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THE SWORD AND TRUMPET monthly magazine is a faith ministry directed by a Board representing various constituencies of the Mennonite Church. It is committed to defending, proclaiming, and promoting the whole Gospel of our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. It emphasizes neglected truth and contends for "the faith which was once delivered to the saints." This publication exposes and opposes doctrinal error which compromises that faith and leads to apostasy.

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bury him with his fathers (Gen. 49:29-32). Joseph was embalmed and put in a coffin and buried in Egypt (Gen. 50:26). Three hundred years later, his bones (not ashes) were brought to Canaan as he commanded before his death. God buried Moses (Deut. 34:5, 6). David was buried (1 Kings 2:10); also there are many others listed in the Bible. The manner in which a body is disposed of must be important: witness the conversation that took place between Michael the archangel and Satan, about the body of Moses (Jude 9). Jesus Christ is our example in life and death. He prophesied about His burial after an unnamed woman poured precious ointment upon His head: "She hath done what she could; she is come aforehand to anoint my body to its burying" (Mark 14:8). His burial was in harmony with the purpose of God: "and they made his grave with the wicked and with the rich in his death" (Isaiah 53:9). Burial is placing the body in the ground and letting nature do its work as an act of God. Cremation is an act of man.

4. Burial signifies the Christian's hope of a resurrection. The reader may read 1 Corinthians 15:40-44, 51-57. Historically, cremation has been associated with the efforts of unbelievers in their denial of the resurrection of the body. Resurrection means something has been made alive. Jesus said, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (John 12:23). As a seed must die in planting to bring forth new life, so our bodies, as seed, must be put into the ground, as an act of faith, to bring forth the spiritual body. Paul says, "It is sown a natural body, and it is raised a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:44). God told Adam after he sinned, "Out of it [the ground] wast thou taken, for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return" (Gen. 3:19). To burn the remains by cremation, which is the seed, intervenes God's design of the resurrection. Job's faith in a future resurrection said, "And though after my skin worms [not fire] destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God" (19:26). This is the faith testimonial of every believer of his union with the Lord in death, burial, and resurrection.

5. Burial illustrates the biblical view

of divine ownership. This is found in 1 Corinthians 6:15-20. We are members of Christ by creation and redemption. Paul reminds us in this passage in v. 19, "Ye are not your own." Therefore our body must be treated as sacred, which means if cremation was wrong for Christ, it is wrong for us. In 1886, the Roman Catholic Church banned the practice of cremation for two reasons: One, its association with the efforts of unbelievers in their denial of the bodily resurrection; and two, it shows irreverence for the body as the temple of the Holy Spirit. One Catholic mortician I spoke with said, "Today they frown on cremation, but some allow it after a traditional funeral." The Bible says that in the last days, there will be the absence of "natural affection" (2 Tim. 3:3) in the family, such as between parents and children. I have learned that many of those who have their family members cremated have little feelings toward the person who has passed on. There is no memorial service planned, no proper burial to mark a place to visit. When the cremation is finished and the family is notified, some do not pick up the urn; thus it has to be discarded. Let us be aware that cremation does not compare to those who were killed in fires and explosions or those who were burned at the stake for their faith. Just as God created Adam from the dust of the ground, He can restore the resurrected body of all people. To be voluntarily cremated is comparable to committing suicide. It is committing an outrage and is desecrating the body entrusted to him by God.

In conclusion to this subject let us keep in mind that man is God's fourth tabernacle on earth. The first tabernacle was in the wilderness. The second was the temple built by King Solomon. The third is Christ, when He lived here on earth, "The word [Jesus] was made flesh, and dwelt [tabernacled] among us" (John 1:14), and number four was man, "Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you" (1 Cor. 6:19). God didn't want either of these destroyed. So "whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord" (Rom. 14:8). We must treat our body as the Lord's. ■

Person of the Month:

Yost H. Miller
(1918-2009)



To have known Brother Yost is to be reminded that our Creator does not need to reuse the pattern when He makes people. Yost made a significant and unique contribution in the body of believers as he offered himself a living sacrifice, acceptable to God, a reasonable service.

Yost was living proof that a teachable spirit, a healthy curiosity, and a keen intellect are assets to learning that cannot be rivaled inside the walls of a classroom.

Before his mind began to diminish because of aging, he often contributed to this periodical [*Calvary Messenger*]. His writing reflected an awareness of our Anabaptist heritage. He was also deeply concerned that we do not lose sight of the centrality of Christ and the authority of the Word. He was keenly aware of the human tendency for worldward drift.

Brother Yost had an unassuming personality. When he spoke publicly, it was not a demonstration of eloquence or oratory. It was rather the evidence of the person that God had made of him. He had a good command of words to express himself.

His was an unusual combination that included the heart of an undershepherd, theologian, philosopher, and scholar. His preaching reflected an active interest in prophecy. He often referred to the second coming of Christ. Even after his mentality became limited, he would frequently mention the Lord's soon coming.

Brother Yost was not only pastoral and intellectual; he also had manual skills as a builder. He especially enjoyed engineering and draftsman aspects of the building trade. Local landmarks of his engineering skills include the Walnut Creek Mennonite Church sanctuary.

While Yost was not a man without struggles, we believe to follow him as he followed Christ is a worthy ideal for all who knew him.

—David L. Miller, Partridge, Kansas

[This tribute was assigned and is approved by Calvary Publication Board.]

—Taken from *Calvary Messenger*

Church at the CROSSROADS

by Steve Gallagher

The “Apostle to the Gentiles” was probably in his sixties when he was arrested for the final time. Nero had just unleashed his bloody persecution of Christians in Rome. As Paul sat in that Roman prison cell awaiting execution, he wrote one final letter to his assistant Timothy. He was in the process of sharing some final instructions to his beloved disciple when a string of prophetic thoughts unexpectedly began to flow into his mind about the Church of the Last Days.

In a sudden change of direction, he wrote, *“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come”* (2 Timothy 3:1).

Such words would naturally cause the student of eschatology to immediately think of the harsh persecution the antichrist will unleash against Christians or perhaps the terrible judgments that will rain down upon earth. But no, that isn’t what concerned Paul at all. His overriding concern for believers was that they would fall away from the faith. He saw the most momentous crisis of the end times being the Great Apostasy. Paul summed up the spirit of this evil movement with the following words: *“For men shall be lovers of their own selves . . .”* (2 Timothy 3:2). In short, Paul saw a form of godliness devoid of the Cross.

The Message of the Cross

In the months leading up to His appointment with Calvary, Jesus began warning His disciples about His impending death. *“The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, . . .”* (Luke 9:22).

Suffer many things? Be rejected? Be killed? How would these simple men respond to this alarming information? While Peter and the other ten recoiled at

the implication of Jesus’ prediction, their devotion to Him had long since been decided. These men would spend the rest of their time on earth laying down their lives for His sake. Judas, on the other hand, wanted no part in such a life and these words only confirmed a resolution that had been growing within him for some time.

The Traitor could not comprehend that the Messiah’s death on the Cross would make a way for people of all ages to be redeemed from the power of sin and enter the kingdom of heaven. There would be only one avenue into the land of glory and it would go straight through Calvary. Because of what was accomplished there by the Messiah, the intricate demands of the Law—which were *Self-dependent*—are not necessary for salvation.

A man only needs to repent of his rebellion to God’s commandments and entrust his life to Christ. The Cross would forever stand as an impenetrable barrier for any who would attempt to enter Heaven through any other means.

Calvary represents God’s great love for mankind—a jealous love, a love that expects reciprocal affection. It was never meant to be a “free pass” to live in disobedience or self-will. It actually meant the exact opposite. Those who decided to follow Jesus would be recognized by direct similarities to His life and death. The life of Judas represents those of all ages who desire the Heaven of Christ without the Cross of Christ.

After warning the Twelve about what would happen in Jerusalem, Jesus gave a small talk that would forevermore delineate the true from the false Christian: *“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me”* (Matthew 16:24). In this succinct

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statement, Jesus offers three requirements for being His follower.

Deny Self

A person cannot and will not follow Christ until he has renounced his allegiance to Self. As long as Self reigns in his heart, as long as he is primarily devoted to Self, he will repeatedly prove himself to be a traitor to Christ's kingdom. The atrociousness of Judas' crime had more to do with the fact that he knew the Saviour intimately and still rejected His authority than it did with his actual betrayal.

It is very interesting that the very people who consider themselves as being vastly superior to a man like Judas are usually the ones who most resemble him spiritually. I say this because, like Judas, pseudo-Christians have never come to grips with their own wickedness, never truly repented of their sins, and thus have never been converted to Christ.

They love to censure people like Judas, Adolph Hitler, or Charles Manson because it strengthens their conviction about their own goodness. This underlying belief in the quality of one's character is the very thing which minimizes sin, avoids examining one's heart, and fends off the conviction of the Holy Spirit. In short, the desire to see oneself favorably is what keeps people from experiencing the kind of true repentance that brings forth a transformed character.

The very ones who are most in need of questioning their faith are tragically the ones who are least likely to do so. False Christians are often those who feel the most eternally secure.

Not only must there be an initial renunciation of Self, but there must be an ongoing rejection of its claims upon the believer's life. But how can a person turn away from the incessant demands that well up from within his own being? Herein lies the essential difference between the true and false convert.

The unconverted churchgoer can initiate certain religious observances into his life, but his best efforts will soon exhaust themselves.

The reason many Christians cringe when they are asked to sacrifice for the sake of others is that nothing has happened within them to compel them to get outside themselves. They see carrying a cross as an uninvited intrusion upon their lives. In their heart of hearts, their true devotion is reserved for the world system that caters to their flesh.

On the other hand, the person who has come to grips with his lost condition and truly has been redeemed lives with an overwhelming sense of gratitude toward his Saviour. Although many see picking up a cross in a negative light, Paul counted it to be a hallmark of true Christianity.

The unavoidable truth is that not everyone who considers himself to be a Christian truly is one. Conversion occurs when the person makes a decision deep within to transfer his allegiance to God's kingdom. It is as if Pilate stands at his heart and says, "Behold the Man! Shall I crucify Christ or the Barabbas of Self dwelling in your bosom?" One or the other must be allowed to live; the other must be put to death. The implications of this decision are eternal.

The fundamental difference between a true and false believer lies in the question of loyalty. Is he devoted to Christ or to himself? When it comes right down to it, is he going to look out for "number one" or will his primary loyalties be to Christ? Will he do his own will or that of God? Will he love Self or will he love the Lord? Being born again means the person is converted from a Self-centered existence to one which is becoming increasingly Christ-centered.

This message is what turned the heart of Judas, because when it came right down to it, he was unwilling to renounce Self and he was unwilling to take up his cross.

The entire life of Jesus was aimed in one direction: the Cross. As much as soothsayers may attempt to paint it in a different light, Scripture offers no illusions to mask the difficult road of Christianity. No matter how rugged and perilous this path may be, true believers will always be found there because, to them, the alternative is unthinkable.

On the other hand, unconverted Christians have no intention of going down that road. Their solution is to simply create another gospel that will allow Self to retain control of their lives. They, too, are on a path, but it is headed in a different direction.

Paul fully understood that there were two separate roads available to those who considered themselves to be Christians. He told the Corinthians, “*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God*” (1 Corinthians 1:18). This declaration established once and for all the difference between the competing mindsets of living for Self or living for Christ.

The very fact that a person shuns the word of the Cross is proof that he does not have the Spirit of God indwelling him. Such people do not want to deny Self; they want to live for Self. They do not want to say *no* to the flesh; they want to say *yes* to it. They do not want to pick up their cross; they want to avoid it.

Those who reject the Cross may have become more knowledgeable about spiritual matters over the years, but it has not translated into a more godly life. They claim to be His followers, but they do not really desire to go where He is going. They are headed in a completely different direction. Where did they get the idea that they could live for Self, disdain the Cross, and still claim to be followers of Christ?

It is clear that they are not being honest with themselves. Their Christianity is outward and has not penetrated their hearts. The painful truth is they are false converts.

Whether or not professing Christians will join themselves to the great falling away predicted by Scripture will be decided by one factor only: have they truly been to Calvary.

The Church stands at the cusp of a monumental fork in the road. Each individual will have to decide for himself how he stands with the Cross. Will he surrender to its demands? Or will he live for Self? Scripture plainly teaches that the majority will deny Christ through their lives. ■

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WHO ARE WE? . . . cont'd.

identify us with Christ. Being a member of a certain church or subscribing to a certain lifestyle does not guarantee that our identity is in Christ.

Our true identity is revealed in the press of life. Mistreatment tests our love and non-resistance. Sacrifice tests our commitment to Christ. The beckoning fad reveals whether our allegiance is to God, or to the world. We would like to think that we wholeheartedly identify with Christ, but what do these tests reveal?

Perhaps of even greater concern is what seems to be a tendency to deliberately identify with the world. There are those among us who portray an admiration for contemporary culture by the use of the world's slang, the imitation of trendy styles of appearance, and an infatuation with crazes like sports or recreation or the latest technology. Even those things which may not be wrong in themselves become sin when we choose to copy them and identify with the world. We join in the worship of its god.

The stones or logs from which Israel's heathen neighbors carved their idols were completely neutral and innocent. But the instant that they became objects of worship to the pagans, they became rivals to Jehovah.

Idolatry was the sin which brought Israel to ruin, and we must learn from Israel's experience. If we are to escape the fate it suffered, we must refuse to worship what the world worships.

My heart cries out to the one who displays his wealth and gadgets; to the one who edges closer and closer to the hairstyles of the world; to the one who hides our distinctive dress—you cannot identify with both God and the world at the same time! You cannot! When you identify with the world you deny God!

Will we live for self, or live for God? Does our heart beat with the songwriter, “Empty of sin and self may I be”?

Who are you? With whom you identify may be more telling than how you identify yourself. ■

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From the Editor's Desk



Paul M. Emerson

GUEST EDITORIAL

Who Are We?

by Timothy J. Myers

Who are we? Why, we are conservative Anabaptists, known as Mennonites. We are Biblicists, a people committed to following Christ no matter the cost. We are Christians who hold the Bible to be inspired, infallible in the original, and the New Testament to be the pattern for the Church. We are born-again people who love all men, are nonconformed to the world, accountable to the brotherhood, and simple in our lifestyle. We are Holy Spirit-filled believers who have answered the call to evangelize the world, to share of our material means to those in need, and to live in holiness.

Does this identify you?

Identity is important. Who we are will control both the decisions and the direction of our lives.

Our sense of identity may spring from many sources. Sometimes we define ourselves in terms of our heritage or our culture. We may categorize ourselves and others in terms of some distinctive Biblical application or by circles of fellowship.

While there is nothing wrong with such

classifications (they are almost inevitable), they should be secondary, not primary. As Christians, our primary identity needs to be that we are God's spiritual children. If we are satisfied to be identified solely by other criteria, we will miss what it means to be a true Christian.

That may seem so trite that it is almost meaningless. However, an incorrect source of identity is a genuine threat to our spiritual life. To feel satisfied with ourselves simply because we have conformed to certain man-made criteria, even though good and proper, invites complacency and deadens us to the voice of God.

Our true identity does not consist of who we think we are, but of God's perfect perception of us.

Do we truly identify with Christ? Or do we look at ourselves as part of Group A, or as someone who practices B, or as someone who believes C? To simply be viewed as astute businessmen, or as good neighbors, or as having nice families, does not in itself

(continued on page 4)

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS



A Devotional Commentary



by David L. Burkholder

OCTOBER 4, 2009

“All Men Seek Thee”

Mark 1:32-45

Our lessons for October, taken from the Gospel of Mark, continue the general theme of the Covenant Community and focus on Jesus' ministry and the response of various individuals to His call to become part of the community of faith. In our brief passage for today we get a succinct view of the scope of Jesus' ministry. He healed sickness, cast out demons and preached, all enhanced and empowered by His constant communion with His heavenly Father. We note, too, in this passage the rapid sequence of events which characterized the ministry of Jesus. He was constantly on the move.

The first 31 verses of Mark 1 are full of movement and significant events in the beginning ministry of Jesus. He was baptized, tempted, began preaching, called disciples, cast out a demon, and raised the sick. These acts all helped set the stage for an expanded ministry of healing there in Capernaum.

At the close of the sabbath, when it was now legitimate to carry burdens, many diseased and demon-possessed individuals were brought to Jesus for healing. The crowds had observed His compassion and healing touch and were now bringing others to be recipients of His mercy. And, true to His character, He healed them all. Jesus' prohibition against the demons speaking His fame may have been partly because it was premature in His plan or, more likely, because He did not want demons to witness to His divine person and power.

After an intense and fulfilling day, Jesus cut short His night of rest to spend time in solitude and prayer to the Father. But even there He was not safe from the reach of the people. Obviously the crowds had returned in the morning, so Simon and the other disciples set out to search for Him. Jesus' response to their statement that “all men seek for thee” did not reflect a lack of concern for needs at Capernaum, but showed rather the reach of His compassion for those in regions beyond Capernaum.

So Jesus moved on throughout Galilee, preaching in the synagogues and casting out demons. One day a leper approached Him with a plea for healing. Leprosy, in its various forms, was an incurable and fatal disease. Those afflicted were outcasts from society, living in squalor, without friends, without hope. Somehow this man had heard of Jesus and had faith in His healing power. Note that his request to Jesus was not in doubt of His ability, only of His willingness.

Jesus then did the unthinkable. He reached out and touched this leprous man, but in the same breath pronounced him clean. Imagine the joy which filled this heretofore hopeless man. Jesus then sent him away to go to the priest for verification of his cleansing and to fulfill the requirements of the Levitical Law. Jesus also told the man not to publish his healing. But he could not keep quiet and as a result Jesus' ministry was somewhat curtailed. He was forced to remain outside the city instead of entering to continue His teaching. Nevertheless, the crowds still sought Him out for His message and for healing. Jesus had established Himself as a great teacher and healer, both of hearts and of bodies.

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For thought and discussion

1. As you read the Gospel of Mark in preparing these lessons, be sure to note the compassion of Jesus for those in need, and the constant movement of the narrative.
2. Jesus ministered to both spiritual and physical needs. In what ways can the church today best replicate those ministries? Discuss.
3. There are likely several reasons why Jesus forbade the healed leper to proclaim his healing. Think through the various implications of the man's disobedience.
4. If Jesus felt it necessary to spend much time in secret prayer to the Father, how much more necessary for us. How can we improve our prayer life? Discuss.
5. Are there times when we may hinder the work of Jesus by being too vocal? Discuss.

Help for teachers

Lesson emphasis: The power of Jesus' touch to change lives—physically and spiritually.

Key verse: verse 41

OCTOBER 11, 2009

Jesus: Son of God

Mark 5:1-13, 18-20

In the chapters between last Sunday's lesson and today's lesson, Jesus continued His ministry of teaching and healing after returning again to Capernaum. In Chapter 4 we see Jesus teaching by the seaside to the multitudes who gathered to hear Him. We notice that "He taught them many things by parables." At the end of Chapter 4 He sent the multitudes away and entered a ship to cross over the sea to Gadara, the setting for His encounter with the demoniac in today's lesson.

This demoniac was in a pitiable state, outcast, completely under the control of the demons, unable to help himself, causing injury to himself, uncontrolled and uncon-

trollable. How this man ended up in such a deplorable condition is impossible to determine. However, he did possess enough rational being to understand his helpless condition and to plead for deliverance.

While the power of evil is fully demonstrated in this poor man, so also is the power of God. And here we have adequate proof for all time of the supreme power of God to overcome even the most intense and encompassing power of the evil one. That demonstration should give hope to even the most helpless and doubting soul. God's power is supreme.

It is a bit difficult to always discern exactly who is speaking in this situation. Something, or Someone, prompted the man to run to Jesus and fall at His feet. Was it then the man, fearful of demoniac retribution (see Mark 9:25, 26; Luke 9:42), or the evil spirit, fearing divine judgment, who identified Jesus as the Son of God and pled not to be tormented? Both are possible. We note that Jesus had already commanded the evil spirit(s) to come out of the man. It appears there was more than one evil spirit indwelling the man (see verses 12 and 13).

Again, in verse 10, it seems as though the man himself, or perhaps the spirit(s) speaking through the man, is asking for the spirits to not be sent away. They requested permission to enter the nearby herd of swine, and Jesus granted their request. The result was that the entire herd of two thousand swine "ran violently down a steep place into the sea" and were drowned.

Verses 14-17 portray the attitude of the townspeople to this dramatic event. It seems as though the financial loss of the swine was of greater concern than the wholeness brought to the formerly possessed man. They asked Jesus to leave. And Jesus, never imposing Himself where not wanted, took steps to depart. How many blessings were lost to these people by denying Jesus a welcome would be impossible to determine, but certainly there were others in that place in need of Jesus' healing touch.

As Jesus stepped into the boat to take His leave, the now healed demoniac

requested to go with Him. And why not? Where better to be than with his benefactor, by whom he was loved and accepted? But Jesus had other plans for him. Since Jesus was rejected by His fellow countrymen, this man was to be the messenger of good news in his home country, to his own people. The result was that many throughout the region of Decapolis heard his exuberant testimony and marveled at the power of God.

For thought and discussion

1. There are several reasons why this account was included in the gospel narrative. What lessons does it teach us?
2. Demon possession was a stark reality in Jesus' day, and it still is. How does it happen? How is it manifested? How can it be dealt with? Discuss.
3. Do we ever allow financial considerations to thwart the work of Christ? How? Discuss.
4. What was especially pertinent about the healed man being a personal witness to Jesus' healing miracle?
5. There are countries today which forbid Christian missionaries entry. Discuss ways people in these countries can be reached with the saving gospel.

Help for teachers

Lesson emphasis: The ultimate power of God over the evil one and his schemes. And also, the power of personal witness.
Key verses: verses 18-20

OCTOBER 18, 2009

Jesus: Healer of All

Mark 7:24-37

As we continue to follow Jesus' ministry we observe Him constantly on the move, teaching, healing, raising Jairus' daughter to life, feeding the multitude, and seeking solitude for prayer. We also note in the first part of Chapter 7 the beginning of conflict between Jesus and

the religious leaders. He also continued to teach and train His disciples.

In today's text we see Jesus leaving Capernaum and going some 40 miles northwest to the area of Tyre and Sidon, into Gentile territory. Jesus was seeking seclusion to teach the disciples, away from the threatening contacts with the Jewish religious leaders and the pressure of the crowds. But even here His fame had preceded Him and He was sought out for the healing of a demon-possessed girl.

The woman who approached Jesus was a Syrophenician, a Gentile, who had obviously heard of the divine healing power of Jesus. She had a demon-possessed daughter for whom she sought deliverance. Jesus' response was not harsh or unfeeling, but meant to test her faith. This woman was quick of wit and not easily deterred. She readily recognized her secondary status in relation to the Jews but somehow seemed to realize that Jesus' compassion reached beyond His own nation. Jesus responded to her faith by granting healing to her daughter, who was not even present when the encounter took place. When the woman returned home she found her daughter healed. Imagine the additional increase this created in her faith.

As Jesus departed the Tyre and Sidon area, heading again to Galilee, He passed through the area of Decapolis. (See last Sunday's lesson.) Somewhere on His journey He was again confronted by a helpless creature, a deaf and partially dumb man. Here again, those who brought the man to Jesus must have known of His healing power and had faith that He could help this man bound in silence and of limited speech. We note from verse 33 that a crowd was gathered about.

Jesus' actions as He pulled the man aside may seem a bit strange. However, remember that this man could not hear, so Jesus used signs to indicate to the man what He was about to do. He would open his ears and loose his tongue. He looked toward Heaven to indicate to the man from whence his healing would come. Then He spoke: "Be

opened.” And immediately the man was healed and enjoyed clear hearing and unfettered speech.

Again, Jesus charged the observers to “tell no man” what they had seen. Jesus was still seeking private time to further instruct His disciples. Should such a dramatic miracle be noised abroad it would be sure to draw a much larger crowd. Also, Jesus was not yet ready to proclaim Himself the Messiah even though the miracles which He did certainly pointed that way (see Isaiah 35). He may also have been trying to shield Himself from further scrutiny by the scribes and Pharisees who were bent on His destruction.

However, the people would not be stilled. They had seen something beyond human reasoning. They were amazed. They could not keep quiet. They had seen the divine Healer.

For thought and discussion

1. Jesus took time to be away from the crowds and pressures of life. But note how He used His quiet time. He prayed, He ministered to the needs of others, He taught His disciples. How should that instruct us in our use of leisure or “vacation” time?
2. What does Jesus’ encounter with the Syrophenician woman tell us about the scope of His mission?
3. The woman was not deterred in her request by the questioning of Jesus. Do we sometimes give up too soon when seeking God’s favor?
4. Does our praise at times fall short of God’s marvelous works among us? Let this lesson challenge us. How can we be more sensitive? Discuss.
5. In both of these cases someone other than the person in need intervened in their behalf. What does that tell us about our responsibility to those in need around us?

Help for teachers

Lesson emphasis: That God’s power is unlimited in scope and breadth.

Key verses: verses 36b and 37a

OCTOBER 25, 2009

The Cost of Discipleship

Mark 10:17-31

Jesus continued to move around, teaching, healing, casting out demons, and miraculously feeding the crowds that followed Him. Jesus was nearing the end of His earthly ministry. His popularity continued to increase, but so did the opposition from the religious leaders who saw in Him a threat to their position and popularity. He still had many things to teach His disciples regarding His approaching death and the principles of the kingdom He was establishing and of which they would soon be the principal ministers. Today’s text taught them a very foundational principle of that kingdom.

The rich young ruler who came to Jesus was sure of many things, but he had a nagging doubt about his eternal well-being. His request to Jesus reflected his entire philosophy of life. He was a do-er. His question as recorded by Matthew (19:16) was “what *good* thing shall I *do*, that I may have eternal life?” He was fixated on his personal accomplishments and abilities. He needed a strong dose of spiritual reality. And Jesus proceeded to give it to him.

Jesus first challenged the young man with his concept of “goodness,” and at the same time gave him a subtle indication of whom he was actually speaking to. This young man had been a good boy, religiously keeping all the commandments dealing with interpersonal relationships. Jesus immediately saw in this young man great potential for kingdom work. But something stood in the way, and Jesus put His finger on it: the young man’s possessions had a stranglehold on his soul. When challenged to sell his possessions, give the proceeds to the poor, and follow Jesus, he balked. The cost was too great. He valued his possessions above the eternal well-being of his soul. So he walked away from Jesus without the peace which he sought.

The disciples were dumbfounded when Jesus stated: “How difficult for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God.”

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They were thoroughly indoctrinated in the prevailing Jewish philosophy that material wealth was a sure sign of God's blessing. Now Jesus seemingly turned that philosophy on its head. But then Jesus clarified that it was those who put their trust in riches, as the young man who had just walked away from them, who will not enter God's kingdom. In fact, He said, it will be as impossible for them as for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle.

Jesus explained further that salvation, the way to enter God's kingdom, comes not by way of man's effort, it is all of God. It cannot be earned by good works. It is a gift to be accepted. It comes by putting trust in God and in Him alone. This, no doubt, encompassed the lesson Jesus wanted to teach His disciples through this experience.

Peter, never at a loss for words, immediately raised the question of what benefit they would receive for the sacrifices they had made to follow Jesus. They had left home and family and their personal livelihood. They had forsaken all to follow Him. Peter's statement implied, "Now what do we get out of it?"

Jesus' response encompassed the whole of what they had given up to follow Him: homes, family, lands—in abundance, and also the probability of suffering for the sake of the gospel. But then the ultimate reward: "in the world to come, eternal life."

So who was better off, the one who selfishly kept everything for himself, or the one who willingly gave all for the sake of God's kingdom? The answer was clear to Peter, and to us as well.

For thought and discussion

1. Be sure you understand the relationship between salvation and good works. Ephesians 2:8-10; Romans 3:20-24 and Galatians 2:16 will be helpful.
2. Don't we still hold to the philosophy that material wealth is a sign of God's blessing? Is this true? If so, how should we really view wealth and its use? Discuss.
3. Does God ask everyone to give up all to follow Him? What is the underlying principle

that should guide our understanding of God's requirement for discipleship?

4. Have you given up possessions, friends, or relationships to be faithful to God's call in your life? Have you been enriched or impoverished by your sacrifice?
5. German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said: "When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die." Explain. Discuss.

Help for teachers

Lesson emphasis: That we must keep our priorities straight to be qualified to enter God's kingdom.

Key verses: verses 21, 22 ■

Good News for America's Families

by Robert Parr

With job loss, the mortgage crisis, and declining investments, today's families are among those facing the worst of the economic strain. Although it is easy to overlook the benefits of a wavering economy, a sociological perspective demonstrates that America's families may have much to gain as they face the crisis together.

Looking at evidence from both Scripture and society demonstrates that a tough economy reinforces the value of family. Often in Scripture, the destitute who received special treatment were individuals who had no family ties (James 1:27), whereas those with relatives were to be cared for by such (1 Timothy 5:8).

Children may actually be blessed from a harsh economy, because the divorce rate drops due to the high cost of dissolving a union when children are involved.

Young singles may benefit by being compelled to stay home, which not only saves them money on living expenses but also provides accountability as they transition into adulthood. Young adults who reside at home are also more likely to continue attending church. *(continued on page 23)*

Newslines . . .

by Hans Mast

incidents events occurrences facts illustrations episodes committees vignettes proceedings problems
experiences crises adventures transactions meetings tragedies scoops reports conferences happenings
bulletins questions reports affairs dramas encounters personages actions tidings et cetera

Messianic Jew Wins Kosher Case

“JERUSALEM, July 15 (*Compass Direct News*) – For three long years a Jewish believer in Christ struggled to keep her bakery business alive after the Chief Rabbinate of Israel, the country’s highest religious governing body, annulled her *kashrut* (Jewish dietary law) certificate because of her faith. Pnina Conforti, 51, finally gave a sigh of relief when the Israeli Supreme Court on June 29 ruled that her belief in Jesus Christ was unrelated to her eligibility for a *kashrut* certificate. While bakeries and restaurants in Israel are not required to obtain the permit, the loss of one often slows the flow of customers who observe Jewish dietary laws and eventually can destroy a business. Conforti, who describes herself as a Messianic Jew, said that in the last three years her Pnina Pies bakeries in Gan Yavne and Ashdod had lost nearly 70 percent of their customers. ‘We barely survived, but now it’s all behind us,’ she said.”

—Excerpt from “Messianic Jew Wins Supreme Court Battle in Israel” (<http://cli.gs/aUN-NUV>) from *Compass Direct News*

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Christian Radio Station in Kurdistan

The government of the Kurdistan Autonomous Region of Northern Iraq has given permission for a Christian radio station to launch in Erbil (the Kur-

dish capital) and a translator station in Kirkuk. Together, they reach around 3 million people—mostly Kurds and mostly Muslims, though there are Arabs and Yezidis sprinkled in. The new radio station will transmit a lot of Bible in the Kurdish language—a translation work that is ongoing. They are producing a number of serialized radio dramas of Bible stories with large sections of the script quoted from the Scriptures. They are also doing a number of educational programs and social-type programs with examples and counsel from the Bible. This station has been funded by the Joshua Fund, the organization of Joel Rosenberg. It was a bit surprising to me to see the extremely Zionist Joshua Fund funding a radio station in Iraq, but I am nonetheless delighted to see them working with Muslims in addition to Jews.

—Source: *The Joshua Fund blog*

* * * * *

Man Arrested for Threatening Telemarketer

An Ohio man who got angry, threatened to burn the building down, and kill a telemarketer offering extended automobile warranties has been arrested and charged with making terrorist threats.

—Source: *St. Louis Dispatch*

* * * * *

Government Waste Fears Prompt Government Waste

Because of the public pressure to avoid government waste, many sectors of the government have responded by issuing directives to reduce the appearance of government waste, even when it means actually spending more money. The biggest area in which this has been seen is hotels. The government has severely curtailed its conferences and meetings in vacation destinations like Las Vegas and Orlando, because it looks wasteful. In fact, the reason they are often held in those locations to begin with is because of the huge number of hotel rooms available at cut rate prices in off-season and in a down economy. So to project the image of not being wasteful, these conferences are being switched to more expensive—but more business-like—places like St. Louis or Denver.

—Source: *Wall Street Journal*

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Racist Harvard Professor Arrested

A lady in Cambridge, MA, saw two men forcing their way into a neighbor's house, so she called the police reporting a possible burglary. One of the men was Harvard Professor Henry Gates, who happens to be African-American.

When Sgt. James Crowley asked to see his ID to prove that he lived there, Professor Gates began to verbally abuse the officer, shouting "Why, because I'm a black man in America?" and calling him a "racist police officer." According to the police report, when Gates followed the officer onto the porch and "Gates continued to yell at me, accusing me of racial bias and continued to tell me that I had not heard the last of him," Sgt. Crowley arrested him for disorderly conduct.

Gates, through the press, publicly accused Crowley of being racist and

stated the only reason for his arrest was racism. Sgt. Leon Lashley, an African-American officer present during the arrest, supported the arrest "100 percent."

Furthermore, Sgt. Crowley is the instructor of a class entitled "Racial Profiling" at the Lowell Police Academy, having been appointed to teach the class by an African-American Police Commissioner.

Professor Gates and Obama are friends, so when Obama was asked about the incident at a press conference, he replied that "the Cambridge police acted stupidly."

—Source: *Wikipedia*

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Apostle Paul Movie in Syria

"A 77-minute docudrama film that tells the story of Saul of Tarsus has been released in the Middle East. The movie, titled 'Damascus,' was filmed on location in the Syrian capital Damascus and other historic places in the nation. It was produced by Arab Christians, in Arabic [with English subtitles available], with a cast of 20 prominent Arab actors and actresses from Syria.

"The film has been endorsed by President Bashar al-Assad and premiered in Assad's personal theater in Damascus in March. More than 1,100 Syrian political, religious, and business leaders attended the premiere. . . . The film is also known in the region as 'Damascus Is Speaking,' and will be shown and distributed throughout churches in the Middle East and around the world. The Joshua Fund reports that [through its funding] 300,000 copies of the film are currently being produced on DVD for distribution in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Israel. The trailer can be seen on *YouTube*: <http://cli.gs/utuhqp>."

—Excerpt from *Joel News International* 692, 30 June, 2009

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Building a House, Thai Buddhist Style

To give a glimpse into the Buddhist world in Thailand, I'd like to quote from Rosene Yoder, a nanny with Chara Ministries in Chiang Mai: "Our peace and quiet back here in the corner of our *muubaan* [neighborhood] is a thing of the past, I'm afraid. There was a big overgrown lot across the road from us and they've been working on getting it cleared up and are now building a house there.

"After the ground was cleared, the first thing that went up was a shack for the workers to live in as they build. I don't know how many people actually live there because there are some who show up in a truck every morning as well.

"I think there are at least three women working, and they don't just cook and do laundry; they are out digging holes and pouring cement along with the men. Last week one morning there was a lot more activity over there than usual and we were trying to figure out what was going on, and then the monks showed up. They sat at tables (I don't know if they were eating or what they were doing), then one of them got up with a bowl of water and started sprinkling it around on the ground while the rest of them did a bunch of chanting.

"It was fascinating to watch, and didn't so much strike me as being all dark and oppressive as simply empty. Here they were doing all these rituals, getting this house dedicated from the foundation up, all for nothing. It is sad, so sad."

—Source: "Nanny Life #3" by Rosene Yoder
* * * * *

Ralph D. Winter, 1924-2009

Wikipedia writes about Ralph Winter: "Ralph Dana Winter (December 8, 1924–May 20, 2009) was an American missiologist and Presbyterian missionary who became well-known as the advocate for pioneer outreach among unreached people groups. He was the founder of the U. S. Center for World Mission (USCWM), William Carey International University, and the International Society for Frontier Missiology.

"Winter is regarded by many as the most influential missiologist in the latter half of the 20th century, if not the entire century. His groundbreaking 1974 presentation at the Congress for World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland—an event organized by American evangelist Billy Graham—was a watershed moment for global mission. It was during this presentation that Winter shifted global mission strategy from a focus on political boundaries to a focus on distinct people groups. Winter argued that instead of targeting countries, mission agencies needed to target the thousands of people groups worldwide, over half of which have not been reached with the gospel message.

"Billy Graham once wrote: 'Ralph Winter has not only helped promote evangelism among many mission boards around the world, but by his research, training and publishing he has accelerated world evangelization.' Also, Ralph Winter is the architect of the excellent missiology course, *Perspectives*."

Quotable statements made by Ralph:
"You do not evaluate a risk by the probability of success but by the worthiness of the goal."
"Nothing that does not occur daily will ever dominate your life."
"If it is worth doing, it is worth doing poorly rather than not at all."
"You can get a lot done if you don't care who gets the credit."

—Excerpts from "Ralph D. Winter" (<http://cli.gs/QBe75t>) in *Wikipedia*

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Counseling From the Word

Five Advantages of Church-Based Counseling

by Deepak Reju

“God knows me well,” a friend once said to me. “He knew that, apart from the accountability and love that comes from a Christian community, I would not survive in this world.”

God never meant for Christians to live alone. Through the church on earth, therefore, He created a place where Christians could gather for corporate worship, accountability, fellowship, instruction, and godly exhortation. I would even dare say that the fullest expression of our faith cannot occur apart from loving communion with other believers in a local church.

Yet because Christians are often scared to reveal their problems to people they know, they commonly seek out counselors who work in private practices outside their church. Now, many of these counselors are doing good work, and I do believe there is a role for private practice counseling. Yet, I want to argue that there are distinct advantages to doing specialized counseling in the context of one’s local church, and I would even propose that it should be the norm.

Here are five thoughts on counseling in the context of the local church.

Submitting to Those Who Have Watch

First, church-based counseling means submitting to leaders who already have watch over your soul.

If you had a choice between seeing some-

one who knows nothing about you and has no obligation to you outside of counseling, or seeing someone who will give an account to God for how well he has watched over your soul, whom would you choose?

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account (Heb. 13:17).

Counselors counsel, pastors pastor. Counselors help you and send you on your way. But pastors are charged with helping you and staying committed to you for the long haul. Counselors are typically open to your returning to their office if the problem resurfaces. But pastors are constantly in your life, so if the problem comes back they will already be walking alongside you. The counselor will help, care, and love. But the pastor will help, care, love, and will exercise authority over you through the ministry of the Word.

Both pastor and counselor do important work in the kingdom. But the nature of the pastoral relationship includes an ongoing commitment to the members of his local church. Thus, within a church context, the pastor’s task is much greater than the counselor’s.

If you are struggling with a problem, it would not be uncommon to want to see someone who is skilled at counseling. The market for Christian counselors has grown steadily over the last twenty years. And there are many more competent, biblical

counselors available today as compared to twenty years ago. But what if you could go to someone who was both a skilled counselor and also your pastor? What if you could combine both professions into one? Think about someone who was committed to pastoring you and your family for twenty or thirty years, and was readily available to you in your own church. Would you at least give him a try?

Building One Another Up in the Faith

Second, church-based counseling reaffirms our commitment to build one another up in the faith.

One priority laid out in Scripture is the importance of Christians building one another up in the faith.

It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:11-13).

God has given the church pastors and teachers, and part of the work of pastoring includes counseling as well as teaching the members of a church to counsel one another (see also 1 Thess. 5:14). A biblical counselor's work is one part of the overall project building the church toward maturity and attaining the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

In counseling, there is always a temptation to problem-solve and "fix" people's lives. Yet the end goal of biblical counseling is spiritual growth. Pastoral counselors use their gifts to counsel because they want people to grow in greater maturity in Christ.

Extending Our Covenant

Third, church-based counseling is a natural extension of our covenant to one another as members of the same church.

Covenants are important tools in the life of the church. They represent a commitment that members of the same church have to one another. When a church mem-

ber meets a counselor in his church, he is meeting with someone who has *already* made a commitment to live with the member in a Christ-centered way. Biblical counseling should be a natural extension of the covenantal commitment we have made as members of the same church.

Not all churches have a formal covenant. But whether or not they do, all churches have a sense of how they are going to live together, which is what a covenant articulates. At my church, there are several lines in the church covenant that articulate what we want to accomplish in the counseling room and beyond.

"We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

"We will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes the members of a Christian church, we will exercise affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require.

"We will rejoice at each other's happiness, and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows.

"We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life."

On the one hand, every member of our church has generously set aside one individual full-time—me—to help it with the work of fulfilling these promises in areas of special need. Of course, I and the other elders need to work hard at reminding the congregation that all this remains their work too. As I've already mentioned, I as the pastor of counseling am also called to equip the congregation to do this work.

Other Benefits of Belonging to the Same Church

Fourth, there are other benefits for pastoral counselor and counselee to belong to the same church.

Many of the secular counseling paradigms advocate no contact with counseling clients outside of the counseling office. But being in the same church helps because

- It allows the counselor to live as a Christ-like example both inside and outside the counseling setting. The integrity of the counselor's words can be matched with the way he lives and participates in a church. It shows the counselee that the counselor doesn't just "talk the talk" but also "walks the walk."
- It provides the counselor with greater insight into the most important dimension of the counselee's life—his spiritual life.
- It allows the two to serve together in a variety of ministries.
- It allows them to serve each other and pray for each other.
- It allows them to grow together through the same corporate experiences. As they sing, worship, hear the Word preached, pray, study Scripture, carry burdens, care for the community, and exalt God together, they share in the experiences that build them up together in their faith.

Recently, one of our pastors taught from the Book of Philemon, and his thoughtful sermons prompted members to share with me their struggles with forgiveness. What an invaluable opportunity! Both the counselor and the counselee talked about the pastor's sermon and the ways God's Word had shaped us. And we got to do this because of our shared experience on Sunday mornings.

Greater Accountability and Networking Caregiving

Fifth, church-based counseling provides the potential for great accountability of shared problems, as well as the opportunity to know who else in the church can share the care-giving load.

A pastor has a unique opportunity to hear people share their struggles. Often no one else will hear and know the things that a pastor knows. How can a pastor of counseling then use this *privileged* information

well? When there is a church member who is struggling with a problem, a pastor of counseling can serve the individual by connecting him or her with someone else who has already worked through the same problem. A private practice counselor outside the church has no other human resources to draw upon—no one else in the counselee's life who can assist. It all comes down to that counselor's wisdom.

But is there not wisdom in a multitude of counselors (Prov. 14:11; 24:6)? Why not charge the close friends of an individual to play a larger role in counseling and caregiving? Why not bring together those people who share the same problems to encourage one another through their struggles? Let the former alcoholic help the struggling alcoholic; or let the abuse survivor comfort the woman who was recently abused. Let them do this as Christians in a church. Let them do this as brothers and sisters who have a covenantal obligation to one another. Let them do this as those who have received God's comfort, and now desire to show that comfort to others. Let them do this as those who have grown and matured in Christ, and who now desire to help those who are struggling.

What a beautiful picture of the body of Christ—not just the strong helping the weak, but the weak helping one another.

Is Church-Based Counseling for You?

America is full of choices. There are probably a variety of counselors available in your community. But, as I've suggested in this article, there are good reasons why you should consider counseling in your own church. God has made us to live and grow in the context of a church. It is good for us to receive strength and encouragement from that community. And it is wise for us to seek godly counsel from wise members of that community. ■

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Shall He That Contendeth With the Almighty Instruct Him?

by David Finley

In the first book of the Bible we read in Genesis 1:31–2:1, “*And God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.*”

As the sixth day of the creation week began to fade into the evening twilight of the seventh, God considered the work of His hands, from the delicately beautiful petals of the lily to the fin anatomy of the great whales plying the vast ocean depths, from the clouds to the heavens itself. With a deep sense of purpose and satisfaction, His thoughts are summed up with the phrase “behold it was good.” We also agree, “Behold it was good.”

Considering God’s stated satisfaction in His creation, how then do we reconcile the extreme contrast in the picture that faces us today? Today we are confronted by the many bones of both man and beast, which lie buried beneath the soil of a world marked by suffering. Suffering by disease, violence, and predation from birth to death, both man and beast struggle to survive. This pattern has played itself out in a myriad of ways for at least six millennia. The weaker become food for the stronger, from the smallest members of the food chain to the largest of carnivores. Even the large intimidating lion or bear fall prey to the more efficient carnivore, man. As the Apostle Paul stressed in Romans 8:22, “*For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*” Faced with such disturbing examples of dysfunction, and apart from any other explanation for the current conditions, what might we conclude? One might say that the Scripture

text is either inaccurate or corrupted in a way that makes it incorrect, and that which was created on days one through six of the creation week wasn’t really good after all. Another may conclude that it is God Himself who was not good, perhaps even cruel.

Thankfully we do have another explanation—his name is Adam. It is Adam who explains how a world where all is good quickly degenerates into one where good struggles to express itself. In Adam, we identify what went awry so long ago. Genesis 3 records Adam’s fall from grace. Both he and his wife, Eve, partook of the one tree in the garden that was forbidden. Consider God’s charge, “*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*” In time this warning became distant in their memories, and from a motivation which is unexplained, Eve found herself by the forbidden tree in the company of the serpent (Satan). Shortly thereafter, both she and her husband consumed the fruit of disobedience and for the first time felt the sting of guilt and the loss of innocence.

The breach that this decision would make in their relationship with their Creator God became clear as God descended, as was His custom, into the garden in the cool of the day, to fellowship with man. Adam heard the Lord calling, “Adam, where art thou?” Adam knew in his spirit that all was not well between him and his Father. He was now the servant of sin, knowing the fruits of evil as well as of good. It is for this reason that fellowship with Adam and his Creator lay broken alongside the leaves of the forbidden tree, because God is Holy and cannot abide in the presence of sin (1 Peter 1:16).

For this reason we struggle. Fellowship has been broken between us and our thrice Holy God. We have received that Adamic nature successively from one generation to the next, because as Adam yielded his authority to Lucifer and rebelled against his good God, the umbrella of God's protection was shattered, exposing the world and all in it to the harsh reality of a world without God. It is for this reason that the whole of creation groaneth and travaileth. Thorns, heartache, disappointment, and death are all fruits pollinated and grown on the tree of self-will.

In Adam, we discern the roots of suffering in the human family. They are 6,000 years long and terminate in a place where they should never have been allowed to take root: in Eden, the garden of God. What was "original sin" to Adam has become personal sin for all who follow him, because we, too, continue the pattern of disobedience. Just as a stone cast into the water causes ripples to move in ever greater circles outward; in like manner as Adam and Eve cast the boulder of self-will into the lake of time; the ripples continue to move ever outward in larger and larger circles, touching the whole human family as well as the creation itself.

In response to this daily struggle to survive, many animals have adapted (or rather corrupted) their physical anatomy, using the tools God gave them in a world where there was no violence or bloodshed in a way that is both violent and bloody. The lion is 400 pounds of sinewed muscle, teeth, and claw. The spider catches her prey in a web of silk and then uses poisons to paralyze her victim. As I consider these and other acts of predation, I have no difficulty believing these same teeth, muscles, and chemicals had a peaceful purpose in securing vegetable-based food in Eden. For one present-day example, consider the panda bears of China. They are of considerable size, and are strong with formidable teeth, yet they subsist on bamboo; they are vegetarian. I have no trouble believing that all animals, like the panda, could live exclusively as herbivores, eating only plant-based foods.

Consider also Romans 8:20: "*For the crea-*

ture was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope." Hope in what? In Christ, for it is He who has "*made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven*" (Col. 1:20). We also hope, in that we look for "*new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness*" (2 Peter 3:13). This hope was expressed prophetically as God spoke to the serpent: "*I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel*" (Gen. 3:15).

Pause to consider the benevolence of God; it was in the very midst of moral failure that God consoled Eve with the promise of redemption, i.e. that one would come of her seed who would utterly and completely defeat the seed of the serpent. Although the day was yet distant, a son of Eve would come and set aright the terrible wrong that had been committed. That promise found its fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ, "*For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive*" (1 Corinthians 15:22).

In all of this, is God cruel or unjust? Not in the least; were there not two special trees in the Garden, not only the tree of the knowledge of good and evil but also the tree of life? In these two trees our parents were given a choice, one legitimate; for the fruits of the tree of life were pure and free for the taking. Conversely, the other was illegitimate. By choice, Adam willfully opposed his creator God. One may ask, Can God, who is Holy, become guilty because of the actions He allows others to do? The answer is "no," because today, just as with our ancestors, the choice is before us; it is our responsibility to choose to do either that which is good or that which is evil. God cannot be held liable for allowing bad choices to produce bad fruit. God has allowed man the gift of free will; may we use it to His honor and glory. And as only He can, God allows the sufferings of life to work to the benefit of His lambs. God is able, with our cooperation, to bring good from something that

Biblical Worldview: What It Is, and What It Is Not

by John Stonestreet

A worldview is the framework of basic beliefs that we hold, whether we realize it or not, that shapes our view of and for the world. Everyone has a worldview. The question is not **whether** one has a worldview, but **which** worldview one has.

There has been a recent proliferation of camps, conferences, books, and organizations promoting the idea of **biblical worldview**. Whereas the word *worldview* would have in times past elicited a blank stare, many Christians today have at least some familiarity with the concept.

But familiarity can breed contempt. “Biblical worldview” is often thrown around today in a haphazard fashion, and it may no longer be clear what it actually means. Also, biblical worldview may be in danger of dying the death of the “been there, tried that, and we’ve moved on” mentality that is prevalent in so many contemporary program-driven churches and denominations.

This would be tragic for two reasons. First, a biblical worldview is not a means, like a curriculum or a program. It’s an end. Seeing God, others, the world, and ourselves as God sees them is a *telos* (goal or purpose) of the Christian life. Second,

SHALL HE THAT CONTENDETH . . . cont’d.

naturally is *very bad* (Romans 8:28). As Hosea said in Hosea 14:9, “*For the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them.*” ■

—Reprinted with permission from *The Pilgrim Witness*, June 2009.

despite all the **rhetoric** of biblical worldview, it is not necessarily a reality. According to recent studies produced by the Barna Group, only 20% of those claiming to be born again and less than 1% of young adults in America can answer a basic set of theological questions according to the biblical worldview.

Biblical Worldview: What It’s Not

Before looking at what a biblical worldview is, let’s consider what it is **not**.

1) A biblical worldview is not merely holding to Christian morals. Certainly, Christian morals flow from a biblical worldview, but one could hold Christian morals without having the biblical foundations to ground those morals. One can even hold to Christian morals for wrong reasons, including mere tradition, convenience, or a legalistic attempt at God’s approval.

Unfortunately, it is common for students to be taught Christian morals without being taught **why those morals are true**. However, moral values not grounded in truths that transcend one’s context no longer make sense when the context changes. This sort of faith is highly volatile, especially in today’s world of ever-changing contexts.

The Bible grounds morality in God Himself. Because the biblical worldview begins with a Creator, we live in a world that was designed—not a random place with arbitrary rules. Moral norms flow from God’s character, expressed in His design for His creation.

2) A biblical worldview is not just

living life with Bible verses attached. Many Christians only know the Bible in bits and pieces. Verses and chapters are taken out of context to supplement or “Christianize” their life, and biblical narratives are only useful for finding that moral nugget to apply to our lives. In this approach, the Bible is merely a therapeutic tool and never alters one’s orientation to life. These Christians view the Bible through the lens of their existent worldview, rather than having their worldview framed by the Bible.

3) A biblical worldview is not automatic from being “saved.” One can be redeemed and yet not fully think or act like a Christian. The Apostle Paul spoke to believers about taking ideas captive (2 Cor. 10), not being taken captive by bad ideas (Col. 2), being transformed by renewing of our minds (Rom. 12), and growing in discernment (Phil. 1).

4) A biblical worldview is not Christian reactionism. This is our reputation in culture, and it is well earned. Worldview rhetoric is often nothing more than code language for defensively reacting to all the bad things in culture. Rather than a view **of** and **for** the world, it becomes just a view **against** the world.

This is a truncated understanding of the Gospel and a poor definition of the term *worldview* that ignores the rich history of biblical worldview thinkers. Salvation is not just **from sin**; it is also **to life**. Because we have the capacity to know God’s design for life, humanity, and the cosmos, as well as the impact of the fall on this design, Christians carry the capacity to contribute to the culture, rather than only railing against it.

Biblical Worldview: What It is

While a full exposition is not possible here, I suggest that a biblical worldview is unique from all other worldviews in at least three ways.

1) A biblical worldview is bibli-

cally grounded. Jewish Rabbi Abraham Heschel once made the following comment about Christians:

“It seems puzzling to me how greatly attached to the Bible you seem to be and yet how much like pagans you handle it. The great challenge to those of us who wish to take the Bible seriously is to let it teach us its own essential categories; and then for us to think with them, instead of just about them.”

A biblical worldview is one that is grounded in the Bible, not just in biblical literacy. It is important to memorize the Scripture, but memorization is not the goal; transformation is (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17). A consistent Bible study time is important, but it is a means to a greater end. Rather than just being informed as to what the Bible says, we are to think biblically about (and be biblically oriented to) **everything else**. The Psalmist’s exhortation to hide the Word in our hearts is not just rote memorization, as Psalm 1 makes very clear.

One of the great barriers to thinking biblically is relegating Christianity to “spiritual things,” rather than everything. This dichotomy is false and does injustice to the robust message of the Bible. The Bible is first and foremost a **metanarrative**, a grand, sweeping story that claims to be the true story of anything and everything that has ever existed. It begins with the beginning of all things, and ends with the end of all things. We, and all people, live in this story somewhere between Genesis and Revelation.

Thus, the Bible sets the stage for all aspects of life and culture. The assumptions we think and live by should be biblical ones, and we should build on these biblical assumptions when approaching theology, politics, economic theory, medical science, emerging technologies, the arts, human behavior, literature, criminal justice, international relations, or anything else.

2) A biblical worldview is culturally

literate. Loving God fully by thinking deeply, discerningly, and truthfully about His world is essential to being a true disciple of Christ. According to the way the Bible presents the grand narrative of God's redemptive plan, Christianity is neither a religion of ascetic withdrawal nor a dualistic philosophy that denigrates certain human activity as less than spiritual. Followers of Christ are called to dive deeply—and hopefully **headfirst**—into the significant historical and cultural issues of the human situation. As G. K. Chesterton said, "If Christianity should happen to be true—that is to say if its God is the real God of the universe—then defending it may mean talking about anything and everything."

Jesus makes this clear in His High Priestly prayer recorded in John 17. Jesus prays for two groups of people, His disciples (vv. 6-12) and those who would believe because of the disciples' testimony (vv. 20-22). For both groups, Jesus prays that the Father would be glorified as people came to know Jesus and thus received eternal life. Then, Jesus asks for an astounding thing: that His followers would **not** be taken from the world (v. 15), but would be protected in the midst of the world by being oriented in the truth (v. 17).

The biblical approach to culture is to understand it (2 Corinthians 10; Daniel 1), confront it (Daniel 3-4; Acts 17), and contribute to it (Genesis 2; Jeremiah 29). The Bible transcends cultural trends and realities because **the Bible is the context of all cultures.** Therefore, we can speak truthfully and significantly to cultural trends and issues, blessing what is good and cursing what is evil.

3) A biblical worldview is defined by hope. Hope is a crucial aspect of the biblical approach to life and the world. Peter tells the persecuted church to "*be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you*" (1 Peter 3:15). Of all the reputations Christians have today, being

hopeful is rarely one of them.

Culturally, hope is in need of redefinition, as it has come to mean nothing more than wishful thinking. "I hope he gets voted off American Idol," or "I hope North Carolina makes it to the Final Four." Wishful thinking lacks certainty because it is a hope **for** something.

Biblical hope, however, is full certainty because biblical hope is not a hope **for**; it is a hope **in**. Biblical hope rests squarely in and on Christ—the Creator (John 1), Sustainer (Col. 1), and Redeemer (Rev. 4) of the entire human story.

Christians often miss hope in one of two directions: optimism or despair. Optimism is the "feel good" expression of Christianity that is always positive, full of self-help advice, and offering "safe" Christian alternatives to all the evil stuff in the world. On the other hand, despair is the escapism that characterizes those who assume the world is headed straight to hell, and there really is nothing we can do about it. Politics, the arts, the courts, and the country are beyond influence and beyond change, and are therefore no place for the believer. We are only to wait for Heaven, when we can escape this whole mess.

Because of Christ, neither optimism nor despair is an option for the believer. How deeply broken must the world and we be for God (the Son) to die! Of course, He did not stay dead. He has risen. Death, in fact, has died, and nothing that will ever happen in the history of the world will alter this certainty. Thus, despair is no option either.

A biblical worldview explains the profound goodness and the profound evil that is found in the world and the human heart. No other worldview can do this. Further, the biblical worldview rests the story of the world and the human heart in the hands of a God who created and has invaded both. ■

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Song of the Month

Douglas A. Byler, Music Editor

This column welcomes the submission of original hymns. Please send hymns, as well as applicable information about the author and/or composer to: Douglas A. Byler, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803.

Tread Softly



by Crosby/Doane

Lyrics: When Moses approached the amazing spectacle of the blazing but indestructible bush, God instructed him to remove his sandals, because he was standing on holy ground. One should not go bounding carelessly into the presence of a Holy God, but approach Him with respect. While “Tread Softly” contains no direct reference to Moses or the burning bush, it does seem to carry some of the same ideas.

The text is tailored very well to the opening of a worship service, and it calls us to quiet reverence and reflection. It also inspires an appreciation of the collective worship experience, recognizing that God is present in a special way when believers gather together. Every verse opens with the call to “be silent,” which is more necessary than ever before in our world today. There is a vast amount of “noise” present in the way we live our modern lives, and it is important to quiet our hearts and minds in preparation for worship. In the first two verses, there is a special emphasis on the things we hear in a worship service, referencing specifically the “message of grace.” The preaching and explanation of God’s inspired Word is the most important part of our time together on a Sunday morning.

The refrain is what inspires the images of Moses at the burning bush: “Tread softly . . . The Master is here; Tread softly . . . He bids us draw near.” We are still to enter God’s presence with care and

respect, just as Moses did. The major difference is that instead of inviting Moses to “draw near,” God told him, “Do *not* draw near this place” (Exodus 3:5, emphasis added). Because Jesus’ righteousness is now what God sees when He looks at us, we can come into His presence with the assurance of His favor, not with the kind of fear, dread, and terror that was associated with God under the Old Covenant.

Music: The music for this hymn is very simple, yet very well suited for the text that it accompanies. The melody line uses only five different notes within the interval of a sixth, a very small range considering that most hymn tunes span an octave or more. The small interval helps to give the hymn a quiet, settled flavor that would be lacking if there were more activity in the melody. The harmony also lends itself to calmness of the text. With one exception, there is only one basic chord per measure. In other words, the harmony only “changes” every four beats, even though there is often some movement within the same chord. Another little thing that adds to the peaceful sentiment of the text is that the beginning and ending notes are identical for all the parts. This helps the verses to flow together without a great sense of stopping and starting again. ■

Tread Softly

FANNY J. CROSBY

(SOLO AND QUARTET)

W. H. DOANE

Gently *p*

1. Be si - lent, be si - lent, A whis - per is heard, Be si - lent, and
 2. Be si - lent, be si - lent, For ho - ly this place, This al - tar that
 3. Be si - lent, be si - lent, Breathe humbly our prayer, A fore - taste of
 4. Be si - lent, be si - lent, His mer - cy re - cord; Be si - lent, be

REFRAIN

lis - ten, Oh, treas - ure each word.
 ech - oes The mes - sage of grace. Tread soft - ly, tread soft - ly, The
 E - den This mo - ment we share.
 si - lent, And wait on the Lord. Tread soft - ly here, tread softly here,

p *rit.*

Mas - ter is here; Tread soft - ly, tread soft - ly, He bids us draw near.
 Tread softly here, tread softly here,

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GOOD NEWS . . . cont'd. from page 10

In addition, the need for families to live closer together for survival often means someone is there to care for aging family members who might otherwise depend on assisted-care facilities.

Remember the Genesis account of Joseph's family? They were reunited due to a vast famine, and through this hardship, his brothers' hearts were changed. They became willing to die for one another and were more sensitive to the needs of their aged father. The guilt of the past was washed away in a flood of forgiveness and in renewed relationships.

God's timely and perfect provision allowed Joseph to tell them, "It was not you that sent me hither; but God. . . And there will I nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou, and thy household, and all that thou hast, come to poverty" (Gen. 45:8-11).

The Lord still provides through families, whether we are connected through birth or by His Spirit. Where others see only despair, may we recognize hope and rejoice in the Lord's provision. ■

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Sermon of the Month



Each month we will feature a Biblical sermon in this column. We would like to emphasize expository preaching and ask our readers to submit good expository sermons for consideration. Please send typewritten copies by "snail mail" or email to: Editor, Sword and Trumpet, Box 575, Harrisonburg, VA 22803; swandtrump@verizon.net.

Exodus en Masse: Could We Have Sent Them?

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" – Hosea 4:6.

by Jerry Hoover

Amber Hagerman lived from November 25, 1986 to January 15, 1996, only nine short years. She was a young girl who became a victim of an abduction and murder.

On January 13, 1996, a man in a black pickup truck abducted Amber, who was riding her bicycle in a vacant blacktop lot near her grandparents' home in Arlington, Texas. A witness to the crime, Jimmie Kevil, immediately dialed 911 on his cell phone and was able to provide police with a cursory description of both the abductor and his vehicle just moments after abduction. According to Kevil, the man in the pickup stopped in the parking lot of the abandoned grocery store where Hagerman was playing and dragged her screaming into his truck. As Kevil was relating his observations to the police, who arrived almost immediately, Hagerman's grandfather, Jimmy Whitson, drove up, looking for the child. According to the grandfather, Amber had been left at the lot with a friend to ride bike. When the friend tired of riding and came home without Amber, Jimmy immediately jumped into his pickup and came to the site as police were arriving. Lapsed time was estimated at less than five minutes.

Amber Hagerman was the second child

in her family to have been kidnapped. Her father's two-day-old granddaughter was abducted in 1991 and recovered safely 10 hours later.

Arlington police began searching for Hagerman immediately. Volunteers searched for Amber Hagerman for several days, and the FBI investigated. Four days after her abduction, a man walking his dog found Hagerman's corpse in a creek bed. An investigation and autopsy revealed, among other atrocious findings, that her throat had been cut. She had been alive two whole days after the abduction before being killed. As a nine-year-old innocent, helpless, frightened victim, one can only imagine the long unimaginable hell she was taken through before she was killed; not only for her, but for her family also. Although a \$75,000 reward was offered for information leading to Hagerman's killer, he was never found. The task force investigating Hagerman's murder was dissolved ten years later, in June of 1997.

No arrests were made. Her murder remained unsolved until July 25, 2007, more than 20 years later, it was announced that Terapon Adhahn of Tacoma, Washing-

ton, was under investigation for Amber's slaying after having been arrested in the rape and murder of two other girls, ages 10 and 12. He is also charged with the rape of two additional girls. The investigation is ongoing.

We know that abductions are tragic events. Why did I tell you this grievous story? For several reasons:

1. Many abductions occur at a time when there has been a lapse of parental vigilance.
2. Many abductions end in tragedy. They usually end with pain, trauma, and death.
3. Our society cares about abducted children. Thousands of volunteers hunt for missing children. They don't just forget about them and write them off as expected events.
4. Recovered children usually carry lifelong scars. Their lives will never be as innocent and pure as they were before.
5. Informed and alert parents can prevent most attempts at abductions by taking precautions and by doing a little training.
6. Finally, Amber's murder inspired the creation of the AMBER ALERT SYSTEM, an innovative early warning system, founded by concerned individuals, to help find abducted children.

The strategy of the Amber Alert System was three-pronged:

- Access activity
 - Make information about abduction accessible to the public.
- Create a network for alarm
 - Promote communication between agencies involved in search and rescue.
- Communicate lessons learned
 - Help communities develop and implement plans to thwart future abductions
 - Raise public awareness on how to protect children and prevent abductions.

Today I am issuing an **Amber Alert!** Abductions/desertions of our children have been taking place in our midst, under our very eyes. Missing: Not one, not two, not fifty, but hundreds of our children!!!

The youth were last seen jumping off the ship "The LaAnabaptista," having been

enticed and abducted by a fancy pirate ship headed for the Broadwayport.

Recently, sightings of this ship have been reported in the ports of Amishport, Beachyport, Mennoport, and other ports along the borders of Anabaptist country.

Amber Alert! I want to issue an Amber Alert! Who will help hunt for the victims of this villain? Who will help set up a national network of alarm? Who will help raise public awareness and help thwart future abduction attempts?

Has anyone seen these youth? Has a reward been offered for their safe return? Have the captains of "The LaAnabaptista" cried: "Man overboard"? Have they called for investigation? Does anyone care they are missing? Will anyone volunteer to search, or shall we find their mutilated corpses lying in the creek bed after a few days with the predator?

Alas! The thousands have multiplied to millions and are following the billions to Hell! Millions should be telling the billions how to escape judgment and death. Millions should be telling the billions how to believe on Jesus!

Alas, alas, the pattern continues. Many of God's heritage are born to Christian parents, sit in conservative Anabaptist churches every Sunday for twenty years, only to jump ship as soon as they can squeeze out from under the railing of their parents' authority. Why?

How many more losses will it take to wake us to cry, "Child overboard"?

Why? What has happened? Why do they defect? What went wrong? Is there any hope of changing the defection rate? Is there anything that we can do?

It is with a sense of urgency, coupled with fear and trembling, that I share the burden that has been on my heart for the last 25 years—

- aware that I am in the midst of the heat of that battle.
- aware that my family is not raised.
- aware that I do not have all the answers.
- aware that I have not been without failures in raising my army of six.

- aware that I will be watched, and my family scrutinized, if I speak to this issue.
- aware that this is a sensitive subject. I am here to give a wake-up alarm.

I doubt that there has ever been a more challenging time to raise godly children than today.

This is my prayer for our day: **Lord, send a revival lest we perish!!! God, as You said in Malachi 4:6, send grace to turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest you come and smite the earth with a curse.**

I remember the day quite well when I sat with my six-month-old firstborn son on my lap in May of 1985, at a school reunion. As I observed what was happening in the lives of my classmates and the church, I began asking, “Where is the vision? Where are these people going? Why was leadership silent? Where will they be in 25 years?” How could I successfully raise my children in a setting where the retention rate to a conservative faith and practice was at 25%?

Not only were we not reaching our communities for God, we were losing the majority of our descendants!

Last year, I asked a member of one of the Holmes County Beachy churches to conduct a survey of the local churches in his constituency to discover the retention rate of their youth to Conservative Anabaptist faith. Conservative Anabaptist Faith was defined as those that still practice nonconformity in dress and holiness in life.

Here is what he found: Retention rate for 1980-1990 is 55% for ministers’ children and 45% of laity. That means that 55% of laity children and 45% of ministers’ children jump the ship.

Last week I asked someone to assess the Conservative Mennonite Churches of Holmes County from the 1958-78 era.

We discovered that of over 300 youth that were born in the 1958-1978 era, the retention rate stood at 28% for laity, and 30% for the ministry, 84 out of 300. Some ministers retained most of their children while others had a retention rate of zero.

I am asking: Is my Ohio community alone in our tremendous loss? What is the retention rate in your community? Are there any that keep them all? Are you, could you, should we, be satisfied with less than 100%? I say that it is high time for a **National Amber Alert** to be sounded in our constituencies. This kind of information/loss should frighten us. Don’t we realize that faith can die out in one generation? And I ask . . .

Friends, brothers, sisters, what is wrong? Are we asleep? Why have we tolerated this loss for generations? Don’t we realize that this “ship jumping” has been going on for decades? One could nearly conclude that Conservative Anabaptists have little care, little shame, and little sorrow with the matter! One could at times believe that our secular world seems to have greater concern over their lost children than we do! **I ask you, how many pastors and congregations have you seen trying to find captive children or strategizing about how to curtail the loss?**

Would we be so silent if someone would have been taking our John Deere tractors and power-stroke pickups from us at the same rate we are losing our children? Yet the loss is not comparable. I’m sure someone would have gotten out of bed, disturbed enough to call the authorities to investigate. Alas, our greatest assets disappear and few seem to notice! **How shall we answer our silence?**

I am not suggesting that there are no parents out there who do not care. Many aged parents have wept to me—many heavy-hearted parents came last year to me . . . saying that all they had accomplished in life turned to dust in comparison with the loss of their children. One father told me, **“If you don’t have your children, you don’t have anything!”** Many parents who have experienced abductions and their ship jumped have cried and prayed all the years long hoping to retrieve those children.

Some have woken up too late, unable to change the course set; just as one minister said to me last week with sadness written

on his face, "I wish I had started thinking more proactively about raising my children twenty-five years ago."

Many do not know where to start or what to do at this juncture. They have not been informed or they do not know how to reach their children, to build bridges to their wayward children. To them I say . . .

Start learning about building bridges. Build a bridge of communication. Acknowledge your failures to them and ask forgiveness of them. Work on becoming their best friend. Win their hearts even at this late hour. Build a tower of prayer. Learn how to tear down strongholds through prayer. Become informed and surround yourself with some resource material. There is much that a parent can still do. There is a lot of information out there. Here are just a few resources:

- Michael Pearl, on his website: No Greater Joy.org.
- Paul Weaver has some good teaching on Capturing the Heart, tapes with Still Waters Ministries.
- John Coblentz has also written numerous books on relationships and the family.
- Ray Wenger has a good book on Training Arrows.
- Doug Philips, Vision Forum.org.

Two weeks ago, in an effort to understand more fully why they jump, I sat down for several hours with one who had jumped fifteen years ago. I will call him John. I asked him to tell me why he and most of his youth group are not in the church that he was raised in.

As I thought back over our conversation, I wished I could have asked him one more question as we concluded our discussion, "John, did any of your former pastors ever contact you, seeking to reconcile differences, inviting you to dialogue? Did any invite you back to your former church?"

Would you want to know why I would have wanted to ask him that question? Because I have sat with too many who hurt because their loss was considered insignificant.

In my discussion with John, there were **four major issues**, among others that sur-

faced, that were considered to be major contributing factors giving him and his church friends occasion to jump ship. He said:

1. *The heart/the essence of Christianity was missed. The centrality of a personal acquaintance and relationship with Christ was missed.* John suggested that somehow, for some reason, the hearts of these young men missed understanding what the essence of Christianity was all about . . . a heart to know and passionately walk with God. This was neither modeled nor taught well. In many cases, they missed seeing a working model of what it meant to be a disciple of Christ and have a vibrant, live relationship with Him.

What happened? Instead of a focus of having an intimate walk with God, **the emphasis was on looking good and doing well, doing and not doing certain things, and obeying the church without question. They were urged to join the church, but little was said about doing it out of a heart of love for God, which should have been the primary motivation.**

Last week I met Don Showalter, who gives seminars stressing the importance of healthy family/church relationships. He said that he has counseled with far too many men from conservative background who have told him that they also missed the heart of Jesus being Lord of their lives. They did not get to know Christ until they were in their twenties or even later, and then only after they had sowed many undesirable and regretful seeds that are now delivering product. **Why did these men miss out on a deep relationship with God?**

It was the father factor. Many of these young men had weak relationships with their dad, and were sometimes just considered property to be put to work, so their concept of God, as modeled in their relationship to their earthly father being impersonal, was transferred likewise. Too many assumed as their father was to them, similarly, that was how God was: an impersonal God. Many were treated more as slaves to

do work, rather than children to be endeared and to be endowed with “a vision and mission for God” perspective.

2. *Passion was lacking. Passionate Christianity was many times not demonstrated. Prayer and passionately loving God with all the body, soul, and mind was lacking and absent.*

John indicated that on an average in his home church, passion was shallow. Parents and church, by and large, did not demonstrate a deep spiritual walk with God. Mediocrity was the norm. The essence of Christianity as modeled to many of them was to live a good life, be obedient to the rules of the church, and was largely driven by their tradition and culture rather than a deep passionate godly faith. Christianity was lived in passive mode: no vigor, no excitement, no passion, and shallow interest, and many times poor understanding of the Word of God.

Alive, vibrant, compelling preaching and teaching were the exception as opposed to the norm. Several young men said that the preaching was in language that they did not understand. As such, church services were meaningless to them. Many fathers were caught up in their own worlds, many times never pursuing relationships with their children so that faith could transfer.

Let me ask you: have you ever thought that thinking children will likely jump from ships anchored in stagnant water, piloted by captains lacking vision and mission, to lively promising ships if given a chance?

3. *Faith vision was unconvincing.*

John concluded that:

- a. **the vision presented was clouded and incomplete.**
- b. He said that the vision **lacked a convincing/compelling element.** Youth did not feel compelled to purchase the goods.
- c. Many of the apologetics given lacked sound rationale. They were of the cheap sort such as “I don’t know,” or “That’s the way we have always done it.”
- d. Faith vision was **shuttered by the**

small worldview blinders that the parents and leaders wore. In his case the boundaries extended no further than the perimeter of the Amish/Mennonite community that he lived in.

e. The vision lacked relevance, worldview, and completeness.

These young people struggled with the whole concept of a relevant Christianity. When they had questions about how some of their inexplicable church standards were relevant to Bible principle or the world, many found themselves intellectually sidetracked and shortchanged of good solid answers. Others missed the vision all together. Vision. What vision? There simply was not much to be caught. Also many of these youth saw no room for their gift-giving.

4. *A perspective of historical identity was missed.*

- a. Many never understood the fundamentals or basic historical facts of the who and what of their faith.
- b. Stories of passionate historical models were not introduced to them.
- c. Few understood that a grasp of spiritual history was vitally important to their future well-being and spiritual safety; or even further, that it would be a vital ingredient in decisions that they will need to make in the future.
- d. I asked John if his friends could have passed a simple test about the key founding men and issues of the reformation, founding dates, and recent American church history. He responded that his estimate is that they may have known the answers to 20% of the basic questions but would have certainly failed the test.

We can’t undo the past. By building bridges we may retrieve some of the past, but I believe that we can work to capture as much of the present as possible, and strategize to capture the future.

What will it take for them to get this vision and passion? I believe that answer is simple: we need some passionate models.

The maxim goes like this: feel no heart, see no passion; hear no faith vision, understand no history.

This equals **no future runner of the faith race!** Why would any thinking person want to stay on a ship anchored in shallow, stagnant waters, wondering what their captains are thinking, while excited passengers stream by in other colorful boats?

So what can we do? What do we need to do?

1. Teach them of the heart of faith.

We need to show the rising generation that true Christian faith is a deep spiritual well-spring in the heart of the true believer. Jesus said in John 7:38, "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The spirit of God flowing out of the deepest part of our heart is the genius of Christianity. Jesus in the heart is central to a living faith! Jesus is waiting to be known.

This is the essence of Christianity . . . walking, knowing Christ intimately. You can have a wellspring of power in your life. He is waiting to demonstrate His power.

Our children and youth will soon detect if what drives us is coming from a deep flow of the spirit of God in our lives, or is just passive mediocrity. They are watching us; what do they see in our lives?

- a. What are we modeling?
- b. What drives us?
- c. What grabs our attention?
- d. Is Jesus Christ demonstrating Lordship in my life?
- e. We need to know that models of passive mediocrity hold no attraction to youth who are bombarded with enticements to worldly pleasure.

Capturing and having the heart of your child is fundamental to the transmission of faith. Parental heart-to-heart communication is absolutely essential to transferring values and faith. Anger is sure to destroy the implantation process.

Isaiah 38:19 states, "*The fathers to the children shall make known thy truth.*"

Where are the fathers? Why are so few teaching their sons and daughters? Why are

parents not involved in guiding the youth in other great decisions as they ought to be?

For faith to transfer, parents need to have the hearts of their children. Unfortunately, many Anabaptist parents are distant from their children.

Either capture the heart of your child, or lose the child. The greatest part of that equation rests with parents. If the heart of your child is distant from you and you want to learn how to capture that heart . . . then get Paul Weaver's sermon on "Capturing the Heart of Your Child" put out by *Still Waters Ministries*.

2. Model passionate Christianity.

Nothing sells like passion; like the old saying, the **seller needs to be sold himself first!** Passion is attractive, passion inspires, passion invigorates, and passion can be electrifying. However, by contrast, **relay runners** lose the will to be competitive and complete the race if previous runners have not demonstrated that the race was worth giving their all to win.

Mediocrity is a poor seller. The bottom line: if you are not excited, don't expect your children or church to be any different. Many children are not passionate because they never saw passionate parents.

How do we demonstrate passion?

We pursue Jesus Christ. We pursue Him urgently! We need Him desperately! We eagerly seek His words and truth!

The fun and pleasure of our world will capture our children's hearts unless they see a passion demonstrated that is deeper and of greater value than that of the world.

Passionless Christianity is not compelling. It will not capture the hearts and minds of youth. Instead, it gives them occasion to look elsewhere for something exciting and fulfilling. We parents must ask ourselves, "What is so compelling about my faith that my children should want it?"

3. Give them a vision. Proverbs 29:18 simply says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

Vision and mission are essential to ongoing life. What is a vision? A vision is a dream or revelation. **Give your children**

a dream, a vision to pursue. Children oftentimes pursue the dreams and visions of their parents. They are looking for a cause.

Vision needs to include:

- who we are.
- where we are going.
- what our mission is.
- an understanding of the cost of failure.
- the glory of finishing well.
- the cost of carnal living, the foolishness of temporal values.
- the beauty of eternal values.
- the beauty of missions. Jim Elliot said, “He is no fool . . . to give what he cannot keep, to get that which he cannot lose.” Jim lived and died to that vision.
- models of spiritual heroes. Give them the models of Michael Sattler, Pilgrim Marpeck, William Tyndale, John Amos Comenius, John F. Funk, John S. Coffman, and others.

Show the youth where their giftings can be used. Show them that they hold a strategic place in the life of the church. Let them feel that their gifts are needed and useful.

4. Teach them history. Is survival possible without an understanding and appreciation of history? According to Psalm 78 and Deuteronomy 6–9, I believe that our children will live or die, depending on what we have taught them about the importance of historical reference!

How can we begin to chart the future without knowledge of the past? Yet many are doing just that. Many are charting the future without reference to the past. This problem is widespread and is making the job of many concerned parents extremely difficult because they have to counter the peer pressure that comes from the children of parents who are careless about learning from the past. Far too many of our parents are failing the history test. They have failed to analyze the lessons of history.

In Hosea 4:6 God spoke to the Jewish people: *“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou*

shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I also will forget thy children.”

This text shares an emotion. It is a lament of unnecessary death and destruction. God is lamenting the unnecessary death of His people in this passage. God is saying that they are ceasing to exist because of a lack of awareness and lack of learnedness.

Thomas Jefferson wrote that schooling in America should be “chiefly historical.” He said, “The people are the ultimate guardians of their own history. History, by apprising them of the past, will enable them to judge of the future. It will avail them of the experience of other times and other nations; it will qualify them as judges of the actions and designs of men.”

Woodrow Wilson argued that understanding history endows us with an “invaluable power,” called judgment. It endows us with wisdom for the present and vision for the future.

Someone noted that history does not just stand alone, but that **the past is prologue to the future.** What do we mean by the word *prologue*? Prologue is a part of the “front matter.” It is preface to the future.

Understanding history gives purpose and meaning to life. It helps a child understand who he is and provides a vision for his future.

History is not irrelevant from a biblical perspective. History does matter. History is important because it is key to understanding how to live in the present and gives vision for the future. It has been said that he who grasps the past controls the future.

How big is this problem? According to those who should know, Bible school church history teachers, this problem is enormous. A former teacher of history for a number of years at SMBI, Marcus Yoder, who is pursuing a Masters in history at Ohio State, told me recently that the majority of the youth of the Conservative Mennonite sector would flunk the simplest test on church history. In light of the importance of history to our present well-being, this is tragic.

He said that the lack of historical understanding is appalling. The youth and many

of the older people of our communities simply have not been taught and do not know who they are, where they came from, and what transformed them to be the people with the special priceless background that they possess. Many lack initiative to inform themselves.

David Crabtree made this statement about this lack: "Our ignorance of the past is not the result of a lack of information, but of a spirit of indifference." Is he right in his conclusion?

Isaiah 5:13 *"Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge."* This passage indicates that a grasp of history and life are intertwined.

Why did Jesus say: *"Remember Lot's wife"*? *Remember* means to "call to memory" the past. Is it important to remember Lot's wife today? Jesus thought the call to historical reference important in His day. What did He want us to consider? Why did Lot's wife turn to a pillar of salt?

Lot's wife was a statue, a monument to tragedy. The tragedy did not stop with his wife. It was a statue to the tragedy of Lot's own decision of a wrong choice. It was a statue to spiritual carelessness. It was a statue to the descendants of Lot. Jesus is asking us to remember/analyze; why was faith lost? What went wrong? What will we learn from the statue?

Our view of history shapes the way we view the present, and therefore it dictates what answers we offer for living the future. Paying attention to history is the only way to escape the danger ahead. It will be a life-line to those who respect it! It will be tragedy for those who reject it!

So what should we believe about history? Pay attention and live, or disregard it and die. Understanding history is a matter of life or death.

5. Destroy the other corrupting monsters. Is there anything else that is contributing to the exodus that we are experiencing? I believe that there is, and that it is high time for someone to sound a trumpet on a number of issues. Actually, I was happy to see that one of the issues

finally is going to be discussed in the next issue of the *Calvary Messenger*—but it has been too long in coming—that of sports and tournaments. Without much ado, one does not need to be too observant to know that it is just as John Coblenz said a number of years ago: **"High dosages of pleasure are lethal to the soul."** Someone else has said "that when sports leaves the back yard . . . it enters a dangerous realm." History tells us that sports and deep spirituality do not mix well.

Brethren, could we agree to deal with the lethal dosage of sports among us? Why do so many chase the little round invention? How we chase it is a reflection of our values. When did it become so important in the kingdom of God? If you would only read the Mennonite web blogging, you will find that we are in trouble, and if you will read further in the blogging, you will know that not only have sports captured the hearts of many of our people, but also unedited Hollywood movies and contemporary music via the Internet/electronic world have captured hearts also. This connection, coupled with the addictive electronic games and indiscriminate control of communication devices, is slaying and corrupting a host of Conservative Anabaptist people today, while too many parents are oblivious to what is happening.

I am serious. It is widespread. And it is past time to cry **Amber Alert**. God's faithful leaders may not stay silent any longer. Those that want faithfulness are going to have to do something about the issue pronto! I warn you: if your youth have come through the previous four monsters that cause ship jumping, here is one that will try to capture them by corrupting them. I am asking the fathers and leadership of today, what are we doing about these two destroying/devouring monsters, the electronic and sports worlds? We may not ignore these two giants of our day who are abducting our youth. I cry "Amber Alert!"

In Conclusion

"Sent" children do not just happen
(continued on page 33)

Teaching to Give and to Share

by Charles E. Steiner

The situation seemed hopeless. Although the master was a great man, he had incurable leprosy. Then a maid shared her knowledge of the power of the God of Israel, and Naaman was cured.

The day had been long and tiring. The morning had been spent traveling on foot into the desert. The afternoon had passed while Jesus preached. Now it was evening and the large crowd was hungry, but there was no food. What could be done? One boy gave his lunch and the need was met.

Imagine what it must have been like for that lad in a crowd of more than five thousand hungry people, so glad he had something to eat. Imagine watching one of Jesus' disciples carry his lunch away. How would you have responded?

Giving and sharing are Bible commands. "Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away" (Matthew 5:42). "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:4). We have the example of Mordecai, who sought the wealth of his people, not himself (Esther 10:3).

When we give something we relinquish the ownership and control of it. If we "give" with conditions or in hope of having some favor returned, we are actually buying. If we "give" hoping to have it returned, we are lending. Our children should learn to give graciously without attempting to control the person who received the gift.

Sharing is allowing somebody else to use our possessions while we retain ownership.

Observing other selfish or unselfish people quickly helps us decide what kind of people we want our children to be. How many

real friends does a selfish person have? What would the church be like if everyone were like him? Think now of an unselfish person. Such a person shares his possessions and gives of his time even when it is not convenient. He is ready to do tasks others do not want to do, or to let others excel instead of him.

How do we teach our children to give and to share?

Probably the best, yet also the hardest, way is by example. It is seldom convenient to allow the neighbor to borrow our tractor or tools, and work bees are usually planned just when we have some other very pressing business. Our children see which receives priority. They will notice a father who always takes the last piece of pie or the biggest piece of cake, yet seldom has time to give to his family.

For mothers, what about the meal you thought of taking to somebody, but never quite found the time, or the daughter you would send to help, but . . . If we as parents have not learned to think of others first, we should not be surprised if our children follow our example.

Our children begin to express their selfish, carnal nature at a very young age (long before we can reason with them, even before they can talk). As they get older we begin to hear expressions like these: "It's mine." "I had it first." "It's my turn." "Me first." "I get the biggest." We must both curb selfish expressions and teach the right way to respond.

We will have to physically help a very young child give up the treasure he has grabbed from another. If another child takes our child's toy, we can help him to be happy with something else. But in either case, if we

"A child should learn early that he may not have everything he can reach."

simply distract his attention to something else, has he really learned to share?

If we put away “special” toys when company comes because they might get damaged, we undermine our teaching on sharing.

A child should learn early that he may not have everything he can reach. This may be the glasses on somebody’s face or a plant on the floor. A baby might crawl toward a potted plant. What should we do? Set the plant up out of reach? Not always. Sometime he will need to learn the concept of “not mine.”

We must guard against the tendency to settle an argument in favor of the youngest child. While it is true the older ones should know better, the younger ones will not learn to share if fighting gets them what they want.

Children might argue over whose turn it is to do a disliked job or to go along with Father. We can then require both to do the disliked job, or decide that neither child goes along with Father. Children must learn that nobody wins when they fight.

When others suffer loss we have another opportunity to teach giving. Maybe the dog shreds little sister’s special doll. Big sister can give one of her special dolls. Or if one boy’s pet dies, another child can share his pet. If another family suffers loss through flood or fire, our children learn a valuable lesson when they give of their own possessions. This will help them to realize what others have lost. In helping our children decide what to give, we should make sure it is something of value and that our children do not expect it to be replaced.

When our children do give or share nicely, we should commend them and point out the joy they receive as a result of their unselfishness.

It is a blessing to watch children sharing among themselves, and to see the happiness they experience when they give with a willing heart. We as parents also share in their happiness. Is not that also one of our greatest blessings? “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4). ■

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EXODUS EN MASSE . . . cont’d.

automatically. For one to be sent, there needs to be a sender. For senders to be successful they need to “tool up”; they need to equip themselves. For Dorcas and me, that tooling up started before our children were born and will continue past this day. Actually, we are today putting in motion the sending of our grandchildren and so are you! Our sending responsibilities will never end, nor will our tool sharpening stop.

We are sending the greatest assets that we will ever have to the greatest and longest future that will ever be! How great will be the price of poor sendoffs? God will hold us accountable for how we have sent His heritage.

So then, let us send them with truth written on their hearts, with passion in their souls, with vision/mission to be accomplished in their minds, and with the knowledge and endowments of Biblical history to guide them into the future!

In closing I would like to give you a quote from Noah Webster:

If we work on marble, it will perish.

If we work on brass, time will efface it.

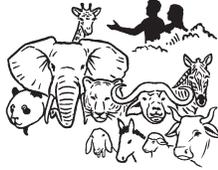
If we rear temples, they will crumble into dust.

But:

If we work with immortal souls . . . if we endue them with principles, with the fear of the Creator and love for fellowman . . . we engrave on those tablets something which will brighten eternity. ■

—Edited by Chester Weaver





Beginning Issues



The Bible: Is It Accurate? (Part 2)

by John Mullett

In last month's article we began to take a look at the Bible's accuracy as an historical record, specifically by looking at a few examples in the area of archaeology and its *internal* claims to be the Word of God. This month I would like to continue that examination by looking at some additional areas including *external* evidence. My goal is to give a few examples and in the process connect you to larger more comprehensive resources.

External Evidence

Hank Hanegraaph puts it this way: "The external evidence test looks *outside* the texts themselves to ascertain the historical reliability of the historical events, geographical locations, and cultural consistency of the biblical texts. Unlike writings from other world religions which make no historical references or which fabricate histories, the Bible refers to historical events and assumes its historical accuracy. The Bible is *not only* the inspired Word of God, it is also a history book—and the historical assertions it makes have been proven time and again.

"Many of the events, people, places, and customs in the New Testament are confirmed by secular historians who were almost contemporaries with New Testament writers. Secular historians like the Jewish Josephus (before A.D. 100), the

Roman Tacitus (around A.D. 120), the Roman Suetonius (A.D. 110), and the Roman governor Pliny Secundus (A.D. 100-110) make direct reference to Jesus or affirm one or more historical New Testament references. Early church leaders such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Julius Africanus, and Clement of Rome—all writing before A.D. 250—shed light on New Testament historical accuracy. Even skeptical historians agree that the New Testament is a remarkable historical document. Hence, it is clear that there is strong *external evidence* to support the Bible's manuscript reliability."¹

Randall Niles approached the Bible and Christianity in investigative fashion and his resulting journey can be found at <http://www.allaboutthejourney.org>. He had this to say about fulfilled prophecies and external evidence supporting the Bible: "With the help of some study aids, I discovered over 1,000 prophecies in the Bible. Of those, an astonishing 668 of them have been fulfilled and none have ever proven false (three seem to be unconfirmed). The others focus on events that are supposed to take place in the future. Come on! These must be generalized, self-fulfilling predictions that find their fulfillment within the pages of the same book. One religious zealot writes a prediction (God will do something specific and dramatic) and another writes the ful-

fillment (God did something specific and dramatic). The predictions and fulfillments are confined to the pages of the same 'holy book.' Not too meaningful . . . Where's the outside support? What does secular history say, if anything, about these events?

"I decided to take a hard, calculated look at some of the 'Bible prophecy' that was connected to verifiable history . . ."²

Niles then proceeded to look at a number of prophecies that are verifiable outside the Bible, including prophecies on the cities of Tyre and Samaria and the decree of Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem.

Fulfilled Prophecy

As mentioned earlier in the Niles quote, the number of prophecies/fulfilled prophecies are staggering, especially in regards to how they separate the Bible from all other books. While the Bible's fulfilled prophecies are far too numerous to cover in detail here, they are one of the most compelling evidences of the Bible's accuracy and reliability.

Some interesting resources on fulfilled

prophecy include the late Peter Stoner's book *Science Speaks* (Moody Press, Chicago) in which he covers a number of prophecies in detail while putting them to the test of the principle of probability. Henry M. Morris and Henry M. Morris III in their book *Many Infallible Proofs* (Master Books) devote an entire chapter to fulfilled prophecy in the Bible. Also see web sites such as <http://www.allabouttruth.org/christian-prophecy.htm>, and <http://www.equip.org/articles/bible-reliability> (Hank Hanegraaph) for more extensive lists and information on fulfilled prophecy.

Next month we will continue by looking at the reliability and accuracy of the Bible's transmission (not the kind in your vehicle) from the original manuscripts to today's copies. *(to be continued)*

1. Hank Hanegraaph, Bible Reliability: M-A-P-S to Guide You through Bible Reliability <http://www.equip.org/articles/bible-reliability>
2. Randall Niles, All About The Journey, <http://www.allaboutthejourney.org/bible-prophecy.htm>, copyright 2002-2009.

Biblical Light on Cremation

by John J. Forry

Recently I heard it said that "there is nothing in the Bible that forbids cremation." That statement reveals a shallow understanding toward that which God abhors and needs to be addressed. There are two questions that come up occasionally that pertain to cremation: Does it matter what we do with our body after death? My answer is "yes." The other question that follows: "Is cremation right or wrong in light of the Scriptures?" Christianity not only concerns itself with the soul but also with the body because the soul has been redeemed and the body will be, in the future.

Let us address the meaning of cremation and its process. According to the *World Book Dictionary*, the word *cremate* means "to burn a dead body to ashes." The body is placed in a special furnace, called a crema-

tory, and subjected to heat over 2,000°F that quickly reduces the body to ashes in approximately less than one hour. While it is in that intense heat, the body appears to be very much alive as it jumps about, which is the result of the contraction and expansion of the muscles. After the body is burned and the remains are cooled, the bones that are left are ground up and they, along with the ashes, are put into an urn. The urn with the contents of at least five lbs. (depending on the size of the body cremated) can be stored or buried. Sometimes the contents are thrown to the wind or scattered over large bodies of water. I ask you: Would you not think it rather gruesome and disrespectful for being responsible (as some families do) to push the button and start the process of cremating the body of your parent, spouse,

or child? One mortician, who operates a crematory, told me, "There is no way that I could cremate one of my family members." How could you do it to someone who was a refined and devout Christian? It must be most repulsive to think of treating the body of a loved one in this way. I am saddened when I hear that some plain people, calling themselves Christians, are making urns for cremation as a business.

Let me share with you five principles from Scripture that explain the evils of cremation.

1. The Biblical image of God's judgment was by fire. It fell from heaven as a holy fire on Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 19:24). On another occasion the Bible says, "There went out fire from the Lord" and devoured Nadab and Abihu because they offered strange fire (Lev. 10:2). Likewise in Numbers 16:35 we read how the Lord sent fire and consumed 250 Israelite men who complained of God's destruction of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Then, too, we have the sad record of Achan's sin against God, His people, and himself. God ordered Joshua and Israel to stone him and his family with stones and burn them with fire as a curse for his disobedience to God (Joshua 7:25). The Apostle Peter says that someday "the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men" (2 Peter 3:7). The final judgment on sin will be with fire.

2. The heathen custom of cremation is an abomination to God. Cremation had its beginnings in the ancient heathen lands. Rome was among the first to practice this custom. In India it is common practice among the Hindus and the Buddhists, and it has spread like wildfire throughout the Western world, including America. Notorious characters like Joseph Stalin and Adolph Hitler wanted to be cremated. However, Joseph Stalin was not cremated but buried.

The first crematorium was built in Washington, PA, in 1876. The percentages of cremations to burials have gone from 5% to 30% in recent years according to my conversation with local morticians. This is done largely because it is one half the price of a tradi-

tional funeral. Regardless how popular its practice, it is still evil. The Bible addresses how God feels about it. In Deuteronomy 12:31, Israel was instructed, "Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God; for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto thy gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods." King Ahaz of Judah made his son to pass through the fire (2 Kings 16:3). The Prophet Ezekiel was told by God to "say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God; are ye polluted after the manner of your fathers? And commit whoredom after their abominations? For when ye offer your gifts, when ye make your sons to pass through the fire, ye pollute yourselves with all your idols, even unto this day. And shall I be enquired of by you, O house of Israel? As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be enquired of by you" (Ezekiel 20:30, 31). The rebellion of Israel and the practice of making their sons pass through the fire brought them under God's judgment. The Lord's displeasure with cremation is clearly expressed in Amos 2:1. "Thus saith the LORD, for three transgressions of Moab and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof; because he burned the bones of the King of Edom into lime." Part of ending the idolatrous worship was to stop the practice of cremation. Thus King Josiah destroyed the crematorium (2 Kings 23:10). These examples from Scripture should be sufficient to show us God's disapproval of cremation.

3. The Biblical method to dispose of God's people is burial. According to divine standards, it was a dishonor for a person to have no burial. Because of King Jehoiakim's disobedience to God, "he was to be buried with the burial of a donkey, dragged out beyond the gates of Jerusalem" (Jer. 22:19, NKJV). At least 34 times in Scriptures the phrase "he died and was buried" is recorded, giving us the usual method that godly people practiced in disposing the bodies of their loved ones. We begin with Abraham, the father of all believers. The only land he purchased was the cave of the field of Machpelah as a burial plot to bury his wife Sarah (Gen. 23). Abraham and his son Isaac were also buried there. Jacob charged his