they are consumed by their pursuit of success. What this has told me is that if I want to reach them with the Gospel, the worst thing I could do is invite them to church or "witness" to them during a break in a board meeting. On the other hand, if I want to point them toward the Savior, I need to make sure my professional behavior is stellar. I need to make the best presentations, close the most successful deals, deliver the greatest product I possibly can. To them, my work is a reflection of who I am. It makes no difference to them if I'm a Christian, Buddhist, or atheist, as long as I'm competent. These people are not anti-Christian. They haven't blacklisted me from their business meetings or their social events once they learned I was a Christian. If anything, they are the most spiritually hungry people I've ever met, but unless the church encourages our involvement in these arenas, my friends in television will most likely remain hungry and the Gospel will continue to be absent from their boardrooms and brainstorming sessions.

We need to reclaim the territory, not in a triumphalistic sense but out of a strong conviction that this is where we belong. Our

churches are growing. Our colleges are full. Subscriptions and sales are up at our magazine- and book-publishing companies. And our broadcast media continue to bring our own music and teaching into our homes. In short, our subculture is healthy. *It* doesn't need more attention. It's the *world* that needs help.

It's time for the lambs to roar.

What I'm calling for is a radically different way of thinking about our world. Instead of running from it, we need to rush into it. And instead of just hanging around the fringes of our culture, we need to be right smack dab in the middle of it.

Why not believe that one day the most critically acclaimed director in Hollywood could be an active Christian layman in his church? Why not hope that the Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting could go to a Christian journalist on staff at a major daily newspaper? Is it really too much of a stretch to think that a major exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art could feature the works of an artist on staff at one of our fine Christian colleges? Am I out of my mind to suggest that your son or daughter could be the principle dancer for the Joffrey Ballet Company, leading a weekly Bible study for other dancers in what was once considered a profession that was morally bankrupt?

I don't think so. In fact, I believe it has been the pessimistic vision of the church that has prevented generations of young people from venturing out into the culture-shaping professions of our world. I've always wondered why we could be so quick to sacrifice our children to become missionaries but stand in the way of their becoming broadcast journalists, film and television actors, photographers, and painters. It's almost as if we believe God is strong enough to take care of his own only as long as they stay within the safety of the Christian ghetto. And yet, the Bible gives us countless examples of people like Joseph, who not only served

as an advisor to the “president” of his day but also used that position to influence the entire land.

Can’t we do that today? Shouldn’t we be encouraging and equipping our sons and daughters to become Josephs too?

A friend of mine told me about a conversation he had with a member of his church. The two were talking about their frustration over their church’s inability to have any impact on their community. It was a relatively small church—about 150 members—in an upscale suburban Midwest city. Included in the congregation were a leading surgeon, several business executives, a department head of a prestigious public school, as well as a number of lawyers, teachers, and sales reps. But, my friend observed, we’re just sort of treading water. Things are getting worse in our community, families are breaking up, our kids aren’t even accepting our faith, and we seem to waste so much time fighting with each other.

My friend then recalled the response of his fellow church member: “Don’t you know, Jim, this is as good as it gets.”

That church, like so many others, is filled with lambs who’ve lost their voice. Not only have they failed to penetrate their community with their values, they have come to accept their failure as inevitable.

I believe it’s not only possible but absolutely necessary for Christians and Christian values to become a vital element in the overall moral and cultural discourse of our nation. Without our strategic involvement in the culture-shaping arenas of art, entertainment, the media, education, and the like, this nation simply cannot be the great and glorious society it once was. If we are to be obedient to our Lord’s call to go into all the world, we will begin reentering the fields that we have fled.

Are you ready to roar?