

MAGAZINE

TRUTH

What To Look For In A Mate

Bobby Witherington

“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4). “And the Lord said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone, I will make him a helper comparable to him’” (Gen. 2:18).

From these verses we learn that marriage is an “honorable” estate, and that it was God himself who recognized man’s need for “a helper comparable to him,” and then created Eve (the first woman) to be the wife of Adam (the first man). Moreover, after creating Eve to be the wife of Adam, God then made provision for the perpetuation of the holy estate of marriage, saying, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24).

However, as God conceived it, marriage is not only divine in origin and “honorable” in nature, it is also permanent in duration. The Scripture plainly says “the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives” (Rom. 7:2). And Jesus, after referring back to “the beginning” when God instituted the marriage relationship and “joined” the first couple in marriage, then said, “Therefore what God has

joined together, let not man separate” (Matt. 19:4-6).

In view of the lofty purpose which prompted heaven’s institution of marriage, in view of God’s intent for its duration, and in view of the fact that the perpetuation of the human species is one of the results of marriage, then it

seems obvious that man’s greatest earthly happiness should be experienced in marriage. But alas! man’s greatest misery is often experienced in marriage! Regarding this point, Solomon said, “It is better to dwell in the wilderness than with a contentious and an angry woman” (Prov. 21:19).

And many wives could say the same about dwelling with a “contentious and . . . angry” man! At any rate, it should be evident that any person, desiring a happy and successful marriage, should use caution when it comes to his (or her) selection of a mate. After all, marriage is a life long contract, and it involves the most intimate of all human relationships.

However, the proper selection of a mate has to involve knowing what to look for in a mate. Picking the wrong mate, and then expecting happiness in marriage, makes about as much sense as trying to make a good omelet out of a bad egg. Yes, it is imperative to know
see “. . . Look For in a Mate” on p. 504

*“And ye shall
know the truth,
and the truth
shall make
you free”
(John 8:32).*

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Is Baptism Essential For Salvation?

Mike Willis

There are several doctrines on which brethren have preached so many sermons and so many outlines have been published that one would think that these doctrines are settled in the minds of Christians. Among such doctrines one might include the following: (a) the action, subject, and design of water baptism; (b) the weekly observance of the Lord's supper; (c) the oneness of the church and its unique characteristics; (d) instrumental music in worship. However, there are several indications that, especially among the institutional brethren, these doctrines are being blatantly rejected.



Changes Among Institutional Brethren

• **Max Lucado.** Some years ago, Max Lucado created a stir among institutional brethren when his radio program taught that one can be saved without being baptized. Here is a transcript from his broadcast:

The Holy Spirit is informing you of something you have never really heard before — that is, that God is ready to be your Father. Maybe you never understood that the invitation was for everyone. Maybe you thought you were unworthy. Maybe now you do understand. God will make you worthy, and the invitation is for you. All you have to do is to call Him Father. Just call Him Father. Just turn your heart to Him right now as I am speaking. And your Father will respond. Why don't you do that?

Father, I give my heart to you. I give you my sins, I give you my tears, I give you my fears, I give you my whole life. I accept the gift of your Son on the cross for my sins. And I ask you, Father, to receive me as your child. Through Jesus I pray, Amen.

After this prayer, the announcer of the program said:

And friend, if you prayed along with Max Lucado just now, here at UPWARDS, we want to welcome you into the family of God. We hope you will contact us and share your personal testimony.

At the end of the broadcast, Lucado continued:

Today is the first day you ever prayed a prayer like that. Could you do me a *see "Baptism . . . Essential" on p. 505*

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Six Principles of Spiritual Success

Lessons from King David to Solomon
1 Chronicles 22-29

Chris Reeves

When he was old and dying, King David passed the throne over to his son Solomon (c. 970 B.C.). He gave his son instructions concerning building the temple. In doing so, he also gave his son some parting advice on spiritual success. What would you pass on to your children if you had one last thing to say to them? Would it be something concerning the physical aspects of life, or something spiritual? Consider the six principles of spiritual success that David passed on to his son Solomon. These principles are recorded for us in 1 Chronicles 22-29.

PROSPER in the Lord (1 Chron. 22:11, 13; 29:23)

First, David wanted his son to prosper in the Lord. David said to Solomon, “Now, my son, Jehovah be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of Jehovah thy God, as he hath spoken concerning thee” (22:11). The prosperity that David desired for Solomon was not just any kind of prosperity. It was the prosperity that comes from being right with the Lord. The prosperity that David desired for his son was conditioned upon three things: (1) keeping the commandments of the Lord (22:13; cf. 28:7-8), (2) being strong (22:13), and (3) arising to work (22:16, 19). This prosperity was not based upon material possessions, money, appearance, social status, education, etc.

This principle of success is the same throughout time. In the days of Joshua, true prosperity was conditioned upon being right with the Lord (Josh. 1:7-9). Also, in the time of the New Testament, John desired that the soul of Gaius would prosper (3 John 2). And today, if we want to truly prosper we must be right with the Lord. So many people today put more emphasis on prospering financially than they do on prospering spiritually. Are you a faithful Christian? Is your soul prospering? How much time do you spend reading your Bible, praying and worshiping with the saints? These spiritual activities will cause your soul to prosper.

PRAISE the Lord (1 Chron. 23:5, 30; 25:3; 29:13)

Second, David wanted his son to praise the Lord. He made arrangements for 4,000 men to stand in the temple to praise the Lord morning and evening! He also set the right example before he died by praising the Lord himself. He said, “Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name”

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(29:13). Praising the Lord focuses the attention on God, not man. Praising God also leads to humility (29:10ff).

Consider those who do not focus themselves on God, but on self. For example, the Gentile world fell away from God into gross immorality because they served themselves and refused to praise and glorify God (Rom. 1:21ff). Paul also speaks of grievous times in which many would fall away because they refused to praise and glorify God (2 Tim. 3:1-5). Do we praise the Lord with our lives and our lips (Rom. 15:11; Heb. 13:15)? We will be successful in life when we praise the Lord and focus our attention on him rather than on ourselves.

PERFECT Heart Serving the Lord (1 Chron. 28:9; 29:9, 19)

Third, David wanted his son to have a perfect heart while he was serving the Lord. He said, “And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind” (28:9). And again David said, “and give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things, and to build the palace, for which I have made provision” (29:19). What is a “perfect” heart? Perfect hearts are “willing” hearts (28:9, 21; 29:5-6, 9, 17). Perfect hearts also serve God wholeheartedly and in truth (cf. 1 King 2:1-4; 2 Chron. 25:1-2).

We too must have a perfect heart. Do we love God with all our hearts (Matt. 22:37)? Do we have a perfect heart (Col. 4:12; 1 Thess. 3:10)? If we are to be successful today, we must be willing to serve the Lord wholeheartedly.

PATTERN of the Lord’s Work (1 Chron. 28:11, 12, 18, 19)

Fourth, David wanted his son to follow the pattern of the Lord’s work while he was building the temple. The pattern for the temple was important to David. It was important to David to reveal the pattern to his son and encourage his son to follow it. The Chronicler records, “Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch of the temple, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper rooms thereof, and of the inner chambers thereof, and of the place of the mercy-seat; and the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit, for the courts of the house of Jehovah, and for all the chambers round about, for the treasuries of the house of God, and for the treasuries of the dedicated things” (28:11-12) . . . “and for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for the pattern of the chariot, even the cherubim, that spread out their wings, and covered the ark of the covenant of Jehovah. All this, said David, have I been made to understand in writing from the hand of Jehovah, even all the works of this pattern” (28:18-19).

We too must follow the pattern of God’s word today (Rom. 6:17; 2 Tim. 1:13). To be successful, we must follow

the pattern of salvation, the pattern of local church work, worship, and organization, the pattern of daily Christian living and the pattern of Christian homes, families, and marriage.

PALACE is Not for Man, But for the Lord (1 Chron. 29:1, 19)

Fifth, David wanted his son to realize that the palace (the temple) was not for man, but for the Lord. The same is true today concerning the Lord’s church. The Lord’s church belongs to the Lord, not man. The sooner we learn this, the sooner we begin to have success. We must understand and accept the fact that some things belong to the Lord and not to us. It is the Lord’s church, the Lord’s body (Matt. 16:18)! It is the Lord’s day (Rev. 1:10)! It is the Lord’s supper (1 Cor. 11:20)! It is the Lord’s money (1 Cor. 16:1-2)! It is the Lord’s work (1 Cor. 15:58)! It is the Lord’s authority (Matt. 28:18)! Many Christians and local churches are unsuccessful because they think that these things belong to them.

PREPARE Abundantly for Death (1 Chron. 22:3, 5, 14; 28:2; 29:2, 3, 16)

Finally, David wanted to prepare abundantly for his death. He prepared for his death by preparing Solomon to build the temple and reign as a king. Friend, are you prepared for death (Mark 1:2-3; John 14:2-3)? You prepare for a family gathering, but are you prepared for *the* gathering of all the world before the King? You prepare for a homecoming, but are you prepared for *the* homecoming with the saints of all time? You prepare for an important person, but are you prepared for *the* King of Kings, Lord of Lords? You prepare for a test, but are you prepared for *the* test of life given in the judgment day? You prepare for a wedding ceremony, but are you prepared for *the* marriage between the bride of Christ and the Lamb? You prepare for a job interview, but are you prepared for *the* interview before God at the judgment seat of Christ?

Early in life Solomon applied the principles of spiritual success that his father passed on to him. He lived by them and they brought him great success. However, at the end of his life he forsook them and did not apply them. He was brought to ruin (1 Kings 11:1-8). Let us not make the same mistake Solomon made. Let us learn and apply these same principles of spiritual success all throughout our lives so that we can be pleasing to God.

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Where We Have Been — Where Are We Now — Where Are We Going (10)

David said, “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Ps. 133:1). Disagreements, dissensions, disruptions, divisions, and divorces are disastrous and destructive in all social units — communities, nations, businesses, schools, families, churches — in all entities where progress, prosperity, and peace are dependent upon proper standards of disposition, behavior, purpose, and action.

Unity, goodwill, love of our Lord Jesus Christ, and respect for God’s will in the New Testament regarding peace and brotherly love, have not characterized the churches of Christ, as an outwardly identifiable body of people, in the past half century. Major and minor divisions have occurred which have alienated and separated brethren completely and permanently. Congregations have divided within themselves (and continue to do so), and groups of congregations have divided themselves from other groups, according to the particular and peculiar dogmas, doctrines, and opinions espoused by each, and according to who may be the “powers that be,” who is “in charge” among the various congregations and groups.

Divisions in families and among religious folks are generally final. Rarely are they overcome. Few people ever admit mistakes, errors, and sins. Repentance, confession, forgiveness, and earnest prayers for mercy are a lost teaching and practice among us. To say, “I am sorry, I was wrong, I want you to forgive me” is a long-since forgotten, unpracticed facet of God’s truth among brethren. It is easier (?) to fuss and leave, “begin another work,” and turn our backs on one another, than it is to reach understandings, exercise patience, study God’s word together, and pray with one another. Suspicions replace trust; misrepresentations, exaggerations, and falsehoods replace truthful speaking and sincere motives; human wisdom replaces divine wisdom; error replaces truth; man replaces God; hatred replaces love; fractiousness replaces peace; anger replaces patience; a vengeful spirit replaces forgiveness and forgetfulness; and final

separation replaces reconciliation and future fellowship. Former friends become enemies for life. Communications cease and contempt in words and looks occur when our alienated brethren are mentioned or met face to face. All of this, and more, has gone on and, to a lesser degree, is still going on among churches of Christ.

The wholesale, major divisions which happened in the fifties, sixties, and seventies over congregational financial support of human benevolent societies; over centralization of programs, money, and oversight under “sponsoring churches and centralized, universal, overseeing elderships”; over the “social gospel” concepts with the church-sponsored eating and drinking, youth ministries, youth programs, aged programs, bus ministries, etc. devastated many churches. Those brethren and congregations embracing these concepts as being authorized by God, as part and parcel of his eternal wisdom and purpose in and for his heavenly kingdom, have become more and more liberal-minded, less Bible-oriented in their thinking, convictions, and practices as two generations of people have come along in the congregations. A casual reading of *The Christian Chronicle* from Oklahoma City, Oklahoma each month, which is the unofficial voice of “the mainstream churches of Christ” (as they designate themselves) will stagger your imagination as to what those churches are thinking, planning, and doing nowadays.

On the other hand brethren, who two generations ago stood for truth and righteousness, who opposed innovations in and additions to the Lord’s churches, who sacrificed themselves and their families upon the altars of faith, obedience to Jesus, and maintenance of the purity of the doctrine and the identity of the Lord’s church, are about all gone. Comparatively few are still living this side of eternity who fought the good fight of faith in the forties, fifties, and sixties, and preserved a remnant by their sound and solid preaching of the gospel, and exposure(s) of the errors and innovations of men, brethren who were determined to change the appearance, identity, organiza-

tion, and function(s) of the Lord's churches. And amongst that remnant, a minority preserved at such great costs and sacrifices, there have been needless, foolish, ungodly doctrines, opinions, alienations, and divisions, so that, to a great degree, those "conservative" churches have decimated themselves and destroyed their influence. Among these newer, younger "conservative" churches, preachers, and brethren, there has arisen in the past generation, a spirit of doctrinal softness, toleration of and no exposure of error, compromise of conviction, condemnation of those who will boldly speak the truth, and an unwritten but subtly practiced creed of rejection of the "more conservative," bolder brethren among us.

Some of the institutionalized, centralized, socialized churches of Christ, now about fifty years of age and containing two generations of new members (the older brethren, like Ira North, who charted the paths of departures from the New Testament for such congregations) are having severe problems and divisions. *The Christian Chronicle*, January 2002, surprisingly carries a long, somewhat detailed, article about the major division in the Madison, Tennessee church. It is written by Lindy Adams, the "Assistant Managing Editor" of the paper. It is titled: "MADISON'S CONFLICT REFLECTS COMPLEX, BROADER ISSUES." Its subtitle says: "What Causes Conflict? Is it escalating? How can we resolve disputes in churches? Examining the roots of these realities, particularly disturbing in church families, can bring light and hope. Churches can resolve conflict (Part one in a three-part series)." The entire article is as follows:

Its name is legendary and brings to mind legendary people and associations. It was our first multi-faceted, multi-programmed mega-church.

It's the church led by Jim Mankin, Jimmy Sites, Steve Flatt and, of course, the inimitable Ira North. It's Amazing Grace Bible Class, Happy Hills Boys Ranch, song leader Nick Boone — yes, Pat's brother.

It's Madison....

It's the church on Gallatin Road in suburban Nashville, Tenn., which under the leadership of bigger-than-life Ira North, went into being a typical congregation to being what some considered our flagship. In its heyday it was the largest congregation in churches of Christ.

But in recent years Madison has fallen on hard times. North succumbed to cancer in 1984 and in the years since

the congregation has gone from a well-oiled machine to one in need of overhaul.

However, recent attempts at an overhaul put those committed to the old ways and those seeking the new at terrible odds.

Tensions rose. Tempers flared. Members were set against members. Some left.

At the end of 1998, Madison's Sunday morning attendance was 3,240. Today it is zzzzzzz2,433, a loss of about 800 members, according to Jerry Sherrill, Madison's business administrator.

So traumatic, so heart-breaking, so disconcerting. But too typical.

Across the nation religious groups from Baha'i to Baptist are embroiled in similar conflict, reports Faith Communities Today, a research project of the Lilly Endowment, which released its findings on 42 U.S. religious bodies last March. Frequently the conflict centers on worship issues.

The FACT study — which included data from congregations among churches of Christ — found that 59 percent of all religious bodies nationwide changed worship practices a "great deal" in the last five years and that such change brought conflict.

As any attentive observer knows, our fellowship is no exception. Since mid-August, word of conflict in 11 congregations has been reported to the CHRONICLE. The discord is of several sorts, but often regards worship.

But what happened at Madison?

Some parts of the story are disputed. While Madison's elders declined to discuss the details of the conflict, some members and leaders shared their insights.

The church's troubles began in earnest in early 2001, members say. A contemporary Sunday morning service in the church's basement fellowship hall was added to two existing traditional services. The new gathering quickly outgrew its quarters.

In February, elder Buck Dozier read an elders' statement saying the contemporary service would replace the second traditional Sunday morning service in the main auditorium. The next Sunday some members walked out of the contemporary worship, according to deacon David Hardin. From that Sunday, the conflict escalated. Madison's promi-

nence drew coverage in local media — including television reports and two articles in THE TENNESSEAN.

A few traditional members, calling themselves “Concerned Members,” began a web site with complaints and reports and mailed 2,500 questionnaires to members polling them about issues.

A member from the traditional worship service called publicly for the elders’ resignation.

Meanwhile, participants in the contemporary worship chafed under decisions by the elders requiring a mixture of traditional and contemporary songs and regulating the length of the sermon.

Practices including use of a praise team on Sunday morning and singing during communion have been prohibited, according to member David Hardin.

However, other Madison sources say such issues are under study.

In September the elders called for help. Larry Sullivan of the Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution, Pepperdine University, made the first of several visits to Madison to help resolve the difficulties.

Sullivan instructed the congregation in dispute resolution skills, conducted interviews with members from various factions and assembled teams to discuss differences. He said Madison, like many churches, is struggling with addressing contemporary culture without abandoning the truths of Christ’s message.

Madison members are frustrated, he said. “They want to reach out and be pertinent to our culture today, yet not lose the underpinnings of the Gospel. I think everybody sees the dilemma and is trying to address it in certain ways.”

As Madison seeks resolution to its ills, what in its experience can offer insight to other churches? Certainly that no church, regardless of prominence, age, history or leadership is immune.

Fifteen years ago few members could have imagined the

fracturing that has occurred at Madison, according to sources at the congregation.

As the Madison elders said in their February statement, “. . . we believe that these times challenge us to humbly relook at what we think and believe . . . We have sought the perfect church in the New Testament, but found them struggling also. We pursued infallible practice and spotless leadership in the Restoration Movement. We found greatness and inspiration, but no perfection. Regardless of our age or position, we all must admit our humanity, and humble ourselves before God.”

The Christian Chronicle, February 2002, quotes the following from Steve North of Nashville, son of Ira North:

Former Madison Member Reacts — Until recently, I had been an active member of the Madison Church of Christ for 48 years. I was disappointed in the CHRONICLE article on Madison. I thought it was one-sided and superficial. Some of my concerns:

1. What has happened at Madison is not simply a dispute or a disagreement over worship styles. It is a disaster. The estimate of only 800 members leaving is grossly underestimated. At least 1,500 members have left Madison in the last few months and many more have left over the last few years. Families have been split, life-long friends are not speaking to one another. Hard feelings and bitterness over this split will last for generations. Ira North said, “It takes 100 years to get over a church fuss.” The future of the Madison Church of Christ as a restoration church is indeed bleak.
2. The announcement that worship at Madison would be divided between “contemporary” and “traditional” services was not the beginning of the problem, it was the culmination of an insidious effort on the part of a few to divide and destroy.
3. The dispute is not about worship styles or “old-timers” who won’t change to adapt to the modern world. . . .”

The above articles about this dispute, and the dispute and division itself, is so saddening and heart-breaking to anyone of us still living who ever attended a service of worship and “old-time” gospel preaching at Madison in the days of C.J. Garner and before. The language and descriptions of this problem, and the approaches and methods of solutions, reeks with phraseology, ideas, and principles completely unknown to God’s word and to identifying characteristics of the Lord’s churches set forth in the New Testament. I plan to comment somewhat about these matters in my next essay. (To be continued)

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The Days of Creation

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Youthful Dreams

When we are young we have great interests and passions, but too often we do not pursue them. Instead of

following our inward desires, we sacrifice them for conformity and convenience. We tell ourselves we will wait until our children are grown, or until our parents have passed, or until some other thing has happened. Then we awaken one day to the realization that we haven't done what we really wanted to do, and we never will! There is a certain sense of emptiness. If your dream of dreams is to move to an area where your presence can make a great difference, do it now while you can. Among the areas to consider is the Northeastern United States.

As I approach my seventieth birthday I have a tendency to look back. What I see are some poor decisions. Fortunately, there were others that resulted in tremendous challenges and changes. That could apply to becoming a Christian, getting married, and deciding to preach. As an encouragement to others, I want to write of one great decision that fulfilled a youthful dream.

As a native of Texas, I began my preaching work there in the fifties. I could have spent my life in the state, but I felt the need to go where churches were small and far between. Having the desire and acting on it are not the same. Following a series of what I think were providential events, I was contacted by the church in East Orange, New Jersey about working with them. The determination to move to the Northeast was made in the spring of 1959. It was for my wife, our three small children and myself a life changing decision. It has led to experiences, sights, sorrows, joys, trials, triumphs, and acquaintance with beloved brethren I could never have known had I remained in my native state.

The Northeast is a great place to live, but more importantly, a great place to work for the Lord. Twice I have left this area, and both times were mistakes. Thus each time I returned. In addition to New Jersey, I have lived in the Northeastern states of New York and Pennsylvania. This article is not intended to be an autobiography, but an appeal and encouragement to young preachers. My experiences can be echoed by others who have come to this area. Several came for a few years and a few for a lifetime. Regardless of how long they have been gone,

some of their most precious memories are of the time they spent in the Northeast. The fields are not always white, but souls can be won. I have taught hundreds of home classes and baptized hundreds of people in New Jersey, and you can too! I have watched as God used me and others to build the largest conservative church of Christ in the Northeast, a multi-national, multi-racial group of loving brethren in the northern New Jersey/New York City metropolitan area. Now as I semi-retire to a less hectic place in the Northeast, I hope to see young men accept the challenge to come to an area with more opportunities than one man can pursue in a life time. Don't wait.

Don't let your youthful dreams die unfulfilled. If I can be of any assistance to you, please contact me *now*.

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What the Gossiper Does

One who gossips is “a person who chatters or repeats idle talk and rumors about others” (Webster). The Bible describes the gossiper as a talebearer, whisperer, busybody, or slanderer. Even Christians who have not learned to control their tongues may be guilty of gossip. Much instruction is given in the New Testament on the proper use of the tongue. In one way or another we are often admonished to lay aside falsehood and “speak truth, each one of you, with his neighbor, for we are members one of another” (Eph. 4:25).

Sometimes Christians who are not especially gifted at being professional liars will without much thought repeat things that they do not know to be the truth. No matter what form it may take, Christians ought not to be found as slanderers or gossipers. This sin does not keep good company. It has as its friends strife, jealousy, angry tempers, arrogance, disputes, and disturbances (2 Cor. 12:20), as well as unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, envy, murder, deceit, and haters of God (Rom. 1:29-30).

Before relating something that may be detrimental, we should ask the following questions: Is it necessary that I tell this? Will it profit him or me about whom I’m speaking? Have I considered every possible angle? An earnest endeavor to answer these questions may check the flow of harmful words. Someone has well said, “If that bit of gossip has made nothing of you, you make nothing of it!”

What does the gossiper do? By answering this question we should be able to see why the Bible paints such a terrible picture of the gossiper.

1. The gossiper wounds others deeply. “All that hate me whisper together against me: against me they devise my hurt” (Ps. 41:7). The gossiper intends to bring hurt to the one spoken about. He may find it necessary to “distort . . . words” to accomplish this end, but since his thoughts are against the person for evil, he has no scruples of conscience forbidding him to do so (Ps. 56:5).

2. The gossiper always finds eager listeners. “The words of a whisperer are like dainty morsels, and they

go down into the innermost parts of the body” (Prov. 18:8; 26:22). There seems to be little doubt that the second clause of this verse refers to food, and for this reason “dainty morsels” is probably a good rendering of the Hebrew word in the first part of the verse. The point of the comparison is that just as the delicate eater loves his delicacies, so the man who delights in gossip gloats over it sinking into his heart. Like the Athenians, too many people find great delight in hearing “some new thing” — and to their shame, too often they have little regard as to whether it is true or not. We must be careful. The words of the talebearer affect us adversely even when we are not aware of it. Reflect for a moment: How easy is it to forget about evil words you have heard about someone and to act naturally toward him the next time you meet him?

3. The gossiper separates friends. “He that covers a transgression seeks love; but he who repeats a matter separates intimate friends” (Prov. 17:9). To cover a transgression is to keep silent about it (but not in some guilty way hide it). It is not always necessary that others know about a wrong that has been done against us. One may go to his brother and be reconciled, and if so, there is no need for anyone else to know about the wrong that was done. In the case of others, when we hear that one person has wronged another, there are two things we must be careful not to do: (1) conclude prematurely that a crime has in fact been committed, and (2) repeat what we have simply heard about someone else. If we later know for sure that a fault was committed, the loving thing to do may yet be to “cover the transgression.” We may be wise to leave the matters to the parties involved to work them out.

“A perverse man spreads strife, and a slanderer separates intimate friends” (Prov. 16:28). As the parallelism shows, the “perverse man” here is the slanderer, or a man of falsehood. You have seen it happen. The best of friends have become hateful enemies because of unnecessary talk. The friends referred to in this verse may be the slanderer and his friend. His talk has alienated from him a bosom friend. But in the same way a gossiper is often successful at breaking up others who have been bosom friends.

Of course, there is also a danger that runs in another direction. A person may be so attached to another that he will not even listen to what might be legitimate charges brought against his friend. No Christian should ever defend a brother who is a bosom friend just because he is a friend. Fear of losing a friendship has led some to compromise the truth. Faithfulness to a friend must never mean more to us than faithfulness to our Lord and his truth. What has a man gained if he should retain a friend and lose his soul?

4. The gossip sows strife and digs up evil. “A worthless man digs up evil: while his words are a scorching fire” (Prov. 16:27). To “dig up evil” literally means “to dig for others a pit” (cf. Prov. 26:27; Ps. 7:16); thus to prepare evil for others. The gossip, through the use of words, will dig a pit to serve as a trap for those he dislikes. This “worthless man” is a person who does much mischief with words. He “uses words which, like an iron glowing hot, scorches and burns” (Delitzsch). You have known people who simply must talk. The gossip is one who will find something to talk about. He will “dig it up” if he must, but his lips burn to talk, and he will talk. The shame is that his lips burn with a message of gossip. He does not have to know that his message is true. He will say it anyway. If one ever gets at odds with “a worthless man” or an unprincipled person, he can expect hurt and much mischief ahead.

5. The gossip will not keep a secret. “He who goes about as a slanderer reveals secrets, therefore do not associate with a gossip” (Prov. 20:19). Most of us have known people who cannot keep a secret. When they repeat what has been told them in confidence they will sometimes say, “I was told this in confidence, so be sure not to tell anybody that I told you,” thinking that somehow this justifies them in telling it. One simply cannot trust a gossip. For

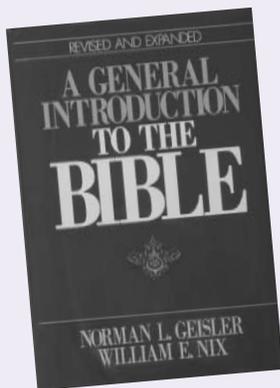
this reason, the admonition is, “Do not associate with a gossip.” If you want to get hurt, a sure way to do it is to reveal to a whisperer that which you do not wish others to know. If you want to get word out about something, tell it to a gossip — but remember to tell him it is a secret! This is the fastest way to get word around.

6. The gossip destroys his own soul. “A fool’s mouth is his ruin, and his lips are the snare of his soul” (Prov. 18:7). We have a way of saying of the person who is known for much talk, “He is always putting his foot in his mouth.” Often the gossip in deeply wounding others comes through it himself unhurt, but as the old saying goes, “there is payday someday.” The gossip is digging his own grave. The very means he has used to wound others will bring about the ruin of his own soul. He brings about his own condemnation.

“So also the tongue is a small part of the body, and yet it boasts of great things. Behold, how great a forest is set aflame by such a small fire. And the tongue is a fire, the very world of iniquity; the tongue is set among our members as that which defiles the entire body, and sets on fire the course of our life, and is set on fire by hell” (Jas. 3:5-6). “But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger” (Jas. 1:19). “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person” (Col. 4:6). “Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips” (Ps. 141:3).

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Accepting Advocates of the “Big Bang” Theory?

Harry Osborne

Should we receive into our fellowship teachers of doctrinal error regarding the creation? Will that error cause one to sin? Does God tolerate the denial of that Bible teaching? How much denial of Bible doctrine should

In a recent article, brother Frank Jamerson took issue with those not receiving one “who teaches error about the days of creation.” He said such error “would not directly cause a person to sin” (*Truth Magazine* [March 21, 2002], 175). The purpose of this article is to examine whether we may lawfully receive one in fellowship who teaches error regarding the creation account. The reader is urged to read the article in the previous issue examining the Bible teaching on the creation account to note that its literal interpretation is affirmed as doctrine throughout Scripture.

Should we receive into our fellowship teachers of doctrinal error regarding the creation? Will that error cause one to sin? Does God tolerate the denial of that Bible teaching? How much denial of Bible doctrine should we tolerate?

What Difference Does It Make?

While some brethren affirm their belief that the physical world came from a God-guided “Big Bang” several billion years ago, others maintain their faith in the literal interpretation of the creation account, but ask what difference it makes if one teaches a God-guided “Big Bang.” They ask if we all believe God did it, does it matter *how* he did it? The same question

has been asked by avowed theistic evolutionists for years. If one grants that the *how* of creating the physical Earth is unimportant, it is equally unimportant as to *how* God created man, whether instantaneously from the dust of the earth at his command or through previously existing animal life by means of billions of years of evolution.

Brother Jamerson and others of his persuasion fail to see the grave danger present in the departure. They believe we “bite and devour one another” by refusing to accept teachers of a God-guided “Big Bang.” While I accept the sincerity of their view, I must respectfully point out the grave dangers found in compromising with and accepting into fellowship those who teach a non-literal view of creation. Please note the following consequences of accepting such teachers of doctrinal error:

1. We accept those who undermine the foundation of biblical interpretation. Genesis is the book of beginnings. It introduces concepts and sets the stage for all further revelation much as the first chapter of a novel introduces and sets the stage for the plot. Genesis 1 and 2 was obviously written as a literal narrative. When we allow for that literal narrative to be interpreted as a non-literal story,

we set the beginning pattern to *presume that narratives appearing to be literal should actually be interpreted as non-literal stories*. If not, why not? With that presumption set in place by the first apparent narrative, no other narrative account in Scripture is safe from a non-literal interpretation.

The global flood of Noah, the confusion of languages at Babel, Israel's crossing through the Red Sea on dry land, Jonah being swallowed by a great fish, the stilling of the sun in Joshua's time, the virgin birth of Jesus, and the resurrection of Christ are all narrative accounts. Can we deny the global flood making it merely a "figurative" presentation of a regional flood? Can we say the confusion of languages at Babel was really a "literary device" to explain a long process of languages diverging? What if we adopted a non-literal interpretation concluding that Jesus was not literally born of a virgin, but that such language was symbolic of his uniqueness?

According to brother Jamerson, one does not directly sin by rejecting the creation account. Does he sin by rejecting these other literal truths? So, how far do we go? Which ones in the list above do we allow and tolerate? Or, may we deny the reality of all without it making a difference? No, we cannot deny basic, literal truths of Scripture and yet be accepted by God and faithful brethren.

2. We commit sin through "lawlessness" as defined by Scripture. The inspired writer said, "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness (*anomia*)" (1 John 3:4). *Anomia* refers to action without or against God's law. To pervert and twist the word of God so as to deny the literal creation account is to speak without law and against law. It violates the divine mandate to "speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). God calls that sin, even though brother Jamerson says no sin is involved.

Jesus used the same original word

(*anomia*) when he said, "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work lawlessness" (Matt. 7:23). Though they professed him as "Lord," the objective evidence showed them to oppose God's law. Jesus called "lawlessness" sin. Does brother Jamerson agree with Jesus? If so, let him tell us how people can twist and pervert the law of God so as to deny the literal creation account clearly taught by that law, yet be described as "lawful" rather than "lawless."

3. We deny the fundamental essential of biblical faith. The Hebrew writer said, "By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God" (Heb. 11:3). The means or instrumentality by which God worked in creation is his speech or word — "He spake and it was done" (Ps. 33:9). His speech did not begin a process that billions of years later cause the creation to be done. It was done when God spoke it to be so.

The worlds were not framed by the "Big Bang" nor did the "Big Bang" stand between God speaking and the worlds being done. If we do not believe that God framed the inanimate "worlds" by his word, commanding it into existence, we do not have *faith* as defined by the inspired writer. Can we receive a teacher of error who lacks biblically defined faith? Surely we recognize that we cannot.

4. We open the floodgate for a wider digression of non-literal interpretation which knows no end. Though some may seek to characterize this point as a scare tactic, it most assuredly is not. We need not speculate about the connection years down the line. Let us examine a few statements being made now by a young man who is in fellowship with a non-institutional congregation in the Tampa Bay area.

This young man has accepted the logical conclusions of the position under review. In response to the

Open Letter written to Florida College concerning error taught about the creation, this young man proudly states that he was the first one to oppose it and *defend a non-literal view of the creation account*. We would ask brother Jamerson to examine the following *non-literal interpretations of Scripture* by this young man with whom he has had correspondence and *tell us which errors we should tolerate in our fellowship*:

Regarding creation: "The Scriptures do not, and can not, demand an interpretation, because even those passages which would seem to demand an interpretation are themselves subject to interpretation. That is to say, all Scriptural texts are interpreted. *Reality is that multiple interpretations are available for almost all Scriptures, including the creation account. . . . Genesis 1-2 must have a symbolic or allegorical meaning*" (Published exchange with Marc Gibson, Sent: 5/17/00). "*Genesis 1 is not a straightforward historical text because its subject matter is neither straightforward . . . nor is it historical. . . . The creation text itself possesses structure and organization which is more closely associated with poetry and allegory rather than history*" (Published exchange with Marc Gibson, Sent: 5/18/00). The young man rejected brother Gibson's appeals for correction and has continued to teach the same error as well as those below.

Regarding acceptability of contradictory doctrines from varying interpretations: "The mere existence of *contradictory message does not prove that there is false doctrine. Perhaps both sides are correct* in their own minds, interpreting the Scriptures in a legitimate and rational manner within the confines of their own religious preconceptions" (Berean Spirit List, Sent: 4/1/02).

Regarding acceptability of denominations: "*We should not assume that simply because we are narrow-minded*

ren have become apologists for the same principle. Will they tell us how far they are ready to follow the young man quoted above? Would they urge us to receive him in some, all or just one of the above statements? If they distinguish between the errors, upon what basis do they make their distinction?

Let us suppose another brother comes where brother Jamerson preaches proclaiming that “Genesis 1-2 must have a symbolic or allegorical meaning” and that we should accept Baptists and Methodists as “Christians and Christians only.” Would he tolerate such an one into the local fellowship? Would he assist the brother in taking issue with those who would oppose the brother’s teaching? Would he see any sin involved?

Let us suppose a brother comes to Florida College and teaches several classes which included statements like “the reality is that multiple interpretations are available for almost all Scriptures, including the creation account,” “I don’t know whether or not the Muslims are going to heaven,” and “I also hope that God will save atheists and agnostics.” Would they claim to do a great service for brethren by allowing such teaching to be done unopposed? Would they use such statements as an example that there are just some things so difficult that we may not be able to draw the same conclusion?

Would they justify continued use of the brother on the basis that the college is not the church, ignoring the fact that they have an obligation to maintain proper fellowship even as individuals? Remember that 2 & 3 John, 1 & 2 Timothy as well as Titus were all books addressed to individuals which instructed them about maintaining a proper fellowship as individual Christians in addition to the corporate fellowship of a local church.

I, for one, tire of hearing the justification for allowing teachers of error unopposed access to disseminate their error because it is done from a college podium! There is no passage of Scripture allowing one to provide for and tolerate the teaching of error in an individual realm any more than such could be done within the corporate work of a local church. Whether from a college podium, pulpit or Bible class, error devastates souls!

If we open the doors to proponents of the “Big Bang” theory today reasoning it is not that bad, the fruits of our broader fellowship will be seen in the lost souls of our children who will carry the attendant lack of faith to its end. Brethren, we are not drifting in so doing — we are speeding away with a big bang!

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that we are conforming with Jesus’ narrow-mindedness” (Berean Spirit List, Sent: 4/1/02). “*When meeting a Baptist we ought to consider such people Christians and politely neglect the title ‘Baptist’ as both irrelevant and inconsequential. When meeting a Methodist we ought to consider such people Christians and politely neglect the title ‘Methodist’ as both irrelevant and inconsequential. Therefore all believers and followers of Christ — including all those who are ignorant and in error — are considered Christians and Christians only”* (Berean Spirit List, Sent: 6/4/02).

Regarding possible salvation in Islam: “*I don’t know whether or not the Muslims are going to heaven. That decision belongs to God. From the standpoint of preference, I would rather see a billion Muslims in heaven. I would ask God to extend His mercy and Jesus’ atonement to these people based strictly upon His own goodness and nothing else”* (Berean Spirit List, Sent: 4/4/02).

Regarding salvation for atheists: “*I also hope that God will save atheists and agnostics. Imagine how these people would act in heaven, knowing as they will that they spent their life consciously disregarding and disrespecting God. They would praise God the most as they would have received the gift of salvation most undeservedly”* (Berean Spirit List, Sent: 4/3/02).

Brother Jamerson has already told us that we should accept into our fellowship those denying the literal creation account. Brethren Colly Caldwell and Ferrell Jenkins from Florida College have affirmed the same thing. Other brethren

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The Process of a Bible Study

Everything in life is a process, a sequence of events that unfold which enable a person to accomplish and achieve and fail in different avenues of their life. The wise man (Eccl. 3:1) put it this way: “To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven.”

God in his rich mercy and love wants every soul to come unto the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). God’s eternal purpose from the very dawn of time (Eph. 3:10) was to send Jesus to earth to live and suffer and die so that sinners might be brought back (reconciled) from the separation caused by sin in their life (Isa. 59:1-2). This separation is between God and every person who has sinned and, once this happens, once sin has stained their soul, their only hope is Jesus! They must contact the blood of Christ which the Bible says happens through baptism (Rom. 6:3-4; Eph. 1:7).

When you and I became a Christian, our journey and our work for the Lord started and God’s plan for saving not only you, but those around you, started as well! A responsibility lies upon every individual who becomes a Christian. He must accept his responsibility and give an answer in the last day for his willingness or unwillingness to fulfill his duty to Almighty God (2 Cor. 5:10). I am only discussing in this article one aspect of the many responsibilities which a person has once he becomes a Christian, a child of God. What is it? — teaching others!

In order to bring others to Christ, you must understand that there is time for everything. A time to ask for a decision to obey the gospel, a time to ask for a confession, a time to ask for a change in that person’s life, a time for that person to hear about the story that never grows old! We must understand this if we are going to be all that God would have us to be (1 Pet. 3:18).

Those who have taught others and have been successful in leading others to Christ realize and understand that the best way to teach someone is to simply sit down,

open up a Bible, and study from God’s holy word! It is the word that is going to convert that person (Rom. 1:16) and my role (my responsibility and yours) in God’s great plan is to simply take this powerful, heart piercing seed and place it upon a person’s heart! Herein begins the process of a Bible study and the point of my topic.

How do I accomplish what God wants me to accomplish?

1. Let me suggest this thought — I pray! Then I pray some more! My prayer is for God to lead me to some soul to teach!

2. I begin to look around my circle of people. I’m referring to those people in my life with whom I come in contact either daily or weekly.

3. Once God has opened the door to this person’s life for me (maybe through some sickness or death, or misfortune or good fortune), I must be able to recognize the opportunity! God is not going to knock us over the head and shout, “This is the one!” We must have our minds focused upon this one thing! We learn this attitude from Paul (Phil. 3:13). Notice he said, “This one thing I do.” Now this doesn’t mean that I am to forsake all my other responsibilities in life but that this takes priority over self and recreation and many other things I could list. We must be attentive and watchful for opportunities that will cause us to say, “This person is a prospect!”

4. I must begin to take steps that will enable me to study with that person! This might include having to build a relationship with him. I personally have had studies with folks and had them to obey the gospel and (the process) of actually sitting down and showing them what to do began, in some cases, one year before. It began with a prayer! Then once the opportunity arose in walked the plan. The plan of how to reach that person. Each prospect will be different so I must learn to give thought to each approach.

5. I must realize that these steps require time, effort,

Why Don't Christians Grow?

The apostle Peter closes his second letter by exhorting all Christians to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 3:18). The New Testament makes clear to us that Christians are expected to progress and mature spiritually. Just as we expect a newborn baby to physically grow and become mature, the Lord expects those who have been spiritually “born again” to grow and become mature spiritually. This process is often commanded and commended in the pages of the Bible (2 Thess. 1:2). In fact, one of the key reasons God has appointed the work of teaching and preaching to be done by the local church is to encourage each member of the church to “grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15).

However, it is often painfully obvious that many Christians do not grow as they should spiritually. To our shame, many never reach any level of spiritual maturity in Christ after having obeyed the gospel. This results in weak churches composed of weak Christians, many of whom will wither and die spiritually. As we observe such situations we are left to wonder why Christians do not

grow. According to the Bible, there are some very good reasons why many Christians do not grow. Christians do not grow because:

1. They do not see a need to grow. Unfortunately, many seem to have the impression that they will get to heaven by being baptized and then putting forth as little effort as possible in service to the Lord for the remainder of their lives. As a result, these see no need to put forth any effort to grow and progress. Christians of this mindset fail to recognize the fact that spiritual growth brings a person closer to God. James writes, “Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you” (Jas. 4:7). We cannot expect to live with God in eternity if we have little interest in growing closer to him now.

2. They do not study and apply God's word. To those who have not yet matured as Christians, Peter writes, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2). The apostle makes clear the connection between Bible study and growth. We will never grow spiritually if we do not put in the effort to carefully

and in some cases money. Calls must be made which takes effort on my part. Time in getting to better know the person, help the person, and grow to love the person is needed! In some cases, you may already know them and someone else asks you to go with them and tell the good news to that person (1 Cor. 3:6) Someone plants and someone waters and God gives the increase! We must always be ready for such opportunities!

6. At some point (I must decide) there has to be a question asked by me. I must ask them if they would like to study. Remember this is a process that will vary from person to person. Some will come easily and some will be difficult. In some instances, the answer will be “No!” The process doesn't end at that point it just backs up a little. We then must move on to other opportunities that God presents

in our lives, but at the same time we must never forget the previous opportunity but simply wait for a better time and a different approach in the process of the Bible study!

Where are you in your process of a Bible study? Are you looking for the open doors in your life? Are you praying and watching and hoping for such a door to be opened? Remember God has a plan and each of us can reach people who others cannot. God knows this and we must be aware of it as well, because one day each of us will have to give an answer for how we handled the process of the Bible study!

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven (Eccl. 3:1).

study and apply the word of God. There must come a time when we are able to move from the “milk” of the word to the “meat” of the word (Heb. 5:12-14). Sadly, many do not see a need to take advantage of opportunities to learn by coming to Bible study and worship services, nor do they study daily on their own.

3. They do not overcome sin. As we run the Christian race, the Hebrew writer exhorts us: “Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1). We will never grow spiritually if we are constantly entangled in sin. God’s people are prohibited from engaging in any form of sin (1 John 3:9). By choosing to sin rather than obey God, we only weaken ourselves spiritually and destroy any growth that might take place. For this reason, Peter compares a Christian who chooses to sin to a dog who “returns to his own vomit” (2 Pet. 2:22).

4. They become discouraged. Many Christians do not grow because they become discouraged either by their own failures, or by the failures of others. Some brethren become discouraged because they cannot seem to overcome sin, or because they feel that they will never be good enough to make any difference in the kingdom. As a result, they become like the one talent man who said to his master, “I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth” (Matt. 25:25). Others are discouraged from growth because they have either been mistreated by brethren, or witnessed hypocritical behavior from their brethren. We need to beware in our dealings with one another that we do not “bite and devour one another” (Gal. 5:15), nor become a “stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way” (Rom. 14:13).

5. They become distracted. Many Christians do not

grow due to the fact that their interests are devoted to worldly things, rather than to the things of God. These are the ones Jesus spoke of in the parable of the sower who “heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Matt. 13:22). It is sad to see Christians devote so much time and energy to their jobs, income, hobbies, and cares of the world to the neglect of their own spiritual well being. Remember, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other” (Matt. 6:24).

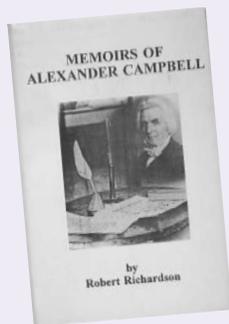
6. They are lacking in love. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Therefore, “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). However, many never develop the proper love and devotion for the Lord that motivates spiritual growth and a desire to be with God in heaven. Let us not forget that eternal life is the reward “the Lord hath promised to them that love him” (Jas. 1:12). Those who do not grow because they do not truly love the Lord will not be in heaven.

Conclusion

Christians will grow if they see a need to grow, study God’s word, overcome sin, keep from becoming discouraged or distracted, and develop a proper love for God. “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). Are you growing spiritually?

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John Isaac Edwards

The Home In The Beginning

Most homes today are nothing like the home in the beginning. Every generation must be brought back to the first

home, as recorded in Genesis 2:18-24. I am calling six things to our attention about the beginning home.

The Result Of God's Mindfulness Of Man

When God observed man's loneliness, he provided "an help meet for him" (Gen. 2:18). From that day unto this hour, God has always been concerned about the needs of man. The Psalmist asked, "What is man, that thou art mindful of him?" (Ps. 8:4). We can't look at the home in the beginning without being impressed with God's mindfulness of man.

A Divine Home

The home is divine in that it is God-made. God made "a woman, and brought her unto the man" (Gen. 2:22). Since the home is a divine institution, we must learn and obey God's laws governing it.

Involved a Man and His Wife

The home in the beginning was not a same-sex relationship. It was not a man and a man or two woman living together, but "the man and his wife" (Gen. 2:25). The law said, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination" (Lev. 18:22).

It was not a man with an animal, but "the man and his wife" (Gen. 2:25). The animals were unsuitable (Gen. 2:19-20). The law said, "Whosoever lieth with a beast shall surely be put to death" (Exod. 22:19).

This was not just a live-in affair either, but "the man and his wife" (Gen. 2:25). The trend today is for folks to just live together unmarried. The Bible calls this kind of an arrangement "fornication" (1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2).

A Stable Home

Most homes today aren't very stable! We have children in our society that have step-dad after step-dad and step-mom upon step-mom. Divorce is commonplace. The first home knew nothing of divorce as Jesus said "from the beginning it was not so" (Matt. 19:8). There was permanency in the first home. Genesis 2:24 records, "Therefore shall a man *leave* his father and his mother,

and shall *cleave* unto his wife." About the only thing many today know about "permanence" in marriage is when the lady of the house gets her hair all done up in curls!

The Place For Man To Fulfil His Bodily Needs

Paul wrote the Corinthians, "It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (1 Cor. 7:1-2). The only place man may satisfy his sexual appetite without sinning is within the confines of a God-approved marriage relationship. "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). It is the responsibility of each to keep a clean bed, and that doesn't mean just keeping the bed-sheets laundered!

The Place To Have and Raise Children

Thousands of boys and girls are born out of wedlock each year. God told the man and his wife, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28). To this union children were born. "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord" (Gen. 4:1). Kids used to sing, "First comes love, second comes marriage, then comes the baby in the baby carriage." Today, they are getting the carriage before the marriage!

How does your home measure up with the home in the beginning?

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The Right to Grow in the Faith

The right to grow in the faith is a fundamental right that God has given the Christian. I believe that the 14th chapter of Romans and the first few verses of the 15th chapter are designed to protect and enhance that right.

This section of Romans has received a lot of attention among brethren recently. Some think too much, others think not enough. In articles that I have read along with sermons and reports that I have heard, there has been no lack of variety in both the exegesis and application of this chapter by brethren whose knowledge and faithfulness I highly respect. Because of this, it is with no little trepidation that I present what I believe this chapter to be teaching.

The Total Context

First, it should be a given that this chapter must not be interpreted so as to conflict with other plain New Testament teaching on fellowship. The New Testament plainly sets limits on maintaining on-going fellowship. While Romans 14 clearly teaches such fellowship can and should be maintained in spite of *some* limited differences among those in “the faith,” it should not be used to cover virtually *all* differences as some are prone to do.

The New Testament clearly teaches that we must not maintain fellowship with certain brethren who differ from us in teaching and/or practice — even sometimes referring to them as “false brethren.” (See Gal. 2:4, 5.) The church at Corinth was rebuked for continuing to fellowship a brother who unlawfully had his father’s wife (1 Cor. 5). This fornicator was lumped together with other immoral brethren (vv. 10, 13) with whom faithful brethren were not to maintain fellowship. The church at Thessalonica was told to “warn the unruly (or disorderly — Greek *ataktis*)” in Paul’s first letter to them (5:14). In the second letter (3:6), some months later, he tells them to withdraw from the disorderly (*ataktis*). Vine says that this word describes “certain church members who manifested an insubordinate spirit, whether by excitability or officiousness or idleness.” The church at Thyatira was rebuked sharply for tolerating one who taught the Lord’s servants to commit fornication (Rev. 2:20, NIV). The “elect lady” in 2 John

was not to receive into her house or bid godspeed to those who went beyond the doctrine of Christ in their teaching (2 John 9-11). Other examples could be cited, but these should suffice to show that all differences among brethren, no matter their nature, cannot be covered by Romans 14.

Not All Are Treated the Same

Before we examine the Romans text in detail, just a few words of caution about taking the “one size fits all” approach to fellowship. As much as we might like to simplify things by reducing all cases to a common denominator and dealing with them all alike, it just does not work that way. There are a number of factors that must be entered into the equation that require judgment on our part. The extent to which one may bear with a situation may depend on a number of things. What is the spiritual age of the person — a babe or mature? Is he demonstrating a rebellious spirit or not? What opportunity has the person had to know better? What influence is the person having on others? What is the strength of the evidence that the one involved is guilty of sin and error? The answer to these questions and perhaps more have to be factored in.

To illustrate what we have been saying, let’s take a look at 1 Thessalonians 5:14: “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all” (NKJV). The treatment of three classes are considered: (1) the unruly, (2) the fainthearted, and (3) the weak. A different treatment is called for in each class, yet they all could possibly be overtly practicing the same thing. Let’s say that there are three women in the congregation who are failing to attend assemblies as they should. There is no doubt that each is in violation of Hebrews 10:25.

It is clear that the first lady is just weak. She needs teaching and exhortation. She comes from a background where “going to church” was not that important. She was convicted concerning the first principles but needs a lot of teaching about other duties. She is also the kind of person who it is just easy for things to hinder her. She needs constant encouragement and support. Her problem is weakness, not unruliness.

The second lady is also unfaithful in her attendance. She is different from the first lady in that she is fully aware of her duty, but she has an abusive husband who hates the church. In order to attend, she has to almost fight her way out of the house. He hides her clothes and car keys. She knows that each time she attends what she will have to endure before and after the services. Having to endure such from her husband Sunday after Sunday, she has become weary and fainthearted. She does not need warning, she needs comfort and encouragement to endure her afflictions and be faithful in spite of her husband. A little help from the brethren with getting her to services regularly might be in order.

Likewise, our third lady knows full well what the Bible teaches about faithful attendance and has none of the problems of the second lady. But, she lets it be known by word and deed that she will attend when and if she wants to. She is unruly with a “insubordinate spirit” (see Vine on “unruly” or “disorderly”). She should be “warned” and if, after given time to repent, she does not correct the matter, then withdraw from (or disfellowship) her.

It should be obvious that overtly each lady is doing the same thing, but the circumstance surrounding each case determines how brethren should deal with her — whether they should support, comfort, or warn her.

I think it significant that Paul urges the Thessalonians to warn the unruly in his first letter to them rather than withdraw from them. Months later he writes his second letter to them and in it tells them to withdraw from them. Now they had been both warned and given “space (time) to repent” (cf. Rev. 2:21).

There is a time to take a preacher aside (privately) and explain to him the way of God more perfectly (Acts 18:26). Also, there is a time to (publicly) rebuke a preacher before all (cf. Gal. 2:11-14). There is a time of sharpness (Tit. 1:13) and a time for gentleness (Gal. 6:1). Attitudes and circumstances makes the difference in the level of corrective measures that need to be taken.

So, before we can apply any teaching on fellowship and correcting sin and error from within, we must keep in mind that the principles of long-suffering, patience, boldness, firmness, etc. must be honored. We need to avoid the extreme of “dropping the axe” at the moment that guilt is determined without any patience and longsuffering and the other extreme of transforming *longsuffering* into

ever-suffering.

In any controversy that has the potential of breaking fellowship, no action should be taken until there has been ample time and opportunity to study and discuss the issues involved in the dispute. And in those cases that will at some point definitely require a break of fellowship, the offender needs to be worked with and given “space to repent” before severing fellowship.

With these observations in mind, let’s look at Romans 14-15:7.

Romans 14

As I read the text, I am impressed with three things: (1) The text is dealing with the relationship between the weak and strong in “the faith” (14:1; 15:1), (2) The things considered are personal and individual in application, and (3) The things practiced are not intrinsically wrong — “unclean of itself.” (v. 14). Now, let’s elaborate and make some application of these three things.

The text primarily tells the strong (in the faith) how to treat those who are “weak in the faith.” “Him that is weak in the faith receive ye.” The “ye” would be the strong. Paul concludes his remarks with “we then that are strong (in the faith, eob) ought to bear the infirmities of the weak (in the faith, eob) . . .” (15:1).

There has been a lot of discussion as to whether the things discussed in Romans 14 are matters of “*the* faith” or not. I see no reason not to regard them as matters of *the* faith for the several reasons: (1) The article (“the”) is in the King James Version and several good Greek texts. (2) In other passages where “the faith” is spoken of, we consider it to be the system of faith or the gospel (see Acts 6:7; Gal. 1:23; Phil. 1:27; Jude 3). Why not here? (3) The situation seems to be parallel with 1 Corinthians 8, where the discussion concerns those weak or strong in knowledge of the faith.

I agree with brother Bryan Vinson in his commentary on Romans, “The parties here introduced are Christians, yet there is that point wherein an inequality exists between them. On the one hand there are the weak, and on the other those who are strong. The point of weakness and strength revolves around the measure of their respective understanding and knowledge of *the body of truth denominated, ‘The Faith’* (italics mine, eob). I am persuaded that it isn’t a case

of being weak in faith, or conviction or persuasion, as both Lard and Whiteside appear to have thought. Rather it is an instance where some are lacking in knowledge, while others are not. Those lacking knowledge are the weak in the faith; these not lacking in knowledge are the strong in the faith” (*Paul’s Letters to the Saints at Rome 259-260*).

Among those in “the faith,” there are various levels of development and knowledge. While all enter as babes, some enter with a better understanding than others of what things are required, permitted, and forbidden by the gospel (the faith) they now embrace. Some develop in this area faster than others. In some cases it may take years. The instructions of Romans 14 create an atmosphere where those who are still weak in the faith can grow and develop in spite of some mistaken *personal* views and practices that they may have concerning what God may or may not expect of them under the gospel. In both cases, the weak and the strong, do what they do “unto the Lord” (14:6). Paul’s instructions allow time and create an atmosphere conducive to the weak’s learning and growing out of his mistaken views — an atmosphere of “righteousness, peace and joy” (14:17) rather than constant disputation over his scruples.

In the course of his comments, Paul identifies the strong and the weak. The strong eats all things, the weak only herbs (14:2). He further states the truth of the matter, i.e., “there is nothing unclean of itself” (14:14). Being strong he understood this. But, the weak could not yet see this truth of which Paul was persuaded “by the Lord Jesus.” What should the strong, like Paul, who understands that “the faith” allows him to eat “all things,” do regarding weak brethren who have not grown to that point of knowledge? Not receive them? Receive him, but constantly dispute with him? Go ahead and eat all things regardless of how it might affect the weak? Or, should he not be patient as the weak practices what his conscience tells him until he can grow out of his weakness in the faith and conscientiously eat “all things”? Should he not be careful so as not to cause the weak to violate their consciences, become weaker, or even be destroyed spiritually (14:20-23)? Should he not, as a strong brother, “bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please [himself]” (15:1)?

So, it seems to me that the thrust of this section of Romans is to show a way that those who are strong in the faith can work patiently and peacefully together with those who are weak in the faith. The strong in the faith (“him that eateth”) is not to despise (“set at naught” — ASV) the weak in the faith (“him that eateth not”). Nor is the weak (“him that eateth not”) to be allowed to judge (separate, put asunder — Thayer) the strong in the faith (“him that eateth”). The kind of differences under consideration that the weak and strong have are such that they can work and worship together, giving the weak opportunity to grow out

of his scruples based on a weak understanding of the faith, and deferring the ultimate resolution of the matter to the judgment of God (vv. 6-12).

Individual vs. Congregational Practices

Now let us consider the personal nature of the things over which the strong and the weak differed. They were things that involved personal or individual practice rather than congregational. The practice of these things directly affected only the one practicing them and his God. One might esteem a day above another in his private practice and another would not. Neither one’s practice necessarily infringes on the other. However, if one who esteemed a day above another insisted that the church also esteem that day — that would be another matter. It could easily force the issue to the point of division because “the strong” who understands that there are no such holy days bound by “the faith” must join in the practice or else separate themselves.

One converted out of denominationalism, still weak in the faith, might accompany his singing in private worship with instrumental music. As long as he does not force the practice upon the church, the strong can afford to be patient and fellowship him, giving him time and opportunity to grow out of his weak knowledge of the faith. However, if he insists on bringing his instrument into congregational worship then the strong would have to deal with him for causing division by introducing an unauthorized practice into the worship of the church (Rom. 16:17).

One who is weak in the faith might believe that, because of the good social work it does, he can contribute to a “faith-based” charitable work or a church supported charitable institution. He sends the institution his personal check each month. I don’t believe this would be reason for the strong to set him at naught. However, if he should press his practice upon the church to get it to start sending a monthly contribution then the fat would be in the fire. Those who understand the implications of such support could not go along with part of their weekly contribution to the church going to such works. Again, I emphasize the things in Romans 14 are things of individual practice and not congregational.

Though a thing is a matter of faith, but individual in application, it does not have to necessarily involve others. Nothing in the text precludes either side from expressing and teaching his position with the proper attitude in order to study the matter. There is a difference in expressing and pressing. Paul clearly expressed his position (14:14). But, at the same time he made room for those “weak in the faith” to practice what they believed until they could come to the knowledge that he had of the faith. He further cautioned those who were like him, strong in the faith, to exercise their liberty, permitted by “the faith,” in such a

way as to protect the consciences of the weak and so as not to destroy them spiritually before they could grow out of their mistaken scruples. (14:20).

Because of this principle brethren, through the years, have been able to work together in spite of some individual differences in practice. Such issues as the covering, military service, and the like have not generally disturbed congregations as such when all parties have had the right attitude. They may exchange views in order to learn and increase their knowledge of “the faith,” but not pressing their views to the point of disruption of the peace and fellowship of the brethren.

Morally Right vs. Inherently Sinful Things

As stated earlier, our text is not dealing with anything “unclean of itself” or as we often say, “wrong within itself.” It does not cover “the works of the flesh.” In the last verse of chapter 13, Paul clearly states, “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, *and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof*” (italics mine, eob). Galatians 5:19-21 catalogs the “works of the flesh.” The things listed, and “such like” are inherently or morally wrong. None of these things is covered in Romans 14. It is dealing with certain morally right things about which there were questions as to whether they are religiously demanded, permitted, or forbidden by “the faith.”

Both “fornication” and “adultery” are listed as works (or lusts) of the flesh. Those guilty of these sins in any form (even though they may be weak in the faith) are not included in those who are to be received in Romans 14. They are inherently sinful and those practicing them cannot be received even though they are privately practiced (1 Cor. 5:11). Those guilty of these sins, in or out of a “marriage,” cannot be retained in fellowship after being given “space (time) to repent” (cf. Rev. 2:21). Thus, adulterous marriages, as per Matthew 19:9 and parallel passages, cannot be included in those to be received in Romans 14.

Furthermore, other instructions are explicit about what to do about with one who continues to practice fornication by being married to one that he has no right to. We are to “put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (1 Cor. 5:13). Also, Christ severely rebuked the church at Thyatira for “suffering” or allowing one to “to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication” (Rev. 2:20). Thus, neither those guilty of fornication, nor those who teach doctrines that would permit fornication are covered by Romans 14.

Romans 14 is not dealing with things fundamental to the faith or anything that threatens to undermine or make shipwreck of a person’s faith (cf. 1 Tim. 1:19). Such questions as the nature of Christ while on earth, whether the alien is subject to the law of God, and trustworthiness of

the creation account are so fundamental to the faith that they cannot possibly be thrown into Romans 14. Mistaken views and teachings on these subjects are such that they will undermine, and possibly destroy, the faith of some. Such cannot be paralleled with the mistaken views of those weak in the faith in Romans 14.

Conclusion

The weak in the faith, in Romans 14, are mistaken in their views and incorrect and over scrupulous in their personal practices and need to grow in the faith. The strong in the faith are correct in their views and practice, but the things are of such nature that they can give deference to the weak without embracing their mistaken views or violating their own conscience or duty to God. The weak in the faith have the right to grow under the gospel in an atmosphere of peace conducive to edification (v. 19). Applying the conclusion to Romans 14 given in the first few verses of the next chapter will protect that right. “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me . . . That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God” (15:1-3, 6-7).

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Islam and Terrorism

by Mark A. Gabriel

The author, an ex-Muslim and former professor of Islamic history at Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt — the most prestigious Islamic school in the world — explains why terrorists do what they do. His graphic message depicts the ruthless realities behind the teachings of Islam. #17126

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“. . . Look For in a Mate” continued from front

what to look for in a mate and then act accordingly. Hence, in the balance of this article we shall consider some of the things one should look for in a mate.

One Should Look For . . .

1. A person of the opposite sex! It has been observed that for Adam God created Eve — not Steve. From a rib taken from Adam’s side God made “a woman, and brought her unto the man” (Gen. 2:22). Under the Law of Moses homosexuality was called “an abomination,” and its punishment involved the execution of both parties (Lev. 20:13). And this is a sin that still involves “the wrath of God” (Rom. 1:18, 24-27). Those who believe that homosexuality is simply “an alternate life style” either have not read the Bible, or do not believe what they have read!

2. One who is free to marry. A woman who marries a second husband while the first husband is still alive is “called an adulteress.” However, if the first husband dies “she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man” (Rom. 7:2, 3). The only exception to this general rule is that of “fornication” or “sexual immorality” (NKJV). Jesus plainly said that “whoever divorces his wife, *except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery*” (Matt. 19:9).

3. One who is morally upright. It is difficult for any marriage to survive on-going immorality on the part of either party to the marriage. The gospel is what converts people (Rom. 1:16; Jas. 1:21). A wedding ceremony may be eloquently worded, and it may contain lofty themes, but a wedding ceremony is not the gospel! So what is there to prevent one who is immoral *before marriage from being immoral after marriage?*

4. One who is industrious. Even a child of God who “does not provide for his own . . . has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Tim. 5:8). The Holy Spirit said “if anyone will not work, neither shall he eat” (2 Thess. 3:10). A “virtuous wife” does “not eat the bread of idleness” (Prov. 31:10, 27). A handsome (but lazy) man, or a beautiful (but lazy) woman, qualifies as a parasite, but not as a fit choice for a life-long companion!

5. A responsible person. One who is a spend thrift before marriage will likely be a spend thrift after marriage. A person who continually gets into trouble (and depends on others to bail him out) before marriage will probably do the same after marriage. If an individual overloads the credit card before marriage, buying things he could do without (and cannot afford) he will usually do the same after marriage. Many a marriage, solemnized “till death do us part,” ended because debt “*put asunder*” what God

had “*joined together.*”

6. One with a good family background. I recognize the fact that this statement may “come across” as being unfair to the person who is victimized by a bad family background. I further recognize that “the son shall not bear the guilt of the father” (Ezek. 18:20). However, it is usually a case of “like mother, like daughter” (Ezek. 16:44), or like father, like son. Another point to keep in mind is the fact that when two people marry each other there is a sense in which they also “marry” each other’s families. As a rule, outlaws don’t make good in-laws. And many a marriage has suffered indescribable misery because of the conduct and shenanigans on the part of families which people “married into.”

7. A Christian! Non-Christians (who remain non-Christians) have about as much chance of building “Christian homes” as carpenters do of building brick houses made out of wood. The quality of a house is determined by the quality of the material out of which it is built, and the quality of a marriage is largely determined by the character of those who enter the marriage. It has been observed that a child of God who marries a child of the devil will probably have problems with his father-in-law! Christians and sinners march “to the beat of different drummers,” and it is often exceedingly difficult for a faithful child of God to consistently “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matt. 6:33) while being married to one who has no interest whatever in “the kingdom of God.” Incidentally, by the word “Christian” I am referring to a penitent, baptized, believer in Christ, an active member of the Lord’s church. I am not referring to a lackadaisical member of the Lord’s church, nor to a conscientious member of some human denomination. It is a case of “can two walk together unless they are agreed?” (Amos 3:3). While the context of this verses is not referring to the marriage relationship, the principle set forth in Amos 3:3 is nonetheless applicable to the marriage relationship. When contemplating marriage, it is wise to ask oneself, “will this person help or hinder my chances of going to heaven?” And then act accordingly.

Conclusion

Too many people become infatuated with some “Prince Charming” or some “cute young thing,” and rush into a marriage for which neither is prepared. Multitudes are primarily influenced by a person’s looks, his car, his bank account, the “security” he offers, or the “fun” enjoyed on a date. But marriage is for a life — or at least it is supposed to be! So before you rush out and marry someone that you will be “stuck with” for the rest of your life, it behooves you to know what to look for in a mate. By so doing, you will have a greater chance of feeling blessed for life with a heaven-sent companion — instead of being “stuck in” an agonizing relationship.

Before closing, I relate the following story. Reportedly, a man was getting quite old, but he had never married, though he, for years, wanted to be married. A friend, knowing of his long-standing desire for a mate, asked, "Why did you never get married?" He replied, "Because I kept looking for a perfect wife." His friend then asked, "Did you never find that one person who would be the perfect mate?" The man answered, "Yes, I found one such person, but she was looking for the perfect husband!" The point is this: the "looking" goes in both directions. It is pointless to look out for that "good catch" without becoming a "good catch" yourself!

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“Baptism . . . Essential” continued from page 2

favor? Could you write me a letter? I don't have anything I am going to ask from you. I do have a letter I am going to send you, I'd like to give you a word about the next step or two. I want to encourage you to find a church, I want to encourage you to be baptized, I want to encourage you to read your Bible. But, I don't want you to do any of these things to be saved. I want you to do all of them because you are saved.

Some of the more conservative institutional brethren exposed Lucado's loose views on water baptism. However, not all institutional brethren are alarmed by Lucado's teaching on baptism. The latest issue of the *Christian Chronicle* had a full page interview with Lucado in which he was asked what he believed about baptism. He responded,

I believe that baptism is essential for obedience. As far as I can tell there is no example of an unbaptized member of the New Testament church. In baptism the believer is identified with the righteous life of Jesus — buried with him, risen with him. Baptism is sacred. We've baptized over a hundred souls a year at Oak Hills for several years.

At the same time, I strongly resist any effort to trust the act of baptism to save. The work of salvation was finished when Christ said it was, on the cross. Baptism, nor any other work, adds to his completed service. My only contribution to my salvation is my own sin. The glory of redemption is not my baptism — but that a sinner like me could stand fearless and saved before a holy God (July 2002, p. 20).

A Baptist could not have worded this any better. Baptism is essential for obedience but not for salvation! And we ask, "Is obedience essential for salvation?"

• **Rubel Shelly.** Shelly caused quite a stir among the

institutional brethren when he participated in the Billy Graham crusade in Nashville in 2001. Shelly believes that "Promise Keepers, the Billy Graham Crusades, and many similar efforts" are things for which "we surely ought to be praising God rather than growing defensive" (*Wineskins* Mar/Apr 2002, 11). Apparently what they teach as conditions for salvation is not a problem for brother Shelly.

Going Too Far

There is no one among us who has promoted more grace-oriented preaching and less legalism than Leroy Garrett and Carl Ketcherside. However, this grace-oriented preaching has gone too far for even brother Garrett to ignore. In his *Once More With Love*, brother Garrett expresses his concern that brethren are throwing out baptism as a condition for salvation. He wrote,

We may applaud the fact that our Churches of Christ folk are discovering grace at a higher level. Oddly, this new appreciation for the place of grace appears to make baptism an embarrassment. As one brother, who is luxuriating in the grace of God, said to me, "I'm trying to wiggle out of baptism, but I have to face the fact that it is there." It is also to be noted that in our pulpits where "grace is preached," there is little said about baptism.

Not only can one not "wiggle out of baptism" with the New Testament in hand, and not only "it is there," but it is there with a resounding emphasis. And it is an emphasis that is consistent with the biblical teaching on grace, but I'll speak to that momentarily. Let us first look at the emphasis. Baptism in the New Testament is not a casual subject.

Garrett goes to the conversion of Saul of Tarsus and quotes Acts 22:16 (is he proof-texting?) which says, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." He then argues:

It is disarmingly clear. It calls for no scholarly interpretation. A sinner who is turning to the Lord is told in the simplest of terms that he is to delay no longer, but to hurry up about it, and be baptized, and wash away his sins.

It is noteworthy what Ananias does *not* say to Saul. He is not told to pray through, or to come to an altar, or to "simply believe" or "give your heart to Jesus." None of that. And even when he refers to baptism, Ananias doesn't tell him that he can be baptized at the next Easter baptismal service. He didn't say, "After all, baptism isn't all that important, we can easily wait awhile." That isn't the way it is in Scripture.

The language is forceful, laced with imperatives. Don't delay! Hurry up about it! Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins! (Feb. 2002, 1).

Friends, when our brethren have gone so far away from teaching that baptism is a condition of salvation that brother

Garrett starts writing to call them back to this fundamental teaching of Scripture, you can be assured that a significant number of these brethren no longer believe that one must be baptized in order to be saved.

Of course, brother Garrett does not address the influence of brother Ketcherside's "brother-in-prospect" on what men believe about the conditions for salvation or what influence working hand-in-hand with denominational folks has on one's perception of what is necessary for salvation.

What Got Them There?

To raise the question of how the institutional brethren have moved so far that a significant element of them do not believe that water baptism is essential to salvation is certainly legitimate. I do not claim to know all of the answers. However, I have read church bulletins and periodicals circulating among institutional churches for over thirty years. I certainly can identify at least one contributing factor.

I started preaching when the division over institutionalism was nearing completion. At that time, I asked to be added to about 100 bulletin mailing lists, from churches on both sides of the institutional issue. Without knowing where a given church stood, one could look at the bulletin and discern a significant difference. Those bulletins published by non-institutional churches were full of Bible teaching on a wide variety of subjects to teach the people about Bible authority, the oneness of the church, baptism, pre-millennialism, etc. Those published by institutional churches were full of devotional material — material that taught the brethren nothing, but encouraged a spirit of devotion. Heart-warming stories, anecdotes, and poems filled their pages, as did advertisements about upcoming attractions at the local church. These churches have heard this kind of preaching for forty years. The older generation who knew how to distinguish the Lord's church from denominationalism is quickly passing from the scene and a new generation is coming along who has never heard the kind of preaching that shows the essentiality of water baptism, distinguishes the Lord's church from denominationalism, and shows what is wrong with unauthorized forms of worship.

Having heard the names of the prominent denominational preachers quoted with approbation and those among us who oppose their false doctrines denounced as sectarian radicals, a generation has grown up which has greater esteem for what James Dobson, Charles Swindoll, and Bill Hybels say about a subject than they have for what Paul, Peter, James, and John say.

Conclusion

Is there a lesson from this for our benefit? Surely one can see among the non-institutional brethren a shift in the content of church bulletins. Devotional material is consuming greater portions of the content of bulletins published among

us. Less teaching is being done to ground the members in the fundamental doctrines of salvation and teaching members what is wrong with prominent false doctrines current in our society. An older generation who knows the truth on these issues is rapidly passing away. Will our younger generation be able to distinguish the Lord's church from the denominations around us? Let us not be so naive as to say, "What is happening among the institutional churches could never happen among us."

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Quips & Quotes



Invitation Songs

The following appeared in the bulletin of the institutional Sixth and Izard church in Little Rock, Arkansas. I reproduce it so you can see the attitude some have toward "traditional" (vs. contemporary) worship.

The statement and question came from a group of older song leaders, "We don't think the tried and true invitation songs are effective as they once were. What do we do?" I am in agreement with their assessment.

There are a number of reasons. Among them is the fact that with constant use, songs that once greatly stirred our spirits no longer do so. How Great Thou Art is still a wonderful song, but it is not nearly as powerful as it once was. That's true with invitation songs as well. Just As I Am, as effective as it has been, no longer carries the impact it once had. The fact that we sing with a different style now also is a factor. Jesus Is Tenderly Calling, though very pointed in its invitation does not communicate as it did for an earlier generation. Added to that is the difference in the way people "respond." In many places, the responses do not walk the aisles when they are ready for baptism — as often as not, they will make their intentions known before the assembly even begins, or talk to a leader after an assembly is over.

My suggestion to the song leaders was to look for songs that are true heart-expressions. They don't have to include specific words of invitation, but they do have to express the desire of the heart to be in line with the heart of Jesus. Newer songs such as Jesus, Let Us Come to Know You, I Come to the Cross, Change My Heart, O God, or I Will Never Be the Same Again need to be considered in looking for a way to encourage response to the call of the Savior.

Back in Print: W.W. Otey, Contender For The Faith

I am pleased to report that the grandson of W.W. Otey, Bill Phipps, from Wichita, Kansas has reprinted in paperback form, *W.W. Otey, Contender For The Faith*. The biography of brother Otey was written by my brother, Cecil Willis. This biography of brother Otey emphasizes the doctrinal issues which the churches faced in the early twentieth century rather than approaching the history of the church through the social-sources-of-division approach to the conflicts as presented by Reinhold Niehbur's book *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (1929) and applied to the restoration movement by Ed Harrell in *The Social Sources of Division in the Disciples of Christ 1865-1900* (1973). One walks with Otey through the controversy over instrumental music and missionary societies (which led to the Otey-Briney Debate) on through the appeal by G.C. Brewer to have church support colleges from their treasury. The book is available through Truth Bookstore at 1-800-428-0121.

Buy A Raffle Ticket in the Name of Jesus

I recently received an advertisement entitled "Help St. Augustine's Home." The ad proceeds to state that St. Augustine is conducting a raffle at \$100 per ticket for a new PT Cruiser. The raffle is a fund raising program for Little Sisters of the Poor, which is a Catholic charity. The insignia shows a cross with a circle inside and inside the circle is a shock of wheat. The Logo of the Little Sisters of the Poor has special significance: "The cross symbolizes our vocation as followers of Christ. The circle signifies the universal dimension of our mission. The wheat symbolizes old age as the time of life's harvest. It also symbolizes the Eucharist, source of charity and summit of our prayer."

Let's look at this more carefully. A religious charity is resorting to gambling as a fund raising device. Gambling has only recently been legal in Indiana, but it certainly is not righteous. The charity is using the tools of the Devil to finance its "good works." If one can use one tool of the Devil, why not other tools? Could they operate a house of prostitution to finance their good works? What about pushing illegal drugs? Or could they produce alcohol such as Christian Brothers Wines?

What would the Lord think about this? The same Lord who drove the moneychangers out of his temple in the first century no doubt has some other cleansing to be done in the future! Reading the brochure reminds me of Matthew 7:21-23 — "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

Separation of God and Gridiron

"University of Nebraska Assistant Football Coach Ron Brown was denied the head coaching job at Stanford University, reports *The Daily Nebraskan*, because of his religious beliefs. Of particular concern was his candid belief that homosexual behavior is a sin. His religion 'was definitely something that had to be considered,' Alan Glenn, Stanford's assistant athletic director of human resources, told the student newspaper.

"We're a very diverse community with a diverse alumni.' Brown says he was shocked at both the decision and the school's candor. 'If I'd been discriminated against for being black, they would've never told me that,' he said. 'They had no problem telling me it was because of my Christian beliefs.' Glenn later backed away from his statement, but others, including San Francisco Chronicle columnist Mark Simon, say Stanford was right not to hire such an outspoken Christian. Brown, meanwhile, says the Stanford rejection won't silence his Christian beliefs. 'I don't believe you compromise any truth for whatever job' he said" (*Christianity Today* [June 10, 2002], 13).

Hawaii Kills Assisted-Suicide Bill

"Opponents of physician-assisted suicide breathed a sigh of relief when a Hawaii bill, patterned after Oregon's assisted-suicide law, was narrowly defeated May 2.

"The bill, halted by a 14-11 vote in the state Senate, would have allowed terminally ill patients to request fatal doses of pain medications. Oregon is the only state with such a law. Gov. Ben Cayetano introduced the bill, which the state House approved in March.

"Kelly Rosati, executive director of the Hawaii Family Forum, says the vote represents a setback for advocates of physician-assisted suicide in other states. '[I hope] we put a halt to a potential juggernaut,' she told *Christianity Today*. 'The momentum of a victory in Hawaii would have propelled their movement forward across the mainland'" (*Christianity Today* [June 10, 2002], 13).

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