



In the Right Place, At the Right Time

Lewis Willis

I suspect we have all heard the expression that a person was “*in the wrong place, at the wrong time*.” Usually, we use that expression to describe some calamity that has befallen someone. Perhaps we refer to an auto accident or a 9/11-type tragedy. Some occasions elicit sorrow, regret, and sadness.

However, most of us never think of being “*in the right place, at the right time*.” I would like to share some thoughts with you on that idea in this article. Have you ever stopped to think what might have happened if certain individuals had *not* been “*in the right place, at the right time*”?

Some Notable Examples

Thomas: Do you remember Thomas, one of the twelve apostles? He is probably best known as “Doubting Thomas.” After Jesus was raised from the dead, he appeared to several of the disciples, but Thomas was not present on that occasion. When those who were there saw Thomas, they told him, “We have seen the Lord.” Thomas replied, “Except I shall see in his hands the print

of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, *I will not believe*” (John 20:24-25).

Eight days later, the disciples are gathered, and Thomas was with them. Jesus came into their midst and singled out Thomas. He said to him, “Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing” (vv. 26-27). When this happened, Thomas answered, “My Lord and my God” (v. 28).

This is a notable example of a man who was “*in the right place, at the right time*.” Suppose Thomas had said, regarding that second meeting, “Sorry, I can’t be there; I have to go visit some relatives.” Had he said that, he would not only have remained an unbeliever, but the valuable testimony of one of the twelve would have been lost during the infancy of the church. Yes, there is something to be said for being “*in the right place, at the right time*” on p. 249

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Moral Purity At Weddings

Mike Willis

From time to time, various authors have addressed pertinent applications regarding moral principles as they apply to such things as smoking, social drinking, immodest dress (wearing modern swimsuit attire around those of the opposite sex, shorts, skin-tight jeans, etc.), dancing, and other issues. I would like to address what will probably be a topic sensitive to some of our readers. That topic is the application of our moral principles at weddings. I suspect that the observations which I shall make will be similar to those that other conscientious Christians likewise have observed.



Modest Dress At Weddings

Perhaps I am not the only one who has been alarmed at the number of Christian ladies who are immodestly clad at weddings. Low-cut bridal gowns with plunging backs are commonplace in today's bridal fashions and not a few Christian ladies are choosing those gowns for their bridal attire. The dresses chosen for the maid of honor and other bridal attendants are frequently low cut with plunging backs.

The commandment to dress modestly has just as much application on the day of one's wedding (or the wedding of a friend) as it has the rest of one's life. Paul wrote, "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" (1 Tim. 2:9-10). One does not escape the temptations of lust just because one is at a wedding. Jesus warned, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:27-28). I do not understand the thinking of those Christian ladies who forget their modesty at their wedding ceremony!

There are modest gowns for the bride and her attendants on the market. In one's desire to find the most beautiful wedding gown for herself, the bride should not forget her responsibility to dress modestly before the Lord and men. The dresses are white for purity and decency, but cut for lust and immorality. Preachers who conduct weddings may need to take a more assertive role in this regard. At least, they have the right/obligation to be sure that they not participate in those occasions in which sin is being committed.

see "Weddings" on p. 250

Rehearsing What God Had Done With Them

Connie W. Adams

When Paul and Barnabas returned from their first preaching trip, they gathered the church at Antioch together and “rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles” (Acts 14:27). Indeed, “As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country” (Prov. 25:25).

The work of Paul and Barnabas, as they preached in Cyprus and Asia Minor, was eminently successful. Many souls were saved and numerous congregations established. Not only had they converted some Jews but had also had greater success in reaching Gentiles. This was cause for great rejoicing.

The success of the gospel around the world has always attracted my interest. Even as a teenager I used to read the News and Notes in the *Gospel Advocate* with great interest. Reports of tent meetings, debates, baptisms in local work, congregations established, and especially word from foreign fields, lifted my spirit and had a part in developing my own desire to preach Christ in different parts of our own country and in some others as well. As a student in college, we had opportunity to hear men speak of the work in far away places. All of this kindled a flame in me and in others as well.

Congregations would do well to either bring men they support in other fields to speak to the congregation (so they will not just be a name on a posted report), or else send one of the elders along with another brother or two from the congregation to visit the work and bring back a first-hand report for the encouragement and edification of the congregation. When such men come to visit, they should be treated with great love and appreciation and not as a sort of curiosity to be tolerated until we can get back to business as usual. It is good for members to have these men in their homes and hear them speak of their work. It is good for children to be exposed to such servants of God. Such visits could even have life-changing effects on our children.

Where it is possible, it would greatly encourage workers in other places if members of congregations which support them could visit them when they are on vacation. Some brethren work in areas where brethren are few and far apart. Many years ago, when we lived in Norway, it was a great help to have visitors from the USA, brethren who sought us out and worshipped with us. We had a number of these to visit in our home and were hungry for news from “back home.” In our own country there are brethren who work in

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places where they are isolated from other brethren. A visit from you when you travel in that region, would do much to encourage them. We have visited some brethren as we were traveling to or from a meeting, who insisted we have lunch with them, talked a mile a minute and would say, “Do you have to go?” “Can’t you stay a little longer?”

For some reason, not very many brethren take the time to send news reports to the papers which carry news columns. Some have thought it sounded like “tooting their own horn.” They have a point. But what is wrong with stating it as Luke did in Acts 14:27 when he wrote of what “God had done with them.” Don’t we all understand that the power of the gospel is not in the messengers but in the message itself, which is of God. As we plant and water and God gives the increase, let others know so we can rejoice together. People send birth announcements to let other relatives and friends know. When people are born into the family of God, it should be of great interest to other family members. The first thing I look for in periodicals is the news section and I am always disappointed when there is not much news reported.

When various issues arise which threaten the faith of God’s people, then it is in order that they be discussed. But while that is being done, there is other work going on among the Lord’s people. Such news helps strike a balance. Would you like to know that last week we baptized three teenagers at Manslick Road in Louisville? This caused great rejoicing for the parents, grandparents, and all the rest of

us. News of sermon series, Bible class topics, activities to reach out to the community with the gospel — all these and more, inspire others to work harder and also pass along good ideas. If you have young men where you worship who are developing their talents to teach and preach, let others know about it. Paul said of the Thessalonians that “their faith to God was spread abroad” (1 Thess. 1:8).

So, my brethren, have some obeyed the gospel recently? Have you appointed elders and deacons? Do you have a new preacher? Some of his friends might like to keep up with his whereabouts. Does the congregation support men to preach the gospel in other places? What places? Who are they? Do you have a successful radio program? Do you have some outreach with a bulletin? Do you have a regular newspaper column? What sort of response do you get? How many hits do you have on your website? What kind of material do you feature? Do you have successful home studies in progress? What approach do you use? Tell us about it. It won’t take long and it would encourage the rest of us. Please rehearse with us what God has done with you in opening the door of faith to the lost where you live and work.

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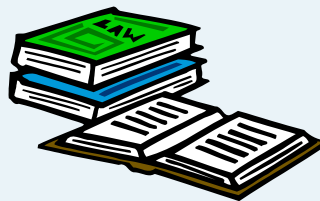
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The Nature of the Godhead

Bruce Reeves

Our understanding of God is very important. We must give our hearts to accepting all that God has revealed about himself. There is considerable disagreement within the religious world concerning the nature of the Godhead. It is the purpose of this article to consider what the Bible teaches on this particular subject.

God Is One

The fact that God is “one” is clearly taught in the Scriptures. The term “God” denotes divine nature, hence there is but one divine nature. There are, however, three persons or beings who each possess this divine nature. Since there is but one divine nature, there is but one God.

Three divine persons compose the Godhead. We can see this point from the very beginning, i.e., creation. The Hebrew word for God in Genesis 1:1 is *Elohim*, which indicates a plurality; thus Genesis 1:26 employs plural pronouns to describe God, i.e., “us” and “our.”

The New Testament refers to the activity of both the Father and the Son in creation, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made” (John 1:1-3). Paul would write to the Colossians concerning this same point, “Who is the image of the invisible God the firstborn of every creature: For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth . . . all things were created by Him . . . and He is before all things and by Him all things consist” (Col. 1:15-18). Again we read Paul as he affirms that God speaks to us through his Son “by whom also He made the worlds” (Heb. 1:2).

Within the Godhead there is a unity of purpose and a diversity of function. Whether one considers creation or salvation the pattern is the same. The Father willed it, Jesus executed the will and the Holy Spirit organized it or revealed it. Just as a husband and wife are two persons, but “one flesh” so the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are three separate and distinct divine persons and, yet, they are

“one” in purpose. The husband and wife have a diversity of function, i.e., they do different things, but they are “one” in purpose. The marital relationship helps us understand how a plurality of persons can be described as “one.”

Our relationship with one another as brethren in Christ can also help us understand this principle. Jesus prayed “that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” (John 17:21). Jesus prays that we might be one as he and the Father are one. He is not praying that we become one person, but that we might be one in purpose!

Jesus is a Being in the Godhead, Not Just a Manifestation

Some attempt to argue that the “Father,” the “Son,” and the “Holy Spirit” are simply manifestations of one person. Such would make each one-third God, rather than each being fully God!

Did Jesus Grow In Favor With Himself?

If there is no real distinction between the Father and the Son, then Jesus grew in favor with himself. “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52).

What Happened At Jesus’ Baptism?

In Matthew 3:16-17, we read of John the Baptist baptizing Christ. Our question is, “Was Jesus expressing approval of Himself?” “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with Him” (Acts 10:38). This sure looks like three separate persons!

Did Jesus Submit To Himself?

When Jesus came to the earth, he fulfilled the role of a servant: “Who existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:6-8).

In Matthew 12:17-18 we find that Isaiah 42:1-3 is applied to Jesus. The original prophecy indicated that the Messiah would be a servant of God (John 8:42). Jesus was a servant of his Father! How could he be a servant of himself?

Jesus Argued That the Father and Himself Constituted “Two” Witnesses.

Jesus affirms that he and the Father constituted “two” witnesses. “Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is not true . . . For I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent me. It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me” (John 8:14, 16-18).

If There is No Distinction Between the Father and the Son, Why Was Their Knowledge Different While Jesus Was On the Earth?

Jesus said: “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mark 13:32). Clearly we have a distinction here between the Father and the Son!

If There is No Distinction Between the Father and the Son, Why Did Jesus Pray?

We read that Jesus’ soul was “exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death” when he was in Gethsemane and, therefore, he prayed to his Father three times. Was it real or just an act when he said, “Not my will, but thine be done?” Was he talking to himself? Did he have a split personality? Were there two spirits in the body of Jesus?

Obviously, he was praying to another divine person, namely the Father! “Who in the days of his flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear” (Heb. 5:7).

When Jesus was on the cross, he prayed as well. His prayers necessitate another personality in the Godhead. He prayed, “Father forgive them,” “My God . . . why hast thou forsaken me,” and finally “Rather, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” Now, honestly, did Jesus forsake himself? Did he “commend” or entrust his spirit to himself or was he entrusting it to another personality?

If the Father and the Son Are the Same Person, How Can Christ Be Our Mediator?

Jesus Christ is our “mediator” according to 1 Timothy 2:5: “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” The idea of a mediator is that he serves as a go-between.

If the Father and the Son Are the Same Person, Is Jesus Sitting On His Own Right Hand?

Peter taught the Pentecostians that Jesus had been exalted and was presently sitting on the right hand of God. Notice the distinction made between the Father and the Son, “Wherefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne . . . therefore being by the right hand of God exalted . . . For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, ‘The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool’” (Acts 2:29-30, 33-35). It is clear to the honest Bible student that the Father exalted the Son, which demands two divine persons or beings.

As Stephen was being executed for preaching the truth, the Scriptures tell us that he looked steadfastly into heaven and “saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God.” Stephen then said, “Behold I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God” (Acts 7:55, 56). Friends, was Jesus standing on his own right hand? This is Jesus in heaven and he is on the right hand of God!

If the Father and the Son Are the Same Person, Will He Give the Kingdom to Himself in Eternity?

Paul wrote: “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power . . . And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son Himself be subject unto Him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. 15:24, 28). Jesus is going to give the kingdom back to the Father and will be subject to the Father according to this text. Is he returning the kingdom to himself or to another divine person? Is he going to be subject to himself? Of course not, he is going to be subject to the Father!

Conclusion

It is a marvellous truth that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are each fully God and that the Godhead loved mankind so much as to work beautifully and harmoniously to

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Guarding Against Immorality in the Mission Field

Steve Wallace

Churches in many places in the U.S. have been harmed by preachers who have been involved in immoral relationships with women. Most preachers who have preached for any length of time have probably been involved in some kind of effort in reaction to damage done by such sins. Beyond the damage done to churches and Christian families, the Lord's cause in many places has received serious setbacks due to the sins of the very ones supposed to be furthering it.

Experience has taught me that many people in foreign countries will watch Americans more attentively than they will those of their own nation. They will note inconsistencies between one's profession and practice. Sadly, the devil takes no holidays.

With the above facts in mind, one can understand that preachers must take extra care to guard against such sins while working in foreign countries. Such a man is often the first Christian many people in foreign countries see. His example must be one that conforms with the holy life and teaching of Jesus (1 Pet. 1:16; 1 Cor. 6:9-10). Also, experience has taught me that many people in foreign countries will watch Americans more attentively than they will those of their own nation. They will note inconsistencies between one's profession and practice. Sadly, the devil takes no holidays. Hence, the dangers presented by the opposite sex are common to all cultures, some, of course, more than others.

The Bible is our guide on this subject as it is in all areas of life (2 Tim. 3:16-17). According to the Bible, how might a child of God be tempted to commit the sin of fornication? Giving Bible answers to this question will go a long way in helping us avoid *any* compromises with women.

What Can Lead to Compromise and Immorality?

The Bible is replete with answers to this question. Proverbs 6:26 tells us,

“For by means of a harlot, a man is reduced to a crust of bread” (NKJV). What “means” might such a woman employ? Also, what else might lead to such unwanted ends? From what we noted in our introduction, we understand that the answers to these questions are needed at home as well as in the mission field. Let us consider them.

1. Close proximity or frequent association. We place the most innocent first. The experiences of Joseph and Tamar teach us that unwanted and unsought after desires can be aroused when a person is not seeking them (Gen. 39:1-20; 2 Sam. 13:1-18). Due consideration of both of these accounts shows us that the sinful desires and schemes of Potiphar's wife and Amnon developed over time. What can foreign workers learn from these chapters? Studies with a female contact, who is innocently seeking to learn more about God, may develop into something quite different. Working with a female translator to produce charts or literature can tempt either

party involved to think of things beyond the task at hand. Spending time in the company of a woman, who is working with you as an interpreter, as you run errands to various places gives much opportunity for conversation. Familiarity can develop that can, with time, become improper. All of the situations described above are innocent. However, as we noted above, the devil never stops working. We know he is capable of perverting anything (1 Pet. 5:8).

2. The look of a woman who seeks your attention. Concerning the evil woman, Solomon warns, “Neither let her take thee with her eyelids” (Prov. 6:25). We do not know the motives of all women. Some may look at us out of curiosity and some out of vanity. However, some look with the intention to allure. “Beauty is vain” (Prov. 31:30) and some women need the flattery of the opposite sex’s attention. This writer’s life in the world before conversion, for which he is ashamed, caused him to realize the truthfulness of Proverbs 7:17-18: Many women seek a man for the basest reasons. Solomon writes of a *kind* of woman in that chapter (v. 5). Let us take hold of his words here: “The adulteress *hunteth* for the precious life” (Prov. 6:26, my emph, sw). Further, unprincipled women from poor countries may think of a man from America as a way out a bad situation. Hardship can do this to a person (Isa. 4:1). Loneliness or an unhappy marriage, coupled with the general view that the outside world has of America, may cause a woman to seek your company.

3. The outward appearance of an evil woman (Prov. 6:25). It is good when it can be said of an attractive woman, “She is just as beautiful on the inside as she is on the outside.” The Bible tells of many such women. Such a woman conducts herself so as not to call attention to herself, keeps from evil appearances, and does not seek to use her beauty for any improper purpose (1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:2-4). Further, she will not knowingly allow

herself to get into a situation which might be seen in an unfavorable light (1 Pet. 3:2). Solomon cautions us of another kind of woman in the above verse. As he writes in 31:30, “Favor is deceitful.” Adam Clark’s comments on this verse are helpful in showing how some women use their outward appearance.

Favour . . . grace of manner may be deceitful, many a fair appearance of this kind is put on, assumed for certain secular or more unworthy purposes; it is learned by painful drilling in polished seminaries, and, being the effect of mere physical discipline, it continues while the restraint lasts; but it is . . . a lie, a mere semblance, an outward varnish. It is not the effect of internal moral regulation; it is an outside, at which the inside murmurs . . . (Prov. 31:30, *Power Bible CD*)

Like bait leads a fish to bite on the hook, the evil woman entices a man with her outward appearance. If that man is a Christian, he is being enticed to do that which he knows is sin. This leads to another weapon such a woman will often have in her arsenal.

4. Words designed to entice. Words come forth from the heart (Luke 6:45). The wise man wrote, “And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets” (Eccl. 7:26). There are women who will cause the subject of their looks to be a topic of conversation. They will speak of how other men view them or speak of them. They will note your lack of attention to their clothes, their hair, or some other feature. We use the phrase “fishing for compliments” in other connections. It fits here. As the above-cited verse shows, many seducers realize how ensnaring a misspoken word or unpremeditated action can be — and *seek to provoke such!* Further, some women will use flattery to achieve their goals: “With her much fair speech she causeth him to yield; With the flattering of her lips she forceth him along” (Prov. 7:21). Conversation with many

people can be pleasant and innocent, but “the lips of a strange woman drop as an honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil” (Prov. 5:3). When it comes to the point where her sinful desires are nearing fulfillment, she has the words to sooth the conscience. She knows how to assure a man of God or anyone else who hesitates in responding to her that “everything is alright” (Prov. 7:14-20).

5. Lasciviousness. Let us first note that lasciviousness can damn the soul *but that it is not fornication* (cf. Gal. 5:19-21). This is written to remind brethren that one can stop short of the sin of fornication and yet still be just as guilty in God’s sight (Jas. 2:10-11). However, let us note why it is that lasciviousness can lead to the sin of fornication. It is defined as follows:

unbridled lust, excess, licentiousness, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness, insolence . . . wanton (acts or) manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc. (*Thayer 79-80*)

Please note the progression in our above points. Lasciviousness is placed at this point in this article for a reason: When used as a tool of the seducer, aspects of it — such as words, manners, body movements and touching — will, with some exception, not appear until a woman has some reason to believe they will further her sinful ends.

6. “A man void of understanding” (Prov. 7:7; 6:32). We save this for last as it is the final ingredient sin of fornication alone. How does one needed. A woman cannot commit the show a lack of understanding in this matter? If he is single, he may fail to treat a married woman as one who is in a sacred relationship (Gen. 2:21-24; Matt. 19:4-6). In his general conduct towards women, he may take verses like the following ones lightly:

Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but

he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? And ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body (1 Cor. 6:18-20).

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an ensample to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity (1 Tim. 4:12).

Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee (1 Tim. 4:16).

Flee youthful lusts (2 Tim. 2:22)

He may forget the warning in these verses, pandering instead to his own vanity and fleshly appetites. He may unconsciously *seek* the very kind of woman we have detailed above. A single or married man may fail to understand the subtleties of an evil woman or the dangers involved in the innocent relationships we detailed under point 1 above. A married man may fail to understand yet other things and, because of his greater knowledge of intimate affairs with a woman, he has less excuse for his ignorance than one who has never been married. He either forgets or has not taken time to consider the seriousness of his marriage vows when he said, "Forsaking all others for thee and thee only." He does not fully understand the sacrificial love commanded of husbands (Eph. 5:25). Perhaps the love he "understands" is of the baser sort, of the kind that Amnon had for his sister, Tamar (2 Sam. 13:1, 15). To use a common term, being "cool" is more important to him than being virtuous.

While not being exhaustive, hopefully, the things we write under this heading will cause all Christians to think soberly about their relations with the opposite sex. Of course, in light of the theme of this article, we hope missionaries will especially take these things to heart.

How Does a Man *with Understanding* Conduct Himself?

We have above considered "a man void of understanding." The purpose of Proverbs and, it goes without saying, God's word in general is to give understanding (Prov. 1:1-6; 4:5, 7; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Therefore, we can learn how to conduct ourselves in ways characterized by the word *understanding*. Let us note some of these ways.

1. Remember your purpose. Churches are supporting you to preach the gospel and to build up Christians (1 Thess. 1:8; 2 Cor. 11:8-9). Occupy your mind with how much you might be able to get done in a given day. Emphasize to those around you what you would like to accomplish and go about doing it. Stay busy. Do not be distracted from your work by things of less or little importance.

2. Try to foresee the dangers innocent associations may present. Some of our best translators in Lithuania are female. Something that has demanded a lot time with them is the proof-reading of translated material (a must in producing literature). I have tried as much as possible to arrange to work with them in the presence of others, no matter where we end up working. Foresee dangers. Do not allow situations that can hurt your influence or, worse, damn your soul. This leads to our next point.

3. Recognize that people are watching you (Prov. 7:6-7; Luke 7:39). (All of what we write herein is written with the understanding that *God* is watching us [Heb. 4:13].) More than once, this writer has had to "clean up" (for lack of better term) after a brother was guilty of some impropriety with a woman. While no immorality occurred in any of these cases of which I am aware, it has amazed and appalled me how many people would volunteer information on such occasions. This goes back to something we noted in our introduction: Many people in foreign countries will watch Americans more attentively than they will those of their own nation. They will note inconsistencies between one's profession and practice (1 Pet. 2:11-12; 3:16).

4. Practice self-control. If a woman stares at you do not intentionally return her look. Avert your eyes. Understand the danger that the Bible connects with this seemingly innocent action. "Lust not after her beauty in thine heart" (Prov. 6:25). "But I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matt. 5:28). Guard your heart against this vanity. It is a step down from the ground upon which you should be standing (Tit. 2:11-12). When flattered, recognize that "favor is deceitful." Also, remember the kind of people who flatter and love flattery (Pss. 5:9; 12:2; 36:2; Prov. 14:20; 26:28; 29:5). Do not seek for yourself or enjoy the kind of attention or compliments the evil woman seeks (#2 above). Never say anything improper to a woman or touch her in an improper manner. Never drop your guard (Prov. 4:23).

5. If you are married, remember your wife. We do not speak here of a passive remembrance. Buy post cards and write her, or write her e-mail from an Internet café. Speak about her to people you meet. Pay attention to your wife's likes, needs, and wants. Then, if you have spare time while in a foreign country, you can occupy it by finding something for *the* special woman in your life (1 Cor. 7:33). This will also help your influence with any women you may use logistically: They will be aware of your love for and dedication to your wife. Those personally acquainted with my work in Lithuania know that I write Mary almost every day without fail and never return home from there without a number of gifts for her.

Distractions in Worship

Joe R. Price

The following news item recently caught my attention:

Jamming Phones to Keep Worshiping Quiet

DOHA (Reuters) — Qatar has imported 1,000 frequency jammers to block mobile phone transmissions that disrupt prayers and sermons in the Gulf state's mosques, the daily newspaper *The Peninsula* said Thursday.

The Cellular Phone Hunter, a pocket-size device, should silence the modern-day nuisance of cellphones chirruping during prayers, the paper said.

Imams and muezzins (prayer callers) have been instructed to switch on the devices a few minutes before the call for prayer and keep them on till five minutes after the prayers, five times a day, *The Peninsula* added (*Lycos News*).

Cell phones rarely go off in our worship assemblies, so I doubt we could use a "Cellular Phone Hunter." I've got an idea, though, that would help us in our assemblies whenever we come together to worship God and edify one another (John 4:24; 1 Cor. 14:26).

Someone ought to invent a "Distraction Hunter" to be used during worship services. Here's how it would work: It will detect and deter distractions to reverent worship — things that make our worship (and those around us) more difficult. Here are some suggested models of this unique device that every church could use:

1. Play-time Hunter. This device will make sure parents

oversee the conduct of their children during (as well as before and after) services. It will silence shouting and playground-type games inside the building. And, it will remind parents to be teaching their children proper conduct during worship. (A side benefit to this device is the improved care of the worship place and its contents. Things like mistreating song books, coloring on pews and walls, and leaving personal trash in the seats will be eliminated.)

2. Snack-time Hunter. A companion to the Play-time Hunter, it will teach parents and children alike that worship is not the time and place to pull out snacks to satisfy cravings or still a fidgeting child. Hunger will be taken care of at other times and places (1 Cor. 11:22; Acts 20:11).

3. Getting up and down Hunter. This pocket-size device will vibrate every time someone starts to *unnecessarily* get up and go to the back of the building. A habit buster, its built-in reminder to attend to personal business *before* worship is an indispensable part of this device.

4. Talking Hunter. Whenever someone is speaking and leading our worship, this tool will insure we give him our full attention as we participate together in worshipping God (Eph. 5:19; 1 Cor. 14:14-15).

What do you think: Will the "Distraction Hunter" catch on where you worship? Should it?

Maybe we already have a "Distraction Hunter" we all ought to be using whenever we assemble to worship God: our own sense of *reverent devotion* and *quiet demeanor* before the God of heaven and earth (Hab. 2:20).

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the church at its best.

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Women's Value in the Lord's Work

Jeff McCrary

There is a terrible fallacy that has been duped upon the people of our society: the traditional work that women do is not important. We see it on TV game shows when female contestants are introduced to the audience. Few are “housewives” (or at least few admit to it), and those with a career outside the home receive markedly greater applause.

A feeling of accomplishment and importance is necessary for all of us. Christians, however, have never been able to get this from society. Paul reminded the Corinthians of society's assessment of them: “For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (1 Cor. 1:26). That was no fault of the Corinthians, and nothing they should have been ashamed of either. Jesus said, “You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28). Our source of worth must come from God himself and his word. Never forget that, ladies.

How many Phebes are there in the congregation where you attend? Paul said of this great saint of God, “I commend unto you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you assist her in whatever business she has need of you: for she has been a helper of many, and of myself also” (Rom. 16:1-2). The Lord's people need a “woman's touch.” It is indeed a very special ability women seem to have in much greater abundance: to care for, feel sympathy for the downtrodden and discouraged.

How many Dorcas are there where you worship? “Now there was at Joppa a certain disciple named Tabitha, which by interpretation is called Dorcas: this woman was full of

good works and alms deeds which she did” (Acts 9:36). We need, every bit as much as men of good works, women of good works — those whose hearts not only burn with love and compassion, but who determine to spend their time helping, doing, encouraging, and working.

How many Sarahs are members in the local church where you are? All many remember about her is that she laughed because of her old age when she overheard God's promise to Abraham of a child, but Peter said of this good woman, “For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters you are, as long as you do well, and are not afraid with any terror” (1 Pet. 3:6). Sarah is God's example of a good wife and young role model to offset the skewed picture our society paints of the proper roles of a godly woman.

We can take the world's view and say that all such women are unimportant and to be pitied, but God holds these women up as examples for all his children. If Jesus had come as a woman, would he not have been such as these? Husbands, whether your wife is a “housewife” or not, let her know how much you appreciate the work she does in the home. If it is necessary for her to work outside the home because of financial needs, help her with the work in the home, as she is helping you with your responsibility of providing for the family (1 Tim. 5:8). Children, you do not want to know what it is truly like to be without a good mother who cares for her children and puts her family first in her life. If this describes your mother, give her a big hug, thank her, and tell her how much it means to have her in your life. Sisters, never let anyone make you think the work you do for your family is less important than what you can accomplish outside the home. May God bless us all as we seek to do his will in the home.

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“Blessed Are They That Have Been Persecuted For Righteousness’ Sake”

Jim McDonald

Verses 10-12 of Matthew 5 read: “Blessed are they that

have been persecuted for righteousness’ sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall reproach you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets that were before you.” While the phrase “Blessed are they (ye)” appears twice in the quotation, the language clearly can be understood as having reference to one item — a blessing is pronounced on those who are persecuted because they are Christians and for the name of Christ.

No blessing is promised to one who suffers for wrong doing. Peter wrote, “Let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil doer, or as a meddler in other men’s matters” (1 Pet. 4:15). The punishment inflicted upon such is just and right. When the two thieves were crucified with Christ and the one on the left railed upon Christ, saying, “Art thou not the Christ? Save thyself and us” (Luke 23:39). But he was rebuked for his behavior. The thief on the right said, “Dost thou not even fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And us indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this man hath done nothing amiss” (Luke 23:40).

There is a natural inclination on the part of evil men to hate good men. Jesus said that darkness hateth the light (John 3:20). As evil men hate what is right, they hate those who do right. Light exposes sin and wickedness, thus men hate light. He “cometh not to the light, lest his deeds shall be reproved” (John 3:20). Have you ever turned over a board that had laid on the ground for a long while? Did you notice how the little insects scurried for cover when you did so? You see, under the cover of darkness they had been busily at work eating away at the bottom of the board, but the light made them run for cover. So it is with wicked men.

Ahab hated Elijah. He search for him in every place he thought he might be found (1 Kings 18:10). When finally

the two came face to face, Ahab’s greeting for Elijah was, “Is it thou, thou troubler of Israel?” (1 Kings 18:17). Elijah’s reply was, “I have not troubled Israel; but thou and thy father’s house” (18:18). Ahab had troubled Israel. He had forsaken God’s law; he had (at the instigation of Jezebel, his wife) introduced Baal worship into Israel; his taking of Naboth’s vineyard and the manner in which he did so showed the tyranny he exercised in ruling over his subjects. His violent end was both just and prophesied. God had warned that “all they that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” that “through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God” (2 Tim. 3:12; Acts 14:22). Jesus warned his disciples, “Ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake” (Matt. 10:22). It has ever been true that God’s people have been called upon to suffer for his cause. Not even those who are supposed to be God’s people will always accept the teaching of God and sometimes will mistreat those who bring God’s messages and warnings to them. Stephen said, “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit, as ye fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed them that showed before of the coming of the Righteous One of whom ye have now become betrayers and murderers — ye who received the law as it was ordained by angels and kept it not?” (Acts 7:51-52).

So Jesus comforted his disciples. You are blessed when men persecute you for righteousness’ sake. You are blessed when men shall revile you, persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely. The knowledge that the accusations are false and that the railings are unjustified will not take away the sting of hurt they bring, but we can be comforted to know, that while we may thus suffer, it is just for a “little while” and our reward is eternal, the kingdom of heaven! (1 Pet. 5:10).

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Help Wanted!

Acts 16:9

Jesse Flowers

Lately I have been hearing of more and more churches among brethren in need of a gospel preacher. Of course, as long as God allows time to continue upon this earth there will always be a need for men to step forward and dedicate their lives to proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. However, it seems that the people of God today are experiencing a famine in regard to Christian men interested in becoming evangelists. The Lord stated the problem best when he said, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the *laborers are few*” (Matt. 9:37).

What an interesting text of Scripture Luke the historian records for us in Acts 16:6-10. We find Paul on his second preaching journey accompanied by Silas and Timothy. These soldiers of the cross were traveling about strengthening the churches already established and sharing the gospel message with those whom had not yet heard. These three preachers attempted to take the gospel to Asia and Bithynia, however, the Holy Spirit did not allow them to do so at that time. When they reached the city of Troas, Paul had a vision in the night. A man from Macedonia stood pleading with Paul to come over to Macedonia and help them (Acts 16:9). From this Paul concluded that the Lord summoned them to Macedonia to preach the gospel to the people there (Acts 16:10).

Grant it, Christians do not receive visions today from the Lord to take the gospel to a certain place on the globe, for we have “all” things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). Yet the Macedonian call continues to go forth today throughout all nations, peoples, and tongues. Men and women, who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matt. 5:6), stand pleading for the gospel message to be preached unto them. And, brethren, to our shame, how few of us are eager and willing to raise our hand and declare, “Here I am! Send me” (Isa. 6:8).

I, as I’m sure you do as well, presently know of many churches of Christ pleading for someone to come to their city and help them in the work of the Lord. Yet, so few an-

swer and respond to the calls sent forth. We must not forget that God Almighty will hold us responsible for making good use of our talents (Matt. 25:24-30). I realize that preaching is not for everybody. In fact, sadly there are some among us who have no business standing behind the pulpit teaching and preaching the word of God, because they shun to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27). Brethren, we shall receive a stricter judgment (Jas. 3:1).

But can you think of a better work to do in the kingdom than to teach and preach the word of God to those who know it and to those who do not know it? Yes, it is an awesome responsibility, but how great the reward (1 Tim. 4:16)! Young men, middle-aged men, older men — if you have the desire to bring glad tidings, then please step forward and go to the work here and abroad. Read 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus over and over as it pertains to the work of the preacher, then devote yourself to follow the divine instruction. Commit yourself to “preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching” (2 Tim. 4:2).

Brethren, far too many of us have ugly, spiritual feet! The prophet Isaiah said it long ago, and the apostle Paul repeats it in Romans 10:15, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!” Let us do a little self-examination (2 Cor. 13:5) and find out what kind of feet we possess. Help is wanted! Will *you* go? “Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Matt. 9:38). Let us pray and let us “go” (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15)!

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Renew Promptly!

The “Quarantine” at Work

Bill Cavender

In November and December 1954,

Conditions have never been the same in the kingdom of God, in the world, and in our country since those fateful days. In reflecting over those years I still figuratively shake my head in utter amazement that such spiritual devilishness, divisiveness, and destruction could have happened to a peaceful, prospering, growing-in-numbers body of people.

brother B.C. Goodpasture, the editor of the *Gospel Advocate* weekly paper in Nashville, Tennessee, the most widely-read, influential and powerful periodical among churches of Christ, “spear headed” a movement to “quarantine the antis” and to drive them from the churches. In all of the history of our brethren, in the Holy Spirit’s revealed New Testament in the first century and in the “Restoration Movement” writings of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries in our country — there had never been such deliberate, willful, malicious attempts to divide, disfellowship, disenfranchise, and drive out brethren, to publicly precipitate a major rupture, to drive a wedge into the body of Christ, the church, and to bring about a permanent breach in God’s family. Prior to those days, 1945 to 1950, it had been “the best of times” in the Lord’s churches; afterwards to this present day, it has been “the worst of times!” The churches of Christ suffered a human wisdom-instigated “blood-letting” and malady, from which we will never recover. The “winds of change” quickly reached tornadic proportions.

Conditions have never been the same in the kingdom of God, in the world, and in our country since those fateful days. In reflecting over those years I still figuratively shake my head in utter amazement that such spiritual devilishness, divisiveness, and destruction could have happened

to a peaceful, prospering, growing-in-numbers body of people. We were much like the people of Laish in northern Canaan, “a people that were at quiet and secure” (KJV), “a people quiet and unsuspecting” (ESV), when the vicious men of the tribe of Dan fell upon them and smote them with the sword (Judg. 18:26-29). God’s people had gone through the trauma and tragedy of the great war, 1941-1945. The preachers and elders were making loud and mighty professions of preaching the unity of all believers based upon God’s word, urging denominational folks (like I had been, and my family members still were) to unite upon the New Testament. There with a zeal exceeding the Pharisees of Paul’s early life, they smote the body of Christ with the two-edged sword of human wisdom and error, praising and practicing division while hypocritically preaching unity. In spiritual battle they tried to exterminate and eliminate the faithful who opposed and obstructed their march to complete victory of the human over the divine.

How quickly love turned to hate, kindness to bitterness, truth to falsehood, unity to division, peace to warfare, tender-heartedness to callousness, godly sorrow to impenitence, and honesty of purpose and motives to judging of hearts and rejection of beloved brethren! Such happens in families. Such occurs among nations. These ugly events are seen in the economic, business world. It hap-

pened among us! So suddenly and so quickly we were no longer a united, growing, prospering, peaceful people. Error, human wisdom, human institutions, the devil, pride prominence of men, selfishness, glimpses of worldly grandeur and glory, and appeals to the flesh became the prevailing principles of the majority of prominent churches, elders, deacons, preachers, and papers among us. "A QUARANTINE" of faithful brethren and "anti" churches was generally accepted as the solution(s) to differences and "issues" among us. With an almost fiendish zeal and delight, multitudes set about to make "the quarantine" effective, to isolate and disbar conservative, conscientious, godly, reputable, well-versed-in-the-scriptures "anti-brethren." As it had been exactly one century before in 1849-1850, when the "Missionary Society" advocates divided the churches of our Lord over their "Society," and never relented nor turned back in regret nor penitence, so exactly did the "Benevolent Society" and "Educational Society" (colleges) and "Centralized Sponsoring Churches" (Herald of Truth) advocates do to the churches of our Lord in 1949-54. Except in descriptive terms and the people involved, there are no differences whatever in principle, practice, and argumentation in the two digressive movements separated by one hundred years of time.

There were already noticeable evidences and incidents of this divisive spirit among brethren, well before the *Advocate's* official "quarantine" was instigated. Roy E. Cogdill, great man and preacher that he was, one of the best prepared, ablest men, of our times, was "persona-non-grata" to the Lipscomb College administration and was forbidden to come on the campus, and that in 1949-50. Rufus R. Clifford, Sr., a fine and good man, faithful preacher of the Old Hickory, Tennessee church in the Nashville area, then the largest church in membership in the U.S.A., was forbidden to speak to the "Young Preachers' Club" and did not appear on their lectureships

because he and the Old Hickory elders had published a statement in the *Gospel Guardian* expressing their convictions against the churches supporting colleges. College lectureships, by 1953-54, were "rigged" and packed with preachers and speakers favorable to the colleges, with men who would "go along to get along," who would not "rock the boat," and who would openly or tacitly condemn the "antis." It was during this period that I quit going to the college lectureships, the last being to the Abilene Christian College lectureship in 1955.

I attended the Freed-Hardeman College lectureship every year from 1947 through 1954. Each year Guy N. Woods was the moderator for the daily afternoon "Open Forum." Especially in 1953 and 1954 "ANTI-ISM" was the main topic of discussion in these "forums," and questions pertaining to the "antis" and their obstruction of and opposition to all the "good works" that brethren were planning and doing consumed the time. These "anti-cooperation brethren" and "anti-orphan home brethren" who would allow orphan children to starve and who didn't believe in preaching the gospel to the lost, were exposed, maligned, excoriated, and verbally crucified. Any "antis" who were present and who attempted to respond to these abuses and misrepresentations were hissed, booed, and murmured against when any one of them attempted to speak. I heard old brother John T. Lewis of Birmingham, who did more work in the kingdom of Christ, who baptized more people and began more congregation than any other man present, was shouted down and prohibited from speaking. Brethren Woods, Gus Nichols, and other well-known preachers, and the college administrators and faculty members who were in the audiences looking on, permitted these sorry spectacles and silently endorsed such behavior. I left the lectureship of 1954, never to return to Freed-Hardeman. My wife, a former student, and I have driven by and onto the campus one time, about

fifteen years ago, but did not stop or leave our automobile.

The *Gospel Advocate* began to encourage and print a "confessional column." Preachers, brethren and/or elders who had been in any way identified with the "anti-movement" could confess their mistakes, their lack of understanding (?) of the Scriptures, and their conversion to the doctrines and practices of church-supported institutions and centralized-control, sponsoring-church types of congregational cooperation, and would be forgiven by the *Advocate* and by "the brotherhood." It was saddening, sickening, and shocking to read the names of well-known preachers who had previously spoken and written the truth about the organization and work of New Testament churches, and to read their statements of penitence and sorrow for having taught error as they cringed, groveled, and figuratively crawled before the *Advocate* and Goodpasture. I saw, as a young preacher, cowardice and hypocrisy of men who would sell their souls and the truth of Jesus Christ in the New Testament, for position, popularity, filthy lucre, and places to preach. I could look through old papers stored in my attic and write the names of a number of cowardly preachers and elders whose names appeared in the "Confesional." I always thought, and still do, of the cowardly, false prophets of Jeremiah's day. Jeremiah was standing alone and suffering for it, crying out and trying to warn the people of Judah of impending doom. The false prophets were prophesying lies, perverting the truth, telling people that everything was hunky-dory, that Jeremiah was a false teacher, an extremist, and that Judah was in no danger. Anyone who reads these words and who does not know the results of Jeremiah's work and teaching as to who was preaching truth or preaching falsehood and the events of 606 B.C. to 586 B.C. does not need to worry about going to heaven. You will get in at the "fool's door" as brother Hardeman used to opine.

No longer could we preach on fundamental, well-recognized, New Testament doctrines which make the Lord's churches recognizable, distinct, and different from all other religious and social bodies of people in all the world, namely (1) the absolute, final authority of the New Testament in all religious doctrines and practices; (2) the absolute autonomy and independence of a local congregation; (3) the oversight of elders of and in only *one* congregation; (4) the work of a church of Christ as being threefold: to preach the gospel to the lost, to teach and bring to spiritual maturity those who obey the gospel, and to care for the needs among poor brethren when the family fails; (5) to expose as false the organizational concepts of the second century through the sixth century which resulted in a "Pope" and Roman Catholicism; (6) to expose the sinfulness of humanly devised societies and organizations being attached to God's independent, local, divine congregations; (7) the sinfulness of taking money from local church treasuries to support human, civil-law-authorized agencies of men. If you dared to preach on these subjects anymore, you would be marked as "an anti" and one who was opposing "good works" which were being done by the big churches, by well-known brethren, by the "majority of the brotherhood," and endorsed by the schools and papers among us except by the hated *Gospel Guardian* paper in Texas which was the "mouthpiece" for the "anti-brethren."

True and faithful men began to be asked not to preach on the above subjects and/or told not to speak on these Bible topics. One well-known "conservative" preacher made an agreement with a large church in Middle Tennessee that he would not "call any names" of institutions or of any programs that he believed were wrong, but he would only "preach the principles," whatever that is. Yet he would go away from home and be as strong as horseradish against institutionalism! That church was lost to the institutional movement! In those days I knew of a number of preachers who were "preaching the principles" and who were so job-oriented and lovers of money that they would not identify who and what they were talking about. Every church that I know of which had such a spineless preacher was lost to the liberals and digressives, just as in the Missionary Society and instrumental music controversies of a century earlier.

The Main Street church, Shelbyville, Tennessee, canceled a meeting with brother Granville W. Tyler, one of the best and most conscientious preachers of our times,

a preacher of great reputation for his doctrinal soundness and godly life. Sometime before the meeting was to begin, the elders of that church attempted to persuade Granville to agree not to preach on these matters which were dividing churches and taking brethren into error. Being a true preacher, he would make no such agreement, even though he may not have even planned to speak on those subjects. They canceled his meeting. Not one of those elders was half the man or Bible student that Granville Tyler was. The inferiors usurped authority over the superior! Such tactics became common practice in those days.

Churches began to demand that preachers supply a "list of sermon topics" before they came for meetings. This became a common vehicle to make a preacher commit himself ahead of time not to speak on certain subjects. These "sermon topics" would serve as the basis, a check list, as to whether or not brethren would cancel a meeting or allow the

preacher to come for the meeting. Sound teaching was kept from churches in this manner. Many, many preachers knew "where their bread was buttered" and many, many churches simply did not anymore ask faithful men to hold their meetings. (That same attitude and practice is prevalent today among many "faithful churches" who do not want anything said about errors taught by some eminent preachers and brethren of the *Christianity Magazine* type, Romans 14 disposition.)

These tactics began to affect me, just as they did hundreds of other preachers, older and younger, who were sincerely and conscientiously trying to preach the gospel of Christ without addition or subtraction, and to warn the brethren of the departure and digressions from the New Testament which were so evident. In five years, 1956-1961, seventeen meetings scheduled for those years were canceled. Deason church, in Bedford County, the first church I ever worked with, 1947-1949, had me for meetings in 1954 and 1956 yet canceled a meeting scheduled for 1959. This hurt me deeply, as these people had been my dear friends and beloved brethren with whom I had done so much work and made such good progress in baptizing a number of people and adding needed classrooms and restrooms onto the meetinghouse. Bethlehem church in Rutherford County had me for meetings in 1956 and 1958, and canceled a meeting scheduled in July 1961. The "main man" and "leader" in the church had his wife to write me. They had been my friends, and I had been with them often when in that area. We had eaten together many times, and I was

a friend to their families. His wife wrote me a four-page, handwritten letter, telling me all the news of the family and of the church, and on the last page, sandwiched amongst other items, she wrote that “the men have decided to cancel the meeting since you are teaching the ‘anti-doctrines.’” I had an excellent meeting with baptisms in 1957 with the Rockvale church in Rutherford County (the county where Marinel and I have owned a house since 1991). I was invited to return in 1960. As the time approached in early 1960 I wrote the church asking to set definite dates for the meeting. Brother Brannon replied, writing that they did not have me scheduled for any meeting! I sent him a copy of the letter he had written in 1957 inviting me for a meeting in 1960. I never heard from him further. Of course, I did not preach in that meeting!

I held meetings with the East Main Street church in Murfreesboro in March 1956 and March 1958. George W. DeHoff was the preacher. He advertised the meeting extensively and highly commended me. J. Leonard Jackson, who preached for the North Boulevard church, wrote in their weekly paper that churches which would bring “anti-preachers” to Murfreesboro ought not to expect brethren to support and attend their meetings. (North Blvd. Church had begun a few years prior to 1956, when a “split” occurred in the East Main Street church, some opposing George DeHoff and some supporting him. A literal fight occurred during the business meeting, one elder tried to physically attack George but was restrained. Two elders, brethren Romine and Haynes, and a large group left East Main immediately and began North Boulevard.) George responded to Jackson and told him to mind his own business and “East Main would have whom they pleased in their meetings.”

My notes regarding that meeting, written soon afterwards, say “Meeting Number 34.” This was my first meeting in Murfreesboro, but the eleventh meeting I have held in Rutherford County, Murfreesboro being the county seat. East Main is a large church and many friends came to hear me from all over that section. Six were baptized and one restored during this meeting, and three more were baptized immediately after it was over. Of this number I baptized two with my own hands, having taught them the gospel until midnight and baptized them the same hour, Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Wood, 1207 Allen, Murfreesboro. Jack and Sara Mai Kelton of Murfreesboro were primarily responsible for getting me this meeting. I am invited to come back in 1958. Brother George W. DeHoff began his thirteenth year with this church as preacher during the time of this meeting, March 18-25, 1956. At this time I had been preaching eight years and ten months.

In the winter of 1957-58, a number of brethren in Murfreesboro bought radio time, fifteen minutes per day, Monday through Friday, for four weeks, having me speak on the problems and issues which were disturbing the

churches. I made tapes for these programs from Cooper, Texas, where we lived at the time, and mailed them to the brethren for use on the radio. About this same time or a bit earlier, George DeHoff had become president of Magic Valley Christian College in Albion, Idaho. Some brethren in the western and northwestern states of the U.S. formed a “Board of Directors” and obtained a charter from the State of Idaho to form a college. They leased the buildings and campus of an abandoned college in the small town of Albion. The State of Idaho could no longer operate the college due to financial difficulties and declining enrollment. As a part of the scheme, Harding College in Searcy, Arkansas, conferred an “Honorary Doctorate,” a “Doctor’s Degree,” on George so as to make his presidency of Magic Valley Christian College more prestigious. George was rather pompous by nature and personality, could strut without too much effort, and being a “doctor” perfectly matched his mental profile of himself. So, in Murfreesboro, on his daily radio program and in meeting announcements, he was now “Dr. DeHoff.”

March 23-30, 1958 found me in another meeting with the East Main Street church in Murfreesboro, a Sunday through Sunday meeting as before, services twice daily, sixteen sermons, plus two Sunday morning classes. My notes of this meeting, written sometime after the meeting, say: “Number 52: This was my second meeting with this church. Two were baptized, one was restored. Preacher here at this time was George W. DeHoff. He and I differed quite a bit on some things I preached in this meeting concerning wearing of titles, kitchens in meetinghouses, church support of human institutions, etc. I was invited back for another meeting in the spring of 1960 by the elders. But that meeting was canceled in the early months of 1959. DeHoff left this church in August 1958 for Albion and Magic Valley College. Before leaving, he ‘padded’ and ‘loaded’ East Main Street church with more elders and deacons, his own hand-picked men, planning to come back there in case the Magic Valley deal did not materialize.” The college never prospered, closed after two or three years. George was back in Murfreesboro, but East Main would not have him as their preacher. Virgil Bradford came to this church as their preacher in January 1959. (To be continued)

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“The heart of the wise teacheth his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips”

Response to Connie's Article

David Posey

I consider Connie Adams a friend as well as brother. We

have spent some profitable time together and he has been a great help to me, especially when I was a neophyte editor trying to get a magazine started.

Brother Adams has penned a review of my article ("Leaders Confront Enemies," *Focus Magazine*, July/August 2002) in the January 2, 2003 issue of *Truth Magazine*. Since he did not contact me before publishing it, I only learned of it when a friend of mine told me about it. When I received my issue of *Truth*, I was surprised at the ire my friend expressed over a relatively small point in the article. Had he called or written prior to publishing the article, he would have learned some of the things that I am now compelled to write by way of response. First, I want to admit that brother Adams has a point. My choice of words, especially in one sentence, may well have left the impression that I was charging all brethren who were involved in the institutional battles of the 50s and 60s with a lack of prayerful consideration about the monumental decisions they were facing. That was the furthest thing from my mind and I apologize if any brother, especially those involved in those battles, was offended by my words. Perhaps I should leave it at that, but brother Adams levels some pretty hefty accusations that seem to impugn my motives. Connie has me pegged as a bit younger than I am. I appreciate the compliment, but I'm not quite as young as brother Adams thinks I am. I was about ten years old when the institutional battles were being waged in California. I have some vivid memories of some specific incidents that I'll never forget. Moreover, my father and several close friends were directly involved in the battles and I have listened with great interest to the stories they have told. I wouldn't accuse Connie of "despising my youth," but I would like to clarify that my observations are not based on ignorance of the facts, but upon personal experience and the testimony of older men who were directly involved. I'm not sure it's fair for brother Adams to discount my experience in favor of his own (remember, we're not discussing objective biblical truth here, but recounting history). I doubt, too, that brother Adams would take the position that only those who are *personally* involved in a matter are qualified to talk about it.

Chalk it up to more "surmising," if you will, but it appears Connie has an axe to grind that goes beyond reviewing the actual words in my article. He charges me with "re-writing spiritual history," says that I was "way out of line," implies that I have "minimized" and "belittled" the contributions of men involved in battling those issue (including, by extension, my own father!), accuses me of having no appreciation for the struggles and sacrifices of those men, charges me with "offensive slander," and implies that I've "abused" and "misrepresented" my own brethren in the conflict. Wow. That's quite an indictment. Correct me if I'm wrong but in the process of accusing me of judging the motives of older men, has he not judged mine? Perhaps brother Adams has inadvertently fallen on his own sword.

If you take the time to read what I actually wrote, you'll notice a couple of things. First, I clearly state that it is *not* my aim to second guess my older brethren. I was serious about that. Second, all the comments at issue are qualified: I write that "I *cannot remember* a time" (twice) and "If that is the way it was in most churches . . ." These are personal, *conditional* statements about what I *remember*. That's all they were. They are not intended to be universal statements about everyone in every place.

Having said that, I readily acknowledge that I should have clarified who I was talking about in the article, and I appreciate the opportunity to correct it. In the article, I refer to the "leaders in those churches" and erroneously assumed that all would read "liberal-minded" leaders. My comments were aimed at those local leaders who were promoting programs like the Herald of Truth and the support of orphan's homes. These leaders were the same men Connie refers to in his review as "the more liberal-minded folks." Some of these were members of my own family — my father's uncles and cousins — and my father stood alone many times against several in "his own household." These "liberal-minded folks" were the ones calling the shots, pulling the rug out from under faithful men, men bent on installing the innovations that eventually divided churches.

I do not relegate the issues to mere “quarrels” in my article but I don’t think brother Adams would say that there was no quarreling during that time. He admits that “tempers flared.” Of course they did; it was an emotional time. I distinctly remember some discussions that took place in some local churches over these issues, and the best you could say about them is that they were “quarrels” — stronger language would be more accurate. Brother Adams seems to imply that everyone involved was characterized by prayerful, thoughtful consideration of these issues. But “prayerful division” sounds like an oxymoron to me.

And that brings me to what Connie calls “the most offensive slander”: my statement that “they didn’t want God’s help in the matter.” I hope it is clear from what I’ve already written that I was referring to those “more liberal-minded folks.” Beyond that, my view of prayer demands my conclusion: if all brethren had truly wanted peace, and were fervently praying for the wisdom that would bring it, *they would have had it*. James 1:5 promises it. If brethren in every place — *including the more liberal-minded brethren* — truly wanted to avoid division, it would not have occurred, unless we believe God would not have answered that prayer in the affirmative. I don’t believe that for a minute.

And so, I stick by my “way out of line” comment that we can only surmise about how things might have been if

brethren had stopped dividing and started praying. Actually, I take that back — there is no surmising about it. If the leaders (liberal-minded) had assembled the flock, put the issues before them and *prayed fervently for wisdom* about them, some folks might have left that local church, but there would not have been the kind of massive division of churches we witnessed during those days. The leaders in those churches would have been given (liberally *and without reproach*) the wisdom they needed to do the right thing and stop these sinful perversions in their tracks. My “proof” is not in my imperfect memory of the facts, but in the objective promise of Scripture about the power of prayer (1 John 5:13-16).

I don’t believe for one minute — and I anticipate agreement from brother Adams on this point — that the men who were installing their pet projects and splitting churches in the process were praying for wisdom all the while. No way! The men who had God-given wisdom were opposing them with all their might, and paying a dear price for it.

I stand on the shoulders of those men and appreciate deeply the struggles and sacrifices they made for the truth. I regret that anything I said in my article about Nehemiah’s prayerful leadership left a different impression.

Answering Brother Posey

Connie W. Adams

We are glad to have the clarification sent by our friend, David Posey, to statements made by him in his article “Leaders Confront Enemies” in the July/August issue of *Focus*. This is a part of a continuing series on Nehemiah. In the confrontation of which he wrote, Nehemiah was in the right and his enemies were in the wrong. The point is made that Nehemiah used his best weapon first — he prayed. Then a comparison is made to the institutional battle and the leaders in that struggle who did not use the best weapon first. My reaction to what he said was because he painted with a broad brush when he wrote “if that is the way it was in most churches, then that’s an indictment of both ‘sides’ of the issues in those battles.”

The clear import of those words is that “both sides” did not pray as they should have. I have no axe to grind, as he suggests. I just did not want to see history rewritten and the motives of good men who contended for the truth, sullied.

He acknowledges that he did not make that clear and his response to my article now makes that plain.

Everything in my article was not aimed at brother Posey. For several years now I have had private talks and correspondence with some younger men and have heard some state in sermons and classes, in which the assertion has been made that if older brethren on “both sides” had been wiser and kinder, then the division would not have occurred. The truth of the matter is that men on “both sides” thought they were right. The debates were attempts to prove the case from the Bible. It was not a battle over who was honest, fair, or prayerful. It was a conflict over Bible truth touching the nature, work, and organization of the church. This is not the first time I have spoken my piece about these mis-characterizations. If brother Posey thinks that is grinding an axe, then so be it. The part of his article to which I objected gave voice to what others have been saying.

What Is a “Sound” Church?

Shawn Smith

This is a good question to ask. You need to take

stock of the congregation of which you are a member. After all, you may have made resolutions to be physically fit or even go on a diet. You also may have plans to be a better Bible student, class teacher, or diligent converter of people’s souls. In any event, to be successful at any of these endeavors, you must begin or maintain healthy activities, which is what the word “sound” means. W.E. Vine defines the Greek word *hugiaino* as “to be healthy, sound in health.” Our English word “hygiene” comes from this word. It stands to reason then, that Christians who associate together in the work of the Lord as a congregation should be concerned about staying spiritually sound.

Writing to a scripturally-organized congregation at Philippi, Paul admonished it thus: “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Phil. 1:27). Paul is not asking Philippi to give up its autonomy when he expected to “hear” of their affairs. A church’s activities should be in full view of all, according to the example set by the Thessalonian church (1 Thess. 1:5-10). These affairs of which Paul writes include all the things that a congregation should

be concerned with, in other words, its work. That which will allow a church’s affairs to be properly carried out and observed by others is the gospel of Christ. The word of God, which Timothy was to preach, is also called “the pattern of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13; 4:2-4).

Therefore, a church can be said to be “sound” if it adheres to the “sound” gospel of Christ. If a church departs from the truth in its work, it can properly be called an “unsound congregation.” If not, why not? A sound church is a church “uncorrupted,” one that is built on sound doctrine. After all, a local church is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15), built by Christ (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22, 23) on his authority and teaching (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:41, 42; 1 Cor. 4:17).

What then is a “sound” church? What are some of its characteristics?

A Proper Name: Since Christ built his church, it belongs to him. Local churches in the New Testament were identified as belonging to Christ or God. For example, Paul wrote of “the churches of God in Christ Jesus which are in Judea” (1 Thess. 2:14); “the church of God which is at Corinth” (1

Brother Posey is upset by my statement, “The most offensive slander of all was the statement that ‘they didn’t want God’s help in the matter.’” Even if, as he explains, he had in mind the liberal leaders, that is still a pretty broad stroke, for it indicts motives. Many of us in those battles tried very hard to keep the issues centered on what the Bible taught and stressed that it was not a contest over personalities nor an attempt to read the hearts of those on the other side. It was still a judgment of motives in what he wrote about this. There is a lesson here for all of us about more recent conflicts. We would all do well to leave the reading of motives with the Lord who judges righteously, and confine ourselves to the Bible principles at hand.

But, I do regret the use of the word “slander” in this case, in light of brother Posey’s clarification and have already apologized to him for that usage. As he suggested, I do not wish to fall on my own sword. Also, there was no intent on my part to “despise” his youth. He is a mature and experienced preacher (and a proud grandfather, four times over). But he has confirmed that he was too young, at that time, to be a participant in the conflict, though I am sure his memories are vivid. The rest of my article will stand on its own legs, and I leave it with the readers to decide. Meanwhile, the point is well taken that we must “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17).

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Cor. 1:2); “the churches of Christ salute you” (Rom. 16:16). You never read expressions such as, “Christians meet here.” Congregations belong to the Lord. That expresses their proper relationship. May no church exist that is ashamed to wear the proper name.

A Proper Work: We can read of three and only three distinct works that Christians engage in collectively as a congregation: Preaching the gospel or evangelism (1 Thess. 1:8; Acts 11:22; 1 Cor. 9; 2 Cor. 11:8, 9; Phil. 4:15, 16; 1:27; Jude 3); edification or building up itself (Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Pet. 2:2; Acts 20:32); and benevolence toward brethren (Rom. 15:25-27; Acts 6:1-6; 11:27-30; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1, 2; 1 Cor. 16:1-4). When a church does not do this work or adds to it a social gospel and recreational program or other unauthorized works, then it is not a sound church.

A Proper Organization: Churches in the New Testament had a distinct, simple, and effective organization. Leadership was always vested in a plurality of men known as elders, pastors, or bishops. Each of these three terms helps us understand their place and function. They were older, experienced fathers who served a church by overseeing the work and feeding the church with the word of God (Acts 14:23; 20:28-32; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 5:12, 13; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:1-9; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Pet. 5:1-3). Other fathers, not necessarily older men, served as deacons who assisted the church in the execution and maintenance of its work (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 3:8-13). Contrary to denominational practice today, pastors are not preachers, one man does not oversee a congregation, nor is it overseen by a board of deacons.

Proper Worship: Worship of God, whether private or publicly engaged in during assemblies, must be “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24; Matt. 15:8, 9; 7:21-23; 28:20; Acts 2:42; 2 John 9). Sound doctrine determines proper and sound worship, not personal feelings, opinions, or what sounds good. New Testament Christians engaged in prayer (Acts 12:9; 1 Cor. 14:14-17), sang spiritual songs and praises unto God (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), taught each other and heard gospel preaching (Acts 11:26; 20:7; Rom. 1:15), gave of their means to support the work of the church (1 Cor. 16:1, 2; 2 Cor. 9:7; Acts 11:27-30), and partook of the Lord’s supper together (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16, 17; 11:20-34; Acts 2:42). Any deviation from such authorized activities renders a church as unsound.

Perseverance in Teaching the Truth: The pattern of conversions through the book of Acts demands a consistent teaching of the plan of salvation from the life of Christ to baptism in his name (Acts 8:27-39; Rev. 3:8, 10). Gospel preaching in many churches today resembles denominational preaching with no effort to show the scriptural plan of salvation. Invitations to obey the gospel are occurring less and less and jokes and funny stories are happening

more and more. A sound church will not grow weary in well doing, including preaching the gospel in its entirety (Acts 20:27).

Love and Care Towards One Another: A church can teach sound doctrine but be cold and indifferent regarding brotherly love and concerns. This may have been the problem at Ephesus in its latter years (Rev. 2:1-5). Thus, a sound church will be full of brethren who openly demonstrate their love for each other (Phil. 2:1-5, 25-30; Col. 3:12-15). Remember the words of our Lord, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

No Immunity to Controversy, Difficulties or Challenges: In example after example in the New Testament, we find churches with problems: Ephesus engaged false teachers (Acts 20:28-31; Rev. 2:2, 3, 6). Though Paul addressed the Corinthians as “saints,” they still had to overcome petty divisions, carnality, and immorality (1 Cor. 1-6). Jerusalem had saints in need and later faced persecution (Acts 6; 1 Cor. 16; Acts 8:1-4). The Philippian church contained brethren who were not of the same mind (Phil. 4:2). The Thessalonians had to deal with brethren walking disorderly (2 Thess. 3:11-14). Such examples underscore the essentiality of preaching sound doctrine, then practicing it. Churches that will not discipline its members when necessary and will tolerate adultery and other sinful activities are not sound! An older preacher once told me when I just began to preach, “If things are going smooth all the time, then check your preaching.” I don’t believe he was telling me to be a trouble-maker, but rather to preach the word “in season, and out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2-5). Elders must constantly be on watch and be pro-active in their dealings with brethren, regardless of how unpopular and unpleasant the fallout may be from their decisions.

Some Who Think They Are Sound: Ephesus left her first love, but didn’t know it (Rev. 2:4, 5). Pergamos was harboring false teachers, perhaps unwittingly (Rev. 2:14-16). Thyatira tolerated a beguiling woman (Rev. 2:20). Sardis thought it was alive, but was dead (Rev. 3:1-4). Laodicea thought it was rich, but was wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked (Rev. 3:15-19). We’ve about come full circle to the beginning of this article. I stated then that now is a good time to take stock of the congregation where you are a member. You may be deceived into thinking that “my congregation is just fine.” However, you could be wrong. If some New Testament churches had brethren who thought they were sound, then some twenty-first century churches have brethren who think they are sound, but are not!

Does “your church” fit the pattern of the New Testament church? Does it need to make some changes in some areas to once again be “sound” in deed? Such questions call upon

Are You Paying Your Debt?

H. Osby Weaver

(Editor's Note: Brother Weaver, having lived through some of the apostasies of the past, will be writing articles relating to these events and reprinting responses to claims, actions, and arguments made by those who were promoting error. This series is labeled "Seeing Ahead by Looking Back." It is hoped that looking back at past events in connection with the Lord's cause that resulted in a major division will encourage brethren to see what the future holds for those who deviate from the Lord's authority in any degree, and to encourage others to stand firmly for the truth even if they must stand alone!)

When Paul said, "Owe no man anything" (Rom. 13:8), he was not negating his confession that "I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish" (Rom. 1:14). Every Christian has that kind of debt imposed upon him. Christians today owe those who preceded them as faithful servants of God who declared the pure gospel of Christ regardless of repercussions or consequences, a debt of gratitude. The sacrifices which they made, the tears shed, the prayers uttered, the privations endured, the jeers ignored, and the sarcastic remarks tolerated, all contributed to our having the truth shining in

each one of us as individuals to do some checking. But they also call upon each one of us to examine our individual lives as Christians. Are you a "sound" Christian? I still like *The Living Bible's* paraphrase of 2 Corinthians 13:5, which reads, "Check up on yourselves. Are you really Christians? Do you pass the test? Do you feel Christ's presence and power more and more within you? Or are you just pretending to be Christians when actually you aren't at all?"

Brethren, think on these things!

From East Florence Contender, January 2003

our hearts unencumbered by the doctrines and commandments of men. Their failing hands threw us the torch; it is now a payment on our debt to "hold it high and not break faith with those who died."

Their courage and conviction boosts what might otherwise have been a flagging interest in truth and righteousness on our part.

As an example of their courage to stand unyieldingly against what might have been considered impossible odds by those of less valor is a situation that developed in the 1850s in Pennsylvania. A Presbyterian preacher by the name of Logan, in his middle 50s, and in his prime educationally and intelligently, and considered by his people as an experience debater issued a challenge to the church of the Lord. At this place the church was small and composed of those whom we might term common people. Mr. Logan, in his boastful manner, challenged them for a debate and virtually dared them to accept it. With no special talent among them, they refused to duck and run. But who would they get to defend the truth? They contacted a young lawyer by the name of John Sweeney who was only 25 years old and did not even claim to be a preacher of the gospel at this point in his life. However, he accepted the challenge!

It may be that Mr. Logan thought this would be a push over and would provide him with some fun and additional ammunition with which to taunt our brethren. But the debate had not gone for very long until Logan learned that Sweeney asked no quarters and gave none when truth was at stake. This was not a debate, in so far as our brethren were concerned, for personal victory, but the church of our Lord and the truth of the gospel were under attack. It was debates such as this that led denominational preachers to conclude that debating religion was wrong.

In such debates, humorous incidents often occurred and this one was no exception. The disputants debated in the daytime, and each was preaching in a meeting at their respective churches at night. Each day, our brethren were

“Right Place” continued from front page
the right time”!

Cornelius: We read of this man in Acts 10 and 11. He was the first Gentile, according to the divine record, who was converted to Christ. He was a Roman soldier of exceptional character. He was devout, he feared God, he was benevolent, a praying man, one who was just; having a good reputation among the Jews (Acts 10:2, 22); he was an excellent prospect for conversion to Christ!

An angel was sent to Cornelius, instructing him to send men to Joppa, seeking Peter, the apostle (Acts 10:5). Peter was instructed to go to this Gentile, “doubting nothing” about whether or not he should go (v. 20). When he arrived at the house of Cornelius, the soldier had gathered his kinsmen and friends in anticipation of Peter’s coming (v. 24). We are told that Peter told Cornelius “words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved” (Acts 11:14).

Cornelius, his family, and friends obeyed the gospel, and

announcing the number of baptisms which they had the night before, but the Presbyterians had none to announce. This got to be a little embarrassing for them. So one night when Logan offered his invitation, an old grandfather, who was rearing a grandson because his mother had died, put a hammer lock on the six-year-old lad and dragged him down the aisle to be sprinkled. They wanted to be able to announce that they also had a convert. While preparation was being made for the sprinkling ceremony, the lad jerked loose and ran toward the back door with the old grandfather right after him. One of their own stepped out in front of the grandfather and said, “No, you don’t. If that boy does not want to be sprinkled, you are not going to sprinkle him!”

Well, of course, this got to brother Sweeney the next day. You never heard of one, without the use of ugly words, getting the scathing that Sweeney gave Logan. At the end of the rebuke, Sweeney said, “Mr. Logan you need to get you a squirt gun so you can catch them on the wing.”

After that, when Logan would charge Sweeney with being a religious tad-pole and a water-salvationist, all Sweeney had to say was, “Mr. Logan get your squirt gun.”

During such encounters, brother Sweeney was paying his debt. One does not have to engage in such debates in order to make a payment on this debt. Just standing for the truth in all circumstances is making a payment.

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were the first converts to Christ from among the Gentiles. When word of their conversion spread, the disciples who had gone forth preaching *only to the Jews*, turned and began speaking to the Gentiles. The New Testament says, “. . . and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord” (Acts 11:21). Now suppose Cornelius had not responded to the message he heard from God’s messenger. He could have said he was too busy. Or, he could have said, “Why should I go looking for a Jew and bring him here to preach to me?” Either attitude would have prevented scores of conversions. Do you see the value of “*being in the right place, at the right time?*”

Philip: This man was an evangelist. He went to the city of Samaria “. . . and preached Christ unto them” (Acts 8:5). The Bible says, “. . . the people . . . gave heed unto those things which Philip spake” (v. 6). Later, an angel sent Philip to a deserted road leading from Jerusalem to Gaza. There, he encountered an important man in the government of the queen of Ethiopia. The word says Philip “preached unto him Jesus” (v. 35). The eunuch from Ethiopia, when he heard the gospel, immediately obeyed it in baptism (vv. 36-38).

Obviously, Philip was “*in the right place, at the right time.*” Suppose he had done as so many do today when encountering instructions from the Lord. Suppose he had said he just could not see any way to make it to Samaria right at that time. Or suppose he had already made some plans for that exact moment, which he simply could not change to obey these instructions from God. Souls would have been lost had Philip not been “*in the right place, at the right time!*”

Other examples could be cited of those who were “*in the right place, at the right time*” — Noah, Abraham, Elijah, David, etc. Where would the world be without them “*in their place?*”

Now We Come To Us

Some of us seem to experience unusual difficulty in putting ourselves “*in the right place, at the right time.*” God tells us to gather as the church on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). He tells us in that gathering to give as we have been prospered (1 Cor. 16:2). God even goes so far as to tell us: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:25). We clearly understand these instructions.

Then note some of the responses of many to this requirement of the Lord. “This is the only time I have to do things with my family.” “We had to plan this trip on Sunday, or we wouldn’t have been able to go.” “Our vacation began on Sunday, and we needed that day to drive to our destination.” “I was out-of-town, but I was too sick to go to

worship anyway, even if I had been at home.”

Whatever the excuse, scores of brethren *deliberately* plan their lives, knowing that those plans will prevent them attending worship. Or, they know the plans will make it necessary to “stick the worship in, if possible,” after they have had their vacations extended, preventing them from putting the worship *first* on the Lord’s day. One has to wonder how they could call Sunday the Lord’s day, when they treat it as “My Day.”

Sadly, too many are not “*in the right place, at the right time.*” To the contrary, they are “*in the wrong place, at the wrong time.*” Vacations and visits are not a problem with the Lord, provided we do not relegate the worship to an unimportant, secondary place in our lives. Brethren, “Vacation Season” is coming. Make certain you and your family are “*in the right place, at the right time.*”
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“Weddings” continued from page 2

A preacher can certainly ask if the bride and her attendants will be dressed modestly before he consents to participate in the wedding. He must not embarrass or needlessly offend a pure, lovely Christian who would not think of dressing indecently, but he can state in a kind and non-accusatory fashion that he is asking these questions because of his own conscience — he does not wish to participate in those weddings in which the bride and/or her attendants dress immodestly.

Alcoholic Beverages at the Wedding

On some occasions, I have attended weddings of Christians and been surprised at the wedding reception to see alcoholic beverages served. This most frequently happens when a Christian marries a non-Christian. Frequently, the defense is offered by the Christian and her family, “We didn’t pay for the alcoholic drinks.”

Am I missing something here? The Christian is the one getting married and she or he can choose whether or not to be part of such festivities. Why can’t the person simply say, “I do not drink alcoholic beverages and they will not be a part of my wedding”? What am I missing?

If this creates a problem, I would suggest that it better to get those problems on the table before the marriage rather than after the marriage. What part Christ is going to play in one’s life needs to be clearly discussed between the husband/wife and the in-laws (as might be necessary).

The decision of whether or not to have alcoholic beverages at one’s wedding is not a morally neutral choice.

Peter wrote, “For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries” (1 Pet. 4:3). Note that “drunkenness” is not the only sin one can commit by drinking intoxicating beverages.

Dancing at the Wedding

I have been to two weddings by Christians which had dancing; I suspect that there are a lot more weddings among Christians which have dancing to which I am not invited. In one of the weddings, I was surprised to see the Christian father dance with his Christian daughter and it was obvious that this was not the first time that either of them had been dancing. A DJ was brought in to play the music for all who wished to dance.

If dancing is wrong in other settings, isn’t it also wrong at the wedding? Does it cease to have a lascivious appeal just because it occurs at the bridal reception?

Church Discipline

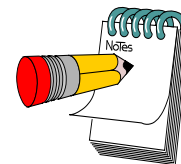
Churches that close their eyes to immodest dress, drinking, and dancing at weddings bear responsibility for the increase in these sins at weddings. Paul wrote, “Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” (1 Cor. 5:6). Teenagers who watch the young ladies have such a “pretty wedding” with its dancing, drinking, and immodest dress will want a wedding just as pretty for themselves. As a result, these lax moral standards will profligate among us.

Conclusion

Let’s not forget our moral principles on the wedding day. One can have a modest wedding gown, leave out the drinking and dancing and still have a very beautiful and memorable day. Surely, participating in sinful activities at one’s wedding is not a good way to start a marriage! And, Christian parents allowing their children to have such a wedding on the day that they leave the home is a poor way to end parental oversight. Think about it!

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Quips & Quotes



Christian Parents Flee Public Schools

“Christians in British Columbia, Canada, are worried that courts are undermining their religious rights in the classroom. They

are troubled by courts' willingness to let teachers use pro-gay books in the classroom.

"In 1997 the Surrey School Board told gay-rights activist James Chamberlain that he could not teach his kindergarten students using the books *One Dad, Two Dads, Brown Dad, Blue Dads*; *Asha's Mums*; and *Belinda's Bouquet*. The board said the books would offend some parents' religious views. Chamberlain sued, saying the board violated the provincial School Act, which requires public schools to be 'secular and nonsectarian.'

"In late December, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled 7-2 in *Chamberlain v. the Surrey School Board* that the school board must reconsider its classroom ban.

"The case has alarmed Christian parents and educators in British Columbia. Brenda Hauser said she plans to send her children in grades 4, 5, and 7, who now attend a Surrey public school, to a Christian school. 'I'm completely for teaching my children tolerance and to love another student who may have gay parents,' Hauser said. 'But these books . . . are propaganda for a lifestyle'" (*Christianity Today* [March 2003], 23).

Underage Drinking Measure

"Chicago — Underage drinkers account for nearly 20 percent of the alcohol consumed in the United States each year, a study says.

"Attempting to correct botched statistics they released a year ago, researchers from Columbia University's National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse analyzed three sets of data from 1999 and said underage drinking amounted to 19.7 percent of alcohol consumed that year, or \$22.5 billion.

"The previous estimate — now discredited — was 25 percent.

"'Excessive' drinking by adults — consumption of more than two drinks a day — amounted to 30.4 percent, or \$34.4 billion, the researchers said. The researchers' definition of excessive drinking is anything exceeding government guidelines for moderate drinking.

"'These analyses show that it is not in the alcohol industry's financial interest to voluntarily enact strategies to reduce underage or adult excessive drinking,' the researchers said" (*The Indianapolis Star* [February 26, 2003], A5).

Study: Health Care, Teen Birth Rates Improve For Blacks

"Washington — Boosted by rising incomes and better access for health care, blacks made marked improvements in key health indicators over the 1990s, according to a private analysis of government data released Thursday.

"Teenage birth rates declined for blacks more than any other minority group, while more black mothers received early pre-

natal care" (*The Indianapolis Star* [February 28, 2003], A6).

Counting Blessings Improves Health, Study Reveals

"The Washington Post — Count your blessings. Count them one by one. You may find yourself sleeping better, exercising more and caring more about other people.

"New research shows that people who consciously remind themselves every day of the things they are grateful for show marked improvements in mental health and some aspects of physical health.

"The results appear to be equally true for healthy college students and people with incurable diseases, according to new research published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*" (*The Indianapolis Star* [March 16, 2003], A19).

Mormon Scholar Under Fire

"Thomas W. Murphy is the latest Mormon scholar to challenge key teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints (LDS). Murphy, 35, has likened the Book of Mormon, an essential LDS sacred text, to inspirational fiction.

"Narrowly avoiding a disciplinary meeting, Murphy remains an LDS member of record for the time being.

"Murphy is chairman of the anthropology department at Edmonds Community College in Lynnwood, Washington. Last year he wrote an essay, 'Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics,' for a Signature Books anthology called *American Apocrypha*. Murphy concluded, 'DNA research lends no support to traditional Mormon beliefs about the origins of Native Americans.' Murphy's doctoral dissertation is the basis of the essay.

"The Book of Mormon details migrations of Israelites to the Western Hemisphere more than 4,200 years ago. According to the book, some of the people were Lamanites, cursed with dark skin because of sin. The current introduction to the the Book of Mormon claims that Lamanites were ancestors of American Indians.

"In his essay, Murphy reviewed recent human molecular genealogy studies that contradict that claim. 'To date no intimate genetic link has been found between ancient Israelites and the indigenous peoples of the Americas,' Murphy said. . . . Murphy told *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that some Mormon intellectuals want to debate the Book of Mormon 'as fiction, possibly inspired, but as fiction'" (*Christianity Today* [March 2003], 24).