

Magazine

Pitching Our Tents As Far As Sodom

Steve Curtis

Because of conflict between their herdsmen, Abraham and Lot decided to separate from one another. Abraham gave Lot the choice of the plain of Jordan or the land of Canaan (Gen. 13:7-12). He chose the plain of Jordan.

From of physical standpoint, this was a wise choice for a herdsman because the plain of Jordan was “well watered everywhere . . . like the garden of the Lord” (v. 10). However, from a spiritual standpoint, this was a poor choice for a servant of God because “the men of Sodom were exceedingly wicked and sinful against the Lord” (v. 13).

When Lot chose the plain of Jordan, did he sin? At first the answer seems to be a resounding, “yes.” However if the answer is yes, what commandment of God did he ignore, disregard, or disobey? If Lot’s decision involved sin, would Abraham have given him the choice?

If Lot did not sin in making his decision, history shows us Lot made a very unwise decision. His daughters married men who would not leave the wicked cities and died in their destruction (Gen. 19:14). When fleeing, his wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt (Gen. 19:26). Furthermore, Lot’s choice put him in the position of being oppressed and tormented daily by the filthy conduct

of the wicked (2 Pet. 2:7-8). If Lot did not sin in making the decision to dwell in the plain of Jordan, his decision led others to sin. He also put himself and his family in the position of being influenced by the wicked that caused spiritual discouragement.

We make many decisions that have both physical and spiritual consequences in our lives. Some decisions involve making a choice between right and wrong. In regard to making these decisions, when one makes the wrong choice it clearly involves sin. Other decisions involve making a choice that does not necessarily involve a right or wrong answer, but demand spiritual discretion. In regard to making these decisions, when one makes the wrong choice it may not involve sin. However, it may be a choice that lacks spiritual wisdom and discretion.

**We make many
decisions that have
both physical and
spiritual consequences
in our lives.**

Let us consider for a few moments some decisions we make today. Regarding questions that involve a choice between right and wrong, only one decision can be made. We must always choose to do that which is right. For our study, let us consider some decisions that involve spiritual wisdom and discretion. No matter how wise our decision is in physical terms, let us learn from Lot not to “pitch our tents as far as Sodom.”

continued on p. 56

Editor: Mike Willis

Associate Editor: Connie W. Adams

Staff Writers

J. Wiley Adams	Jarrod Jacobs
Donald P. Ames	Daniel H. King
Dick Blackford	Mark Mayberry
Edward Bragwell	Aude McKee
Bill Cavender	Harry Osborne
Stan Cox	Joe R. Price
Russell Dunaway	Donnie V. Rader
Johnie Edwards	Chris Reeves
Harold Fite	Tom Roberts
Marc W. Gibson	Weldon E. Warnock
Larry Hafley	Lewis Willis
Ron Halbrook	Bobby Witherington
Irvin Himmel	Steve Wolfgang
Olen Holderby	

Guardian of Truth Foundation

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Connie W. Adams	Fred Pollock
Andy Alexander	Donnie V. Rader
Dickie Cooper	Weldon E. Warnock
Ron Halbrook	Mike Willis
Daniel H. King	Steve Wolfgang

— Subscription Rates —
\$24.00 Per Year
Single Copies — \$2.00 each
Foreign Subscriptions — \$25.00
— Bulk Rates —
\$1.75 per subscription per month

Manuscripts should be sent to Mike Willis, 6567 Kings Ct., Avon, IN 46123, (317) 272-6520. E-mail: mikewillis1@attglobal.net

Subscriptions, renewals and other correspondence should be sent to Truth Magazine, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102.

Book orders should be sent to Truth Bookstore, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102. Phone: 1-800-428-0121.

Web Address: www.truthmagazine.com

Postmaster: Send change of address to P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102.

Truth Magazine (ISSN 1538-0793) is published twice a month by Guardian of Truth Foundation, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102. Postage paid at Bowling Green, KY and additional mailing offices.

Sports Activities and the Christian Life

Mike Willis

The scene was The Palace of Auburn Hills and the occasion was a basketball game between the Indiana Pacers and the Detroit Pistons on November 28, 2004. As the game came to its conclusion, a hard foul was committed that ultimately resulted in Indiana Pacers players going into the stands to assault the fans who were throwing ice and drinks on them. It was a chaotic brawl resulting in heavy fines, suspensions, and eventually even criminal charges. What occurred at The Palace, in some ways, illustrates what has been happening in sports over the last quarter of a century.



Sports figures have evolved into demi-gods who are virtually worshiped in our culture. A successful athlete develops the attitude that he is above the law and deserving of an astronomical salary. Groupies follow him wherever he goes. Women throw themselves at him, making him think that he can conduct himself anyway he chooses. As evidence of this, consider the misconduct of Coach Bobby Knight while he was at Indiana University, the conviction of Mike Tyson for rape, and the (dropped) charges against Kobe Bryant. In addition to these nationally known figures, there are lesser known college players who have been charged with sexual misconduct, drunkenness, drugs, and other offences in numerous states.

To me, it appears that twenty-first century sports is a case of the tail wagging the dog. When my generation was in school, sports were extra-curricular activities. The primary activity of school was learning the educational topics assigned. One was not allowed to participate in extra-curricular activities unless he maintained his grades. As sports have gained importance in America, we are hearing of cases of athletes being given special treatment so that they remain academically eligible for the game. Some gifted athletes have tutors and note takers for their college classes. Have we forgotten that participation in sports is optional?

Even if one goes down to the lowest level of organized sports to attend a T-ball or pee-wee football game, one witnesses misconduct by the parents
continued on p. 57



Building Strong Bible Classes

Connie W. Adams

Bible classes are scripturally authorized under the general command to “teach.” Classes are expedients, or methods to that end. If they are worth having, they are worth developing into effective tools for learning. There is evidence, in a number of places known to me, of greater awareness of the need to improve the quality of this work. Teacher training courses have been offered in many places. There is a wide assortment of good material in print to help in this work. Some congregations have within them skilled and knowledgeable people who have been able to produce their own teaching materials. Whatever produces greater interest and success in teaching the word of God is certainly desirable.

For many years, in far too many places, Bible classes have been poorly conducted. How many times have you been in a class where the teacher, and some students, spend ten minutes trying to decide if they stopped last week at verse 7 or verse 10? I have sat in classes in Job, Daniel, Revelation, Romans, or one of the gospels where the teacher not only did not know what the passage was about, he did not even suspect what it was about! Or brother A is asked to read a verse and comment on it, to which he replies “ Well, I think it pretty well explains itself.” Or, “ The next verse explains it.” And that may be so, but genuine Bible study needs to probe a little deeper.

Often, in the rush to make practical applications, and that needs to be done, there is a failure to grasp the context of the passage under study. What did it say in context to the original recipients of the book? Confusion reigns in a study of Revelation unless that principle is observed. Once that is established, then it is time for application.

Much of the indifference toward Bible classes is the fault of the teachers. A class soon learns whether or not a teacher is prepared. Some teachers will lecture for fifteen minutes and then ask, “Are there any questions?” By that time, there will be none. Many in the class will have become glassy-eyed as they have struggled to stay awake. There are times to lecture, but it must be done with careful preparation and in an interesting way.

Sometimes one or two students will dominate all discussion, intimidating the rest. Teachers need to study to learn how to elicit useful response from the students. The late Thomas Hughes, who was an excellent teacher, used to say, “Never tell the class what the class can tell you.” This is especially

continued on next page

true in reviewing. Some teachers will ask a question, then if no one speaks up right away, the teacher then answers his own question. That pregnant pause might be some of the best teaching and learning that takes place during the whole class period.

Questions We Should Ask About Bible Classes

1. Is the Bible being taught? Are we spending more time on the comments of uninspired people than on what the Scripture says? Bible classes have no defense unless the Bible is being taught. “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11).

2. Are workbooks and study aids being abused? I am not opposed to the use of literature unless it teaches error or else becomes such a crutch that Bible study is hindered more than it is helped. I have sat in classes where students have dutifully read off their answers as they have filled in the blanks, or in a true or false section, or told how many times a certain word appeared in a section of three or four chapters, and left wondering how much real Bible study was actually done. Then there are classes where the teacher reads the text of a workbook. Why? Cannot the students do that for themselves at home and free the class period for discussion of the text? Don’t forget that our faith should not stand in the wisdom of men (even good men), but in the power of God.

3. Are small children’s classes geared more to babysitting than to instruction? Of course, their attention spans are short and approaches have to vary. Still, the objective is to teach, on a level they can grasp, what the Bible says.

4. Is the approach so tedious that the student becomes lost in the forest? There is a place for verse by verse study (I enjoy teaching that way), but there must be some sense of progress. When a class spends three years on a book with four chapters, it is easy to become so tedious with long dissertations on every word, that the student can’t see the forest for the trees. It is good to dig out the meat of the word, but unless the class has a sense of forward motion, it will be hard to maintain interest. The other end of that problem is to settle continually for survey type classes where you have to cover several chapters in every class to stay on a schedule. We need survey classes, but not exclusively.

5. Is the “whole counsel of God” being taught? Are there gaps in the teaching program so that needed subjects or books are being overlooked? I worked once with elders who were working out a plan for the next five years of classes. We spread it all out on a board. It was easy to spot areas of weakness that way. We could see if there was a proper balance between Old and New Testaments. Did we offer enough help on evidences? Was there a proper balance between textual study and topical ones to deal with practical issues facing Christians? It was an eye-opening experience.

6. What is the evangelistic thrust of these classes? Are students near or over the age of accountability being taught what to do to be saved and motivated to act? What of visitors who are not saved? Do we not have some responsibility toward them? Often, teachers and/or students make thoughtless comments which close minds before they can be taught. Cutting or sarcastic remarks may get a laugh, but they may also close a mind which might otherwise be taught.

Do we have classes which ignite the fires of evangelism in our young men and women? Are they being made aware of efforts around the world to save the lost? Do classes stimulate students to take the knowledge gained in the classroom into the mainstream of life? Do they move Christians to “teach faithful men who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2)?

7. Are there regularly scheduled teachers meetings where elders can monitor what is taking place, and where teachers can help each other sharpen their skills? Discussion with teachers in such settings can help elders to spot areas of need, stay on top of situations before they get out of hand, and help them to evaluate the attitudes of teachers toward the Scriptures and toward godly living. It is also a good setting in which to develop new teachers.

I could be mistaken, and hope that I am, but it appears to me that, as a whole, we are not as knowledgeable a people about the word of God as we ought to be. We are not the people of the book we once were. I know the usual excuses but they are no more acceptable now than they have ever been. It is still required that we “search the scriptures daily” (Acts 17:11) and that we “study” to show ourselves “approved unto God, workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Both pulpit and classroom must combine in instilling a knowledge of the word of God into the hearts of those who hear us. Eternal issues are at stake.

In the process, let it not be forgotten that God requires “faithful” people to teach others. James said teachers shall receive “the heavier judgment” (Jas. 3:1). Morally weak, half-baked Christians have no business in the pulpit or the classroom in a teaching role. They need to be converted first. Shorts wearers, mixed swimmers, social drinkers, cigarette puffers, profane and vulgar talkers, and other worldlings are mighty poor examples to set before the public. Their students cannot be expected to rise to any higher level than the example of their teachers. Did I hear even a faint, distant “Amen”? Somewhere?

P.O. Box 91346, Louisville, Kentucky 40291



What Your Dress Says About You

Larry Ray Hafley

(If your reaction to the title of this article is, “I don’t care,” it is likely your dress reflects that, too.)

No, one need not be a “slave to fashion” to be a Christian. There are no “wardrobe police” in the kingdom of God. Modest clothing, coupled with a sincere heart, is acceptable before God and all right thinking men (1 Tim. 2:9).

Your clothing may signal your honor or dishonor of another. When Joseph was told he was to meet with Pharaoh, “he shaved himself and changed his clothes” (Gen. 41:14). How would you dress to meet the president of the United States? How would you dress if you knew Jesus were going to be at services this Lord’s day? (He will be there — Matt. 18:20; Heb. 2:12!)

Your apparel may show whether you are mourning or rejoicing. That was so in the case of David. His servants knew the difference in his behavior after he changed his clothes, went to worship God, and then ate (2 Sam. 12:20, 21). Note that how he was dressed while he mourned and prayed for his ailing child was different from that which he wore to go to worship. He “changed his apparel, and came into the house of the Lord, and worshiped.” How do you dress to worship God?

Your attire may reveal your moral character. “And there a woman met him, with the attire of a harlot” (Prov. 7:10). “What,” you ask, “is the attire of a harlot?” If a movie or a television show were going to portray an undercover police operation to catch men who solicit prostitutes, can you picture in your mind how the ladies would be dressed? You just answered your own question!

Men need not go to the beach to see undressed women. All they have to do is go to Wal-Mart or the mall. Our society, in general, has lost any sense of modesty and decorum. Sexual enticement is the dress of the day. “Look at me and lust” is the purposed

array of many. They have no shame, neither can they blush (Jer. 6:15).

Your adornment may show your level in social and civil affairs. Haman knew how to arrange the finery of one worthy of respect and honor (Esth. 6:8, 9). When the wandering, squandering, prodigal son returned home, they put a ring on his hand, shoes on his feet, and covered him with “best robe,” the finest garment (Luke 15:22).

Ever heard the statement, “He dresses like a bum?” Ever have any trouble figuring out what was meant by that question? I didn’t think so. Today, it seems that dressing like a bum has become a national obsession. Many dress like a rumbled, shabby hobo when they go to a funeral visitation or a rehearsal dinner. Even some churches are beset by dingy, scruffy looking folks who apparently have never been schooled in how to “dress for the occasion.” (Yes, I know James 2:1-5 is in the Bible, and if that is your lot in life, we are honored to have you with us.)

4626 Osage, Baytown, Texas 77521



“Brother” Max Lucado?

Frank Richey

While there is no one name given for the Lord’s church, the name Church of Christ has been used for many years to distinguish God’s people from those in denominationalism. For the past several decades, false teaching has invaded many churches of Christ. I have advocated, along with many others, that those who do not wish to practice pure New Testament Christianity should drop the name “Church of Christ.”

Perhaps some of our readers are old enough to remember the 1950s and how many members of the Church of Christ were proud that one of our own became one of the most popular singers in the United States. Pat Boone was a student at David Lipscomb High School in Nashville, Tennessee, when he started gaining prominence as a singer. With a beautiful voice, clean-cut image, and uncommon good looks, he soon became the cultural icon of his day. Not only did he sell millions of records, he starred in a number of movies. However, Pat Boone would soon disappoint his brethren by leaving the church and embracing denominationalism and a charismatic belief.

Fifty years after Pat Boone’s meteoric rise to stardom, many members of the Church of Christ proudly point to the celebrated author, Max Lucado, as not only a brother in Christ, but a gospel preacher, having preached for the Oak Hill Church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas, for the past fifteen years. Lucado, author of forty books, selling sixteen million copies, is indeed one of the most celebrated authors in America today. For his success as an author, we applaud him. For his departure from the faith, we mourn him. We also mourn for the thousands who will be led away from the truth because of the false teachings of Max Lucado.

Max Lucado No Longer Preaches For a Church of Christ

An article in the *San Antonio Express-News*, dated September 6, 2003,

and written by Lisa Harrison Rivas, staff writer, said, “Max Lucado hopes renaming his church, opening new campuses and adding musical instruments to the worship service will help bring more people to Christ.”

“Oak Hills Church of Christ is now Oak Hills Church, and although the name has changed, Lucado said the church’s core values will not.

“Vic King, minister of missions and outreach, said the staff doesn’t expect a lot of members to leave over the changes.

“It’s the sign that we are changing,” King said. “We are changing to a sign that more accurately reflects who we are.”

“Lucado, who has been the pulpit minister for 15 years, said during his Sunday sermon that some find the Church of Christ name to be an insurmountable barrier.”

“A common comment from new members is this: ‘We would have come sooner, but we had to get over the name of the church.’”

“Kaye Daughtry, a member for 25 years, said that’s because many people are fed up with denominations. ‘We are going to receive people who will visit here who might not have (before),’ she said.”

Last year I heard a great sermon preached by Donald Townsley, en-

titled, “Change Agents in Churches of Christ.” In that sermon, brother Townsley’s first indicator of change was a change in the name “Church of Christ.” While there is no one name given for the Lord’s church, the name Church of Christ has been used for many years to distinguish God’s people from those in denominationalism. For the past several decades, false teaching has invaded many churches of Christ. I have advocated, along with many others, that those who do not wish to practice pure New Testament Christianity should drop the name “Church of Christ.” Max Lucado has worked to this end, advocating that the “OF CHRIST” be dropped from the Oak Hill Church.

I thought the quote from Vic King, minister of missions and outreach, was a very accurate point as to what was taking place at Oak Hill (Church of Christ), when he said, “We are changing to a sign that more accurately reflects who we are.” I couldn’t agree more. The new sign, Oak Hill Church, recognizes that they are not OF CHRIST! Thank you, Max, and elders of Oak Hill, for changing your name, because doctrines being taught there are not of Christ, are not revealed by the Holy Spirit in his Word, and are not revealed by the God of heaven.

Max Lucado Teaches Baptism Is Not Necessary For Salvation

In a sermon on the Oak Hill website, (<http://www.oakhillschurchofchrist.org/>), there is a paper entitled, “Oak Hill Church of Christ Position on Baptism.” (The name Oak Hill and Oak Hills seem to be used interchangeably.) This paper is “based on a sermon preached by Max Lucado on November 12, 1995, and again on February 2, 1997.” Notice some quotes from Max Lucado on baptism:

If you choose not to be immersed at this time, we still welcome you as a member.

(Baptism is) the beauty, simplicity, and significance of this demonstration of devotion.

Baptism (is) a one-time declaration of a lifetime of devotion to God.

Baptism separates the tire kickers from the car buyers.

Jesus commanded all his followers to prove it (faith?) to make the pledge, by public demonstration in baptism.

Baptism was, and is “a pledge made to God from a good conscience” (1 Pet. 3:21).

Baptism is a vow, a sacred vow of the believer to follow Christ.

Please understand, it is not the act that saves us. But it is the act that symbolized how we are saved!

If you were baptized in a Baptist church or Pentecostal camp or in the lake at a family reunion, that doesn’t matter. What is important is that you knew that you were a sinner and Jesus was your savior.

Is it possible for an unbaptized believer to be saved? Yes, definitely.

No one this side of heaven can fully understand the majesty of baptism. Watch out for the one who claims to have a corner on the issue.

From the above mentioned points we find that Lucado teaches one can be a member of the church without being immersed; that baptism is a demonstration of devotion, rather than a commandment of God necessary to salvation (Acts 10:48); that baptism is a public demonstration of faith rather than a means of “putting on Christ” (Gal. 3:27); that baptism is a pledge to God from a good conscience, rather than a command of God and a promise that baptism “doth also not save us” (1 Pet. 3:21); that baptism is a sacred vow of the believer, and I don’t have a clue as to what that means; that regardless of how or for what purpose you were baptized,

in a Baptist church (which does not teach baptism for remission of sins) or a Pentecostal camp, etc., you are saved; that an unbaptized believer can definitely be saved (Mark 16:16 says, “he that believes and is baptized shall be saved, and he that does not believe shall be condemned.”) and finally, that no one this side of heaven can fully understand the majesty of baptism. Again, I’m not sure what Max Lucado means by this statement. I would simply point out that the Holy Spirit has revealed the mind of God on the subject of baptism and from the Bible we can learn the following about baptism:

- Baptism saves (Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21).
- Baptism is for remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
- Baptism is a command of God (Acts 10:48).
- Baptism is something we must do (Acts 9:6, 18).
- Baptism washes away sins (Acts 22:16).
- Baptism is a burial through which we must go in order to rise from the dead (spiritually) and have newness of life (Rom. 6:3-6).
- Baptism is the way we put on (wear) Christ (Gal. 3:27).
- Baptism is a circumcision made without hands (a spiritual circumcision) whereby sin is cut off from the body (Col. 2:11-12).
- Baptism is the means whereby we come in contact with the soul cleansing blood of Jesus Christ and is how Christ’s blood washes away our sins (Rev. 1:6; Acts 22:16).

Lucado has taken the plan of salvation, given by the God of heaven, and perverted it, making baptism an option, rather than a requirement for salvation. In all fairness to Max Lucado, he mentions several times the importance of baptism in his paper. I think this is where the “baptism is the difference between the tire kickers and the buyers” comes in. While Lucado emphasizes the importance of

baptism, he speaks out of both sides of his mouth when he says it important, but not necessary. How can this be?

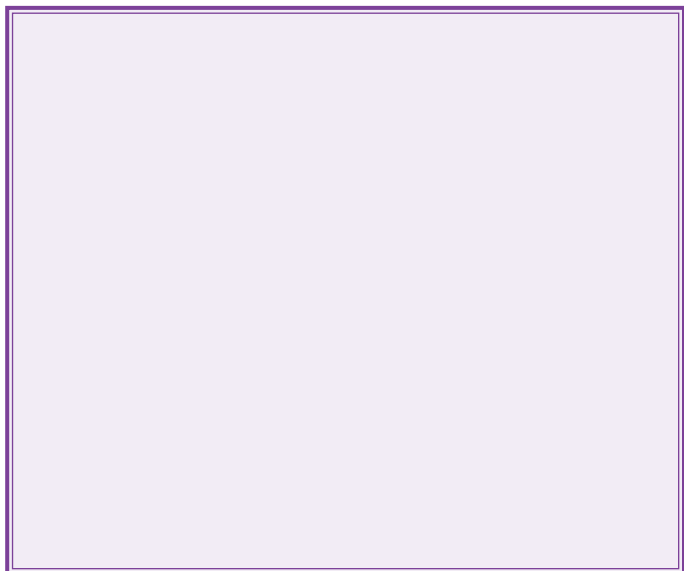
Max Lucado Teaches That One Can be Saved Through Prayer

In an article by Adron Doran, entitled “Pray and Obey,” found at website (<http://www.bibleinfont.net/>), Doran says the following: “I have a copy of a tape of a speech that Lucado made over radio station KJAR in Lubbock, Texas, in December 1996.”

In his Lubbock radio sermon Max Lucado said to his listeners that: “God is ready to be your Father. Maybe you never understood that the invitation was for everyone. Maybe you thought that you weren’t worthy. Maybe now you do understand God will make you worthy and the invitation is for you, and all you have to do is call him Father. Just call him Father. Just turn your heart to him even right now as I am speaking. Call him your Father, and your Father will respond. Why don’t you do that?”

In a seeming effort to recite a model prayer (with mechanical instruments of music playing) Lucado continues: “Father, I give my heart to you. I give you my sins. I give you my tears. I give you my fears I give you my whole life. I accept the gift of your Son on the cross for my sins. And I ask you, Father, to receive me as your child Through Jesus Christ I pray.”

The tape records the radio announcer as coming on the air and saying, “And friend if you prayed along with Max Lucado just now, here on Upwards, we want to welcome you into the family of God.” Then Lucado returns to the microphone and says: “If today is the first day you’ve ever prayed a prayer like that, could you do me a favor? Could you write me a letter? I don’t have anything I am going to ask from you. I do have a letter I would like to send to you.



I’d like to give you a word about the next step or two. I want to encourage you to find a church. I want to encourage you to be baptized. I want to encourage you to read your Bible. I don’t want you to do any of that so you will be saved; I want you to do all of that because you are saved.”

This type of evangelism is unknown in the Bible. Nowhere can one find an example of an alien sinner praying for and receiving salvation. However, by studying the book of Acts, we can see over and over again what people did in the New Testament to become Christians. They heard the word of God, they believed it, they repented of their sins, they confessed Christ, and they were buried in baptism for remission of sins.

Max Lucado Preaches That Instrument Music is Acceptable to God

Notice the quote from the San Antonio *Express News*, September 6, 2003: “Most Churches of Christ feature only a cappella singing, a tradition King said is based on the absence of the use of instruments in the New Testament churches. But for the first time, Oak Hills will add instruments to a new Sunday evening service, which will be geared toward young adults and will begin early next year.”

Again, we see a departure from the faith by adding to God’s word. The adding of instrumental music to the worship of the church has no authority in the Bible and such a departure from the faith was unknown until the seventh century. “Pope Vitalian is related to have first introduced organs into some of the churches of western Europe, about 670; but the earliest trustworthy account is that of the one sent as a present by the Greek emperor Constantine Copronymus to Pepin, King of the Franks, in 755” (*The American Encyclopedia* XII:688). The first musical instrument to be used in churches attempting to restore New Testament Christianity, was in Midway, Kentucky, in 1849. As the use of musical instruments increased in the churches, a division over this issue and over missionary societies, resulted in the liberal group (accepting the instrument) being known as “Disciples of Christ,” while the more conservative group (refusing to accept the instrument), was known as “Churches of Christ.”

Conclusion

Is there any difference between the teaching of Max Lucado and Billy Graham? Is there any difference between the teaching of Max Lucado and most of the televangelists on the air today? Could Max Lucado preach for most of the denominations in America today and be embraced and fellowshiped by them? I think so. Max Lucado is just another false teacher preaching a false doctrine that results in false hope and eternal destruction.

From River Bend church of Christ, November 2003

Martin Luther and the Divorce-Remarriage Controversy

William V. Beasley

Because of his misunderstanding of justification, the gospel of Jesus Christ, Martin Luther believed that there was a conflict between the writings of the Apostle Paul and the little epistle of James. The writings of Paul were, in Martin Luther's estimation, evangelical and ought to be in the canon of Scripture. In contrast, the Epistle of James, in Luther's view, was at best deutero-canonical (secondary) and at worst the product of the mind of man.

Martin Luther's estimate of the Epistle of James can readily be seen in quotations from his pen (as quoted by R.C.H. Lenski, a Lutheran, in his commentary, *The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and The Epistle of James*): "If one wants to preach the gospel, it must, in short, be on the resurrection of Christ. He who does not do that is no apostle; for this is the main part of the gospel. And those are the right, noblest books, which teach and impress this, as stated above. Hence one can well feel that the Epistle of James is not right apostolic epistle, for there is hardly a thing of this in it. . . . Therefore St. James's Epistle is a right strawy epistle . . . compared with them (i.e., John's Gospel, Paul's Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and First Peter), for it bears no evangelical character. . . . But this James does no more than drive to the law and its works, and in a disorderly way throws one thing into another, so that I imagine it was some good pious man, or other who took up a few statements from the disciples of the apostle and so threw them on paper, or perhaps out of his sermon the thing was composed by another" (Lenski 515).

Although a Lutheran, Mr. Lenski recognized that Martin Luther was a mere man subject to error. "Nowhere in the New Testament is there a tract of conflict between James and any of the apostles, including in particular Paul. . . . James and Paul, like the Twelve, are in fullest agreement on the doctrine of justification. Those who assume a conflict between James and Paul regarding this doctrine do not properly understand James 2:14-26 and often also Paul's teaching" (Lenski 510). To these words from the pen of Mr. Lenski, I would offer a hardy "Amen." We might disagree as to proper understand-

ing of the writings of James and Paul, but would agree that misunderstanding might well be the reason for believing that there is a controversy between Paul and James.

Martin Luther's doctrine of justification was more important to him than was the truth of God, revealed in the Epistle of James. It was indeed "Martin Luther's doctrine" or else there would not have been a conflict, in his mind, between Paul and James. While there is no conflict between Paul and James, there was certainly a controversy between James and "Martin Luther's doctrine." Instead of being taught of God, through the Epistle of James, Martin Luther rejected the Epistle of James as a strawy epistle or the product of the mind of a second or third generation Christian.

What does all this have to do with the Divorce-Remarriage controversy? Absolutely nothing, except for the attitude of Martin Luther toward that portion of God's word which was in conflict with his (mis)understanding of doctrine. Today there are members of the church who know that Matthew 5:31-32; 19:9 are in conflict with their (mis)understanding of the doctrine of Divorce/Remarriage, so they, like Luther, must reject the source of the conflict. So far as I know, no one has called the Gospel of Matthew a strawy gospel, but there are some who have decided that Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are Old Testament books, and, therefore, not binding upon the Christian today. Instead of being taught of God, through the Gospel of Matthew, some reject the relevancy of the Gospel of Matthew labeling it an Old Testament book. If the gospels are Old Testament books, these Old Testament books were written after Jesus had fulfilled the law of Moses and had, by his fulfillment thereof, nailed the "bond written in ordinances that was against us" to the cross (Col. 2:14).

Please note that I have, at no time in this article, questioned the honesty of Martin Luther or the integrity of my brethren. Being honest and sincere does not, as we should all know, determine the validity of what is taught.

3810 W. Red Wing St., Tucson, Arizona 85741, BeesNest@aol.com

The Bible

Brian Anderson

A lot of folks do not fully appreciate the Bible. A book written over a 1500 year span, by forty different men of differing languages, differing educations, from different locations. Yet, sixty-six books that seamlessly fit together, carrying a single theme. If included in the New York Times Best Seller's list it would be number one every week. No other book has been so beloved and yet so despised. It has survived throughout its history through persecutions and attempts to destroy it. Today there are no overt attempts to take it out of circulation, but it is being attacked by the world by attempts to discredit it and impugn it. Folks make fun of those who believe what it says. A leading physicist, who is also an atheist, stated that, "The Bible's account of creation is pure fantasy." Some think it simply a nice decoration for their coffee table. A recent survey found that only 53% say that they occasionally read it compared to 73% in 1980. What is this book we call the Bible? Let's take a look.

The Words of God

What many folks in the world have not come to grips with is that the Bible is the recorded words of God. "... God hath spoken" (Heb. 1:1-2), the Hebrew writer explained. It was Paul who said, "All scripture is given by the inspiration of God (God breathed, BWA), and is profitable" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Paul thanked God for the Thessalonians for "when ye received the word of God that ye heard from us, ye received it not as the words of men, but as it is in truth, the words of God" (1 Thess. 2:13). When one begins a study of what the Bible is, we must first understand, that it is the words of God.

It's the Truth

No matter what the subject matter, the Bible is the truth. The Bible has been proven over and over again by history, astronomy, archaeology, and science.

Examples:

The Hittites were a forgotten people of history only mentioned in the Bible (some forty times). Not until 1906 was the Hittite Capital of Boghazkoy, near the modern

capital of Turkey, discovered by Hugo Winckler. Until his discovery many used the discussion of the Hittites as proof of biblical error.

Sergius Paulus (Proconsul) is mentioned in Acts 13. Many claimed that there were no Proconsulships in Cyprus (Senatorial official). Most claimed that there were only a "procurator" (imperial official) that ruled at this time. Later archaeological finds have found coins on Cyprus speaking of the Proconsul. In northern Cyprus coins have been found that state "in the proconsulship of Paulus."

For many years, the astronomers and scientists of the world thought that the world was flat. The Bible pointed to the truth on this matter years earlier. "... He that sitteth upon the circle of the earth" (Isa. 40:22).

- Suspension of the Earth in Space (Job 26:7).
- Empty place in the North (Job 26:7).
- Life is in the blood (Gen. 9:4). For years medical doctors let the blood out of sick folks thinking that would get rid of infected blood and would heal an individual. In all actuality, they bled people to death!
- Paths in the sea (Ps. 8:8) — Modern day shipping lanes.

Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them by thy truth, thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Therefore, any claims that contradict what the Bible says from a physical or spiritual sense is false!

Therefore when the Bible claims the following items, they are true!

- God created the world in six days (Gen 1; Exod. 31:16-17).
- Baptism is essential for salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21; Jas. 2:24).
- There is one church (Matt. 16:18; Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4).

Cannot Be Changed

How can the words of God be changed? He hasn't changed, "I am the Lord God, I change not" (Mal. 3:6; Heb. 13:8). The word of God lives and abides forever (1 Pet. 1:23-25). From the beginning of God's book to the end, he warns of adding to or taking from his word (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Gal. 1:8-9; Rev. 22:18-19).

Must be Obeyed

This is not just a book of stories. It is a law book. "Bear ye one another's burdens and thus fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Paul recognized in his time that many had not obeyed it (Rom. 10:16; 2:8; Gal. 3:1; 5:7). The truth must be obeyed (John 8:32; 1 Pet 1:22; Eccl. 12:13; Matt. 7:21; Eph. 4:32; John 13:34; Matt. 7:12; Mark 16:16). John wrote, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates of that city" (Rev. 22:14).

Will Judge Us in the Last Day

There is judgment to come (Acts 24:25; Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10; Eccl. 12:13-14; Acts 17:30-31; Rom. 2:16). Jesus said, "... for the words that I have spoken will judge you in the last day" (John 12:48). John stated, "And I saw the dead, both small and great, standing before God, and the books were open" (Rev. 20:12ff). The books are the books of the Bible. One day we will all stand before God, and be "judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Rev. 20:12b).

Do you have the proper respect for the Bible? Are you reading it? Are you patterning your life according to its teachings?

P.O. Box 106, Orleans, Indiana 47452
andersonbrianpeg@aol.com

"Swinging"

John Isaac Edwards

I learned a new word in a home Bible study the other day. Actually, it is an old word with a meaning new to me. The word is "swinging." I gathered, from our conversation, that he had something in mind other than sitting in the swing out on the front porch.

1. A Slang Word. The word "swinging" is used in a slang way to mean "sexually promiscuous. Practicing exchange of partners, especially spouses, for sex" (*American Heritage Dictionary*). If you are swinging, in this sense of the word, then you are sinning!

2. One Man/One Woman. God's arrangement, from the beginning, is one man for one woman and one woman for one man (Gen. 2:18-24; Matt. 19:4-6). Paul put it this way, "Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband" (1 Cor. 7:2). This is monogamy, and that is not a type of wood!

3. Fornication. We really just need to call this what it is. It's fornication. Any sexual activity outside of a God-approved marriage relationship is sinful and will cause one to be cast into a devil's hell! 1 Corinthians 6:18 teaches, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body." Fornication is so serious that Jesus gave the innocent party the right to put away the guilty, with the fornicator never having the right to marry another (Matt. 19:9). The sexually promiscuous will not go to heaven (Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Couples trading partners — What is this world coming to?

200 N. Posey St., Salem, Indiana 47167

Who Will Enter The Narrow Door?

Jim Gabbard

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem, we got a fairly good look at him, first through the eyes of wise men from somewhere in the east, who tracked his presence by the stellar bodies, and then through the eyes of the some shepherds who were guarding sheep in the area and were notified of Jesus' presence by an angel. We saw Jesus as he was moved to Egypt as an infant because of a threat on his life by Herod, king of Judea. We saw him no more until he surfaced at about age twelve, but then for only a brief moment.

Jesus was kept from our sight after the temple scene when he was twelve until he started his personal ministry. Matthew and Luke give us a pretty good account of that beginning, but Mark only brings Jesus to the public view well into his ministry.

Very shortly after Jesus began his ministry, he moved to Capernaum where lived for three years, preaching the gospel around and about, but actually only appearing to us on very brief occasions. We only saw a very brief part of his life during that three year period but when he did appear, the things he said were so profound that they have made a very deep impression on us all and we feel as if we knew him intimately for years.

One of the most profound and most relevant things Jesus said was uttered on his extended preaching journey from Capernaum to Jerusalem. As he was preaching in one of the villages, some very preceptive person asked Jesus a question, namely, "Lord, are there but a few who are being saved?"

Jesus' answer: "Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able."

I can't recall how long it has been since I met a person who told me he thought he was lost. Almost everyone I know believes he has a relationship with God which immunizes him from ending up in torment. Many such people have not been to any kind of a church for years. Some have

never been to church and others belong to one denomination or another.

Why is it so important that we strive to enter through the narrow door? Jesus said many will seek to enter and not make it. There is a significant difference between strive to enter and seek to enter. All casual seekers should be filled with anxiety so much so that they cannot sleep well at night; such as the case when awaiting the arrival of a powerful hurricane, which is nothing compared to the effects of one who misses the narrow door and wanders in through the wide way.

Door To Home

That door is most desirable that we enter because it is the door to our spiritual home. It is the door to heaven. Our long term home is not this earth. We are citizens of heaven (Phil. 3: 20). We are here for but such a short time. Our stay here in terms of time could be compared to a visit from an alien from another planet (if there were aliens on any other planet, which there are not). And that alien landed his spacecraft in your yard, walked up to your window and peeped in, then immediately flew away back to where he came from, there trying to tell the others what earth is like.

That narrow door is the hope of every man (Heb. 6:19). This short earthly visit gives us no real satisfaction. We hardly get to know what life is about here until we are called away. Where will we go when we leave here, if we miss the narrow door?

There are four pertinent questions, matter of fact, the only questions which have real significance for us: Who am I? Where did I come from? What does it mean that I am here? and What will happen to me when this life is over?

Why Will Some Seek and Not Find the Narrow Door?

The Holy Word gives us an insight as to why many do not find the narrow door, many because of the pride of life

Home Bible Study

Johnie Edwards

Tell me how many home Bible studies are going on among the church members, and I'll tell you about how many are being converted! We seem to be living in times when people can be taught one-on-one, a little easier. So, we take a look at teaching a home Bible study:

1. Home. One of the best places to have a Bible study is in the home of the one being taught or in the home of their friend who set up the study. I like to set around the kitchen table, where there is a place to write and take notes.

2. Bible. The textbook for the home Bible study is the Bible. Jesus said, "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). That seed is being planted in the soil, which is the heart of the student being taught. The teacher is simply a seed-sower. Learn the material being used well and teach it with conviction.

3. Study. When the teacher arrives at the place of study, you are there to teach. So, get at it immediately. The best place to begin a home Bible study is with a lesson on "Authority." Unless you establish that the word of God is the standard by which all religious matters must be settled, all else will not get the job done. The word of God is that authority (2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:3), vested in Christ (Matt. 28:18; 7:29). The second thing to study is, "God's Plan For Saving Man." Folks have to know what God has done and what they must do to be saved, as they learn the need for such a plan. Don't be timid about pointing out what the Bible says one must do to be saved (Mark 16:16). Philip taught folks about the church as he converted people. "But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God (church), and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:12). So, lesson 3 is all about "The Church." A good lesson to finish with is "The Worship." After folks are baptized, they need to know what God expect of them in regards to worship (John 4:24).

4. Setting Up A Study. Many ask, "How do I set up a home Bible study?" It's like selling, you have to ask for the sale! Everyone needs at least six friends. Make a list of the six and start with the one you think most likely would be interested in a study. Then get to know that person, do things together, visit with them, then say, I'd sure like to study the Bible with you. Which would be the best evening for you, Tuesday or Thursday? Then do it! You can purchase this Home Bible Study from Truth Bookstore.

4121 Woodyard Rd., Bloomington, Indiana 47404

(1 Pet. 5: 5-6). We do not learn the life style of lust and pride from the Father but from the world about us (1 John 2:16-17). For those who would know why God allows evil in the world, should study this passage carefully. Lust and evil are not from God, they are from the world. Why does God allow it? Because he does not wish to make robots out of us and direct our every move. He made us to be free and we should assume the responsibility to deny the lustful desires.

There are many who will not enter the narrow door because they carry a load of contraband. Our desires and lusts for too many things consumes us. Do we ever seriously consider the baggage we drag along through life. Do we ever really and truly examine ourselves to see if we are really in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5)? Or are we stuck in a rut and mistake it for faith?

2833 Millshed Rd., Morgantown, Kentucky 42261

Drink Responsibly?

David Dann

In his letter to the church of Ephesus, the apostle Paul writes, “And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit” (Eph. 5:18).

Surely no child of God would defend the right of the Christian to enter into an alcohol-induced drunken state in light of the strong condemnation of drunkenness found in the Bible. But while few waste their time in defending outright drunkenness, many will spend a great deal of effort in defending the casual consumption of alcoholic beverages.

The sale of alcoholic beverages is a profitable business for many due to the great popularity of intoxicating wine, beer, and other forms of alcohol in our culture. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the consumption of alcohol does great damage in society through the disease, destructive behavior, and drunk-driving deaths that inevitably arise from it. But those who market alcoholic beverages are aware of the dilemma. In fact, it is quite common now for television commercials advertising alcohol to conclude with an earnest exhortation for consumers to “drink responsibly.”

The idea in the minds of some brethren seems to be that there is some merit in the beer commercial exhortation to “drink responsibly.” But is there? Is it possible to consume intoxicating drink in a responsible manner?

The Implication of the Beer Commercial Exhortation

Those in the business of selling alcohol would have us believe that one can consume their product in a responsible way. The clear implication is that it is only the irresponsible use of alcohol that causes all of the alcohol-related problems in our society. We are expected to understand that the man who has one too many drinks and then gets behind the wheel causing a car wreck, the girl who drinks too much at a party and winds up pregnant, and the husband who gets drunk and beats his wife are typical of the ones who are drinking irresponsibly. There is supposed to be a more refined, more responsible kind of drinking that is to

be done, and the idea is that if we can just eliminate this excessive irresponsible type of drinking, then we will have eliminated alcohol-related problems in the world. But the question remains as to whether or not one can consume any amount of alcohol in a responsible manner.

What Does the Bible Say?

1. The Bible warns against the consumption of intoxicating beverages. The Scriptures, in both Old and New Testaments, offer warning after warning against the consumption of intoxicating drink. Consider the following passages:

Wine is a mocker, intoxicating drink arouses brawling, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise (Prov. 20:1).

Do not look on the wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup, when it swirls around smoothly; at the last it bites like a serpent, and stings like a viper. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart will utter perverse things (Prov. 23:31-33).

The priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink, they are swallowed up by wine, they are out of the way through intoxicating drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment (Isa. 28:7).

Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy (Rom. 13:13).

For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries (1 Pet. 4:3).

2. Is it possible to sin responsibly? If it is possible to drink alcohol in a responsible manner, then might it also be possible to commit other sins in an equally responsible way? Paul writes, “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy,

How to Treat One Another

David Flatt

Since the church has existed, God's people have had a clearly defined purpose: to save souls. Throughout the New Testament, this purpose has been expressed: "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, 'All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost'" (Matt. 28:18-19). We are to do whatever we can, within the bounds of the Scriptures, to save the lost. However, this group effort will not be productive and successful unless we work together. There are certain ways that we can treat one another that will promote peace and prosperity. Let us notice together how God has said we are to treat one another.

When we come together, we are to edify one another.

The word edify means to build and or strengthen (Vine 18). As it is used in the Bible, it refers to ". . . promoting the spiritual growth and development of character of believers, by teaching or by example" (Vine 18). There are three basic ways in which we edify one another. The first is through worship: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one

another (edifying, DF) in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). The second way is by teaching as Paul did to the Ephesians: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). The third way to edify is by words of encouragement as were offered from Paul to Timothy: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1). Surely, we could treat one another better by edifying more often.

Next, we should treat one another in a manner of kindness. How many of us consistently treat each other kindly? Paul stressed the importance of kindness to the Christians at Ephesus. He commanded, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). We all should try to show kindness to others as often as possible, not just when it is necessary. We should not feel there are only specific events that evoke kindness; rather we should live with a spirit of kindness ever present.

murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21). Notice that the consumption of alcohol ("drunkenness" and to a lesser extent, "revelries") is included among the "works of the flesh." If it is possible to fornicate responsibly, hate responsibly, and murder responsibly, then it is certainly possible to drink responsibly. But as the apostle says, "those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God" (v. 21).

3. Is it only irresponsible if it is done in excess? Many have the idea that the consumption of alcohol is only wrong if it is done in an excessive way that leads to drunkenness. Can we apply that sort of thinking to other works of the flesh? Is it okay if one experiences the outburst of only a little wrath, manifests only a moderate amount of envy,

or only gets caught up in a socially acceptable degree of idolatry? We ought to understand that sin is sin regardless of the degree of involvement on the part of the one who commits it (1 John 3:3-4-8).

Conclusion

Since it is impossible for one to truly drink alcohol responsibly, the responsible approach for the Christian is to refrain from the social and recreational use of alcohol altogether. As the Scripture says, "Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thess. 5:22). In order to drink responsibly one must drink something that will not dull his senses, lessen his self-control, and lower his guard in the face of temptation. Do the responsible thing C don=t drink!

3400 The Credit Woodlands, Unit 48, Mississauga, Ontario, Canada L5C 3A4, ddann@rogers.com

We should show hospitality towards one another.

Invite other Christians into your home. As it relates to a previous point, hospitality is one way to edify each other. The apostle Peter wrote, “Use hospitality one to another without grudging” (1 Pet. 4:9). Be inclusive of others. We should always be willing to entertain and spend quality time with our brethren, as often as we can. Hospitality promotes unity, love, and encouragement to all involved.

We should treat one another using preference.

We live in a self-centered society. Everything we do is to be done to benefit ourselves. Too many of us look out for our own best interest before the best interests of others. This must not be how we treat one another. The needs of our brethren should come before our needs. Paul told the Romans. “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Rom. 12:10). The way this happens is by considering others before ourselves. In another letter, Paul referred to this idea as esteeming others better than ourselves: “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3).

We should treat one another forgivingly.

We should always be willing to extend forgiveness to our brethren whenever they seek it. This was the essence of Jesus’ teaching to his disciples: “Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven” (Matt. 18:21-22). As we noted in a previous point, forgiveness is to be extended in kindness: “And be ye kind

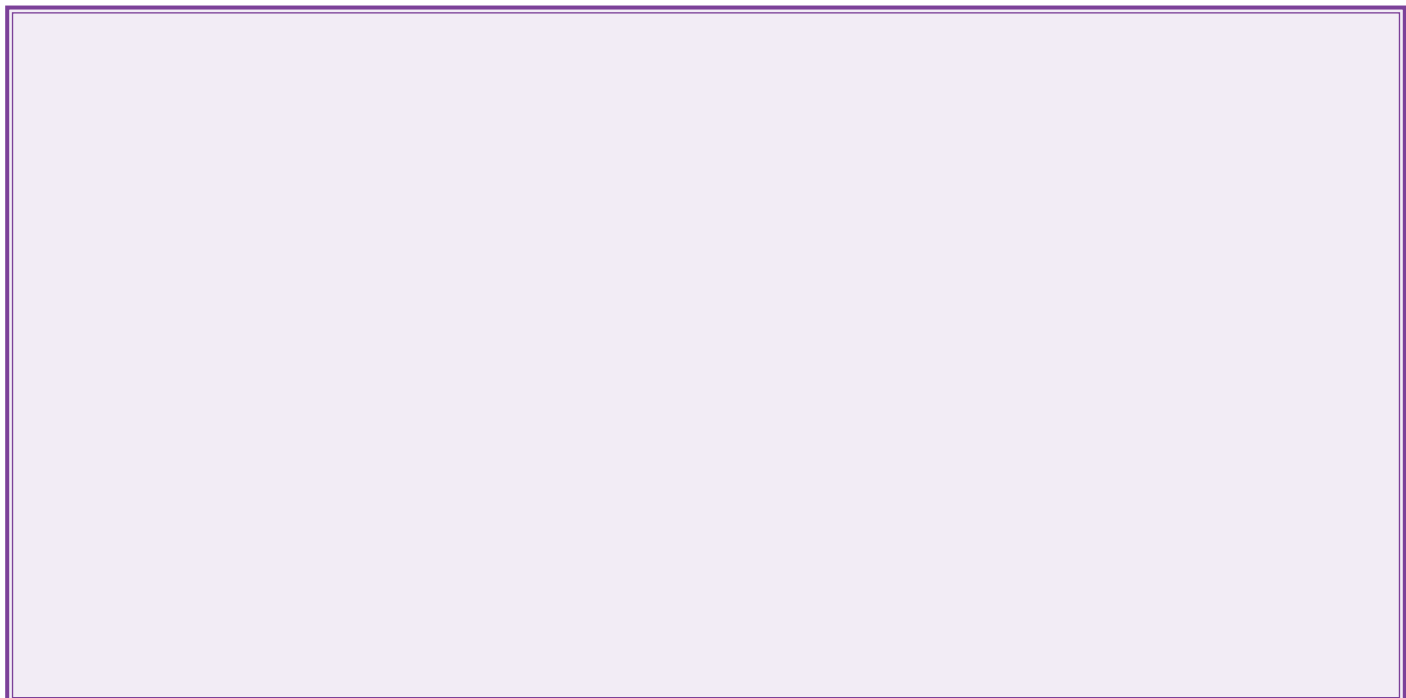
one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you” (Eph. 4:32). We are to offer forgiveness to one another because God offered it to us through Christ’s death: “Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Col. 3:13). Finally, remember, if we do not give forgiveness to each other, Jesus will not give forgiveness to us: “But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses” (Mark 11:26).

Lastly, we must treat one another in a manner of love.

Love must be evident among God’s people. If love does not exist there will be no edification built, kindness given, hospitality offered, preference demonstrated, or forgiveness extended. Without love, the Church will become stagnant and die. We must love one another because Christ loved us: “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” (1 John 4:11). Love is to be an identifying characteristic of the people of God. Again, John wrote, “A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34-35).

Certainly, we should treat one another with the utmost care, concern, and love. If these teachings are applied in our lives, the church will become stronger. Not only will we become a stronger people, but we will also cause the body of Christ to increase.

491 E. Woodsdale, Akron, Ohio 44301



Christ the Divine and Muhammad the Human

Bobby L. Graham

The rapid growth of Islam in recent decades has caused much concern among Bible believers, as well as among most Americans aware of the militaristic tendency of Muslims in the spread of their religion. While some experts have differentiated between the terrorist activities of Muslim fundamentalists and true Islamic beliefs, it appears to many of us that the fundamentalists are actually practicing what the Koran teaches. In an effort to strengthen the faith of Christians and to equip them to deal with the general onslaught against their faith by Muslims, we here present one of the most arresting contrasts conceivable between the obviously human Muhammad and the divine Jesus.

1. Christ was born according to OT prophecy in Bethlehem, but nobody even foresaw the birth of Muhammad. Old Testament writers previewed the career of Jesus in such detail that honest first-century observers could have picked Jesus out of a crowd. Messianic prophecies dot the landscape of Old Testament writings. Many years ago Liddon said that there were some 330 such prophecies. Jesus, Paul, and Peter all verify the prophetic nature of the Old Testament Scriptures (Matt. 5:17-18; John 5:39; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; 2 Pet. 1:16-21). Specific reference to Bethlehem as the location of the Messiah's entrance into this world appears in Micah 5:2.

In view of the heavenly Father's concerted effort to prepare people for the birth and later ministry of Jesus, it is truly amazing that he made no such effort surrounding the birth of Muhammad, in view of the claims that Muslims make for his being a prophet. It should be evident to honest souls that the ministries of the two are definitely unequal, with that of Christ towering far above that of the man Muhammad. The foundation erected for Jesus' work is solid, while that on which Muhammad's rests is shifting sand, because of no special divine attempt to prepare for his coming. Is it even conceivable that the God of heaven would propose to establish a world religion on one for whom he announced no preparations to prepare people for his arrival? Much ado is made over the Bethlehem birth of Jesus, both by the Father and by the angels. What did they have to say about Muhammad's birth? Absolutely nothing! People informed by the Old Testament knew of Jesus' birthplace and made their way there following the birth. Did similar interest surround the birth of Muhammad? No!

Islamic denial of the deity of Jesus Christ is based in part on his being born, because no attributing of human form or likeness to deity conforms to Islam and because God had no consort able to give birth to his Son. Let us recall, however, that Jesus' birth was not the time of his origin but the means of his entry into this world as a human

being for the work of redemption.

2. The genealogy of Jesus Christ was foretold in the OT, whereas it was not true of Muhammad that his genealogy was of divine interest.

Again the Father had a plan for the sending of the Messiah to this world. To prepare people for his coming, especially the Israelites, to whom he would first come, God gave definite previews of the Coming One. Part of the identity of Jesus was set forth in the genealogies found in the New Testament (Matt. 1; Luke 3). The importance of this information lies in the Jewish insistence on the importance of the lineage of the Messiah. Unless such genealogical information could be established as reliable, the Jewish people would definitely reject his claims to messiahship.

The regal (royal) line of Jesus is found in Matthew 1, where his rightful claim to David's throne is verified. In Luke 3 we have the legal line of Jesus set forth, where the record shows Jesus' rightful family line all the way back to creation.

Study carefully the following information concerning Jesus' family background:

The Lineage of the Messiah

- Seed of woman (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4)
- Seed of Abram (Gen. 12:3; Gal. 3:16)
- Tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10; Heb. 7:14)
- House of David (Isa. 11:1; Acts 13:23)
- Divine in nature also (Mic. 5:2; John 1:1-2)
- Equal to God (Zech. 13:7; Phil. 2:6)

In vivid contrast to such abundant advance disclosure about Jesus' genealogy, there stands the complete dearth of such information concerning Muhammad. God evidently had no plans for the coming of Muhammad upon earth's scene, because he gave

no announcement of his coming, made no predictions of his arrival or work, and arranged for no harbinger to herald his entry.

In fairness we point out the Islamic claim that Muhammad, not the Holy Spirit, was the comforter (*paraclete*) promised by Jesus to the apostles in John 14:16. This claim, however, falls flat against the contextual identification of the *paraclete* as one known by the apostles (14:17), sent to the apostles (14:26), coming in the name of Christ (14:26), and reminding them of Jesus' teaching (14:26). Muhammad (A.D. 570-632) came too late to be known by the apostles or to be sent to them. Likewise Muhammad did not claim to have come in the name of Jesus (authorized by him to teach or to act as a prophet), and he certainly did not reiterate the teaching of Jesus or glorify him by his reminders of Jesus' teachings ("whatever I have said to you").

3. Jesus worked undeniable miracles in confirmation of his claims, but Muhammad worked no miracles.

It had been common throughout the Old Testament period for God to validate or attest the claims of the prophets by the miraculous power given to them. Such was the purpose of the miracles worked by Moses, Elijah, and other prophets. Jesus worked miracles to prove his claim to be the Son of God and the Messiah. In Peter's statement concerning such in the first gospel sermon of Acts 2:22, the fact of the miracles stood out as something not denied by those who had observed them. While some of the Jews had attributed the power for miracles to Satan (Matt. 12:24), they had never denied the reality of the miracles. The healing of the lame, restoring of sight to the blind, feeding the multitudes with a meager amount of food, walking on the water, and raising three people from the dead were unmistakable signs of the power of God involved in the ministry of Jesus Christ. An interesting correspondence occurring in John's

account of Jesus' life demonstrates that when Jesus worked a miracle, he then taught concerning his spiritual provision in the area indicated by the miracle.

For example, after restoring sight to the blind man in John 9 as a demonstration, Jesus then taught that he is the light of the world. In connection with his raising Lazarus from the dead in John 11, he said that he is the resurrection and the life. By means of miracles Jesus convinced many of his claim to be the Messiah and the Savior of the world, but Muhammad gave no signs, depending on the use of the carnal sword to "convert" people. On one occasion when he went to Medina and became the dictator, he resorted to killing those who refused to believe his message. I suppose that what miracles could not do (because he worked none), he accomplished with the instrument of death. Islam became a religion of physical conquest, as opposed to the religion of Jesus Christ's dependence upon the power of truth to persuade people and turn their wills to obedience.

The Koran has no miracle to underscore its veracity, just as Muhammad had no sign to prove his claim to be God's prophet. On the other hand, the Bible lies on the solid bedrock of proof provided by the countless miracles of Jesus and his apostles. It is uncanny that the Muslim resorts to various parts of the Bible on occasion when doing so serves his purpose (such as pointing out that it foretold the coming of Muhammad), but he then self-servingly charges the Bible with distortion, corruption, and incompleteness in areas of contradiction of his beliefs. Which time is he correct and truthful? He cannot have it both ways. One who will use the sword to force belief will also lie to prop it up, because he is not concerned about the power of truth in either instance.

4. The Father in heaven raised Jesus from the dead to verify his deity, but Muhammad's grave is

untouched. That Jesus arose from the dead on the third day rests on abundant proof. First, the Old Testament and Jesus predicted his resurrection (Ps. 16; John 2:19-21). Second, the witnesses testified that he arose and lived long enough to withstand any tests supplied by unbelievers in the early days of gospel preaching (Acts 2:32; 1 Cor. 15:4-8). Third, the empty tomb stands yet as continuing evidence, which has ever blunted all onslaughts of unbelief. Fourth, no position or theory ever concocted has dealt sufficiently with all facts. The resurrection stands; the theories fall! By means of raising Jesus from the dead, the Father declared to all people of all nations for all time to come that Jesus is his Son with authority (Rom. 1:4). Surely all recognize that God would never have thus given approval to the claims of an impostor.

Located in Medina, the tomb of Muhammad is a show-place with a mosque enclosing it and gardens and fountains surrounding it. What does it show? It continues to stand as a monument to the failure of Muhammad to arise from the dead. In the absence of any miracles to confirm his claim to be a prophet, any resurrection to mark him as such, or any fulfillment of his predictions, why should any believe him or believe in his teachings. Islam likewise falls to the ground and fails to be truth in a destiny similar to its founder's lot of confinement to a tomb.

5. The vast difference between the Koran and the Bible says much about the differences between the two founders. Jesus wrote no part of the New Testament, but he made provision for the work to be done in his sending of the Spirit of truth to guide in the revelation of truth that became the New Testament (John 14-16), whereas Muhammad also wrote nothing because he was illiterate. Authentic copies of both sacred books, however, do exist. The description of authentic does not mean that both convey truth, but that both fairly and accurately represent what the earlier (original) documents said. Because the apostles received and taught all truth (John 16:13; Acts 20:27) and because the New Testament does not permit addition or alteration (2 John 9; Rev. 22:18-19), the message is final (Jude 3). Consequently, the New Testament leaves no room for the Koran. The New Testament also affirms that there is no need for the Koran, in that it furnishes the man of God completely for all good works through Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Col. 2:10).

The Koran also could not be God's word because it is contradictory to itself and to the Bible. Numerous contradictions with the Old Testament occur in the Koran, chiefly concerning Noah, Abraham, Potiphar, Joseph, and Moses. Its contradictions with the New Testament relate to Jesus, retaliation, marriage and divorce, and the taking and breaking of oaths. For detailed information, which this article does not have space to include, we refer the reader to the *Hutto-El Dareer Debate*. Internal contradictions of

the Koran involve its claims that Jesus did and did not die on the cross (4:15 and 19:33), that belief in God by the Jew or Christian would gain a reward with the Lord and that no other religion would be acceptable (2:62 and 3:85), and its requirement to slay the pagan against its prohibition of coercion in religion (9:5, 29 and 2:256).

Only a divine being has the capacity to reveal truth in such a fashion as to make it entirely consistent and united like that of the Bible, while the contradictory nature of the Koran's teachings betrays a human source rather than a divine one. Why should anyone desire to accept the contradictory Koran when he can have the Bible, which presents a unity beyond human production.

6. The modus operandi of Christ and his followers versus Muhammad and his disciples reflects radically different attitudes and approaches. The work of Jesus and his followers always followed the line of teaching the gospel and offering proof in the form of miracles (Acts 10:39-41; Heb. 2:3-4). Moral persuasion was the means of achieving the objective of making disciples, because belief was the foundation of conversion to Jesus Christ (Mark 16:15-16). Suggestions of efforts from his disciples to employ other means met the Lord's rebuff (Luke 9:51-56; John 18:10-11, 36-37). The only power appointed by God for reaching men's hearts/minds and used by the early Christians with divine approval was the message of Christ (Acts 8:4; Rom. 1:16; Eph. 6:10-17). When so-called disciples resort to other means to make disciples, they turn aside from the way of Christ, implement their own "Great Commission," and manifest their disregard for divine wisdom.

Muslims have long employed the carnal sword to spread their religion, as have some calling themselves Christians. Numerous states have fallen to their influence, and many populations have been subdued to the practice of Islam with this weapon. The call for *jihad* (holy war) against the United States is sometimes heard from different Muslims around the world, forming the basis for much of world terrorism. Hatred for the enemies of Islam is a distinct teaching/practice of Islam, whereas the Lord Jesus Christ still calls upon his disciples to love their enemies and pray for those despitefully using them (Matt. 5:44f). Upon reflection, is it not understandable that a religion depending upon such force of arms for its advancement and maintenance is rather void of moral strength and influence?

Surely the distinctiveness of Jesus Christ and his way of serving God stands apart from the carnal status of Islam. In all of the areas here discussed and others as well, it should be obvious to fair minds that Jesus is divine, the Bible is God's word, and the religion of Christ has the sanction of heaven.

24978 Bubba Trail, Athens, Alabama 35613
bobbylgraham@juno.com

The Antichrist

Frank Himmel

“The time is ripe and getting riper for the Great Dictator, the one we call the ‘Future Fuehrer.’ This is the one who is predicted in the Scriptures very clearly and called the ‘Antichrist’” (Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* 92).

The dictator’s agenda is summarized by John Walvoord in *Armageddon, Oil and the Middle East Crisis*:

A new world dictator will first reveal himself in the role of a peacemaker in the Middle East. . . This event will take place during the first stage of the revived Roman Empire, the fourth world empire described by Daniel. . . The leaders of the ten nations will consolidate the power lost by the fall of Rome. The future Mediterranean leader will await the right moment to . . . seize control of the Ten-Nation Confederacy. For three-and-a-half years he will masquerade as a prince of peace, the saviour of the world. For the next three-and-a-half years he will use satanic wonders and power to declare himself god and ruthlessly crush all opposition. Near the end of the period the nations of the world will field armies to challenge him. Gripped in a dramatic world war, the armies will converge to begin the suicidal battle of Armageddon . . . (138, 142).

That is what premillennialists say. What does the Bible say?

Revived Roman Empire?

Not once does Daniel or any other prophet refer to a “Revived Roman Empire.” Not one verse refers to ancient Rome “disappearing to emerge again just before Christ returns to establish the kingdom of God” (Lindsey 81).

Daniel 2:44 identifies the days of ancient Rome, the fourth empire in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, as the time when God’s kingdom would be established. That is when Christ came, and that is when he took his place on his throne at God’s right hand, establishing his kingdom (Acts 2:33-36; Rev. 3:21; Col. 1:13-14). Only the presupposition of an earthly kingdom requires revamping the prophets’ time frame.

Twenty-first Century Dictator?

Premillennialists insist that the beast out of the sea in

Revelation 13 is the Antichrist, this “Future Fuehrer” who will bring on the great tribulation. But John, the author of the book, said he was describing “the things which must shortly take place” (1:1), “for the time is near” (1:3; 22:10). He said he was a “fellow-partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus” (1:9). What he was describing, ancient Rome’s opposition to Christianity, was already underway nearly 2,000 years ago!

Premillennialists insist that the “man of lawlessness” in 2 Thessalonians 2 is the Antichrist. Paul, the author, said “the mystery of lawlessness is already at work” (v. 7). What he was describing was also already underway nearly 2,000 years ago!

The Antichrist?

The Bible nowhere mentions a specific character named Antichrist. It does identify an attitude as antichrist.

Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour (1 John 2:18).

Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22).

And every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world (1 John 4:3).

For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist (2 John 7).

Do these descriptions sound like a world dictator 2,000 years removed from John’s day or false teachers already active in the first century?

Countless men in our time have been thought by some to be the Antichrist: Hitler, Mussolini (he was Italian!), Khomeini, Kissinger, Gorbachev, Hussein — the list goes

A Reflection by Paul

Bart Campbell

When Paul wrote the second letter addressed to Timothy, I have sometimes wondered if he reflected over his life in preaching the gospel of Christ. Paul reminded Timothy that all Scripture is given by the inspiration of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17). He then instructed Timothy to preach the word (2 Tim. 4:2) and the imminent prospect about the end of his life (2 Tim. 4:6-8). I know that this might be speculation on my part, but I have wondered as Paul wrote these thoughts to Timothy, if he might have reminisced concerning the various experiences that he had preaching the gospel.

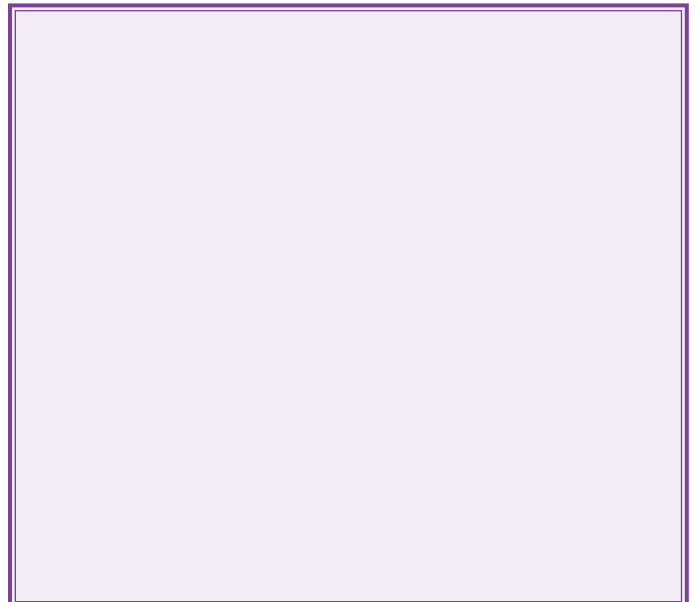
Paul may have thought about the beginning, the events that took place along the road to Damascus. He may have reflected on what he had done before the Lord revealed himself to Paul. He may have thought about the reluctance of the brethren in Jerusalem to accept him as a brother. He may have thought about all the things that had happened on his missionary journeys, both the good and the bad. With the anticipation of the end of his life, it would be normal for him to be caught up in personal reflection.

But when Paul admonished Timothy to preach the word, “reprove, rebuke, and exhort,” he did have some specific things in mind. “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths” (2 Tim. 4:3-4). Who do you suppose are the “they” of this passage? Some might say that it has to be the Jews who spearheaded the opposition against the church and particularly the Apostle

Paul. Some may say it was the Gentiles who opposed the gospel because of their attachment to idolatry that was prevalent in this period of time. But what if the “they” who Paul says would turn away from the truth and toward myths or teachers of their own desires were Christians?

As Paul would reflect upon his life as a gospel preacher, as he thought what he might say to Timothy in what could be his last communication with him, he could have admonished Timothy on the responsibility a preacher has to his brethren. “Preach the word” because some brethren may not endure sound doctrine. “Preach the word” because some brethren may acquire teachers who will tickle their ears. “Preach the word” because some brethren may turn their ears away from the truth and turn toward myths. “Preach the word” because a source of opposition to your work as an evangelist just may be some of your brethren more than the world, even though the world might put you in prison or to death.

P.O. Box 1373, Globe, Arizona 85502



on and on. Each has come and gone from the political scene. They may all be antichrist in the Bible sense of denying Jesus. None is, nor shall any other be, the “Future Fuehrer” of Bible prophecy. There is no such prophecy.

7700 Hoover Way, Louisville, Kentucky 40219

“Pitching Our Tents” continued from p. 1

“Pitching Our Tents” continued from front page

Choosing a Career

Choosing a career is not necessarily a choice of right and wrong. The Bible teaches us to work (Eph. 4:28; 1 Tim. 5:8). When one chooses to be employed, self-employed, or an employer, decisions are made which will affect his relationship to God, will have physical and mental effects personally, and will affect every relationship he has with other individuals. It is important to consider all these things when making a career decision.

Lot’s decision to dwell in the plain of Jordan may be seen as a career decision. He did that which was best for his flocks and herds. It likely was the most promising for financial growth and security. Yet, his decision involved moving his family. His new community affected his service to God. As a righteous man, it seems that he was not liked because he appeared to keep “acting as a judge” concerning the wickedness of Sodom (Gen. 19:9).

Choosing a career is not so much a choice between right and wrong as it is a choice of “pitching our tents as far as Sodom.” Working overtime may relieve financial burdens, but how will more time away from one’s spouse affect their marriage? How will the children be affected? Moving to a new community may allow one to advance his career, but how will it affect raising a family to worship and serve God? If a wife or mother continues to work or have a career, how will it affect her ability to be a homemaker (Tit. 2:5; 1 Tim. 5:14)? When it comes to jobs and careers, are we going to “pitch our tents as far as Sodom”?

Choosing a Spouse

The marriage relationship is to be a great blessing between a husband and wife. This institution was created and designed by God to fulfill the needs of man (Gen. 2:18-24). As such, to enjoy the full blessings that marriage can offer, we must look to God for wisdom in choosing a spouse and for guidance in our marriage relationship.

Marriage is a permanent relationship between one man and one woman (Matt. 19:4-6). It is a privilege to those who have a right to be married. Otherwise, only one who has put away a previous spouse for sexual immorality or is a widow/widower is free to marry (Matt. 19:9; Rom. 7:2-3). Furthermore, one should choose a spouse who understands God’s designs of that relationship and is committed to upholding them (Gen. 2:24; Col. 3:18-21).

Can a child of God marry an unbeliever? Is this a question that involves a right or wrong decision? If so, what command of God is ignored, disregarded, or disrespected if one chooses to marry an unbeliever? There are some who believe it is a sin for a Christian to marry an unbeliever. Reference is made to passages like 2 Corinthians 6:14 for support of this belief. Of those who have taken this posi-

tion, I personally have never known of a congregation withdrawing from a man or woman for choosing to marry an unbeliever.

If it is not a matter of right and wrong, should a Christian “pitch their tent as far as Sodom” and marry an unbeliever? It has been done before. Occasionally, the believing spouse has been able to convert the unbelieving spouse. However, this seems to be the exception. Many who marry unbelieving spouses are in a position where they fall away from faithful service to the Lord. The believer fails to raise their children to be Christians because the unbeliever more easily influences them. Some, who never fall away and are able to raise their children to be Christians, are in an environment of spiritual discouragement and are oppressed daily for marrying an unbeliever.

Marrying an unbeliever is not necessarily a decision involving right or wrong. However, when it comes to choosing a spouse, do you want to “pitch your tent as far as Sodom”?

Allowing Children to Work Part-time, Participate in Sports and Other Extracurricular Activities

Should a young teenager be allowed to work part-time? Should a child be allowed to participate in sports, in the band, drama club, or other activities? Are these questions that involve right and wrong decisions? If they are, then what commands of God are ignored, disregarded, or disrespected if young people participate in such activities?

Parents have the responsibility of meeting their children’s needs whether they are spiritual, mental, social, or emotional in nature. Our Lord increased in wisdom, stature, and favor with God and man (Luke 2:52). There are a lot of good things a young person can learn from meeting the responsibilities at a job and managing money. Physical talents and skills can be developed through sports. Social skills are developed with others by being members of clubs.

It is not so much a decision of right and wrong as it is a decision of whether they should be allowed to “pitch their tents as far as Sodom” when it comes to these activities. There are many examples of young Christians who are involved in these activities and remain faithful to serving the Lord. Unfortunately, there are other examples where young Christians involved in these activities fall away. Working part-time, participating in sports, and being involved with clubs has its consequences, both good and bad. Having considered the good, let us consider the bad. Being involved in such activities will put young Christians in the position of choosing between assembling with the saints or participating with their group. It will put them in close association with others who usually do not share the same morals. As these activities are known to interfere with academic work, they can interfere with spiritual work.

Some young people receive instruction and godly counsel and avoid falling prey to the pitfalls of these activities. Others are not so fortunate. Whether a young person should participate in such activities may not be a choice of right or wrong. However, when it comes to this choice, should one “pitch his tent as far as Sodom”?

Conclusion

Between right and wrong, the choice is always clear even if some choose to do wrong. Let us have moral courage to do that which is right.

Regarding decisions involving choices which require spiritual discernment, let us learn from Lot not to pitch our tents as far as Sodom. A choice may be made that is not sinful; but it may not be the best choice for one’s soul and their service to God. “And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, and that you may be without offence till the day of Christ (Phil. 1:9-10).

130 Audobon Ave., Florence, Alabama 35633

“Sports” continued from page 2

who abuse sports officials who make a call against the preferred team. Such conduct has become so commonplace that it is the subject of comedy routines on television.

To say that sports has gotten out of hand is no overreaction. I would like to consider the Christian and sports in this article.

The Bible and Sports Events

Paul made the statement, “But refuse profane and old wives= fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness. For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:7-8). When I was a student at Florida College, brother Hailey would quote this passage and say, “I want to get all the profit that I can from bodily exercise.” The Scriptures do acknowledge that bodily exercise is profitable, as any medical doctor will tell you. We do well to encourage our children to be active. America is plagued by obesity which frequently begins in the early years of childhood because children are TV/video game couch potatoes.

In 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Paul uses the athletic contests to illustrate spiritual lessons:

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every

man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.

We cite these things to acknowledge the good that athletics does. It helps keep the body physically fit. One learns group participation, social interaction in games; one learns teamwork in some sports; one learns fortitude by enduring the grueling practice sessions in preparation for the games; one learns to overcome pain in some cases; one learns to concentrate his mind on accomplishing a goal when so many distractions are around him.

I write what follows, not as one who has no interest in sports. I enjoyed playing football for three years in high school; I ran the mile in the track and field competition. I enjoy watching sports on television. I do not write as one who hates sports.

The Danger of Sports to the Christian Life

Having acknowledged the positive contribution that sports play in one’s life, one would be naive not to recognize that sports can become a threat to one’s development as a Christian. I would like to suggest the following dangers.

1. The Danger of Immodest Dress. There are some sports that create a temptation for those participating in them because of the attire that is worn. What the Bible teaches about modest dress is applicable to sports activities as well as to any other time. 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). Some sports activities involve the wearing of immodest apparel. If immodest dress is a problem for participants then it is also a problem for those who watch these contests. For example, beach volleyball is not only a problem for the players, men have no business watching women beach volleyball games because of the immodesty problem.

In first century times, the Jews objected to participation in the gymnasium because of the nudity there. 1 Maccabees 1:14-15 condemns the erecting of a gymnasium in Jerusalem “according to Gentile custom” which included physical exercise in the nude. The erecting of a gymnasium in Jerusalem was viewed as compromise with Hellenism which included participation in the Roman wrestling contests (2 Macc. 4:11-17).

I think of the immodest dress associated with such sports activities as basketball (though some uniforms are not indecent), swimming, beach volleyball, some tennis attire, and some track attire. Also, one should include the

immodesty in the cheerleading and twirlers= attire that is generally worn. The cheerleading squads for professional teams are girly shows plainly put. And Christians have no business watching girly shows.

2. The Danger of An Over-emphasis on Sports. Jesus warned of the danger of the “cares of this world” rooting out the good seed of the gospel in his parable of the sower (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23; Luke 18:4-15). Among the cares of this world that may become so all consuming that they root out service to the Lord is sports. There are parents with two or three children who are involved in sports activities who must take their children to practice practically every evening of the week, drive them to games at distant locations, and eat, sleep, and drink their sports. When the parents then become coaches or referees, there is little time left for spiritual activities. God is given secondary importance, if not completely rooted out.

Over-emphasizing sports shows itself at public worship in a number of ways. The children sometimes miss worship to attend practice and games. The more conscientious parents make sure their children attend worship, even if this means pulling them out of a game in order to attend worship. Nevertheless, the children (and adults) must turn off the excitement and activity of sports and turn on their spiritual mind, as if there were a light switch that can be flipped as one walks through the door of the meeting house. Sometimes the children do not even change into clothing more appropriate for worship; sometimes the younger children are so tired that they lay their heads on the table and fall asleep; sometimes the children forget their Bibles and lesson books; sometimes they do not take time to make preparation for class; sometimes they don't know which lesson they are on because they attended another congregation nearer to the game on the preceding week. Teachers complain that some of these children are missing so much of the class that they cannot have any continuity in the class, even if they are attending other congregations when they miss. Sometimes children sleep through evening worship services because they have played soccer all Sunday afternoon. Sometimes the family comes in late or leaves early because of games. Some seem to think that being late to services is no problem so long as one doesn't miss the soccer start time or that it is acceptable to leave early from services so that one makes the game on time. Either way, God gets short-changed for the sake of sports. “Will a man rob God?”

I was told of one family who have left the Lord's church because of sports activities. The family would attend the nearest church to the soccer field whether institutional or non-institutional. Eventually they left the non-institutional church and now hardly worship at all.

Yet, criticism of a Christian's participation in sports activities is almost sacrosanct. Parents treat sports as if they

were sacred or off-limits for criticism. Were one spending the same amount of time in other spheres of life, such as antiquing, sewing, stamp collecting, etc. people would say, AThere is something wrong here!@

3. The Misuse of One's Time. Paul wrote about the need for “redeeming” one's time saying, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16). The idea that is expressed is that Christians should use their time in view of eternity. Some have their priorities mixed up because of sports. They never volunteer for activities at church, but volunteer to coach the sports activities. They have no time for hospitality or visiting the sick and needy, but run all over the city and county to be present at the various games.

Non-sinful activities that root out spirituality are wrong. By “root out” I simply mean that they leave no time for the worship and service of God (that includes more than just attending worship somewhere). If you doubt that this is occurring, look to see whether we are producing more elders, deacons, and preachers or more sports enthusiasts — basketball players, football players, baseball players, fans, etc. In my humble judgment, we have many church attenders who have very little commitment to Bible study, prayer, and service to others.

Professional Sports

On some occasions, parents seem to push their gifted athletes to become professional athletes. There have been a small handful of Christians who have reached professional levels of athletic competition. I know one or two who have been successful in keeping their spirituality in that atmosphere. But, the environment for professional athletes is about as conducive to healthy spirituality as is boot camp for a soldier. I know a few faithful soldiers, but most Christians who enter the military struggle to survive spiritually.

Who would want to encourage his Christian child to subject himself to such temptations? Are we thinking clearly about what is most important in life?

Conclusion

I want to acknowledge that some of the things written in this article are judgmental issues. Yet, life consists in making good judgment decisions. I encourage conscientious parents to think about what messages they are sending to their children by their conduct in participating in sports activities.

6567 Kings Ct., mikewillis1@attglobal.net

July 11-14-2005

Bowling Green, Kentucky — Convention Center

Second Annual Truth Magazine Lectures

The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
8:00 - 8:50	What About Islam and the Qu'ran? Kyle Pope	Is the Biblical Text Reliable? John Smith	Are There Lost Books of The Bible? Mark Mayberry
9:00 - 9:50	Evidences: Unity of Bible: Steve Wallace	Evidences: Prophecy: Kevin Maxey	Evidences: Historical Reliabilty David Dann
10:00 - 10:50	Addictive Behaviors Pornography: Steve Wolfgang	Addictive Behaviors Substances of Abuse: Art Adams	Addictive Behaviors Gambling: Joe Price
11:00 - 11:50	Creation: Dan King	Genesis 3: Paul Blake	Genesis 6-8, The Flood: Tom O'Neal
Lunch Break			
Ladies Classes			
10:00 - 10:50	How To Deal With a Husband Addicted to Pornography: Betty Wolfgang	Teaching Children to Respect Authority: Sherilyn Mayberry	Creating Peace At Home Violet McDaniel
Auditorium			
2:00 - 4:00	Open Forum		Elders & Work of the Church
Singing 7:00 - 7:30 — Lead by R.J. Stevens			
What Does the Bible Claim For Itself? Donnie V. Rader	Is the Bible Relevant to the Modern World? Walton Weaver	Oh How I Love Thy Law: Johnie Edwards <i>(After Wednesday evening Bible Study)</i>	First Century Morals for the Twenty-first Century: Andy Alexander



NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
INDIANAPOLIS, IN
PERMIT NO.
7867