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I live in Honduras as a missionary. We are not involved with "contemporary music" issues. But I want you to know that I go to church to worship God, not to be convicted of sin! My sin is to be confessed before I go to church, when I commit the sin. The author has the wrong motive for going to church and does not know his Scriptures!

[*A Lost Focus* by Dan Lucarini]

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I loved the article in the May/June 2004 issue by Dr. Mark Minnick about how important it is to read and how to find time. It is titled, "Not a Day without Its Pages." I wanted to print out a copy off your website to glue into my "Literary Commonplace Book" (A book of quotes from all my reading).

Renee Richmond  
Phoenix, AZ

Greetings from the golden land of Myanmar in the name of our Lord Jesus. Thank you so much for sending me your magazine. I have been receiving it for about six months. I have effectively used it not only in my

preaching but also in adult Sunday School. Your magazine has brought lots of blessings to our people. We are growing in the knowledge and maturity as well as by reading the Word of God and using *FrontLine* magazine. Therefore, I'm eagerly looking and waiting for your magazine. May God bless you all.

Pau Gin Lian  
Yangon, Myanmar

I have had the privilege of reading the journal of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship. I am presently in seminary in Cameroon, and I will be going back to Chad to pastor a local Baptist church. Please send *FrontLine* to me as often as possible. I pray for you and this great job.

Daniel Andjingar  
Chad

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# What the Biblical Home and the Fundamental Baptist Church Have in Common

**W**hen Satan skews the illustrations of God's truth, he is actually working to skew the truth itself. We know that God has ordained marriage to be a committed relationship between one man and one woman, but why? His explanation is clearly given in both Testaments. In Genesis 2:24, we are told, "Therefore (because the woman was made from Adam's flesh) shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." The inspired explanation in Ephesians 5:30-31 is clear, "For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. **For this cause** shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife..." Simply put, marriage between one man and one woman is a picture of the relationship between Christ and His Church.

The roles of the husband and wife are the illustration of Christ's redemptive plan for man. The husband illustrates the loving leadership of Christ, and the wife illustrates the loving trust of believers in Christ. This truth is also taught in 1 Corinthians 11:3, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God." This verse suggests no such thing as inequality between Christ and God, but the willing subordination of the Son to the Father in the redemptive plan. Just as there is a testimony of loving leadership and loving trust in the Godhead, there is this same testimony in the home.

Think of it: no human being comes into this world that is not born into an illustration of God's redemptive plan. No matter what kind of spiritual darkness covers the cultures of the world, every living soul has, or has had, a human father and mother. No wonder Satan has targeted the family for destruction since the Garden of Eden. Paint an inaccurate picture, and the observer is likely not to recognize the real thing. Having perverted the Biblical plan for marriage, the forces of evil are now allied to institutionalize the perversion. We must not be distracted into thinking this is merely a debate about civil rights; it is a matter of defending the Gospel!

The illustration of the family is reinforced by an illustration in the Local Church. Baptists have historically held to a church polity based on two offices: Pastor and Deacons. Although other traditions may have some merit, the weight of biblical teaching on church polity is similar to that on the home. The two offices provide another illustration of loving leadership and loving trust. When these offices are properly pictured, they are helpful to both the Christian family and the community that need the Gospel. Evil pressures are just as strong and focused to pervert the Local Church as they are toward the family. Dictatorial pastors should not be surprised to find bullies at the head of homes. Rebellious leadership among the men of the church can well expect there to be rebellion in the homes.

Just as parents who violate their biblical roles influence their children to despise those roles and assume unbiblical attitudes and lifestyles, so it is in the Church. Pastors and deacons are in a powerful position to communicate truth, if they believe it and are committed to it. It has often been said that the Church has more influence on the culture than the culture on the Church. Liberation from the biblical role of the Church in its relationship to Christ preceded the "liberation" of women in the home. An apostate Church should not be surprised to find itself in an apostate society.

We will not change the minds of the spiritually blind through logic and the majority vote. This problem is an outcry for revival. We will never end the holocaust of abortion, the insanity of redefining marriage, or a host of other problems until we have a sane judiciary, which we will never have until we have a Congress with character, which we will never have without an electorate with principles. That will only come through evangelism and the regeneration of individuals.

God's redemptive plan includes two parties in a relationship: a Savior and a Believer; a loving Leader, and a trusting servant. Where better to present this Gospel in a convincing, well-illustrated way than from within the two places where God has built the illustration into the very structure itself: the Biblical home and the Fundamental Baptist Church.



DR. JOHN VAUGHN



# In Defense of Marriage

by Rick Cross

*M*arriage is the molecular structure of our civilization: it cannot be changed without destroying itself. Yet Christians are faced with an urgency to defend the Biblical definition of marriage under which our country has operated since its inception. The majority of people in our country desire to retain the definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman. Recent pro-homosexual marriage advocates have sought to negate the will of the people and redefine marriage by use of the courts. "If we accept judicial supremacy on the marriage question, we will probably end up with a judicially created and approved national marriage definition that redefines the institution in unisex terms."<sup>1</sup>

The federal constitutional amendment on marriage was an attempt to deal with an issue of which homosexual marriage is just a part. The question is not necessarily, "Shall we allow homosexual marriages?" but rather "Will we, as a nation, continue to be guided by the principles of a federated republic?" As a republic, we elect officials to represent us at a fed-

eral level. Will we continue to do this, or will we allow others to determine policy? We are discussing reconfiguring the foundation of our culture.

The attack on the Biblical definition of marriage should be no surprise. It is the logical result of major influences in our culture. The removal of Biblical code from the classrooms and the courtrooms caused some large cracks in the foundation of a strong nation. This fueled the concept that absolute truth was nonexistent. As a result, many today deny objective truth conclusions reached by either reason or divine revelation. If there is no absolute truth (the unchanging wisdom of God in Scripture), we are left to the only other alternative, the volatile wisdom of man. The logical progression is to exalt exclusive individualism—that is, the rights of the individual rise above everything else, including the voice of elected authorities, in establishing a moral and stable society. Without an objective standard of truth upon which to base society, the result is that persuasion will establish cultural directives.

A society is in great danger when it sets aside the Biblical concept of marriage. Today in Canada one cannot publicly criticize homosexuality. Because of

a "hate crimes" law that includes sexual orientation, even the quoting of Scriptures that condemn homosexuality can be illegal. Similar "hate crimes" legislation in Sweden resulted in a pastor being sentenced to thirty days in jail for preaching a sermon in which he said homosexuality is wrong. In our country, the recently proposed Kennedy-Smith "hate crimes" bill would give protected status to the homosexual lifestyle. Logically, once marriage is redefined as something other than a heterosexual union, the institution itself loses its meaning, and there is nothing to stop further redefinition but personal preferences. Once the Biblical standard of one-man, one-woman marriage is broken, there are no brakes.

There are tools that informed Christians can employ to defend the Biblical concept of marriage in society. The American tradition of federalism allows individual states to adopt differing policies but maintain the overall principles stated in the Constitution. There have been some victories recently with states overriding activist judges who played loosely with the marriage laws. These victories have sent loud messages to other states that liberal pressures do not need to be controlling factors. It is possible for the Supreme Court to override state policy. However, state policy could be instrumental in forming a Supreme Court decision. As Robert Bork says, "One

way or another, federalism is going to be overridden. The only question is whether the general rule will permit or prohibit marriage of same-sex couples."<sup>2</sup>

Another way is to keep same-sex "marriage" from spreading via the migration of couples from state to state demanding recognition of their same-sex vows. "The stated intention of homosexual activist groups is to use marriages issued in Massachusetts to infect every other state by virtue of the U.S. Constitution's 'Full Faith and Credit' clause. Therefore, in 1996, the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) defined marriage as being between one man and one woman in the eyes of the federal government and protected states from being forced to recognize policies of other states regarding same-sex couples."<sup>3</sup> "However, . . . the greatest federal judicial threat to DOMA springs . . . from the Supreme Court's evolving view of equal protection and personal liberty."<sup>4</sup> Legislation has been introduced which would limit the federal courts' ability to set a national precedent regarding marriage. The Marriage Protection Act removes jurisdiction from federal courts over issues pertaining to DOMA. "By implementing this legislative power, we can preserve each state's traditional right to determine its own marriage policies without federal court interference."<sup>5</sup>

Some are saying that the problem isn't the Constitution but the judiciary, which has exceeded its legal boundaries. What's the remedy? "The legislative and executive branches should simply treat judicial abuses of power as null and void and refuse to enforce them. After all, the other two branches are charged with defending the Constitution—and that doesn't mean enforcing unconstitutional whims of the courts."<sup>6</sup> "The legislative branch should also apply the ultimate sanction for abuses of power: removal from office. Grossly arrogant justices should be impeached."<sup>7</sup> This seems like a simple answer. However, getting full commitments from officials to impeach a justice would be just as difficult as broad acceptance of a constitutional amendment. Many elected officials are afraid of negative political consequences.

The Federal Marriage Amendment at this writing has just been defeated in the House. Although it was not perfect, it would have stopped "all other efforts to redefine marriage on a national scale."<sup>8</sup> There are still avenues available for individual states to pass marriage amendments. There are also Christian organizations that will be publicizing the names of politicians who voted against the FMA in an attempt to see them voted out of office and replaced with those who will defend marriage. Christians must support such efforts and let their voices be heard.

The United States government is unique in its principle of the "consent of the governed." The second paragraph of the United States Declaration of Independence contains these words:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.—That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the *consent of the governed*,—That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness.

Our nation's Founding Fathers knew very well what citizen life was like without a government that operated by "consent of the governed." The previous experience of the colonists was a government where "innumerable measures, including taxes, were passed by the British

Parliament, and the colonists had no input, no representatives to express their dissent, and no opportunity to do anything except obey the laws imposed upon them.” “Consent of the governed” determines that “the people subject to the laws are the ones who should make the laws, especially the basic constitutional rules by which they are governed.”<sup>10</sup>

The founders never meant for federal courts to turn into judicial tyrannies. In fact, Alexander Hamilton wrote in the *Federalist Papers* in 1788 that “The judiciary is beyond comparison the weakest of the three departments of power.’ He added that the constitutional powers granted to legislative and executive branches were checks against judicial ‘misconstructions.’”<sup>11</sup> The homosexual marriage issue has found a growing number of federal courts becoming “judicial tyrants, overturning laws passed by state legislatures and Congress and legislating a radical liberal agenda. This is not the proper role of judges. Their role is to interpret laws, not create them.”<sup>12</sup>

It is not the mission of the believer to reform society through governmental policies. Our confidence for the future is not found in politicians. Our discipleship mandate is to be aggressive ambassadors for the cause of Jesus Christ. However, we do live in this culture and must be salt and light as we influence those around us for our Lord. Even if some of the above tools would be effective in restraining the unbiblical directives so discussed,

“Christians face an uphill battle to change a culture that demands universal tolerance and promotes feel-good sexuality. You can try to kill a weed by cutting off the visible part. But until you’ve treated the root, the same problem will emerge later.”<sup>13</sup> The answer to these issues remains the proclaiming of the gospel of Jesus Christ to a spiritually dead population and the heart change that results from accepting the free gift of eternal life.

Rick Cross pastors Faith Baptist Church in Longmont, Colorado.

<sup>1</sup> “Saving Marriage,” Joshua Baker and Maggie Gallagher, July 12, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> “Stop Courts from Imposing Gay Marriage,” Wall Street Journal, Aug. 7, 2001, A-14.

<sup>3</sup> “DOMA Won’t Do It: Why the Constitution Must Be Amended to Save Marriage,” Professor Gerard Bradley, et al.

<sup>4</sup> “Saving Marriage.”

<sup>5</sup> “Protecting Marriage by Constraining the Courts,” U.S. Rep. John Hostettler, October 17, 2003.

<sup>6</sup> “The Amendment Strategy,” Joseph Sobran, July 15, 2004

<sup>7</sup> “The Amendment Strategy.”

<sup>8</sup> “Like It or Not . . . The Marriage Amendment Is the Democratic Way,” Senator Orrin G. Hatch

<sup>9</sup> “The Jeffersonian Perspective: Majority Rule & Consent of the Governed,” Eyler Robert Coates Sr., 1996.

<sup>10</sup> “Amendment Best Response.”

<sup>11</sup> “Protecting Marriage.”

<sup>12</sup> “It’s Time To End Judicial Tyranny,” Rev. Louis P. Sheldon.

<sup>13</sup> “The Prohibition of Gay Marriage.”

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# A Biblical Perspective On Marriage



**David Pennington**

*J*n a day when the definition of marriage is debated, one has to determine what constitutes a marriage. Can a marriage occur between two women or two men?

Is it really necessary for people to marry? Why can't they just live together? What is a marriage anyway?

If someone asked a group of people to share their opinions regarding the subject of marriage, he would likely receive almost as many opinions as the number of people he asks. People primarily base their opinions upon their experiences or feelings. This article, however, seeks to discern what the Bible teaches regarding the subject of marriage. Not everyone will agree with its teachings. But no human has the authority to alter its teachings. Mankind can only receive or reject what God teaches in the Bible.

## **Origin of Marriage**

The first recorded marriage occurred between Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. After creating man, God concluded it was not good for Adam to be alone (Gen. 2:18). So He made from man a woman (Gen. 2:21-23). He brought Adam and Eve together, and they became "one flesh" (Gen. 2:23-24). Notice God brought Adam, a male, and Eve, a female, together. In doing so, the Lord revealed His plan for mankind. Obviously, He could have created another male for Adam. However, He did not do so. He chose to create a woman to be a helpmate to Adam. Eve became Adam's completer. Neil T. Anderson and Charles Mylander write, "The woman is honored by the acknowledgement that the man is incomplete without her. In humility, the woman acknowledges that she was made for man. In humility, the

man acknowledges that he is incomplete without the woman. Both share an equal dignity, honor and worth because of their created purpose; both share a common humility and honor before God and each other. Each is necessary for the completion of the other. Both absolutely need God, and both necessarily need each other. They are created to live in an interdependent relationship with each other, and a mutually dependent relationship with God" (*The Christ Centered Marriage*, p. 25).

## **Definition of Marriage**

How one defines marriage has become increasingly important in today's culture, primarily because there are those in today's culture who seek to alter what constitutes a marriage. Within the last year, numerous women desiring to "marry" women and men desiring to "marry" men have said their vows to each other, declaring to the world that they are "married." Because of the aggressiveness of the homosexual community, there may be a day in America when such "marriages" are nationally recognized. But one must ask himself, will God ever recognize such "marriages"? Not according to the Bible. A simple, honest evaluation of the Bible clearly reveals that God defines a marriage as the uniting of one man with one woman. Marriage is actually a covenant with God and to each other to give oneself without reserve to his or her spouse. No where in the Bible does God allow or encourage a woman to marry another woman or a man to marry another man. In fact, one finds numerous passages where such behavior is condemned. For example, one classic passage in Paul's Epistle to the Romans describes homosexual passion as that which is unnatural and the result of mankind's rejection of God (Rom. 1:27). The Bible also addresses the subject of fornication. While the

term “fornication” is a broad term that prohibits a number of sexual sins, it certainly prohibits men and women living together without being married. First Thessalonians 4:3 reads, “For this is the will of God, *even* your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication.” The Bible also prohibits adultery. Although adultery has become an acceptable sin in today’s culture, the Word of God is very clear about God’s disapproval of such wickedness. Hebrews 13:4 reads, “Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.”

Unfortunately, mankind chooses to reject God’s revelation about marriage. Some in society seek to rid themselves of God’s constraints and force today’s culture to accept their sinful desires as a societal normative. Sadly, such individuals label those who seek to follow God’s divine plan for marriage as divisive, unloving, bigoted, and even hateful. Yet, to reject God’s Word is to violate His very character or nature. He is “holy,” and He desires for all who call upon His name to be “holy” (1 Pet. 1:16).

How should God’s people respond to the emphasis of their contemporary culture? Should they accept the “marriage” of two males or two females? Should they accept fornication and adultery as a cultural normative? Not if they seek to please God. The immoral homosexual and heterosexual communities must understand that believers do not make the “rules,” they simply obey them. The immoral community’s animosity towards those who reject homosexual “marriages” or adulterous relationships is misdirected. It should be aimed at God. After all, He makes the “rules.”

Believers who disagree with society’s immorality, however, should have compassion toward those who seek to find happiness in relationships that displease God. After all, such happiness is illusive. The only hope for any man or woman is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and obedience to God’s divine revelation, the Bible.

## **Permanence of Marriage**

From the beginning, God’s intentions were for one man to marry one woman for life. Their marriage forms a human picture of Christ’s relationship with His church (Eph. 5:32). Mankind has distorted this picture through divorce. While there are times when spouses are unfaithful and even abusive, most divorces occur because people are selfish and unforgiving. Difficulties develop between a husband and a wife, and one if not both members of the marriage choose to sever their marital relationship in divorce. In fact, many people in today’s culture have been married multiple times. Sadly, divorce rates have skyrocketed among the saved and unsaved alike. People often enter into new marital relationships without ever truly resolving past difficulties. No wonder their new marriages often end up in a divorce court. There is little forgiveness, and reconciliation is rarely even considered.

## **Insights on Marriage**

Throughout the Bible God provides numerous insights for developing a “one-flesh” relationship. One of the most important insights concerns the need for a husband and a wife to leave their parental ties in order to form a new marital unit (Gen. 2:24). It is not coincidental that the Lord provides this insight in connection with the first marriage.

Interestingly, neither Adam nor Eve had parents. Yet, in anticipation of future concerns, God gives very specific instruction regarding the need for couples to “leave and cleave.” Upon marriage, the focus of the man and the woman must shift from their personal family to their new marital unit. Their focus must be upon each other, even when children enter the home. Marriage is a lifelong commitment to each other. Nothing should create a breach between a husband and his wife.

A second major insight involves the role God gives to each marriage partner. For example, God has declared man as the “head” of his home (Eph. 5:23). Headship never included unchecked authority or dictatorial power. Every man has numerous authorities: civil, religious, and divine. However, someone has to direct the family. God has chosen for man to do so. Sadly, many men fail to fulfill this important responsibility in their homes. Some men focus upon indulging their children and wives rather than leading them in the ways of the Lord. In contrast, God has given a wife the role of supporting her husband’s leadership. Her support includes having input into marital or family decisions. In fact, a wise husband will greatly involve his wife in decisions regularly. Remember, she is his completer. She brings a perspective to their relationship that he will often overlook. They are a team, but each team member has a specific role.

A third insight concerns responsibilities. A husband has responsibility to love, protect, and provide for his wife. His love is to be sacrificial (Eph. 5:25, 28). He is to unselfishly give himself to his wife. He is to protect her. Such protection includes physical, emotional, and spiritual protection. Certainly, this does not mean she is inept or incapable of caring for herself. However, when God provides a husband for a woman she should rejoice in God’s protective design. Such protection should not be rejected or resented. She should rejoice in the care God provides for her through marriage. A husband should also provide for his wife and family. Such provision has become more difficult in today’s society. Many wives work outside the home to meet the financial demands of life. A husband is wise to realize that women who work outside the home really have two “jobs.” Managing a home is really a “fulltime” job that can be easily overlooked. In contrast, God has given some specific responsibilities to the wife. God asks her to support and respect her husband. Supporting him includes the place of honor she gives him in her life and their home. She is to exercise respect towards her husband, even though at times he may not deserve such respect.

God has a perspective on marriage that He clearly communicates in the Bible. Cultures may change, opinions may vary, but individuals who honestly research what God’s Word teaches regarding marriage will come away with a clear understanding of God’s ways. The real issue in today’s culture does not center in understanding what God teaches about marriage. It centers in man’s willingness to obey God’s teachings. With today’s culture constantly bombarding them with unbiblical thinking and practices, pastors need to commit themselves afresh to study and teach God’s perspective on marriage.

Dr. David P. Ennington pastors Burge Terrace Baptist Church in Indianapolis, Indiana

A color photograph showing two men in a river. The man on the left, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and dark trousers, is standing in the water, holding the other man's head above the surface. The man on the right is wearing a light-colored t-shirt and dark trousers, with his eyes closed as he is being baptized. The background shows a grassy bank and some trees.

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# Adoption:

## The Precious Truth of Belonging



A reader might be tempted to quickly gloss over a list of technical terms that relate to our salvation: justification, sanctification, conversion, repentance, election, adoption, perseverance (or was it preservation?). The list may appear to be

tedious. Perhaps we should just thank God we are saved. Why make this precious truth any more complicated? Each of these technical terms, however, describes a precious facet of our salvation. As men of God studied, they classified some of this richness with terms that will reward today's diligent students. The study of adoption will yield a deeper appreciation for our God and His salvation. Having experienced the joys of spiritual and physical adoption, I hope to illuminate the Biblical adoption with personal illustrations to make our understanding more joyous.

### **Adoption Moves Us with God's Planning**

I can remember sitting across from our doctor and hearing the stark reality: the probability that we would never be able to have children. Since there is always room for error, I held tenaciously to the fallibility of diagnoses. I had been raised to believe that when things became difficult, you could always do something about

it. By sheer determination you could will your desires into reality. After all, Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel, Manoah and his wife, Elkanah and Hannah, and Zechariah and Elizabeth—all of them were able to arrive at happy endings. Certainly it would be no different for us. It took me much longer than it took my wife to see and accept the gracious inheritance offered to us.

The term used for adoption is the Greek *huióthesia*. Both Thayer and BAGD divide the concept of adoption into three distinct usages. The first usage is the election of Israel. In Romans 9:4 Paul writes, "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the **adoption**, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." The thrust of the text is that God had chosen His people, but they had rejected Him. Adoption describes that act of grace whereby God chooses for Himself those who are undeserving. Verses four and five demonstrate why Israel's failure is relevant. They had been given a tremendous opportunity, but they failed to see the benefits of the adoption that they possessed.<sup>1</sup>

Modern adoption is much different from the ancient adoptions (from which we should gain our understanding of Paul's use in Scripture).<sup>2</sup> Childless couples would frequently adopt an adult male. This was a business

arrangement. The adopted son would become heir to the aging couple, but he was to discharge his duties of care and service. In this we learn that adoption is born in the heart of the adopting parents. It was often their need or their desire that initiated adoption. Since God has never needed anything, our adoption was motivated by His desire. Our adoption was initiated by our Heavenly Father.

In our family, we have adopted two children. While we acknowledge God chose them for us, we also realize that we chose them as well. One daughter was adopted from an orphanage in the Ukraine. There were so many children. Yet when we met Amanda, we knew that God had brought us together. While our adoption of Christina was under different circumstances, the principle of choice was just as applicable. It is a great comfort to know that God has initiated our adoption. He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world.

### **Adoption Blesses Us with a New Relationship**

The second way that *huióthesia* is used is to describe "those that turn to Christianity and are accepted by God as his sons."<sup>3</sup> Romans 8:15 teaches, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." When we compare this with Galatians 4:4, 5, we see the bondage to fear is a clear reference to the hopelessness and condemnation that is found under the Law. Hendrickson explains that being "under the Law" was not just an issue of Old Testament economy, but that being under the Law implied a complete inability to meet the Law's requirements.<sup>4</sup> The blessing of adoption is not simply the removal from an economy of condemnation, but the placing of the adopted child into an economy of grace; greater yet, an economy of acceptance and love. Second Corinthians 8:9 teaches the blessedness of this arrangement: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." The riches addressed in this verse are not simply the riches of heaven, but all the riches that accompany the given title "child of the King." The Scripture indicates that in the glorification of Christ, He will put all things under His feet. Yet the believer has been made by adoption a joint-heir with Jesus Christ. "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."<sup>5</sup> The believer is given more than a hope of inheritance, though an inheritance is certainly one of the adopted son's privileges (Col. 3:24; 1 Pet. 1:4). He is given a family. "Through adoption into the filial relationship between Jesus as the Son and God as his Father, believers all share alike in the new family of

God. Within the body of Christ, each person has full parity, a full share of the blessings of the covenant, as brother and sister to Jesus and to one another."<sup>6</sup> It would have been possible to have been pardoned and justified without being adopted. Nothing but the love of God compelled Him to bring believers into His family. In physical adoption a child is chosen that might fill or fulfill a family. But in spiritual adoption, the one being adopted brings nothing to the table. The entire process is a measure of God's grace. As J. I. Packer points out, this family relationship is one of two elements that are given as measuring devices of the love of God. The first way to measure God's love is by what He did on the cross (Rom. 5:8; 1 John 4:8–10). The second is found in 1 John 3:1, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."<sup>7</sup> The adoption of the believer gives him the confidence to come into God's presence (Eph. 3:12; Heb. 10:19–22). John 1:12 says; "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

### **Adoption Guarantees to Us a Wonderful Future**

Adopted children can sometimes feel insecure. Will some other bad thing happen, and will they lose this set of parents too? But adopted children can feel just as secure as natural children. In the ancient adoption practices, as well as the present, the adopted child cannot be disinherited. In both of our adoptions, the presiding judges reminded us that adoption is permanent. Once we adopted our child, we could not remove that child from our family.

The third way that *huióthesia* is used is in reference to a future aspect of man's redemption. The first reference looked back upon God's kindness to Israel. In the second aspect there is the present reality of the redeemed. While the believer possesses his right as an adopted son, there remains a future work as well. This reflects the culture of Paul's day. Often a wealthy family would adopt simply to have someone to whom they could bequeath their goods. This is why the adoption of sons corresponded with the making of a will.<sup>8</sup> Those who have experienced the physical concept of adoption today can relate well with the "already—not yet" concept of adoption. Today, children are given, in some cases, into the custody of the adoptive parents before the adoption is finalized, but there remains more work before the adoption can be final. In much the same way, the Holy Spirit is granted to the believer as a seal of the authenticity of the transaction (Eph. 1:13, 14; 4:30). Yet, like those who wait for the legal requirements to be completed, so the believer waits for the full redemption of his body at the coming of the Lord. In the meantime, the adopted child of God, by the Spirit, learns to call God his Father. So it is in waiting for legal finalization. The child takes his place in the home learn-

ing and growing into his new status as a member of the family. Romans 8:23 says, "And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Unlike the literal human adoption process, the seal of the Holy Spirit is sufficient to guarantee the veracity of the adoption. None of God's adoptions ever fall through.

Dr. Robert Condict pastors Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church in Baldwin, Maryland.

<sup>1</sup> For an excellent treatise on this text, see Thomas Schreiner's comments in the *Baker Exegetical Commentary of the New Testament*, pages 476–90.

<sup>2</sup> One of the best historical and cultural studies that this author has found on the nature of adoption in ancient cultures is William Barclay's *Letter to the Romans*, pages 109–112.

<sup>3</sup> Walter A. Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 833.

<sup>4</sup> William Hendrickson, *New Testament Commentary: Expositions of Galatians and Ephesians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), 160.

<sup>5</sup> Romans 8:15–17, AV.

<sup>6</sup> Beth Spring, "When the Dream Child Dies," *Christianity Today*, August 7, 1987, 28.

<sup>7</sup> J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1973), 214.

<sup>8</sup> For a discussion on the legal nature of adoption, see Kittle's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, page 398.



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# Encouraging Those on the Frontline

**Bob Ellis**

*A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver. . . As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country.*

Proverbs 25:11, 25

Everyone in a distant and strange place, even under the best circumstances, longs for news and encouragement—and rejoices when it arrives. Imagine the loneliness and homesickness of being in a foreign country with many people and yet at the same time alone. Add to that being on a battlefield in a desert in the summer when temperatures are in triple digits. According to Chaplain Gary Fisher, one troop commander describes it this way: "Being in Iraq in the summer is like being stuck in an oven on broil, and just for fun, someone every so often opens the door and throws sand in your face." Many American military personnel, including chaplains, are in such a place this holiday season.

The FBFI Commission on Chaplains, in partnership with Fundamental Baptist churches, has sent military chaplains to serve and minister in distant and often dangerous places. FBFI-endorsed chaplains are godly, dedicated, and faithful men who are serving God and their country with distinction, men who deserve and need the prayers and encouragement of God's people.

The holiday season provides an opportunity for Christians to be a blessing to our military personnel serving at home and on the frontline. Individuals, families, churches or church groups (Sunday School classes, senior saints, a group of veterans), or Christian schools can use the following suggestions as instruments of encouragement and help to FBFI chaplains.

## Care Packages

Using shoeboxes, make care packages. The U.S. Postal Service will provide free shipping boxes. They can be ordered at [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com). One box should be marked for

the chaplain you or your group chooses. All other boxes should be gift-wrapped and marked male or female. Fill each box and pack it so that the items will not move and be damaged. Send all the boxes to the chaplain or chaplains you chose. The chaplain will give the boxes to military personnel of his choice. It takes up to a month for overseas military personnel to receive packages. Include your name and address as well as the name, address, and phone number of the pastor and the church. If your church has a web page, include the web address.

## Chaplains Deployed Overseas

Chaplain (CAPT) Gary Fisher  
Deployed until February '05  
HHT 1-4 CAV CMR 464  
Box 201  
APO AE 09226-0201

Chaplain (CAPT) Roger Rodriguez  
Deployed until April '05  
HHC 2BN 5INF  
APO AE 09355-9998

Chaplain (LTJG) Richard Wiese  
Deployed until June '05  
1 / 4 H&S Chaplain's Office  
UIC 40250  
FPO AP 96613-0250

Chaplain (MAJ) George Youstra Jr.  
Deployed until July '05  
8FW HC PSC2  
Box 2878  
APO AP 96264-0025

## Suggested Items

### Written materials

A note of encouragement giving brief information about you or your family, Sunday School class, school class, or group. An attractive gospel tract that gives the

plan of salvation, a copy of John/Romans combination, a small pocket-size New Testament.

DO NOT send any materials that criticize the Muslim religion.

#### Personal items

Practical, durable items such as a toothbrush, toothpaste, stick deodorant, disposable razors, shaving gel, shampoo, bars of soap, a comb, a hairbrush, lotion, lip balm, and so on. Items such as shampoo and lotion that might leak should be put in a sealable plastic bag.

#### Food items

Chewing gum, canned nuts, individually wrapped pieces of hard candy, and so on. Do not send items that will melt, spoil, or become stale.

#### Chaplains Stationed in the USA

Please send these men cards and letters only. Introduce yourself and your family. Include the name of your church. Classes and groups—several or all members should write a note. Keep it upbeat. The purpose is to encourage.

Chaplain (CAPT) Mike Shellman  
8230 Foxtrail Drive  
Fayetteville, NC 28311

Chaplain (CAPT) Greg Odiorne  
1179 Blankshire Road  
Fayetteville, NC 28314

Chaplain (CAPT) Brian Palmer  
111 Austree Drive  
Columbia, SC 29229

Chaplain (LTJG) Daniel Hall  
3545 Sunbird Way  
San Diego, CA 02124

Chaplain (LT) Daniel Owens  
3525 Scamp Street  
San Diego, CA 92124

#### FBFI Chaplains

FBFI-endorsed chaplains are among the best educated and most dedicated chaplains in our Armed Forces. Your participation in project "Encouraging Those on the Frontline" will enable them to minister in another way, thereby, opening the door for witnessing. All will be very thankful for your concern and effort in helping to encourage and reach those to whom they minister. If they could speak with you personally, their request would be "Brethren, pray for us" (1 Thess. 5:25).

Bro. Bob Ellis is the National Field Representative for the FBFI Commission on Chaplains. He and his wife travel extensively promoting the FBFI chaplaincy ministry in Fundamental Christian colleges and seminaries. He is also available to speak in churches and can be reached at (850) 261-6647.

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**C**remation is becoming increasingly popular. According to statistics published at [www.cremationchicago.com](http://www.cremationchicago.com), just over 21% of America's deceased will be cremated this year. In 1900 there were 20 crematories in America, and by 1913 (when the Cremation Society of America was established) there were 50 crematories, cremating 10,000 bodies. Today, there are 425 American crematories, cremating over 150,000 bodies. Presently, the remains of 1 in 5 Americans will be cremated, and by 2025 it is expected that half of all who die in America will be cremated.



**Charles Phelps**

### **There are many reasons for the increasing popularity of cremation.**

Cremation is far less expensive than a traditional burial. With cremation being offered at \$1,500 and traditional burial averaging over \$7,000, there is money to be saved.

Cremation is more convenient than embalming and burying. Since there is no need for a "timely interment," mourners are afforded greater flexibility when making plans for memorial services.

Cremation is preferred over customary burial for ecological and environmental reasons. Some cremation advocates argue that we will "run out of room for cemeteries someday" and believe that the environment is safeguarded when embalming chemicals are abandoned and decomposing flesh is kept out of the earth.

Though I am typically inclined to choose that which is practical and (especially!) affordable, I believe that it is best to choose that which is most Biblical. On the matter of cremation, I believe that the Christian is best advised to choose "No." Will you take the time to consider the matter with me?

### **The Origins of Cremation**

Cremation is not new. For centuries American Indians, Hindus, Buddhists, and others far removed from the Revelation of God's Word have blackened the skies by burning the bodies of their dead. When deciding upon cremation, it is appropriate to ask, "What are the origins of this practice? Am I comfortable being identified with this tradition?"

### **Cremation's Origins**

Cremation can be traced as far back as 3000 B.C. (the "Stone Age") in Europe and the Near East ([www.cremationchicago.com](http://www.cremationchicago.com)). The Ancient Greek armies cremated their dead to keep their enemies from desecrating the bodies of the fallen ([www.newadventure.org](http://www.newadventure.org)). Also, because the Greeks were dualistic, they felt that the release of the pure spirit from the evil body was expedited by cremation. Slavic tribes along the Dniester and Dnieper River Valleys of Russia practiced cremation during the Neolithic era. Potteries containing cremated remains have been found in Bohemia, Moravia, Central Germany, Hungary, and Great Britain ([www.thelutheran.org](http://www.thelutheran.org)).

The *Encyclopedia Britannica* (15<sup>th</sup> Edition, p. 776) reports that pagan Scandinavians favored cremation, believing it helped free the spirit from the flesh and also that it kept the dead from harming the living. These pagan practices paralleled the cremations during the Greek and Roman eras.

### **Modern Cremation**

Professor Brunetti of Italy designed and displayed his cremation chamber or "retort" at the Vienna exposition in

1873. The Brunetti Chamber burns the body at temperatures in excess of 1500 degrees Fahrenheit for approximately three hours. The four-to-six pounds of bone fragments that remain are pulverized and boxed.

The first Brunetti Chamber was installed in Washington, Pennsylvania, in 1876. The first American cremation was accompanied by readings from Charles Darwin and from the Hindu scriptures as the atheistic owner of the crematories went about his business (*Christianity Today*, May 21, 2002, p. 66). (It would seem appropriate that the Hindu scriptures were read. Modern Hindus continue to cremate and often sprinkle the remains along the Ganges in hopes of allowing for a faster reincarnation of the spirit.)

### **The Biblical Record**

Dignified care for the body of departed loved ones is pictured throughout the Bible.

Abraham demonstrated greater concern for the proper burial of his dear wife, Sarah, than he did for the financial sacrifice that was incurred to buy the cave of Machpelah (Genesis 23). Jacob was willing to move to Egypt from the Promised Land only after his sons promised to bury him in the cave where his father and mother were interred. The funeral trip was arduous for the children of Jacob, but as they carried the mortal remains of their father, they were reminded that Jacob had been created in the image of God (Genesis 2:7). With every step that Jacob's sons took, they were reminded of the fact that they marched to graves of their own.

The dignified care of the bodies of loved ones displayed in the pages of the Old Testament continues in the pages of the New Testament. John the Baptist, Lazarus, Stephen, and our Lord were all buried by friends who willingly sacrificed time, treasure, and tears. Those of us who find pleasure in the giving of gifts would do well to consider how important it is to care for the bodies of our loved ones and follow the example of Joseph of Arimethea who cared for the Lord. (Matt. 27:59, 60)

The New Testament teaches us that burial presents a picture. The burial of a body is like the planting of a seed (1 Cor. 15). Both activities require faith. The farmer plants his seeds hoping for a harvest. We who remain plant "not that body that shall be, but bare grain . . . But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him" (1 Cor. 15:37, 38). The blood of Christ has bought the terrestrial

body of a Christian (1 Cor. 6:20). One day, the soul that has been saved by the sacrifice of Christ will wear a celestial body that has been prepared in the heavens for him (2 Cor. 5:1-9). Since the Scriptures show us the portrait presented in burial, we should be careful to allow the world to look at the picture as it is framed by an open grave.

The catacombs of the early church bear silent witness to the faith of those who planted the precious remains of those who went before them. After our spiritual ancestors wrapped the bodies of their loved ones in burial clothing, they laid them in places that they knew in Greek to be *coemeteria* or "sleeping places."

There are those who say, "The Bible really doesn't talk about cremation." Such a statement is not necessarily accurate. The residents of Sodom and Gomorrah were cremated (Gen. 19). Nadab and Abihu were cremated (Lev. 10). Achan and his family were cremated (Josh. 7). Cremation was the penalty imposed upon those who participated in certain forms of immorality (Lev. 20:14; 21:9). The Moabites were promised the judgment of God because they cremated the bones of the King of Edom (Amos 2:1, 2), and Saul was partially cremated after he committed suicide (1 Sam. 31). It is better to say, "The Bible doesn't speak positively about cremation."

In a culture that diminishes the value of life, it should not surprise us to find that little dignity is demonstrated toward the dead. Jay Meader, a columnist for the *New York Daily News*,

reported that the government of Sweden has entered into the cremation business. "Dead people are heating thousands of homes in Sweden. Their posthumous candlepower is piped to local energy companies from the ovens of two high-tech crematoriums." "It's only sensible!" argues Helsingborg crematorium official Borje Stolt. "It's environmentally friendly! And relatives can console themselves that the death of a loved one benefits the whole community! ... We just can't afford to be sentimental about this!"

Borje Stolt is right. The Christian community cannot afford to be "sentimental" about this. Neither can believers afford to be unscriptural about this. The Scriptures are clear—bury, don't burn!

Dr. Charles Phelps pastors Trinity Baptist Church in Concord, New Hampshire. Pastor Phelps notes that he will participate in funerals when cremation has been chosen.

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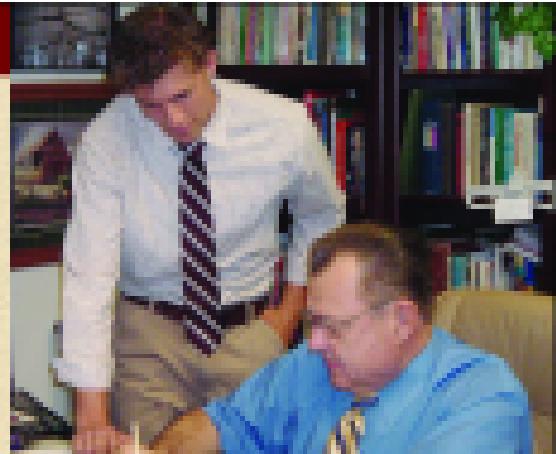
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# SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

## First Partaker

### New Year's Counsel

For many years a man in my church has come in for a kind of spiritual checkup during the first few weeks of every new January. A pastor would be swamped impossibly if very many folks tried to schedule something like this at that time, but I've always admired this brother's wisdom in seeking counsel for approaching a new year.

What would it be like to have the opportunity to start a new year with seasoned advice from several devoted Christian leaders all at once? What if you could get as many as a dozen or so of them all together in a room for a joint consultation on your needs? What verses would they call to your attention? What comments would they make? What warnings? What assistance? What direction?

I thought I'd find out by turning to some of our treasured daily devotionals. Probably no one knows who the first to print such a book was. I've tried unsuccessfully to discover the answer. But what I do know is that daily devotionals are widely read. *Our Daily Bread*, the monthly devotional first written by M. R. DeHaan and published ever since by Radio Bible Class, has a circulation of 800,000. The number of copies of Oswald Chambers' *My Utmost for His Highest* is in the millions.

Through the years I've accumulated a shelf-full of such devotionals. Right now I'm enjoying *The One Year Book of Christian History*, which provides a story from Church history for every day of the year. I don't think I've ever completely finished a daily devotional, but most have had many blessed entries, and I've been happy to recommend them, albeit with the caution that we must not be satisfied with someone else's

"devoting" in place of our own.

The unique value of a devotional is that it's giving you the daily counsel of a trusted Christian leader. In other words, the impact is not so much in *what* is being said but in *who* is saying it.

So here's some of the best New Year's counsel that I've been able to gather from Christian leaders. Some are household names. Others are lesser known. But all contribute something of a high spiritual caliber that is worthy of consideration as we open the door to *anno Domini* 2005.

*Teach us to number our days* (Ps. 90:12). "An American urged a friend of his who had just arrived in this country from Thailand, 'Quick, let's run to catch this bus!' Once inside, the happy American said, 'We have gained three minutes.' The Thai asked, 'What do you intend to do with them?'

"Men in advanced Western countries have no answer to this question. Our generation has forgotten how to walk. It knows only how to run and to drive.

"We run to save minutes and squander what we have saved in unworthy activities, conversation and amusements. . . . A man who has lived seventy years will answer before God for thirty-seven million minutes."

~Richard Wurmbrand, *Reaching Toward the Heights*

"This is the beginning of the months, and God gives me a fresh start. He says, 'Behind you the road has many places where you have failed. Your memories are not sweet as I meant them to be. But, behold, I make all things new. . . . I send you to the untried experiences in front, pardoned, hallowed, armed in the panoply of heaven.'

"Since He crowns me so with His kindness, let me return the response He craves. New reverence of His

**"The husbandman  
that laboreth must  
be first partaker  
of the fruits"  
(2 Tim. 2:6)**

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sanctity, new gratitude for His tenderness, new trust in His supply: these be the feelings of my soul. New delight in prayer, new earnestness in studying the Word, new waiting for the unction of the Spirit: these be my exercise when I am with my Father. New brightness in my look, new certainty in my testimony, a new beauty of the Lord about my conduct: these be the lineaments of my life.” ~Alexander Smellie, *In the Hour of Silence*

*This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, . . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:13, 14).*

~*Daily Light*

“We can all start afresh! However far we have ascended, there is something higher; and however far we have fallen, it is always possible to make a fresh start. We need to take our place in the School of Christ and be taught by Him (Eph. 4:20–21). If the Holy Spirit be ungrieved, He will witness to our sonship; He will enthroned Christ as King of our life; He will keep the self-life in the place of death; He will give us a hunger for the things of God; He will give power in witness-bearing. In order to have a strong and blessed Christian experience, the one thing is to see that we do not grieve the Spirit. I do not think that we can grieve Him away, but we may greatly limit and restrain His gracious work by insincerity of speech, the nursing of an unforgiving spirit, any kind of over-reaching or fraudulent dealing, impurity of speech, or failure in love. We may be bound, so as not to be able to move our arms, by a number of cotton threads, quite as tightly as by a strong rope-thong. Let us take care not to grieve Him by such inconsistencies.”

~F. B. Meyer, *Our Daily Walk*

“Let us begin the year with solemn reflection—and say, with Job, ‘When a few years are come, I shall go the way whence I shall not return.’ Let me not only believe this; but think of it, and feel the importance of the sentiment. Yes, in a little time I shall be no more seen. How—where—shall I be disposed of? The seasons will return as before, but the places that now know me, will know me no more forever.

“Let us begin the year with self-inspection—and say, with the chief butler, ‘I do remember my faults this day.’ . . . Let us be open to conviction. Let us deal faithfully with our own hearts. Let us not compare ourselves with others, and especially the more vile; but with our advantages; with our knowledge; with our professions; with the law of God.

“Let us begin the year with a determination to abandon whatever appears sinful—and say, with Elihu, ‘If I have done iniquity, I will do no more.’

“Begin the year with fresh concern to be useful, and ask, with Saul of Tarsus, ‘Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?’ Let me look at my condition, my resources, my

opportunities. How can I glorify God, and promote the welfare of my fellow creatures?

“Begin the year with more conduct in the arrangement of your affairs—and resemble Ezra and his brethren, who ‘did according to the custom, as the duty of every day required.’ God has said, ‘Let everything be done decently and in order.’ Much of your comfort will arise from regularity in your meals, in your devotions, in your callings, and your piety will be aided by it.

“Finally. Time, this short, this uncertain, this all-important time, upon every instant of which eternity depends, will not allow of our trifling away any of its moments. Resolve, therefore, to redeem it. Gather up its fragments, that nothing be lost.”

~William Jay, *Morning Exercises*

*Choose you this day whom ye will serve (Josh. 24:15).* “One thing is certain, that if you desire improvement in anything, it will never come to you accidentally. It must begin in a distinct, resolved purpose to make a change for the better. I call on you to give this day to a serious review of your life, of what you have been living for, and of what you purpose henceforth to live for.

“Carry no bad habits, no corrupting associations, no enmities and strifes, into this new year. Leave these behind, and let the dead Past bury its dead; leave them behind, and thank God that you are able to leave them.”

~Ephraim Peabody, *Between the Lights*  
(compiled by Fanny B. Bates)

*Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind (Rom. 12:2).* “Non-conformity to the world and its ways, transformation through a new mind, these are the ideals with which Paul confronts the Romans as he pleads for their surrender to God. At the beginning of another year we may well face this earnest exhortation and ask ourselves a few direct questions. Are we prepared to be non-conformists, conscientious objectors to the world? Are we willing to be thought different, to stand alone for the sake of Christ? Is our great heart hunger for complete transformation into the image of Christ? Above all, do we really want a renewed mind, an outlook upon life that is steadily less of the world and more of Christ?”

~Frank Ely Gaebelein, *Looking Unto Him*

*My earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed. . . .* “We will all feel very much ashamed if we do not yield to Jesus the areas of our lives He has asked us to yield to Him. It’s as if Paul were saying, ‘My determined purpose is to be my utmost for His highest—my best for His glory.’ To reach that level of determination is a matter of the will, not of debate or of reasoning. It is absolute and irrevocable surrender of the will at that point. An undue amount of thought and consider-

ation for ourselves is what keeps us from making that decision, although we cover it up with the pretense that it is others we are considering. When we think seriously about what it will cost others if we obey the call of Jesus, we tell God He doesn't know what our obedience will mean. Keep to the point—He does know. Shut out every other thought and keep yourself before God in this one thing only—my utmost for His highest. I am determined to be absolutely and entirely for Him and Him alone."

~Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*

*The inner man is renewed from day to day* (2 Cor. 4:16). "There is one lesson that all young Christians should learn, namely this—the absolute necessity of fellowship with Jesus each day. . . . Many Christians backslide because this truth is not clearly taught. . . . They strive to do their best to fight against sin, and to serve God, but they have no strength. They have never really grasped the secret: *The Lord Jesus will every day* from heaven continue His work in me. But on one condition—*the soul must give Him time each day* to impart His love and His grace. Time alone with the Lord Jesus each day is the indispensable condition of growth and power." ~Andrew Murray, *God's Best Secrets*

"Welcome every new circumstance, O follower of Christ, confirming upon you those habits which help men to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord. And since a New Year spreads out its fair pages, waiting the record of your hand, RESOLVE THAT YOU WILL KNOW GOD'S WORD!"

Make up your mind that you are going to memorize it 'with a comma accuracy.'

"Let text after text sift down into the very fibre of memory until at last it will be no labor to quote the Bible—thy tongue shall give forth His sentences with the same effortless abandon as the fountains and depths that spring out of the valleys and hills!"

~Richard Ellsworth Day, *The Borrowed Glow*

*On the first day of the month were the tops of the mountains seen* (Gen. 8:5). "This verse has a unique applicability to the first day of a new year. The 'tenth month' here corresponds with our January; so the 'first day' is our January first. What an exhilarating discovery were those uncovered mountain-tops that first day! The flood was declining. God had not 'forgotten to be gracious.'

"Those mountain-tops speak to us on the first day of this year. What will the new year bring of joy, or sorrow, achievement or frustration, health or sickness, good or ill? We cannot foresee what darksome vales or verdant plains or surprise vistas the unfolding months may unveil. Yet if we are truly Christ's, we are not in total obscurity. Up from the unknown, misty morrows, cer-

tain grand securities stand out in advance view.

"Some of the Lord's people live, as it were, in the basement of the ark, in the twilight of a faith which is never quite sure. They lie against the ribs of the ship, hearing the thud of the waters, and nervously asking whether the ark can survive the strain. . . . This is a joy-killing suspense. Fellow-believer, as the new year comes in, climb the ark! Gaze out from the higher places, with 'assurance of faith.' Lo, the 'tops of the mountains!'"

~J. Sidlow Baxter, *Awake My Heart*

*Day by day, and with each passing moment,  
Strength I find, to meet my trials here.  
Trusting in my Father's wise bestowment,  
I've no cause for worry or for fear.*

*He whose heart is kind beyond all measure,  
Gives unto each day what He deems best.  
Lovingly, its part of pain and pleasure,  
Mingling toil with peace and rest.*

~Carolina V. Sandell-Borg (trans. Andrew L. Skoog)

*For ye have not passed this way before* (Josh. 3:4). "We have not passed this way before, but the Lord Jesus has. 'For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities' (Heb. 4:15). It is all untrodden and unknown ground to us, but He knows it all by personal experience; the steep bits that take away our breath, the stony bits that make our feet ache so, the hot shadeless stretches that make us feel so exhausted, the rushing rivers that we have to pass through, our Shepherd has gone through it all before us. . . . And He does not know with that sort of up-on-the-shelf knowledge which is often guilty of want of thought among ourselves, but He remembereth that we are dust. Think of that when you are tempted to question the gentleness of His leading. He is remembering all the time; and not one step will He make you take beyond what your foot is able to endure. Never mind if you think it will not be able for the step that seems to come next; either He will so strengthen it that it shall be able, or He will call a sudden halt, and you shall not have to take it at all."

~Frances Ridley Havergal, *Opened Treasures*

*He went out not knowing whither he went* (Heb. 11:6–10). "Abraham took 'one step,' and he did not 'ask to see the distant scene.' And that is faith. Faith is not concerned with the entire chain; its devoted attention is fixed upon the immediate link. Faith is not knowledge of a moral process; it is fidelity in a moral act. Faith leaves something to the Lord; it obeys His immediate commandment and leaves to Him direction and destiny.

"And so faith is accompanied by serenity. 'He that

believeth shall not make haste'—or, more literally, 'shall not get into a fuss.' He shall not get into a panic, neither fetching fears from his yesterdays nor from his tomorrows. Concerning his yesterdays faith says, 'Thou hast beset me behind.' Concerning his tomorrows faith says, 'Thou hast laid Thine hand upon me.' That is enough, just to feel the pressure of the guiding hand."

~John Henry Jowett, *My Daily Meditation*

*And 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). "This is the first promise to fallen man. It contains the whole gospel, and the essence of the covenant of grace. It has been in great measure fulfilled.

"Throughout this year we may have to learn the first part of this promise by experience, through the temptations of the devil, and the unkindness of the ungodly who are his seed. They may so bruise us that we may limp with our sore heel; but let us grasp the second part of the text, and we shall not be dismayed. By faith let us rejoice that we shall still reign in Christ Jesus, the woman's seed."

~C. H. Spurgeon, *Faith's Checkbook*

*Looking up to heaven, he blessed and brake the loaves; and he gave to the disciples to set before them* (Mark 6:41). "Surely the one fundamental need in our life and service for God is the blessing of God upon it. No other need exists. What do we mean by blessing? Blessing is the working of God where there is nothing to account for His working. For instance, you calculate that a penny should buy a pennyworth. But if you have not paid your penny, and God has given you ten thousand pennyworth, then you have no basis for your calculations. When five loaves provide food for five thousand and leave twelve baskets with fragments—when, that is to say, the fruit of our service is all out of proportion to the gifts we possess, that is blessing. Or, to be rather extreme, when, taking account of our failures and weaknesses, there should be no fruit at all from our labours, and still there is fruit—that is blessing. Blessing is fruit out of all relation to what we are, results that are not just the working of cause and effect. Blessing comes when God works wholly beyond our reckoning, for His Name's sake."

~Watchman Nee, *A Table in the Wilderness*

"A part of the host will this year tarry on earth, to do service for their Lord. . . . We will this year gather celestial fruits on earthly ground, where faith and hope have made the desert like the garden of the Lord. . . .

Dr. Mark Minnick is pastor of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina.

O for grace to feed on Jesus, and so to eat of the fruit of the land of Canaan this year!

"Let January open with joy in the Lord, and December close with gladness in Jesus!"

~C. H. Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*

"Today, dear friends, we stand upon the verge of the unknown. There lies before us the new year and we are going forth to possess it. Who can tell what we shall find? What new experiences, what changes shall come, what new needs shall arise?

"All our supply is to come from the Lord. Here are springs that shall never dry; here are fountains and streams that shall never be cut off. Here, anxious one, is the gracious pledge of the Heavenly Father. If He be the source of our mercies they can never fail us. No heat, no drought can parch that river, 'the streams whereof make glad the city of God.'

"We cannot tell what loss and sorrow and trial are doing. Trust only. The Father comes near to take our hand and lead us on our way today. It shall be a good, a blessed new year!"

~Mrs. Charles E. Cowman, *Streams in the Desert*

*The year we have now passed through,  
His goodness with blessings has crowned;  
Each morning his mercies were new,  
Then let our thanksgivings abound.*

*Encompassed with dangers and snares,  
Temptations, and fears, and complaints;  
His ear he inclined to our prayers,  
His hand opened wide to our wants.*

*We never besought Him in vain,  
When burdened with sorrow or sin.  
He helped us again and again,  
Or where, before now, had we been?*

*For so many mercies received,  
Alas! What returns have we made?  
His Spirit we often have grieved,  
And evil for good have repaid.*

*How well it becomes us to cry,  
"Oh, who is a God like to thee?  
Who passeth iniquities by,  
And plungeth them deep in the sea!"*

*"Assist us, we pray, to lament  
The sins of the year that is passed.  
And grant that the next may be spent  
Far more to thy praise than the last."*

~John Newton, *Olney Hymns* ☺

# Bring . . . the Books

**Confidence in God—The Life and Ministry  
of George Muller of Bristol**

Like many Christians I was somewhat familiar with the ministry of George Muller to the orphans of Bristol, England. I knew of his commitment to living by faith and had heard illustrations from his life from time to time. This summer I finally read my copy of the classic biography on his life written by A. T. Pierson (Muller's son-in-law), *George Muller of Bristol: His Life of Prayer and Faith*, and I gained a new appreciation for Muller's passionate faith and simple, complete trust in God.

In his own words, "There was a day when I died, utterly died; died to George Muller . . . died to the world . . . and since then I have studied to show myself approved unto God." Here was the secret to Muller's amazing ministry. Muller's life was

living proof that a life of faith is possible; that God may be known, communed with, found, and may become a conscious companion in the daily life . . . that the days of divine intervention and deliverance are past only to those with whom the days of faith and obedience are past—in a word, that believing prayer still works the wonders which our fathers told of in the days of old.

George was born on September 27, 1805, in what was then called Prussia. He was reared in a wealthy family that had little or no time for God. He was the favorite son of his father, who spoiled him and excused or overlooked all manner of evil behavior in young George. "Before he was ten years old, he was a habitual thief and an expert at cheating; even government funds entrusted to his father were not safe from his hands." He spent the evening of his mother's death in drunken carousing through the city streets.

In his twenty-first year, this wayward worldling came to know the saving power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Somehow he found himself at a worship service where a simple servant of God knelt in prayer to ask God's blessing on the meeting. It was the first time George had ever seen anyone kneel to pray, and it made a profound impact. He recorded these thoughts in his journal: "I am much more learned than this illiterate man, but I could not pray as well as he." This would not be true for long; in the years ahead, he would excel in the discipline of prayer, and it would become the cornerstone of all his life's work!

Two years later, in 1827, Muller applied to the London Missionary Society to serve as a missionary to the Jews; he traveled to London to prepare. In 1829 he informed the Society of his intentions to serve without salary and only where and when the Lord should direct. This was unacceptable to the Society, so his

missionary endeavor was severed before it officially began. In 1830 Muller became the pastor of a small church at Teignmouth. It was here that Muller set down as a firm life principle that he would never receive a fixed salary for any service rendered to God's people, trusting only in Jehovah-Jireh for his daily provision. At the end of his life, he would summarize this decision in these words: "I have joyfully dedicated my whole life to the object of exemplifying how much may be accomplished by prayer and faith."

Muller kept meticulous daily records of all God did for him and the orphanages. In 1865, after thirty-one years of serving over 10,000 orphans and meeting their daily needs, he recorded that he had been able during the entire time to remain true to the original principles upon which the work had been established. He had never gone into debt, had never made others aware of his needs or those of the orphanages, and had never accepted resources from unbelievers. Asked what would happen to all of his work and the orphan houses after his death, he replied, "My business is, with all my might, to serve my own generation by the will of God: in so doing I shall best serve the next generation, should the Lord tarry." Pierson noted, "This man of God had staked everything upon one great experiment—he had set himself to prove that the prayer which resorts to God only will bring help in every crisis, even when the crisis is unknown to His people whom He uses as the means of relief and help."

During his ministry Muller saw God provide for five large orphan houses and for the daily needs of over 10,000 orphans. During that time he personally gave over £110,000 to Sunday schools and day schools where over 150,000 children were instructed, some £90,000 for the purchase and circulation of over 2 million Bibles and 3 million books and tracts, and over £260,000 to missionaries in foreign fields. When you add to this amount all the money that was given to him for the orphanages, he gave away almost £1.5 million to the Lord's work! No wonder A. T. Pierson said, "Such a life and such a work are the result of one habit more than all else - daily and frequent communion with God." May the Lord raise up in our day men of like faith and prayer. ☩

"... when  
thou comest,  
bring with thee  
... the books"  
(2 Tim. 4:13)

Dr. Sam Horn is Executive Vice President of Northland Baptist Bible College in Dunbar, Wisconsin.

# Straight Cuts

## Homosexuality: What the World Promotes, God Condemns

One of the greatest problems facing contemporary American culture and Biblical Christianity is the pressure to accept homosexuality and same-sex marriage as the moral equivalent of heterosexuality and Biblical marriage. Today's Christians face misinterpretation, twisting, and perversions of Scripture: God created homosexuals; they are born that way and cannot change; the sin of Sodom was not homosexuality but inhospitality; Old Testament condemnations refer only to cultic worship and male prostitution; Jesus did not condemn homosexuality; the most important teaching in the New Testament is love; Biblical prohibitions do not refer to homosexuals in committed monogamous relationships; attempts to change will ultimately fail. Liberal theologians and clergy join homosexuals in demanding that society and churches accept them and their behavior as normal. The ultimate pressure is to have any negative statements about homosexuality, even the reading of Bible passages, branded as hate crimes.

Such pressure demands a clarification of Scriptural terms that have become clouded. Reliance on condemnation of "sodomy" to warn about God's condemnation of homosexual sin faces two problems. First, modern legal definitions of sodomy include acts between men and women and between humans and animals. This adds confusion to something about which Scripture is clear. Second, the use of the term in the Bible is limited. "Sodomy" does not occur in the KJV or other widely used English versions, though "sodomite(s)" does appear five times in the Old Testament (Deut 23:17; 1 King 14:24; 15:12; 22:46; 2 Kings 23:7). These passages express God's strong condemnation but do not clarify the meaning of the term. However, such passages as Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 make clear what God condemns—you shall not "lie with mankind, as with womankind." In two key NT passages (1 Tim. 1:8–11 and 1 Cor. 6:9–12), biblical terminology unmistakably states God's condemnation of homosexual lust and behavior.

Paul reminds Timothy that, properly used, Old Testament law is good (1 Timothy 1:8–11). It is given not for the righteous, but for the lawless, *anomois* (those devoid of control), and for the rebellious, *anhupotaktois* (literally, not submissive). Those who engage in the sins listed are disobedient to the law of God and without self-control; moreover, their refusal "to be brought under" is actually rebellion against God. This rebellion includes *pornos* and *arsenokoites*.

*Pornos* is the root of our modern word pornography. Here the masculine plural, *pornois*, is translated "whoremongers" (KJV). A modern dictionary definition of whoremonger, "a man who associates with whores," may mislead. Translations such as "fornicators" or "adulterers" may also

lead readers to think only of sexual violation of marriage. Even though there is a connection with the root *pernemi* (to sell) and early Greeks used *pornos* as a term for male prostitutes, it is obvious from other passages that the NT uses it to identify any who are guilty of illicit sexual relationships (cf. 1 Cor 5:1, 9, 11, 12; 6:9; Eph 5:5; Heb 6:9; 12:16; 13:4).

*Arsenokoites* especially highlights the New Testament condemnation of homosexuality. Beginning with Tyndale, there has been a tendency to use euphemisms such as "abusers of themselves with mankind." Contemporary readings are not much clearer. The first element of the compound, *arsen*, is specifically the male sex. The second element, *koites*, refers to a bed or couch, a place for lying down, the marriage bed (cf. Heb. 13:4), a place for sexual activity. This word has been brought into English as "coitus," meaning the sexual union of male and female. The compound *arsenokoites* refers to males who lie together for sexual activity. Similar activity among females is condemned in Roman 1:26. "Homosexual" is the only modern English word that provides the definition as well as the identification of those who rebel against God in this manner.

Another facet of homosexual sin is added in 1 Corinthians 6:9. *Malakoi* means yielding, soft to the touch, clothing made of soft materials (Matt. 11:8; Luke 7:25), and refers metaphorically to a male who yields his body to another male for sexual activity. "Effeminate" does convey the idea of submissiveness and feminine appearance, and "transvestite" describes appearance, but this context implies homosexual practice as well.

In contrast to the world's insistence that "sexual orientation" cannot be changed, 1 Corinthians 6:11 presents not only a possibility but a practical example of what God can and is willing to do for those given to sexual sins. In the midst of a society whose philosophers and rulers glorified and practiced homosexuality, these Corinthian believers had experienced transformation by the new birth. They were washed, *apolouasthe* (middle voice, to wash away). This is the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5), but the middle voice implies a desire to be cleansed. They were sanctified, *hegiasthete* (passive voice, separated from profane things and dedicated to God). They were justified, *edikaiothete* (passive voice, pronounced righteous or as one ought to be). The grace of God cleansed, sanctified, and justified them. All three conditions are in the aorist tense—not just a possibility, but a reality. These were works accomplished at salvation. God condemns all forms of homosexuality, like other sins, but provides forgiveness and transformation. ☩

"Rightly dividing the Word of Truth"  
(2 Tim. 2:15)

David writes in Psalm 127:4, “As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.” Now, using “arrows” and “children” together in the same sentence would send shivers down the spine of any conscientious parent. But the analogy is both interesting and instructive. As a man of war, King David knew very well the importance of a properly delivered arrow. It’s not something that just happens. As sportswriter Marilyn Stone wrote, “The archer, the bow and the arrow must be tuned and perfectly in sync or the arrow misses its mark” (Marilyn Stone, “New Arrows for 2002,” [www.dto.com/hunting/article](http://www.dto.com/hunting/article)).

Last summer’s Olympic Games brought to light, once again, the effort required to “bring home the gold.” The South Koreans took the majority of the medals for archery. Out of a possible 270 points, the South Korean men scored 251 points, which included 12 bull’s-eyes. The South Korean women won their eleventh consecutive gold medal with 241 points. And the key to their overall success can be summed up in one word: preparation. Their strenuous training regimen, which included swimming in icy waters to build endurance and sleeping in a cemetery to build courage, was what ensured their success in delivering those polished shafts to their desired destination. And it is preparation that is needed in ensuring that children, once sent forth, will “hit” God’s target for them. “Arrows do not grow themselves: they have to be wrought out with much thought and care. So our children.” (S. Conway, *Pulpit Commentary*, volume 8, p. 230).

When I was in high school, I took archery in gym. I learned that the proper procedure for shooting an arrow consists of two stages: preparation and shooting. The preparation stage begins with the arrow “in hand” for certain inspections. First, the use of the arrow must be determined. Will it be used for hunting, target shooting, or as a weapon? This will determine which pile (tip) as well as what type of fletching (feathers) to use. Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.” Part of “training up” children is assessing their gifts and strengths and then guiding them and equipping them to hit that mark for the Lord.

The next step in preparing an arrow for flight is to check it for imperfections. Marilyn Stone writes, “To fly true, the arrow’s dynamics must match the bow or the poetry disintegrates into a choppy, non-rhyming cadence” (Marilyn Stone, “New Arrows For 2002,” [www.dto.com/hunting/article](http://www.dto.com/hunting/article)). There is a standard the arrow must meet to enable it to hit its mark. That standard for “children-arrows,” of course, is the Word of God. Any departure from that standard is an imperfection and must be corrected. Bent arrows must be straightened, nicks and scratches must be sanded smooth, and damaged piles and fletching must be replaced. Much care must be given in preparing the arrow while it is still “in hand” because the next stage is the actual shooting of the arrow.

*“To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, ‘A window shalt thou make in the ark.’”*

Charles Spurgeon

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***As a man of war, King David knew very well the importance of a properly delivered arrow. It’s not something that just happens. As sportswriter Marilyn Stone wrote, “The archer, the bow and the arrow must be tuned and perfectly in sync or the arrow misses its mark”.***

Matthew Henry warns, “Observe here, children of the youth are arrows in the hand, which, with prudence, may be directed aright to the mark: God’s glory and the service of their generation; but afterwards, when they have gone abroad into the world, they are arrows *out* of the hand, it is too late to bend them then” (Matthew Henry, *Commentary*, Volume III, p.735). On the positive side Spurgeon adds, “We shall see them shoot forth into life to our comfort and delight if we take care from the very beginning that they are directed to the

right point" (C. H. Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, vol. 3, p.85). So the thought that must be pre-eminent in the mind of parents is that once the arrow is in flight, for all practical purposes it is on its own. You can yell at it and throw things at it, but your influence upon that arrow will be limited.

The benefits of properly trained children are many, but in continuing to use the analogy of an arrow for them, we will narrow those benefits down to two. First of all, a well-delivered arrow will afford protection. This idea of protection is seen in Psalm 127:5 where, referring to children as arrows, David writes, "Happy is the man that

tion of this is seen in the life of Isaac. Genesis 27 tells us that when Isaac was old and his eyes were dim, he called for his son Esau and commissioned him to provide a feast for him. And he said in verse 3 of Genesis 27, "Now therefore take, I pray thee, thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and go out to the field, and take me some venison." Here we see Esau, as an arrow, going forth with his arrows to provide for his father who was unable to provide this meal for himself.

Provision and protection are the benefits of properly prepared, properly delivered arrows. On the other hand, if an arrow is not prepared or delivered properly, there are consequences that can be summed up in one word: pain. Proverbs 29:15 expresses this—Solomon says, "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." Henry Smith wrote, "Well doth David call children arrows; for if they be well bred, they shoot at their parent's enemies, and if they be evil bred, they shoot at their parents" (Henry Smith, *Treasury of David*, vol. 3, p.94).

I remember as a child watching a cartoon in which Elmer Fudd was out hunting Bugs Bunny with a bow and arrow. While Elmer was searching for his prey, Bugs sneaked up behind him, pulled an arrow from Elmer's quiver, bent it into a U-shape, and then put the bent arrow back into Elmer's quiver. When Bugs finally showed himself to the hunter, Elmer quickly reached into his quiver, pulled out (you guessed it) the bent arrow, and shot it at Bugs Bunny. Well, the arrow acted like a boomerang, and Elmer Fudd was the one to get it in the end. Now, I know that arrows can't really do that, but children can. As Matthew Henry observes, "But these arrows in the hand too often prove arrows in the heart, a constant grief to their godly parents, whose gray hairs they bring with sorrow to the grave" (Matthew Henry, *Commentary*, vol. 3, p.735).

Happiness is the lot of a man who has his quiver, his home, full of well-prepared arrows. To be surrounded by children who have been prepared and aimed by the Word of God, who have been sent forth and hit God's mark for them is indeed a wonderful heritage and reward. "Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. . . As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them" (Psalm 127:3–5a). ☺

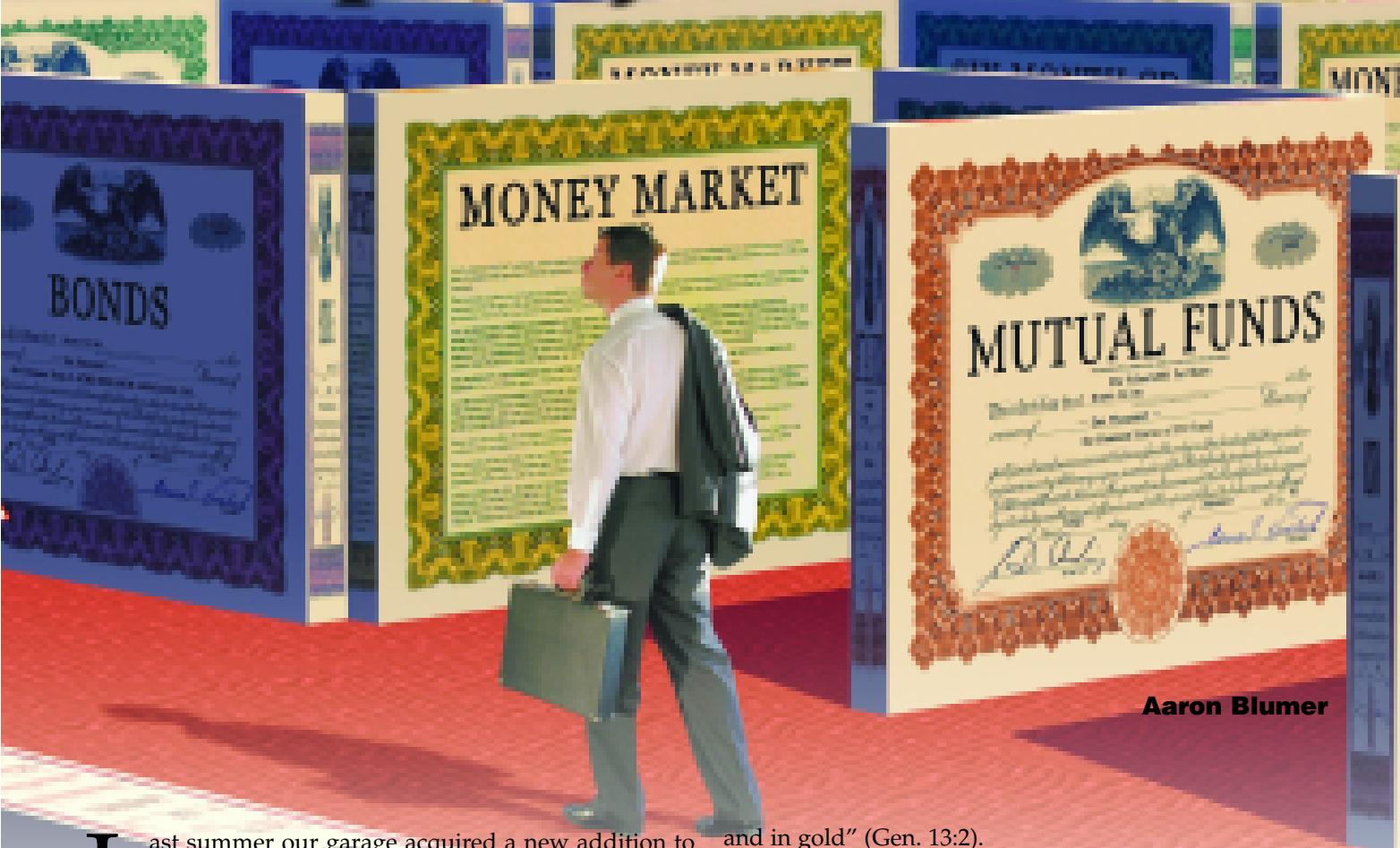
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**Matthew Henry warns, "Observe here, children of the youth are arrows in the hand, which, with prudence, may be directed aright to the mark: God's glory and the service of their generation; but afterwards, when they have gone abroad into the world, they are arrows out of the hand, it is too late to bend them then."**

hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate." In the ancient world, a battle often occurred at the gate of a city. The idea in this psalm is that a well-prepared child, when sent forth, will speak for his parents and defend them as necessary. R. Tuck writes, "For long a son stands with his father, the time comes when he may have to stand for his father" (R. Tuck, *Pulpit Commentary*, Volume 8, p.233). This idea is also captured in a Chinese proverb that says, "When a son is born into a family, a bow and arrow are hung before the gate" (James Merrick, quoted by C. H. Spurgeon, *Treasury of David*, vol. 3, p.94).

The second benefit of a properly shot arrow is that it affords provision. A wonderful illustra-

# Prosperity and Poison



Aaron Blumer

Last summer our garage acquired a new addition to its collection of lethal chemicals: a bottle of fungicide now adorns a high shelf. The chemical's intended purpose is to keep the tomatoes alive and prospering, and it has proved to be wonderful stuff. But it came with a whole booklet of instructions and dire warnings. Too little water in the solution or too many applications to the plants, and the blessing can become a bane, killing what it was intended to nurture.

The Christmas season reminds us that there is also a potent agent in our American homes that can become toxic to us and our families. It is the wonderful but deadly phenomenon called prosperity.

Prosperity can become poisonous in many ways. We'll consider three.

## Guilt

First, prosperity becomes poisonous if it's mixed with guilt. Scripture represents prosperity as a form of God's blessing. When God began to gather a people for His name through Abraham, He promised Abraham great prosperity. And He delivered! "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great" (Gen. 12:2). "And Abram was very rich in cattle, in silver,

and in gold" (Gen. 13:2).

The pattern continued in the lives of Isaac (Gen. 26:12–14) and Jacob and Joseph. "The Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man" (Gen. 39:2). Centuries later, Moses reminded God's people again that their prosperity was God's blessing: "And the Lord shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground" (Deut. 28:11).

Now, as then, honestly attained prosperity is a gift from God. Feeling guilty about it insults His generosity, leeches joy from our lives, and poisons our relationship with God. As our families meet this Christmas and share great abundance, we should keep guilt out of the mix and, instead, add large quantities of humble thankfulness.

## Forgetfulness

Second, prosperity becomes poisonous if combined with forgetfulness. When we receive a gift, it's supposed to make us remember the giver more than we otherwise would. But ironically the human heart tends to respond to the gift of prosperity in exactly the opposite way. Because our possessions are so constantly visible, and because the hand of Providence is so constantly not, the gift of prosperity tends to be more real to us than the

Giver. Soon we begin to feel that our well-being depends on our own labor and resources, and through forgetfulness prosperity turns to poison.

Moses confronted this tendency when he warned God's people about their prosperous future in the land. "When the Lord thy God shall have brought thee into the land . . . to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildest not, And houses full of all good things . . . when thou shalt have eaten and be full; Then beware lest thou forget the Lord" (Deut. 6:10–12). "And [beware] when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God . . . And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth" (Deut. 8:13, 14, 17).

The truth we have to re-inject into our thinking again and again is that our hard work does not really produce our prosperity and our possessions do not really secure our well-being. God does. Moses went on to say, "But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deut. 8:18).

Thousands of years after Moses, Paul reminded Timothy to confront the same problem. "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Tim. 6:17).

If others have struggled down through the ages, certainly we who enjoy a life of unprecedented plenty are even more vulnerable to forgetting Providence. As we share our abundance with one another this Christmas, let's protect our families by reminding them of our dependence on Almighty God.

### **Distorted Values**

Third, prosperity becomes poisonous if joined by distorted values. Human nature is prone to respond to prosperity by developing twisted values. That is, we tend to assign much more value to certain features of our lifestyle than these features really have. To put it another way, we lose sight of the difference between needs and luxuries.

In America, many believe they are "poor" if they can't afford to buy a second car. There just isn't enough left after making the payments on the first car loan, the satellite TV, the big screen entertainment center, and after buying the latest trendy clothes and the newest CD from their favorite musician. We shouldn't be surprised to see this kind of thinking. Prosperous societies enjoy increasing comfort and luxury from generation to generation, and each generation tends to classify as "needs" what the previous generation saw as "luxuries."

Thinking this way has serious consequences for believers. Though we are fairly quick to sacrifice "luxuries" for what has enduring value, we generally see "needs" as non-negotiable, and if meeting those "needs" costs us some family time or some ministry opportunities or some growth opportunities—well, a person has to do what he has to do.

This reasoning is sound enough, but if our idea of "needs" includes what are really luxuries, the result is that we cling to the expendable and sacrifice opportunities that are truly priceless. The prosperous young man Jesus

met is one ancient example. "Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions" (Mark 10:21, 22).

The results of these distorted values can be grave. Parents pass up a Christian education for their children, high school graduates opt out of Christian college training, and families pass up opportunities for short-term missions all because they "don't have enough money." Even worse, moms and dads neglect one another and their children because they "need to work more hours." Perhaps, sometimes, we really don't have enough money for these items of higher value, but we each have to face the question honestly: have we simply elevated luxuries to the level of needs and put them in the "nonnegotiable" file? Have we created a lack of funds for growth and service by confusing luxuries for needs?

Paul's warning is as timely as ever: "Having food and raiment let us be therewith content" (1 Tim. 6:8). Tragically, parents sometimes create values confusion in their children unintentionally while trying to teach them important lessons. They aim to teach "the value of hard work" (an important Biblical lesson, Prov. 14:23), so they encourage their child to get a job. But all too often a sixteen-year-old has a job only so he can buy a car that he really needs only so he can get to his job. Meanwhile, matters of much greater worth are being crowded out of his life.

We parents must take great pains to avoid teaching our children the bad habit of sacrificing important relationships, Christian service, or even regular worship for the sake of "more stuff." If we make that mistake, we allow the blessing of prosperity to pervert our values and poison our families.

God's Word declares what is truly of greatest worth: "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way , and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. 6:5–7).

The lesson that we must love God with all our being is the most important one we can teach our children. If we fail in that, teaching "the value of hard work and responsibility" is pointless. Our prosperity demands that we constantly realign our values to God's and that we take great pains to instill His values in our children.

Soon families will gather and gifts will be given. We will share our vast prosperity with another. God calls us to do so with attitudes informed, shaped, and constrained by Biblical truth. Let's be thankful for the gift of prosperity, mindful always of the Giver, and careful to keep a clear view of what has greatest value in life. Then prosperity will not poison our families. It will be the source of joy and blessing God intended.

Aaron Blumer pastors Grace Baptist Church in Boyceville, Wisconsin.



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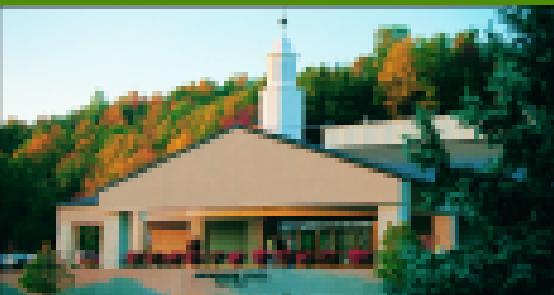


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A good marriage is made up of two good forgivers.  
—Unknown

Like cars, I stick to one model.  
—Henry Ford on marriage

Why does Christmas always come just when the stores  
are so crowded?  
—Unknown

Christmas is when you buy this year's gifts with next  
year's money.  
—Unknown

There is no such thing as Society. There are individual  
men and women, and there are families.  
—Margaret Thatcher

There is scarcely any less bother in the running of a  
family than in that of an entire state. And domestic busi-  
ness is no less importunate for being less important.  
—Montaigne

There are good marriages, but no delightful ones.  
—Due de la Rochefoucauld

If I would get to the highest place in Athens, I would lift  
up my voice to say, "What mean ye, fellow citizens, that  
ye turn every stone to scrape wealth together, and take  
so little care of your children to whom ye must one day  
relinquish all?"  
—Socrates

There is no doubt that it is around the family and the  
home that all the greatest virtues, the most dominating  
virtues of human society are created, strengthened, and  
maintained.  
—Winston Churchill

The perfect Christmas gift for the person who has  
everything is a burglar alarm.  
—Bits & Pieces

They talk of Christmas so long that it comes.  
—George Herbert

The character of the Creator cannot be less than the  
highest He has created, and the highest is that babe  
born to Mary on that first Christmas morning.  
—A. Ian Burnett

"Some people always sigh in thanking God.  
—Elizabeth Barrett Browning

The finest test of character is seen in the amount and  
the power of gratitude we have.  
—Milo H. Gates

In thankfulness for present mercies nothing so becomes  
us as losing sight of past ills.  
—Lew Wallace

One should believe in marriage as in the immortality of  
the soul.  
—Honore de Balzac

The Christian religion, by confining marriage to pairs,  
and rendering the relation indissoluble, has by these  
two things done more toward the peace, happiness, set-  
tlement, and civilization of the world, than by any other  
part in this whole scheme of divine wisdom.  
—Edmund Burke

There is no synthetic replacement for a decent home  
life. Our high crime rate, particularly among juveniles, is  
directly traceable to a breakdown in moral fiber—to the  
disintegration of home and family life. Religion and  
home life are supplementary. Each strengthens the  
other. It is seldom that a solid and wholesome home life  
can be found in the absence of religious inspiration.

—J. Edgar Hoover

And let us give thanks for Someone to thank.  
—Gerhard E. Frost

Marriage resembles a pair of shears, so joined that they  
cannot be separated; often moving in opposite direc-  
tions, yet always punishing any one who comes  
between them.  
—Sydney Smith

Success in marriage is more than finding the right per-  
son: it is being the right person.  
—Robert Browning



*Wit & Wisdom* is compiled by Dr. David Atkinson,  
pastor of Dyer Baptist Church, Dyer, Indiana.

## Offering Help to a Broken Home

Amy Johnson

### *Divorce? That will never happen to my family!*

Have you ever thought that about your home? My parents' marriage would have been the last on earth to end in divorce, so I thought. But it did. I was fifteen years old. Unfortunately, alarming numbers of marriages today end in divorce. Even sadder is that the divorce rate is just as high among so-called Christian families.

It was a cold December night when my family changed forever. We were getting ready for our church's annual Christmas banquet, hosted by the deacons, one of whom was my dad. I was anticipating a fun night of serving for the dinner and attending a youth group activity afterward. My dad came home from work that evening and was greeted by six excited children. But something was much different with Dad that night.

Agitated and distracted, he sat at the edge of his bed; and with his head buried in his hands, he began to weep uncontrollably. It was as though something had snapped inside him. There was nothing my mother could say or do to help or comfort him. None of us spoke as he proceeded to the basement where he retrieved a large suitcase.

The older siblings comforted the frightened younger ones who cried, sensing something was terribly wrong. Dad disappeared into the bedroom, packed several belongings, and then headed for the back door. He left broken and without a word. The back door shut, and Dad never returned home again.

Sounds shocking, I know. We did not see it coming; and looking back, there were few signs that would have caused us to anticipate it. That cold night I was sent to the banquet and youth group activity overwhelmed with fear and uncertainty. It was the first of many days and weeks that we spent keeping a lonely and terrible secret. Eventually, the shame of it all came out. Stunned family, friends, and church members learned that this respected Christian leader had left his wife of sixteen years and his six children.

I still get a lump in my throat and in the pit of my stomach as I recall these events. As startling as it may sound, as a teen I sometimes struggled more with hurt, frustration, or bitterness toward fellow believers than I did toward my own father who had left us. We experienced stares, avoidance, hurtful comments, whisperings, speculations, and false judgments. More than anything, there seemed to be a general lack of

concern. Thankfully, there were some exceptions. I am forever grateful for those selfless and sacrificing Christian brothers and sisters who showed compassion and extended help to our hurting family. It is their Christlike example that I try to follow when meeting the needs of others around me.

God's Word is sufficient for all circumstances of life. Hurting believers need to experience its strength, comfort, instruction, correction, forgiveness, cleansing, and hope. We know that God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16), but spouses or children who find themselves in the midst of divorce need to know that God is still sovereign and in control of their lives because without God life is hopeless. Share Scripture and truth with them to help battle feelings of abandonment, loneliness, frustration, anger, bitterness, hurt, guilt, and fear. Rather than quoting Romans 8:28 in passing, take time to write out or explain the rich truths that Paul teaches in that passage about God's sovereignty in salvation, the security that we have in Him, and the unsurpassable love of Christ. Share the precious truths of Hebrews 13: God will never leave us, He is our Helper, and we need not be afraid. Or of Deuteronomy 32 which describes God as our Rock, His work as perfect, and His ways as faithful, righteous, and upright. Psalm 68 describes God as a Father of the fatherless. Use God's Word to help others who face the sting of divorce.

A child of divorce often feels as though he's lost not just one parent but both. While one parent may leave to follow a life of sin, the other is left devastated, confused, or angry. Mothers are sometimes forced to seek outside employment. Legal matters can be messy and drag on for months. Children have feelings of being torn, disloyal, or responsible for the breakup. Take advantage of this tender time in young people's lives. Give them your attention, your time, your love and concern. A strong relationship with God is vital in their lives. Help lead them to Him. Otherwise, bitterness may consume them, or they may be tempted to seek comfort in sinful habits, wrong friends, or other activities that may mask or push aside their hurtful surroundings.

I am grateful to those Christian people who invested their lives in my family. There were those who somehow knew to leave Christmas gifts on our doorstep when my mother couldn't afford them.

Continued on next page

## Ladies' Circle

Continued from previous page

Many evenings one faithful Christian woman would come to sit with my mom. Mom needed company and conversation to ease her loneliness. This dear lady sacrificed her time to pray with Mom, listen to her, and meet any needs she had. There were a couple of single college guys who took my brothers to ball games or out for ice cream. It would have been very helpful if a father had asked them to join his own boys for an activity. I longed for someone to spend time with me. Our assistant pastor and his wife faithfully attended every legal meeting with my mother. That pastor also bravely taught us teenagers how to drive! On the day my parents' divorce was final, after observing in the courtroom, I returned to school to find a special card in my locker from a former youth pastor. All these acts of kindness and displays of Christian love helped us greatly and are still etched in my memory.

Perhaps the greatest impact on our family came from those people who faithfully prayed for us. There is one particular elderly couple that made it a priority to fervently pray for all six of us children on a daily basis. God heard and answered the prayers of these godly people. As a result we have grown up to love and serve God, and among us is a pioneer missionary, a youth pastor, a pastor's wife, and younger ones studying at a Christian college with a desire to serve God with their lives. (To God alone be the praise and glory.)

You may not have experienced divorce in your family, but certainly there are those around you who have. Many want to help, but few actually do. It is better for you to stumble over your words or actions than to remain silent. As part of the body of Christ, we are to encourage one another, pray for one another, bear one another's burdens, weep with one another, exhort, teach, comfort, and so on.

This holiday season is a perfect time for you to reach out and help a family in need. Many of life's special events are clouded after a divorce occurs. Birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, weddings, and births can be hurtful or awkward. Holidays are no exception. There are encounters with in-laws or the divorced spouse. There are feelings of sadness and loneliness. There are legalities that require visitation rights and the necessity of sending away your children, even against their will. There is a sense of not fitting in when attending church events where most everyone is part of a couple. While certainly the emphasis of the Christmas holiday is to celebrate the incarnation of Christ and His offer of salvation to mankind, the celebration can be a struggle when in the midst of or having gone through a divorce.

This Christmas, look around you. I am frequently guilty of being too busy with less important things or too concerned with my own family's needs while neglecting those around me. First of all, ask God to strengthen and protect your own marriage and watch out for the wiles of the Devil as he subtly attacks your family. Also, do not forget that the holiday season affords great opportunities to share the gospel. A hurting family in your neighborhood, office, or school may be very open, tender, and eager to hear about the only One who can truly fill their void and meet their most important need. Include a broken family or a child of divorce in your family's holiday celebrations. Make a meal, send a card, share Scripture, spend time, give gifts, and, most importantly, pray that God will be at work in and through their lives to the praise of His glory.

Amy Johnson is a pastor's wife, homemaker, and mother who resides in Allen Park, Michigan. She can be contacted at pagjohnson@aol.com.

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*Shepherding A Child's Heart*, by Tedd Tripp; 1995, Shepherd Press

Many of us Christian parents have searched for a good book to help us in the task of parenting. This search is often frustrating, due to a combination of factors: failure to base instruction on God's Word, reliance on human wisdom and theory, emphasizing external control rather than a heart for God, examining principles without application, or detailing applications with no principles. In addition, some have encouraged an approach that leads to rules-based methods rather than addressing the heart and conscience. Still others embrace determinism, implying that "if I do everything right, my children will all turn out right."

Tedd Tripp's book addresses these problems better than any other book that I have read. He begins with Proverbs 4:23: "Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life." From this he concludes that if we do not address the heart, we will not accomplish long-term goals. In his words, shepherding the heart "means helping [children] understand themselves, God's world, the ways of God, how sin works in the human heart, and how the gospel comes to them at the most profound levels of human need." "It exposes the true nature of reality and encourages faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."

I have read books that rarely use Scripture, but this one is infused with it. Tripp continually addresses important issues throughout the book. To avoid external control only, he gives practical applications to his basic theme. "This is your task in shepherding your children. You must make the point of appeal the conscience. . . . You address the heart by exposing sin and appealing to the conscience as the God-given adjudicator of right and wrong."

Another area in which we commonly make mistakes is to focus on control only. Tripp deals with this fallacy in many ways. One very important application of this is

giving children what he calls "a keepable law." "I have spoken to many parents who feared they were producing little hypocrites who were proud and self-righteous. Hypocrisy and self-righteousness are the result of giving children a keepable law and telling them to be good. To the extent they are successful, they are like the Pharisees." Elsewhere he points out that all shepherding must ultimately point our children to Christ, both for salvation and in order to live life as God desires us to.

Some books I find to be frustrating because they focus entirely on principle, which in itself is good, but they ignore application. Others are pragmatic, allowing human reasoning to take the place of Bible principles. In this book, both the principles and the application are covered. Tripp addresses all the ages, from infancy to late teenage years, giving principle and application for each age. We have too often allowed our thinking to take on the world's view as one of dreading the teen years, or thinking that all counsel ends when they move out of our home. This has no Biblical basis, and Tripp addresses this as well. He points out that "you are seeking to influence and provide counsel. You can accomplish nothing of lasting value simply by being an authority. You must seek to counsel and influence."

As the parent of four children who are all now in their twenties, I would highly recommend this book. Many of its truths we learned along the way; some we didn't learn for a long time due to our own need to grow. Reading this book in order to write this review was probably my fourth time through it, and I was again convicted of my own need to be more Christlike, to depend on the Holy Spirit for growth, and to see life through God's eyes. This book will aid you in that process and bears reading more than once.

In 2001, Tedd Tripp published a second book titled *Shepherding a Child's Heart: Parent's Handbook*. He states that this is not a workbook to use with the first book but expands on what he learned in the time between the two books. In particular, it expands the principles that are taught in the first while still providing application. I've used it for a Sunday school class on parenting, and it serves as a good basis to provoke discussion, thereby reinforcing the truths being taught. It does not take the place of the first book, but reinforces and amplifies it. Both are worthy of your time if you seek to raise your children to know, love, and serve God, or want to encourage and help others as they do so.

Ted Harris is a family physician practicing in Greenville, South Carolina.

## The Ethics of the Evangelist (Part 2)

**Jerry Sivnksty**

In the last article I discussed the matter of evangelists' finances. I emphasized the fact that we, as evangelists, must be careful not to employ unbiblical ethics concerning finances; rather, we are to be thankful for what the Lord gives so that we can continue our ministry.

Now I want to discuss the ethics of an evangelist in regard to the pastor. The evangelist must realize that he has been invited by the pastor to come to the church to hold meetings. I must stress the fact that it is the pastor's kindness that has opened this door of opportunity to serve the Lord. Therefore, the evangelist must take the utmost care not to do anything that would quench the working of the Holy Spirit in the meetings. We evangelists are guests, and we must be careful not to create problems for the pastor. By the way, the pastor is in charge – he is the undershepherd of the local church. No evangelist should ever try to take control of the pastor's leadership. Some have tried to do so, and I want to relate these true accounts.

Many years ago, a pastor invited a special speaker for a conference at his church. During the message, the speaker started throwing folding chairs across the platform for the sake of illustration. This godly pastor got up and stopped the speaker, saying, "We don't do such things here in our church." The pastor then dismissed him from the platform. The speaker had overstepped his bounds, and I'm thankful for a pastor with enough character to stop that kind of nonsense. Another pastor in a southern state told me that he had an evangelist for a week of meetings. He said the evangelist was railing on his people with such relentless hatred that he had to cancel the meetings. He told the evangelist that the church was giving him a love offering for the entire week, but he had to ask him to leave after the Tuesday night service. Remember, the pastor is in charge of his congregation and must protect them from being browbeaten.

I want to encourage all evangelists to be very careful of attitudes toward the pastor's leadership. First, if the pastor asks you not to say certain things from the platform, honor his request. Many years ago I had a meeting with a pastor, and I said, "Pastor, tonight I would like to acknowledge a person in the congregation from the pulpit." He told me it wouldn't be wise for me to do that. Rather than disagree with him, I told

him I would follow his counsel.

Second, if the pastor makes a suggestion to the evangelist regarding the length of the service, he should again honor that request. A pastor friend of mine told me he had an evangelist for a week of meetings. The pastor told me that he approached the evangelist in a kind way and asked him to shorten the length of his messages. The pastor told him they would even cut the music service shorter so that he'd have enough time to preach. My friend told me that the evangelist was very upset that the pastor would even suggest such a thing. Let me say that an evangelist is spiritually cutting his own throat when he holds such an elevated opinion of himself. We evangelists must be open to constructive criticism and suggestions.

Have people criticized me and given me suggestions? Yes! (I could write a book on the suggestions!) They have helped me. A while ago, I was preaching a meeting in the Midwest. At the close of the service, a businessman approached me and said, "May I make a suggestion to help you?" I told him I needed all the help I could get, so please fire away. He said, "In your message tonight, you said, 'I don't care what you believe, the Bible says . . .' You are putting up a wall between you and your congregation by offending them. In essence, you're insulting them when you say you don't care what they think. It would be better stated if you said, 'It makes no difference what you believe, the Bible says . . .'" I took that small piece of advice to heart.

We must be teachable! We must never have the attitude that we have arrived and know it all. Let's allow criticism to make us better servants for the Lord.

Third, pastors are evangelists' best friends. We must do all we can to protect them; never allow anyone to speak evil of the pastor or cast doubts upon his leadership. The pastor is the man of God who has heavy responsibilities to shepherd his people. Let's do all we can to encourage the pastor, stand shoulder-to-shoulder with him, and never usurp authority over his ministry.

You may contact Evangelist Jerry Sivnksty at P.O. Box 141, Starr, South Carolina 29684 or via e-mail at evangjsivn@aol.com.

## SECOND CORINTHIANS:

"Ministees? What on earth is a ministee?" No, it's not an endangered aquatic mammal that lives in Florida. I made it up. It was a desperate device designed to keep the title from seeming applicable only to those in "the ministry." Second Corinthians comprises the Apostle's most detailed discussion of the ministry from the minister's perspective. But the ministry is all about people, after all; so the "ministees" figure prominently into what Paul has to say.

Second Corinthians is notoriously difficult to outline and present systematically. In large part, this is because it is perhaps his most "letter-like" epistle—passionate, digressive, and written "on the road." The content is highly personal and revolves entirely around Paul's previous epistle and upcoming visit to Corinth. But like all Scripture, though it is penned at a specific time to a particular church in an ancient culture, its contents are timeless in their insights into human nature and behavior, the nature and privilege of the ministry, the burdens of ministers, and the responsibilities of, yes, the "ministees."

*Note: Unless otherwise noted, Scripture references are to 2 Corinthians.*

### Background

In the previous column, we discovered that 1 Corinthians was Paul's second (at least) letter to the believers in Corinth, written from Ephesus in response to news that he had received of them from several sources. When Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, his plan was to remain in Ephesus until Pentecost (May–June, A.D. 54 or 55), and then to travel to Corinth via Macedonia and Achaia (rather than sailing straight across the Aegean to Corinth) for an extended visit with them—perhaps even wintering there (1 Cor. 16:5–9), before going on to Jerusalem (Acts 19:21). Part of his plan was to finish collecting a goodwill offering from the Gentile churches to give to the poor and persecuted Jews in Jerusalem, which was to be prepared before his arrival (1 Cor. 16:1–4).

After the uproar in Ephesus (Acts 19:21–41; cf. 2 Cor. 1:8–10), Paul and Timothy traveled north from Ephesus toward Macedonia (Acts 20:1). Paul arranged to rendezvous along the way at Troas with Titus (on his way back from carrying 1 Corinthians to Corinth). When that meeting did not materialize, a concerned Paul proceeded on to Macedonia (2 Cor. 2:12–13), where he finally met up with Titus (2 Cor. 7:5–6, 13–14).

Paul then penned 2 Corinthians from Macedonia (9:1, 4), en route to Corinth (between Acts 20:1 and 2), in response to the news Titus brought back from Corinth. Paul then sent this epistle directly on ahead with Titus (8:16–9:5) while he visited other churches on his way to Corinth. When Paul reached Corinth, he stayed three months (Acts 20:3a), during which time he wrote Romans (Rom. 16:21–23). But when Paul was preparing to take ship for Syria, he got wind of a Jewish conspiracy against him, changed his plans, and returned instead through Macedonia again (Acts 20:3b).

### Outline\*

This epistle naturally self-divides into three major sections: (1) Paul's explanation of why his visit to Corinth was delayed (chs. 1–7); (2) Paul's encouragement of their preparation for his upcoming visit, particularly in connection with the offering for the Jerusalem believers (chs. 8–9); (3) Paul's emphasis on the certainty and imminence of his visit, particularly in connection with his detractors there at Corinth (chs. 10–13).

#### I. Explanation of Personal Conduct and Apostolic Ministry (1–7)

- A. Introduction (1:1–11)
- B. Paul's Conduct Explained (1:12–2:13)
- C. Paul's Apostolic Ministry Described (2:14–7:4)
- D. Paul's Reconciliation with the Corinthians (7:5–16)

#### II. Gentile Collection for the Jewish Believers at Jerusalem (8–9)

- A. Need for Generosity (8:1–15)
- B. Mission of Titus and Companions (8:15–9:5)
- C. Results of Generosity (9:6–15)

#### III. Vindication of Apostolic Authority (10–13)

- A. Paul's Apostolic Rights and Authority (10:1–11:15)
- B. Paul's Apostolic Credentials (11:16–12:13)
- C. Paul's Third Visit Plans (12:14–13:10)
- D. Conclusion (13:11–13)

### Content

Let's trace more closely the precise flow of content and transition.

#### 1–7—Apostolic Ministry in Corinthian Context

- 1:1–11—Introduction

# MINISTERS, MINISTEES, AND THE MINISTRY

- 1:12–2:17—Paul’s Coming Visit, Past Correspondence, and Present Journey

- 1:12–2:2—Paul’s Coming Visit: Reasons for Delay (Note “come”—1:15, 16, 23, 2:1, 3, 12.)
- 2:3–11—Paul’s Past Epistle: Concern for Disciplinary Aftermath (Note “I wrote”—2:3, 4, 9.)
- 2:12–17—Paul’s Present Journey: Concern over Titus’ Delayed Return (Note “when I came to Troas . . . I had no rest . . . because I found not Titus”—2:12, 13.)

- 3–6—The Ministry: Its Nature, Demands, Privileges, Promises, & Responsibilities

- 7:2–16—Paul’s Present Journey, Past Correspondence, and Coming Visit Revisited

- 7:2–7—Paul’s Present Journey: Comfort over Titus’ Return & Report (Note “when we came to Macedonia . . . our flesh had no rest . . . but God comforted us by the coming of Titus”—7:5.)
- 7:8–12—Paul’s Past Epistle: Comfort over Their Response to His Letter (Note “letter/epistle . . . I wrote”—7:8, 12.)
- 7:13–16—Paul’s Coming Visit: Comfort & Confidence in Coming Visit

Note: The *inclusio* formed by the two “bookends” (ch. 1b–2 and ch. 7) and their chiastic structure is seen more clearly when you jump from 1:15–2:17 directly to 7:2–16, treating the “digression” of chapters 3–6 as parenthetical (though hardly unimportant).

## 8–9—Preparation for Coming Visit: Organizing the Collection for the Jerusalem Believers

- Note especially 8:6, 7; 8:10, 11; and 9:1–5 (9:4, “come”).
- Everything else Paul says about giving is couched in this context of their preparation for the offering for the Jerusalem believers in light of Paul’s imminent arrival.

## 10–13—Problems for Coming Visit: Affirmation of Apostolic Authority and Warning to Slandering Imposters

- 10:1, 2, 7–11—Paul’s authority (belittled by some in Corinth)
- 11:1–4—Paul’s jealousy (over the purity of their relationship to Christ)
- 11:7–9—Paul’s purity of motive (freedom from avarice)
- 11:12–15—Paul’s enemies (their nature)
- 11:16ff.; 12:1ff.; 12:11–13—Paul’s reluctant boasting
- 12:14, 20, 21; 13:1, 2—Paul is coming.

## Synopsis

You can hear Paul’s sigh of “comfort” at the good report from Titus (1:1–11). Paul then explains why his itinerary changed so that he was forced to write (the Book of 1 Corinthians) rather than come personally (1:15–2:4), and he expresses his immediate counsel on one pressing matter (probably the immoral brother, cf. 1 Cor. 5) (2:5–11). Returning to his itinerary, he relates how Titus’ failure to meet him in Troas raised his concerns about the Corinthians’ response to his letter (2:12ff.).

Paul transitions into discussion of the ministry that is a digression or parenthesis “in terms only of the framework of the epistle but not at all in terms of the substance of the epistle” (Hughes). In 7:5 Paul returns to the subject he left behind back in 2:12, 13—his rendezvous with Titus and the great “comfort” Paul had in Titus’ report of the Corinthians’ response to Paul’s earlier epistle. The passage exudes a minister’s burden that (and his joy when) his ministry is appropriately received.

Paul turns next (8–9) to the single most practical concern he has in connection with his imminent visit: the collection among the Gentile churches as a testimony and assistance to the Jerusalem Christians. This is not a peripheral issue but central to Paul’s visit—so much so that he explains why he is sending Titus and two other brethren on ahead with this epistle in order to oversee and expedite this offering.

Chapters 10–13 “are an exposure of the impostorous ‘apostles’ who have invaded the Corinthian church, and who, in their attempt to undermine Paul’s apostolic authority, have . . . imputed mercenary motives to him, and have so far succeeded in bringing the collection to a standstill” (Hughes). Paul warns that he is coming and there will be fallout.

## Keywords

Dividing keywords by the major divisions helps highlight the distinctive themes and emphases of each section. Just as important as the presence of these words in certain segments of the epistle is their absence from other sections.

## Chapters 1–7

*Comfort/Consolation (parakalew/paraklesis)*—19x

- Almost exclusive to chapters 1 and 7.

*Tribulation/Affliction (thlipsis/thlibw)*—12x

- More than in any other NT book.

Continued on next page

# At a Glance

(Continued from page 31)

*Suffer(ing) (paschw, pathema)*—4x

- A subset of tribulation/affliction

*Grieve/Sorrow (lupew/lupe)*—18x

- Significantly more than in any other NT book and all other epistles combined.

*Commend/Commendation (sunistanw/sunistaw/sustatikos)*—11x

- More than all other NT books combined.

*Epistle (epistole)*—8x

- More than any other NT book.

*Minister/Ministry/Minister*

(diakonew/diakonia/diakonos)—20x

- Diakonew more than any NT book outside Gospels; diakonia and diakonos more than any other NT book.

*Glory/Glorious (doxa/doxazw)*—22x

- Doxa more than any other NT book.

## Chapters 8–9

*Grace/Gift (charis)*—18x (10x in chs. 8–9)

- More in 2 Cor. 8 than in any other NT chapter.

*Abound/Abundance (perisseuw, perisseia, perisseuma)*—9x (chs. 8–9)

- More in 2 Cor. 8–9 than in any other NT book.

*Riches (plou-)*—4x

*Profuse Provision*—9:10–15, note the variety of terms thrown together. NOTE: Sometimes a concept may be expressed in an extravagant variety of synonymous terms. For example,

▪ 9:10

- “he that ministereth” = *epichorew* (supply, furnish, provide)
- “minister” = *choregew* (supply plentifully, “sponsor” or “fund”)
- “multiply” = *plethunw* (increase, multiply)
- “increase” = *auxanw* (cause to grow, increase)

▪ 9:11

- “being enriched” = *ploutizw* (enrich, make wealthy)
- “to all bountifulness” = *haplotes* (liberality)

▪ 9:12

- “supplies” = *prosanaplerow* (to fill up by adding to; cf. 11:9)
- “is abundant” = *perisseuw* (to abound, overflow, have more than enough)

▪ 9:13

- “liberal” = *haplotes* (liberality arising from a singleness of purpose)

▪ 9:14

- “exceeding” = *huperballw* (surpassing, something thrown beyond)

▪ 9:15

- “unspeakable” = *anekdiegetos* (indescribable, incapable of being adequately expressed)

*Ready/Readiness*—3 synonyms appear a combined total of (8x)

- All terms more here than in any other NT book.

In other words, 8–9 is clearly focused on exhorting the Corinthians to excel in the grace of giving abundantly, with the assurance that God will abundantly provide for them in return, and to be prepared when Paul arrives to participate in this ministry. Note the emphasis on which he ends (9:15), the example which he calls to their final attention for gratitude and inspiration.

## Chapters 10–13

*Apostle (apostolos)*—4x (6x in 2 Cor.)

- This is a major topic in his Corinthian correspondence (cf. 1:1; 8:23; and 10x in 1 Cor.). Of 42x the word occurs in all epistolary literature (including Revelation), 17x are in Corinthians. Ephesians has 4x, Romans and Galatians have 3x, all other epistles have 2x or less.

*Boast(ing) (kauchaomai, kauchema, kauchesis)*—20x (31x in 2 Cor.)

- More than all other NT books combined.
- Paul’s use of this word 20x in 10–13 links it to 1–9, where he uses it 11x.

*Fool(ishness) (aphrwn, aphrosune)*—9x

- More than all other NT books combined; only in 2 Cor. 11, 12.
- By his own admission, Paul stoops to the “foolishness” of “boasting” purely out of necessity for the sake of defending his apostolic integrity against those who have slandered it and sought to undermine his credibility and ministry with them.

*Us and Them*

- This clue to Paul’s focus is not identifiable in keywords, but in first person vs. third person verbs and pronominal references. It is most easily traced in the English text throughout 10–11 in particular. Where “us vs. them” contrast breaks off (11:23), Paul continues in ch. 11b–12a on a highly autobiographical note, detailing his persecutorial experiences (11b) and revelatory privileges (12a).

## Theme

Paul’s philosophy of ministry can be summarized in three key points that surface repeatedly throughout 2 Corinthians in a variety of expressions:

- The importance of maintaining credibility with those to whom we minister.
- The minister’s gratification when people respond rightly to his ministry of God’s Word.
- The glories and challenges, privileges and responsibilities of the ministry.

\* The outline featured is adapted and abbreviated from Murray J. Harris, “2 Corinthians” in *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. Much debate has focused on whether 2 Corinthians is a single unified letter or two pieces of correspondence patched together into one. For a thorough and convincing defense of the unity of 2 Corinthians, see Philip E. Hughes, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, pp. xxi–xxxv.

## **Vanishing Protestant Majority**

"Since colonial times the United States has been a Protestant nation. But perhaps as early as this year (2004), the country will for the first time no longer have a Protestant majority." So begins the research study entitled *The Vanishing Protestant Majority*, by Tom W. Smith and Seokho Kim and the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. The report defines "Protestantism" as "including all post-Reformation Christian faiths" which would include the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and several New Age adherents. According to the report, an increasing number of inactive members of Protestant churches are calling themselves "Christians" rather than "Protestants." ([www.norc.uchicago.edu/projects/gensoc.asp](http://www.norc.uchicago.edu/projects/gensoc.asp), accessed August 4, 2004)

In *Time* magazine's August 16 article on the report ("Roll over, Martin Luther"), author David van Biema reported that those most affected were Protestant denominations such as the United Methodists, the Presbyterian Church (USA), and the Episcopal Church. ([www.time.com](http://www.time.com)). The August 2004 *Calvary Contender* reports that "in 2003 the

Presbyterian Church (USA) had its highest percentage loss. Leaders say they are losing people to the secular world (8/04 AB). Deep rifts have worsened among Episcopalians and United Methodists over the past year. Liberal theology is a root problem."

## **No More Dangers in the SBC?**

Stating that "crusades cannot last forever," former SBC president Morris H. Chapman recently indicated that the conservative resurgence in the Southern Baptist convention has gone far enough. In an article posted at the Southern Baptist news site on June 21, 2004, reporter Jon Waller reported on the June 15 message preached by Dr. Chapman, who is now the president of the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention. After reminding the messengers at the national convention "that the conservative resurgence would not have been successful had it not been for rank-and-file Southern Baptists," Chapman went on to say that Southern Baptists are in great danger of going down what he calls the "road of separatism." After admitting that there are those within the SBC "who reject biblical fidelity," Chapman said that he and other leaders of the SBC

should have taken the opportunity to be more inclusive. In Chapman's thinking, the goals of the conservative resurgence have been achieved.

"Expressing a concern that Southern Baptists, having affirmed their faith in the Bible, 'will develop a censorious, exclusivistic, intolerant spirit,' Chapman warned there is a real threat that the convention might 'end up on the road of separatism,' a direction equally as disabling as liberalism. This road of separatism is 'an ecclesiastical methodology that devalues cooperation in favor of hyper-independence,' Chapman stated." (<http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=18521>, accessed August 30, 2004)

## **Dr. Alice Cooper**

Shock rocker Alice Cooper has received an honorary doctorate from Grand Canyon University. The university, formerly affiliated with and supported by the Southern Baptist Convention, was established by Baptists in 1949. Michael Clifford, vice-chairman of the university said, "I'm trying to maintain the Christian heritage that the founders created, but I've got to create value for the degrees for our graduates so they can find top jobs and go help change the world for Jesus."

(<http://www.bpnews.net/bpnews.asp?ID=18238>, accessed August 30, 2004)

## **Seeing Through Black Holes**

For two decades Stephen Hawking, a renowned Cambridge physicist, has been the leading theorist concerning the so called "black holes." In short, the theory states that there are places in the universe where gravity is so intense that nothing (including light) can escape. Science fiction and fantasy writers have used this theory to indicate that a black hole is a door to other, parallel universes (where, presumably, the Ten Commandments do not apply). Until this year, Hawking had stated that the matter pulled into the black hole would ultimately cease to exist. On July 21, in a paper presented before the 17<sup>th</sup> International Conference on General Relativity and Gravitation, Hawking overturned his own theorem by indicating that that matter and energy within a black hole does not cease to exist. His presentation shook that scientific community. According to the Associated Press, "His new theory produced waves of skepticism and puzzlement from leading physics professors. Two in the front row—William Unruh of the University of British Columbia and

## NOTABLE QUOTES

Robert Wald of the University of Chicago—shrugged and shook their heads in disbelief as Hawking spoke. ‘He’s running away from what we still believe,’ said Wald, an expert on black holes.” (*Chicago Sun Times*, July 22, 2004) In his book *A Brief History of Time*, Hawking had posed his own evolutionary hypothesis indicating that human life is the result of millions of years, millions of variables, and surprisingly, millions of universes (going through continual “big bangs” and “big crunches”). Over the years he has used black holes as evidence of the existence of other universes. His remarkable admission on July 21 will challenge more than just his view of black holes.

### Inciting Religious Hatred?

Britain's top law enforcement official is Home Secretary David Blunkett. On Wednesday, August 4, he stated that “a new law to criminalize the inciting of religious hatred would apply to far-Right evangelicals as much as to Islamist extremists who preached violence against other religions.” Evangelicals were understandably outraged. (<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news>, accessed August 9, 2004)

### Don't Speak Out on the Issues

The Canada Customs and Revenue Agency has warned the Catholic Church and the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada not to speak out on issues such as abortion and “same-sex marriage.” (WorldNetDaily, [http://www wnd com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE\\_ID=39971](http://www wnd com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=39971), accessed August 16, 2004)

**T**he oldest and grandest calling in the world is building a Christian home.—Henry Drummond

**T**he family circle is the supreme conductor of Christianity.—Henry Drummond

**T**hat there was no room in the inn was symbolic of what was to happen to Jesus. The only place where there was room for Him was on the Cross.—William Barclay

**I**f we were determined to conceal and subvert the Gospel, it would be hard to invent a better device than the Santa myth.—John Mahoney

**H**e who has not Christmas in his heart will never find it under a tree.—Roy L. Smith

**O**ur trouble is we want the peace without the Prince.—Addison H. Leitch

**T**he point at which most parents lose their children is when the parent needs to speak with authority. The authority which parents have, but often choose to ignore, is the authority given them by God. It comes to the parent by way of a personal knowledge of and a personal surrender to the Word of God. Lacking this authority, and the children being beyond spanking age, there is then no apparent reason for obedience. And to compound what is already a deplorable situation, the parent so desperately desires some semblance of unity in the home that he not only capitulates to but also cooperates with the child's unreasonable, irrational, and nonsensical demands.—Daniel Webster

**I**f you don't firmly program your children's minds with truth, someone else will do so with half-truth, untruth, and unimportant truth.—Daniel Webster

**P**arents don't plan to fail in raising their children—they often fail to plan.—Daniel Webster

**I**f we work upon marble, it will perish. If we work upon brass, time will efface it. If we rear temples, they will crumble to dust. But if we work upon men's immortal minds, if we imbue them with high principles, with the just fear of God and love of their fellow men, we engrave on those tablets something which no time can efface and which will brighten to all eternity.—Daniel Webster

### Religion and Morality

Euro RSCG Worldwide recently completed a survey on the effects of religion on marital fidelity. The following excerpts are quotes from their findings.

“A substantial 39 percent of Americans agree ‘my religious beliefs factor into my sexual behavior,’ while at the other extreme, a very meager 3 percent of French respondents agree and an overwhelming 91 percent disagree. No other nation surveyed comes close to the United States in terms of allowing religion into the bedroom, the nearest being the U.K., with 16 percent in agreement. In Germany, just 6 percent agree.”

“The Chinese are by far the most likely to think that monogamy is the natural state for human beings: 70 percent of them agree, compared with 57 percent of Americans and even fewer respondents in France, the U.K., and Germany (44, 42, and 40 percent, respectively).” ([http://www.euroscg.com/press/press\\_247.htm](http://www.euroscg.com/press/press_247.htm), accessed September 15, 2004)

### Marriage and Divorce

According to a survey by George Barna, 35% of born-again Christians are likely to divorce. This percentage is the same for non-Christians.

While it is true that more non-Christians avoid marriage altogether by cohabitating, this figure is still startling. (<http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdateNarrative&BarnaUpdateID=170>, accessed September 21, 2004)

This news is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International.

## Messiah's Birthplace: A Needy Mission Field

Pearson Johnson

In two recent issues of Global Focus, we learned about the needs and opportunities in the Muslim world. During this Christmas season, as we continue to look westward in our Focus, we come naturally across a nation which we are very familiar: Israel. While we normally associate discussions of Israel with Christmas time, prophecy, biblical geography, or contemporary politics, we would like to encourage you to view Israel this season as a needy mission field.

Since 1882 there have been numerous Jews who have migrated back to Israel. This migration is known as Aliyah. In 1948 mass immigration brought Jews from 102 countries and now total close to 6 million people. Those who come from Europe are referred to as the Askenazim. The Sephardim are Middle Easterners. Those coming from Ethiopia are referred as the Falasha, and Jews from South Asia are known as the Kochin. The largest group is from the Russian/Ukrainian block. Lately there have been increased numbers of Spanish-speaking Jews and North American Jews returning to the homeland. It is estimated that almost one-half of the world's Jews have returned to Israel. Today, with all of these immigrants, Israel is a multi-linguistic and multi-cultural nation.

Slightly smaller than New Jersey, Israel is a modern, sophisticated industrial nation as well. Israel is known for developing defense technology, aviation, communications, computer-aided design and manufacturing, and medical electronics. They have also become self-sufficient in many agricultural products. Israel is a world-class, modern nation.

Growth of churches in Israel has been significant. In 1948 there were reportedly about 12 believers in 2 congregations. By the turn of the century, the number of congregations rose dramatically to 81—due mainly to Russian-Jewish immigration. Religious groups are free to operate inside of their own communities, but anti-proselytizing measures and social pressures have restricted the kinds of activities in which Bible-believing churches can engage. Children cannot be proselytized. It is against the law to teach someone else's child anything but Judaism. The ultra-religious Orthodox Jews (Haredi) dominate society, even though they only represent a minority of the larger body of religious Judaism. Pray that the power of God's

***Israel needs to be viewed just like other highly unevangelized fields in which souls need to submit to Jesus as the Messiah, and churches need to be planted.***

grace would break through the religious pride and religio-political power of the Haredi.

Dan and Diane Morrell, professors at Pillsbury Baptist Bible College, spent one full year ministering in Israel, and they return often for short-term trips. They told us that a prospective missionary cannot enter the country under the umbrella of missionary work but must take a tentmaker approach to ministry. Some organizations like the Church of Scotland, and the Southern Baptist Convention, were grandfathered in and are not subject to the newer laws, since they were in the region before 1948. They have special permission to send a set number of their "missionaries" to the country even today, though their quota was decided years ago and cannot be increased. According to the Morrells, one of the best options for those going as a tentmaker is to enter as a journalist or a student. An organization or group of people can enter by applying as an amutah (non-profit organization) to provide

services for the many immigrants coming to the nation. Amutahs are inspected by the government to ensure legitimate and ethical work. In the Morrells' opinion, the most urgent need in Israel is training for Israeli pastors. They are often self-taught and have been influenced by the charismatic movement. Pray for qualified tentmakers to go and dedicate themselves to this task!

Many evangelical groups have started ministries in Israel as a result of their misapplication of Old Testament eschatological promises to this dispensation. Certainly God did great things through Israel in the Old Testament, and He still has great plans for the nation in the end times. In this dispensation, however, Israel needs to be viewed just like other highly unevangelized fields in which souls need to submit to Jesus as the Messiah, and churches need to be planted. God is accomplishing a work there now, but there is much more to be done.

During this Christmas season, when you naturally think about the Messiah coming to Israel, please stop and pray that God would raise up laborers to take news of the Savior to a whole new generation in this needy country today!

Pearson Johnson is Missions  
Pastor at Inter-City Baptit Church in Allen Park, Michigan.

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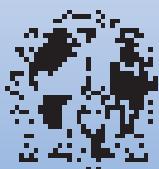
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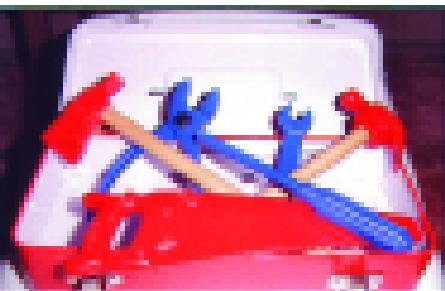
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## Shop ‘Til you Drop?

Well, here we go again into another holiday season. It is commonly understood that the stores have tried to “break even” for the rest of the year hoping to make a profit during this period. As you know, this “season” has expanded over the years. Thus, in American shops, the Christmas decorations now appear sometime in October. Clever marketing has attempted to teach us that “more is better” and that “saving” means “spending.” Pricey Christmas gifts have become more important than the precious Gift of Christ. So, it’s necessary for believers to conquer this cultural thinking in their own attitudes and actions.

To win this victory over vanity, you must turn away from the empty attitudes and actions of this age. Let’s face it, Solomon was the ultimate “shop ‘til you drop” consumer. He had the wealth to buy whatever he chose and the wisdom to see the results. You can read the notes from his experiments throughout the book of Ecclesiastes.

Like many today, he tried to find real happiness by amusing himself with comedy, alcohol, new houses, new properties, animals, money, collectibles, and all sorts of music.<sup>1</sup> Solomon’s notes show that substituting goods for God is a recipe for despair. Through the window of the Word, believers recognize this substitution as idolatry. Of course, modern society tries to disguise this idolatry with words such as *alcoholism, individualism, materialism and experientialism*. In each case, the word can be defined by preceding the root word with “an unusual devotion to.” The fact is that many modern day “isms” are the same things the ancients

called idols. Society also hides the pursuit of pleasure in more subtle ways: standard dinner plates and hamburgers have both expanded by more than 20 per cent, and today’s soft drinks are 50 per cent larger than those of past decades.<sup>2</sup> Vendors have been consistently “super sizing” our expectations. The words from a recent advertisement sum up the world’s approach: “Don’t do nothing you don’t want to do. Ain’t nothing funny about you. Keepin’ it real and do what you feel. You gotta eat, eat Rally’s.”<sup>3</sup> In the findings from his own experiment in emptiness, Solomon warned all of us to turn away from these (sometimes subtle) attitudes (12:12).

To win this victory over vanity, you must learn to fear the Lord (12:13). This fear of the Lord is an attitude of loving respectfulness that recognizes God’s Presence at all times. This attitude of fearing the Lord helps each believer look at life and lifestyles through the Lord’s eyes. With this approach, each of us can learn to recognize the idolatry and vanity of this age.

A careful examination of the Scripture passages that discuss the fear of the Lord will transform your way of thinking. These passages reveal that the person who knows the fear of the Lord will be secure and satisfied. He will not continue his empty pursuit with meaningless results. Solomon’s findings in this text closely parallel other transforming passages such as Ephesians 4:22-24 and James 1:21-22. The fear of the Lord renews your mind and helps you to think correctly. When you look at the holidays from the Lord’s perspective, giving thanks sets aside

thoughtless gluttony—God means more than gifts. You can be victorious by setting aside the world’s empty attitudes and learning the fear of the Lord.

To consistently win this victory over vanity, you must obey the commands of Scripture. Verse 14 explains that this is to be done with the full recognition of coming judgment. This recognition of accountability clears your vision and brings you to reality. The companion passage in James 1:22 is most instructive here. To be a hearer of the Word and not a doer is to deceive yourself. Think about what this means! Those who do not obey God’s Word are trying to live in fantasy rather than reality. For all practical purposes, they are playing an April fool’s joke on themselves. Is it any wonder that the harsh realities of life come crashing through this façade of fantasy? The “ultimate shop ‘til you drop” consumer has already told you where the pursuit of folly leads. “Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.” Obeying God’s commands will bring you out of your fantasy world.

It’s absolutely necessary for you to conquer the pressures of this culture in your own attitudes and actions. By setting aside those empty teachings, embracing the fear of the Lord and obeying God’s commands, you will learn how to be victorious over vanity.

We wish you joyous holidays as you meditate upon these Scriptures.

<sup>1</sup> Ecclesiastes 2 (unless otherwise noted, all passages cited in this article are from the book of Ecclesiastes)

<sup>2</sup> <http://outreach.missouri.edu/cmregion/thriving/2003%20August/Watch%20Those%20Food%20Portions.html>

<sup>3</sup> Television advertisement for Rally’s hamburgers.



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