

Magazine

Godly Marriages Needed!

Jarrold Jacobs

Marriage is on the “endangered species” list in this country. The fact that so many marriages in our country end in divorce gives me great concern. Yet, it seems as if the respect for marriage among the general population continues to decline. This is truly sad.

Why is it that marriages so often fail? Some reasons for failed marriages include: money problems, infidelity, religious incompatibility, immaturity, physical abuse, emotional abuse, drunkenness, drug abuse, etc. Many other reasons could be given as to the cause for divorces today. Sadly I believe these are but symptoms of the actual problem. At the root of all marriage problems is *sin*! Let us understand friends that *anytime* a marriage ends in divorce, *someone* (or both) *has sinned*!

I have made the observation before that it seems like people spend more time preparing for their wedding than they do their marriage! I believe I am right. Folks spend more time and energy worrying about a single day which is here and gone than they do the lifetime that follows, and all the changes that come as a result. To the married folks, may I suggest we do a better job in teaching our children about marriage. To those not yet married, may I suggest that this is the time to be preparing for that potential mate.

Why say this? It is because our preparation for marriage now will go far in helping us make sure we have a marriage that will stand the test of time, and truly be a marriage “til

death do us part” (Rom. 7:2-3)! What can we do to have a godly marriage?

Make These Principles A Part Of Marriage

I think the following principles are recognized as necessary for living a “quiet and peaceable” life among men; but seldom do we realize such principles ought to be first practiced in the home. May we realize that the following characteristics are necessary in the home:

1. Love Your Neighbor As Yourself

(**Matt. 22:39**). When a lawyer asked Jesus “Who is my neighbor?” the parable Christ spoke showed that all men are our neighbors (Luke 10:29-37). Since this is true, ought not this love for our neighbor begin at home? I think so!

2. Treat Each Other As You Want To Be Treated (Matt. 7:12).

Folks have often called this passage “The Golden Rule.” I think we fail to realize that “the Golden Rule” applies at home just as it applies toward those who are strangers, or neighbors down the street!

3. Love One Another (Col. 3:14). If one wants to see a great example of love, look to Christ (John 15:13). In connection with this, Paul said the exact same thing when he told husbands to “love your wives, *even as* Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Eph. 5:25). Husbands, to what extent do you love your wives, and how do you

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Addressing Modern Issues

Mike Willis

Some age old questions continue to need answers in the twenty-first century. When Jesus stood before Pilate, the Roman procurator asked, "Are you a king?" Jesus responded, "Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth?" (John 18:37-38). That question is still being asked by contemporary man.

Post-modern man says that there is no truth. Truth is relative to the individual—that is, what is true for one man is not necessarily true for another. The idea is expressed like this: "You may think that homosexuality is sinful. If so, avoid homosexual conduct. However, do not try to impose your morality on anyone else." "You may think that pre-marital sexual relations are sinful. If so, avoid pre-marital sex, but don't preach to me your value system."

A passage of Scripture to those who have this concept has no authority over their lives. First of all, they do not accept that the Bible is a revelation from God. The very idea that God exists is not admitted by many of them; they may be agnostic or atheistic, but in either case, they do not acknowledge the Lordship of God over their lives. Second, should God exist, they do not believe that the Bible is his revelation. Rather, for such a group, the Bible is man's groping efforts to find God, not God's revelation of his will to mankind. Third, should God have chosen to reveal himself to mankind, there is no way to know which revelation expresses his will, whether it be the Qu'ran, the Rig Vedas of the Hindus, the writings of Confucius for the Chinese, the Old Testament for the Jews, or both Old and New Testaments for the Christians. Fourth, were one to accept that the Christian Bible is a revelation from God, he would still be faced with the subjective problem of interpretation.

For post-modern man, language cannot reveal the mind of God to man. He presents the problem of language conveying truth messages. He illustrates by a man writing a document. What he intends that document to affirm and what that document actually says are two different things. When another man reads that document, he reads it from his subjective background. What the document says and what he understands it to say are two different things. The communication problem between two individuals prohibits accurate

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Troubled Over Growing Old

Connie W. Adams

The Bible addresses the needs of people in every stage of life. In Titus 2:1-6 Paul gave instruction for “aged men,” “aged women,” “young women,” and “young men. “Each age has its own special challenges and growing older has its share. One wag said, “It is not so bad to get old, its just inconvenient sometimes.” But, if the normal course of life continues, we shall grow old.

As people turn from the middle years of life to face the sunset, they become aware that their time is shorter and respond in different ways. Some make vain attempts to recapture youth and give credence to the old saying that “there is no fool like an old fool.” Some become gloomy and pessimistic interspersed with bitterness. Some become selfish and overly demanding of attention and make life hard for their families. Some become sharply critical of nearly everybody and everything. But some stay young at heart, interested in life to the very end, and as active as they are able to be. These truly adorn the golden years with grace.

Old Age to be Honored

“Thou shalt honor the old man” (Lev. 19:32). David “died in a good old age, full of days, riches and honor” (1 Chron. 29:28). “The glory of young men is their strength, the beauty of old men is the grey head” (Prov. 20:29). Paul taught Timothy to treat older men as fathers and older women as mothers (1 Tim. 5:1-2). This places great responsibility on the older to live up to this honor. Neither was this intended to breed pride in the mere fact of age. In comparison to God our days are “as an hand-breadth, mine age is as nothing before thee” (Ps. 39:5). The aged are not excused for sinful behavior. The aged and the young would suffer alike in the captivity (2 Chron.36:16-17). The older must not “despise” the young (1 Tim. 4:12). Eliphaz foolishly belittled Job for his youth (Job 15:7-10). But there is a deference and respect which the younger should accord the older.

Trials and Temptations of the Sunset Years

Infirmity of the body. As we grow older, our bodies undergo significant changes. Ecclesiastes 12:3-5 symbolically pictures these changes. When youth has passed and “the years draw nigh” then hands tremble, legs weaken (there is fear of falling and breaking a hip), teeth weaken and become few, sight dims, hearing is impaired, sleep is restless, the voice becomes weak, fear of heights limits us, hair turns grey or white, what used to be light is now a burden, sexuality fades, as “man goeth to his long home, and the mourn-

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ers go about the streets.” That is the reality of aging. But as the “outward man” is perishing, the “inward man” is to be “renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16-18). When Jacob was old and his eyesight dim, he was still grateful for his blessings and wanted to bless the sons of Joseph (Gen. 48:8-11).

The danger of forsaking the Lord. How sad it is to see men who have served God faithfully in the strength of youth and middle life, turn away from him in the older years. “And it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father” (1 Kings 11:4). Timothy was warned against “old wives fables” (1 Tim. 4:7). When the family is grown, there is more time on your hands and the responsibilities of life have lessened, there is a temptation to spend too much time in idle talk, gossip, and running down the younger generation. Don’t!

Loneliness. The feeling of being neglected (whether real or imagined) can sour the spirit. This becomes the bane of many older people and of those who care for them. While you have time on your hands, younger ones are as busy with life as you used to be. Do you remember when you were younger? How much time did you spend with lonely older people? Are you accessible? Or does your manner intimidate others and cause them to back off?

Insensitivity. The fact that we are older does not exempt us from civility. What the Bible says about “gentleness” applies to the older too (Eph. 4:31-32). Some older people have developed the habit of bluntness to the point of injury. Age is no excuse for deliberately hurting others.

The Aged Can Bear Fruit for the Lord

Moses was eighty when called to Egypt to bring God’s people out of bondage (Exod. 7:7). His brother, Aaron, who went with him, was eighty-three. It is interesting that among the excuses offered by Moses, he did not say, “I am too old.” Caleb was eighty-five when he asked for and received his inheritance at Hebron (Josh. 14:10-14). Anna was eighty-four when she prophesied about Jesus (Luke 2:36-38). Paul described himself to Philemon as “Paul the aged” (Phile. 9). “Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing” (Ps. 92:13-14).

The counsel of the aged ought to be sought and respected. Rehoboam asked for and heard the counsel of the older men, but rejected it in favor of the rash advice given by his peers. His peers were wrong, the older men were right and the king so angered the people that he lost ten out of twelve tribes, a division beyond repair. Paul said the aged women should set the example of holiness and should “teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their

own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Tit. 2:3-5). There are two things to be observed here: (1) Older women have the duty to teach the younger, and (2) the younger women need to listen and learn. Yet, age does not guarantee that counsel is always right. Remember the old prophet who lied to the young “man of God” and cost him his life (1 Kings 14:11-18). The counsel of the aged must conform to divine truth or it is useless.

Many congregations have suffered for lack of older members to lead the way. Many churches have been without adequate leadership because older members retire and move to warmer climates to fish, play golf, or putter in gardens, or to attempt to “go back home” after being away for thirty or forty years. This creates a gap in leadership in churches which need a good mix of ages, including older and experienced elders, deacons, and teachers. May I ask a question? What is the retirement age in the kingdom of God?

The Ideal

“Honor widows that are widows indeed.” She is one who “trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day” (1 Tim. 5:3, 5). Those “taken into the number” (enrolled as recipients of care from the church, 1 Tim. 5:16), must be “threescore years old, having been the wife of one man, Well reported of for good works; if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work” (1 Tim. 5:9-10). The presence of such older woman in any church is a real asset to the cause.

“Aged men” are to be “sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience” (Tit. 2:2). Younger ears are listening and younger eyes are watching. The kind of men Paul described here are a treasure in any congregation.

As we near the end of the journey, while our bodies have slowed and weakened, may our spirits quicken as we glance backward to count our blessings and savor our memories, and then look ahead to the precious promises of the gospel and to an inheritance which is “incorruptible, undefiled and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:3-4).

“For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night . . . The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow: for we are soon cut off, and we fly away . . . So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Ps. 90:4, 10, 12).

When we have “gone the last mile of the way,” when the last deed has been done, when the last word has been said, “Oh bear me away on your snowy wings to my immortal home.”

P.O. Box 91346, Louisville, Kentucky 40291

The Truth Lectureship: What It Is and Is Not

Ron Halbrook

I have received a brotherly and friendly request to briefly explain the rationale and nature of the Truth Magazine Lectureship which began in 2004.

1. The Guardian of Truth Foundation exists as a business because of the interest of individual Christians to provide Bible teaching materials. In offering these Bible lectures or lessons, we are acting together on an individual basis to teach the truth of God's word as other Christians may do at any time and place they can find such an opportunity.

2. We are not acting as an agency of any local church or churches in any way or in any sense. We have no desire and take no action to organize the churches to join in doing anything. All local churches can and must press forward to do their own work.

3. We do not wish to pressure anyone to attend or approve our lectures, any more than a family which might provide Bible study lessons in their home. We do not pressure or throttle any speaker in an effort to limit what he must say or not say if he agrees to present a lesson. If a brother does not wish to attend or speak, we consider him to be sound and faithful the same as any other brother. At the first lectureship in 2004, we even set aside time in the open forum for anyone to speak who wished to express disagreement with our lectureship. That same door remains open when we conduct open forums at subsequent lectureships. We have no divisive or factional spirit about this matter.

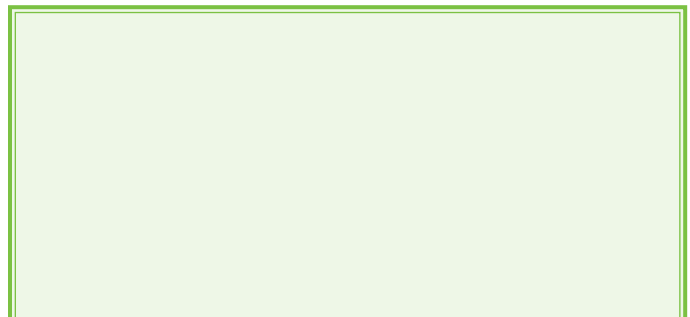
Since some brethren have raised the issue of the missionary society, let me offer this observation. Our situation is very different from that of the missionary society. (1) The missionary society was not a business which afforded individuals a means to produce and to provide teaching materials. Rather, it was organized as an ecclesiastical

organization which sought and received representatives from the churches. (2) The missionary society organized in 1849 was the direct result of Alexander Campbell's many articles in the 1840s advocating some means of centralizing the work of local churches.

For additional study, consider my article entitled, "Let the Church Be the Church!" (*Truth Magazine* XLVIII, 18 [Sept. 16, 2004]:560, 563-65 [16, 19-21]). For more detailed study, see *The Garrett-Humble Debate* (an oral debate which occurred in 1954, published in 1955, and reprinted by the Guardian of Truth Foundation in 2005) and the book entitled *We Have A Right: Studies in Religious Collectivities* by Dan King and Mike Willis (Guardian of Truth Foundation: Bowling Green, KY, 2005).

As brethren discuss their views of the lectureship, let us all express ourselves in a kind and courteous way. First, this promotes a good atmosphere for study and exchange of thoughts. Second, such matters relate to personal conclusions and activities which do not involve the local church or our relationship as brethren. A calm and courteous spirit in discussing such matters will help to avoid any unnecessary friction and alienation.

3505 Horse Run Ct., Shepherdsville, Kentucky
40165



Preaching the Gospel in Northwest Indiana . . .

John, Peggy and Johnny Berlin
300 North Liberty St.
Hobart, IN. 46342
(219) 942-2663

A request for benevolent assistance: January 9, 2006

Dear Brethren,

Greetings! I hope this letter finds you all well.

Please let me introduce myself. My name is John Berlin. I've been preaching for the Lord over thirty-two years. My preaching has been in Missouri, Kentucky, Virginia, Ohio, and Indiana. I am presently working with the church in Hobart, Indiana. We begin our ninth year at Hobart on June 1, 2006.

My wife's name is Peggy and my son, Johnny, is twenty-two and still at home. One daughter lives east of Cincinnati, Ohio. Two daughters live in North Carolina with their families. We have six grandchildren.

It's difficult for me to write for help. I'm not completely sure of how to go about it. The church here is unable to be of much assistance. I hope you will take time to consider this important request.

On December the 8, 2003 my wife was diagnosed with cancer. On March 11-13 she had a very painful implant to treat the cancer. This was after several painful radiation treatments. She is said to be cancer free now. We are very thankful for this. Follow-up tests will have to be done for the next five years. During this time our medical debt has climbed to over \$64,389.60. Please allow me to tell you more.

Back before Peggy got cancer we had an insurance plan that was going to go up to \$1,200 per month with a \$4,500 deductible amount. This we could not afford, so we dropped it and took a less expensive plan. This turned out to be a big

mistake. This plan failed to help much with the cancer expenses. We are now with the "Caring & Sharing" program. This plan does not pay for debts before October 2004.

We applied for Medicaid on March 18, 2003 and waited for over a year and a half for an answer from them. Finally we received a denial letter. We were advised to send in an appeal letter. This we did on July 14, 2005. On November 1, 2005 we met with the approval board. We received a reply on November 22, 2005 that our appeal was denied.

With our medical debt continuing to increase and our attempts at finding financial help from other organizations being unsuccessful, we feel that we must seek help from our brethren. Sometimes things get greater than one can handle alone.

My wife just had (December 7) a nodule removed from her thyroid gland. In fact they took 40% of her thyroid at the same time. No cancer was found. We were given a gift of \$5,000 and \$1,000 from two congregations that made this possible. A debt of \$2,974.56 is left. We have received at total of \$21,000 from brethren in the past two years. This is not included in the \$64,389.60 figure. Brethren sure have been a blessing. We are so grateful!

May I humbly ask if the church where you are has the ability to help us in our need. Any amount will be deeply appreciated. I'll be happy to supply you with any information you might desire. The church at Hobart will be monitoring the funds received and how they are spent. Please send your gift to: Hobart Church of Christ: c/o John and Peggy Berlin, 300 N. Liberty St., Hobart, IN 46342.

Thanks for the time you have taken to consider this request.

My best to you in the Lord.

Sincerely,
John D. Berlin

The Parable of the Two Debtors

Bill Cavender

One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment.

Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."

"A certain money lender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with

oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Luke 7:36-50, ESV).

In point of time, this parable is evidently the first one spoken by our Savior. He was in Galilee, in the second year of his public life and preaching. His first year was defined by his two visits to Jerusalem for two Passovers (John 2:13-5:47), with the months between being spent in preaching and doing mighty works in Galilee. In his second year in Galilee, he reached the height of his popularity, having done many miracles in his first year, and now his fame was spread abroad and multitudes followed him (Matt. 4:23-25; 12:15-21; Mark 3:7-12; Luke 6:17-19). Early in this second year he chose twelve from his number of disciples, whom he called "apostles" (Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-19). He took the Twelve aside upon a mountain northwest of Capernaum, and taught them the "Sermon on the Mount" (Matt. 5:1-7:27), teaching a

Information enclosed: Request letter, references, medical debt chart, income figures.

References

1. Jimmy Whitaker: Treasurer and member at Hobart, 219-942-6488.
2. Greg Litmer: 1-859-647-2342 (preacher).
3. Steve Hardin: 1-317-839-0174 (preacher).
4. Johnie Edwards: 1-812-336-2085 (preacher).
5. Mark Russell: 1-219-465-4089; Cell Ph. 219-309-0143 (preacher).
6. Dwaine Kallenbach: 1-636-456-2466 (Member of the

church in Warrenton, MO. where I've preached in the past. He knows our situation.)

7. Jerry Ribar: Member at Hobart (219-947-4888).
8. Charles Rawdon: Member at Hobart (219-762-1120).

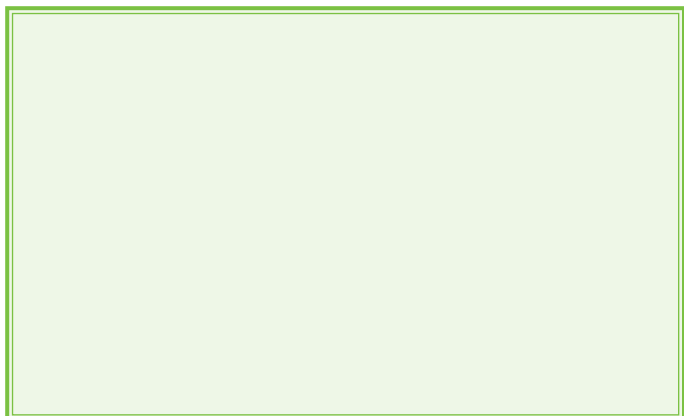
Income

1. Hobart, IN. — \$4,064.00
2. Plainfield, IN. — \$ 600.00
Total: \$4,664.00 per month
3. Church at Hobart provides a house. We pay everything out of my income except for the house.

synopsis to the multitudes by the sea when he came down from the mount (Matt. 7:28-29; Luke 6:20-49). He healed the centurion's servant at Capernaum (Matt. 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10). At Nain he raised the widow's son from death (Luke 7:11-17). He received John's messengers (John was now in prison), answered their inquiries, and then explained John to the people and spoke those noble tributes to the Baptizer (Matt. 11:2-30; Luke 7:18-35). This was the last contact between John and Jesus, shortly before John's death by beheading and Jesus' death by crucifixion about a year and a half later.

After this visit with John's disciples, Jesus was invited to a meal in the house of a Pharisee, evidently in Capernaum, where he taught the parable of the two debtors (Luke 7:36-50). After this, he went about Galilee on his second preaching tour (Luke 8:1-3); he encountered scribes and Pharisees who accused him of being in league with Beelzebub (Satan) and who committed an "eternal sin" when they did so (Matt. 12:22-45; Mark 3:19-30); he taught the people who the "true kindred" of the Christ are, in contrast to blood kin, our family (Matt. 12:46-50; Mark 3:31-35; Luke 8:19-21). It was after these events that our Lord taught the parables by the Sea of Galilee, beginning with "The Parable of the Sower" (Matt. 13:1-53; Mark 4:1-34; Luke 8:4-18).

One cannot but wonder regarding the motives and purposes of Simon in inviting Jesus to his house for a meal. This is one of those "secret things" which belong to the Lord our God (Deut. 29:29). Open hostility to Jesus in Galilee, removed from the seat of Jewry (Judea and Jerusalem; John 7:1), was not yet as apparent as it later would be (Matt. 15:1-9; Mark 7:1-13). The "Prophet" of Galilee, now famous throughout the land, excited attention and a following of disciples, and would be of interest to a Pharisee. Simon's motives may have been sincere and not ulterior, having a true desire to know Jesus better and to determine for himself whether or not Jesus *really* was a prophet. Luke names the "Pharisees" twenty-eight times in his account of the life of Jesus and in every case, except Simon's, they are indicted for their hostility to Jesus.



He invited Jesus to his house but with a chilly, coldly courteous reception. Other guests were there. They would be judging Simon as well as Jesus, and, for sure, Simon's conduct that day would be made known to the leaders of the sect in Jerusalem. Simon must be careful. On the one hand he acknowledged the importance of Jesus and his claims, and on the other he must keep his distance and not appear to be a disciple and ally of the Prophet. Jesus did not, therefore, receive the warm, normal, gracious courtesies which would be extended to an important guest. So, why did Jesus accept the invitation, knowing in advance how he would be received? Because Simon was a sinner! He needed help, teaching, and salvation, just as much and more so, as did the assembled guests and the "sinful woman" who disrupted his meal and perplexed his guests. Any life which is disfigured by censoriousness, harshness, a party spirit, and pride, needs instruction, grace, mercy, and salvation. But the sad fact is that folks of this kind and class know not that they need the "Great Physician." They think they are "whole" and set others at naught (Matt. 9:10-13; Luke 18:9-14). Simon loved little, had little faith, thought himself to be a "little sinner," but an important religious leader. He needed help from Jesus more than did the "sinful woman" who came to his house, unwanted and uninvited!

This unnamed, sinful woman, entered the house and, without any vacillation, came to Jesus. Generally, commentators want to associate her with harlotry. Adam Clarke argues that she was simply a heathen, Gentile woman of Galilee (Gal. 2:15-16; see his comments on Luke 7:37). Jesus, shortly before this visit to Simon's house, invited penitent sinners, those who are laboring under the yoke and heavy burdens of sin, who are conscious of their sins, and who learn of Jesus who can help and save them, and give them rest and peace, this Jesus invited such ones to come to him (Matt. 11:28-30). This "sinful woman" could very well have heard this message of relief, salvation, and comfort. It is obvious she knew who Jesus was, his claims and his power. She had heard him. She "learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house." With her faith and her ointment, she made preparations to find him and to show her love for him. She, who was judged by most to be of the lowest rungs of society, climbed the ladder to heaven that day with Jesus holding her hand and pronouncing her to be well-pleasing to God. Greater contrasts can scarcely be imagined than those seen in the meeting of the Pharisee and the "sinful woman"—and all of this because Jesus was there!

She entered the dining area of Simon's house, broken-hearted, weeping profusely, wetting the exposed feet of Jesus with her tears, loosening the tresses of her hair and wiping his feet dry, and, bending over, began kissing his feet (Greek: "kissed repeatedly"). Then she broke the seal of the alabaster cruse and anointed his feet with the perfumed ointment. Simon saw all of this—but what did he

see? All he saw was a “sinful woman” with her hands on Jesus, pouring out, not only ointment, but tender, heart-felt expressions of love and devotion. This wasn’t appropriate! “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner!” So, Simon thinks Jesus is an imposter, he is not a prophet, he is traveling under false colors! A real, God-endowed prophet would have known better than to allow such a woman to be near him, let alone touch him! Jesus, knowing Simon’s heart and thoughts, told Simon, “I have somewhat to say to thee,” and Simon replied, “Speak” or “Say on.”

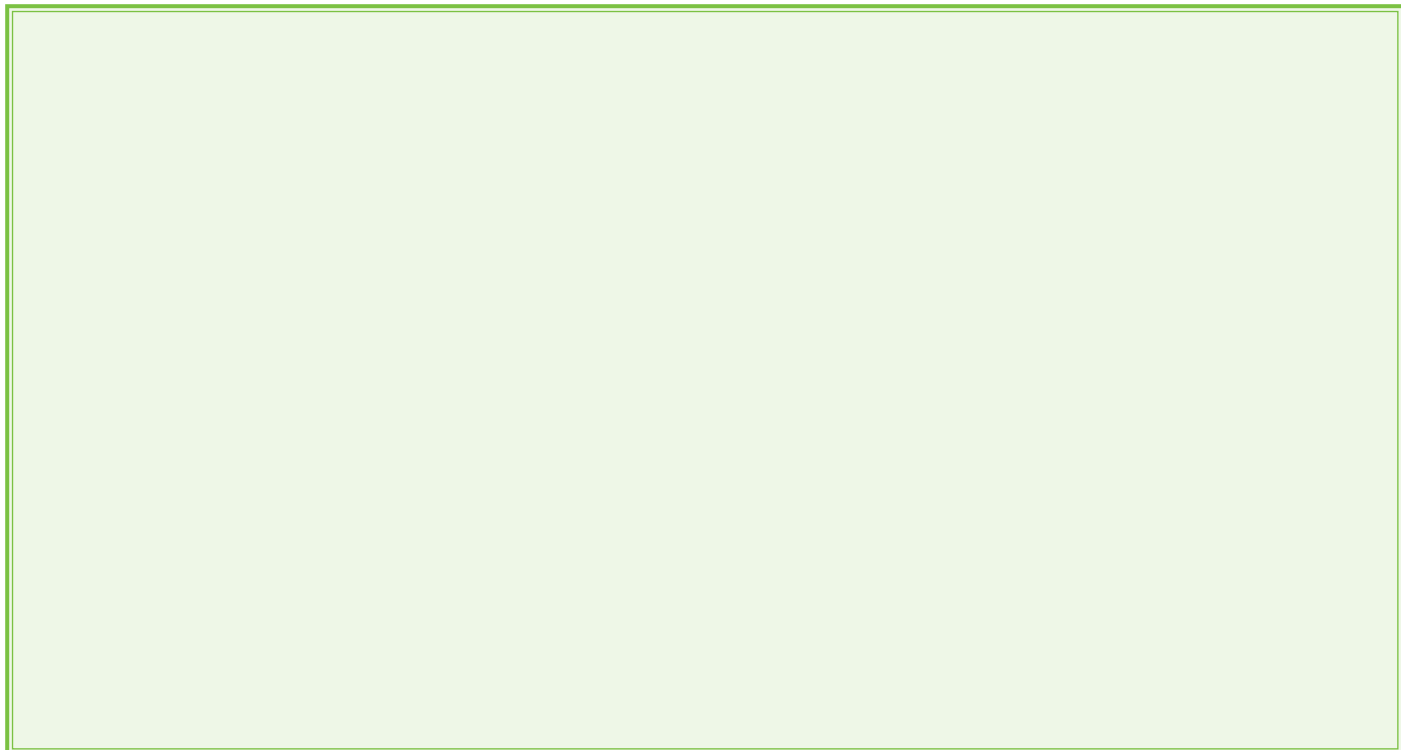
Jesus spoke the parable of the two debtors to Simon. The five hundred denarii debtor is the woman; the fifty denarii debtor is Simon; the creditor is God. One owed ten times more than the other. Both were insolvent; neither could pay. The Creditor “frankly” (“freely,” “forgave of his generous bounty”) forgave both of them. Now, which one will love the Creditor, their Benefactor, the more? Simon answered correctly: “The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt.”

Now the beauty of the parable and the great lesson of this encounter between Jesus and Simon is taught us. Simon may have seen this woman somewhere before she entered his house. To his dismay, he now had seen her in his house. But he was blind. He had never seen faith, love, mercy, penitence, sorrow for sin, and redemption—those inner, spiritual traits and qualities which one must have and cultivate if he is to see God. Jesus put Simon and the

woman side by side. She did the very hospitable, lovely deeds from a sincere and contrite heart that Simon did not do or have. “Simon, I do see and know this woman, but do *you* see her? Side by side you stand with her, both debtors, and, by comparison, you are as coarse as burlap and she is as refined and pure as finely spun silk” (borrowing words from a sermon preached years ago). In truth, Simon was the five hundred denarii debtor and the woman was the fifty!

“Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” “Your sins are forgiven.” And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.” May goodness and mercy continue to follow thee (Ps. 23:6)! The Pharisee murmured and the penitent rejoiced. Jesus had won the woman and saved her soul. Jesus tried with Simon but there is no indication he succeeded with him. Her faith had saved her, and her expressions of love and devotion to Jesus were the growth and fruits of faith. “Justified ones live by faith,” so said the prophet and the apostle (Hab. 2:4; Rom. 1:17, etc.). Hearts and lives filled with the love of God in Christ Jesus will ever be fruitful and will never be neglectful, even to such sweet deeds of hospitality and kindness as washing the feet with tears, wiping them with the hair, bestowing kisses of genuine and godly affection, and anointing others with the holy oil of friendship and fellowship in the house of God with Jesus (Ps. 23:5-6).

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Hebrews 7:25 and “Once Saved, Always Saved”

Larry Ray Hafley

Mr. Jones believes, and Baptist doctrine teaches, that God will “save forever” those who cease to “draw near to God.” He says that God “By no means will ever disown one of his children,” even if they quit drawing near to God. Hebrews 7:25 makes no such promise to such people.

“Rev. Mack Jones” of Baytown, Texas, writes a weekly column in his church bulletin entitled, “From Your Pastor’s Heart.” From it, we extract the following:

We are often questioned about the eternity of our belief. People want to know if God will disown them. The emphatic answer is, no! By no means will God ever disown one of his children. Heb. 7:25 states this very clearly; “Hence, also, he is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (NAS). We are saved forever. We draw near to God through Christ, and He makes intercession for us. This gives us great assurance of our faith in Christ (*Wooster Baptist Church Messenger*, Vol. 29, Number 8, 2/20/01).

Review of Mack Jones’ Remarks

It is to be doubted that folks question “the eternity of (their) belief.” Faith, like hope, is not eternal. Both shall be swallowed up in the possession of “life and immortality” brought to fruition and completion. However, we shall let that pass and deal with the main thrust of Mack’s message.

1. Observe this stark contrast between the word of the spirit of Jones and the word of the Spirit of Jesus:

Mr. Jones said, “People want to know if God will disown them. The emphatic answer is, no! By no means will God ever disown one of his children.”

The Bible says, “I will smite them . . . and disinherit them” (Num. 14:12). “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered: and men gather them, can cast them into the fire, *and they are burned*” (John 15:6). “If we deny him, he will also deny us” (2 Tim. 2:12). “Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off” (Rom. 11:22).

God will “disinherit, cast forth, deny, and cut off” some of his children. This cannot be speaking of the unsaved, for they have no inheritance and are already denied and cut off (John 3:18). Thus, God will, contrary to Mr. Jones’ claim, “disown” his disobedient children. Jones says, “He won’t.” God says he will. Whom do you believe?

2. As proof of his contention that God will never “disown one of his children,” Mr. Jones refers to Hebrews 7:25, “Hence, also, he is able to save forever those who draw near to God

through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”

The passage is not disputed, nor is its teaching denied. It is certain that God will “save forever those who draw near to God through Him” (Christ). With that we are in complete agreement. There is no difference between us on that point.

However, that is not the question at issue. Mr. Jones believes, and Baptist doctrine teaches, that God will “save forever” those who cease to “draw near to God.” He says that God “By no means will ever disown one of his children,” *even if they quit drawing near to God.* Hebrews 7:25 makes no such promise to such people.

It is indeed possible for one who once drew near to God to depart—“many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (John 6:66). “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12). Remember, there is absolutely no way that a child of God who draws near to God will ever be disowned. Jones is right about that, but what of those who, instead of *drawing near*, turn and “*draw back*, or fall away? What of them? “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who *draw back unto perdition*; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Heb. 10:38, 39).

Conclusion

Those who “draw near,” God will “save forever,” but those who “draw back” do so “unto perdition,” or destruction.

Other passages in the book of Hebrews show that Jones is wrong when he says that a child of God will not be disowned, no matter how he lives. Even if we did not know how to explain Hebrews 7:25, we would know that the Baptist doctrine of “once saved, always saved,” is false.

As proof thereof, note the following passages in Hebrews.

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him (Heb. 2:1-3).

Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God (Heb. 3:12).

Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it (Heb. 4:1).

Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief (Heb. 4:11).

For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:26-29)?

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled (Heb. 12:15).

These passages show us that Hebrews 7:25 does not teach that a child of God cannot, under any circumstances, be disowned. There is perfect

harmony between these texts and that of 7:25. As long as one draws near to God, he is “saved forever,” but if one ceases to believe, departs from God and is “defiled,” a punishment worse than death awaits him!

It is at this point that someone will say, “But, the Lord said the child of God is ‘saved forever.’ When he says that, he cannot turn and disown that person.”

Well, let us see what God means when he says a man is saved and will not be lost. Let us ask him, “Lord, when you say a man is saved, are you saying that he cannot be lost, no matter what else occurs? Is that what you are saying?” Hear the Lord’s answer to our question:

“When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it” (Ezek. 33:13). From this text, we learn what the Lord means when he says the righteous man “shall surely live.” He does not mean that he will live, no matter what he does, or how he lives. Rather, the Lord said that when I say he will surely live, “if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it.”

Consider the reverse. God says the wicked shall surely perish. He says the wicked will be lost forever (John 3:36). Do Baptists believe that because God says the wicked are condemned that they cannot be saved? Certainly, not! So, as we all believe that though the wicked are said to be doomed, we know that if they turn they can be saved. Likewise, though the righteous are said to be saved, they will be lost if they turn back into sin (Rom. 11:22).

At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a

kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them (Jer. 18:7-10).

Language could not be plainer to one who believes what the Lord said. To those who are wedded to a doctrine rather than love for the truth, nothing will suffice to convince their hardened hearts (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

Concluding Remarks

First, let it be noted by those who say we are “answering questions no one is asking,” that this Baptist preacher says he is “often questioned” about this topic. We know the answer he gives, and the danger it represents. If our brethren who think we ought not to deal directly with such issues had taught the truth on the subject, perhaps there would be fewer souls turning to men like “Pastor Mack” for answers.

Second, some find fault with reviews of this nature. They speak of how they sincerely appreciate the truth, but they “just wish” it had not been done in such a “dogmatic,” or “bigoted,” or “legalistic,” or “pharisaical,” or “narrow-minded” (take your pick) manner.

Will those folks reprimand Mr. Jones for his plain, unequivocal avowals of his position? Note his “dogmatic and judgmental” reply to the question, “Will God ever disown one of his children?” Without testing the winds, without any sympathy for the “heartfelt feelings” of those who may disagree with him, the “Rev. Jones” says, “The emphatic answer is, no! By no means will God ever disown one of his children.” Now, that is bold and direct! When he states his position in clear and certain terms, allowing no space for a contrary view, he receives no rebuke. Why, then, are we criticized and condemned when we take an equally

steadfast stance? Why is it right for a false teacher to state his error boldly and directly but wrong for us to oppose it in the same way?

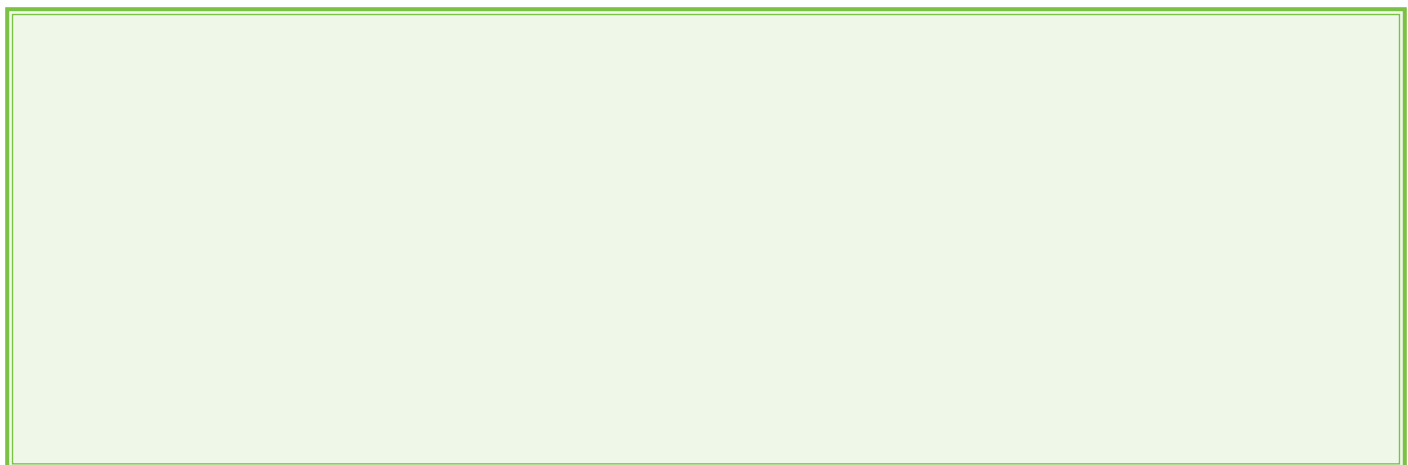
Third, will those who know how to answer such men as Mr. Jones please do so? They say they agree with us. They say we are teaching the truth, but they think we are not doing it as it ought to be done. That is fine. Let our critics, then, do the work. Let them give the answers as they should be given. I shall be happy to step aside and let them say what should be said in the way it should be said. Any takers?

These final points may be seen as unnecessary and cited as proof of a well meaning, but misguided, malevolent spirit. Again, if that be so, let well meaning, but *correctly* guided, benevolent spirits take over and handle aright the word of truth.

The truth is that there is an attitude which looks down in disgust at contending for the faith. They believe that answering denominational doctrines is a disservice to the work of the Lord and that doing it demeans and diminishes us before the world. This spirit is at home declaring their despising of “our traditions,” but God forbid that they should dirty themselves by uprooting the traditions of men. They regale shallow, superficial spirituality with their mocking disdain of “brotherhood watchdogs,” making fun of those who endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Beware of this popular, people pleasing spirit. It will not teach your children the difference between human religion and divinely revealed faith. It will not teach your grandchildren the exclusive, distinct nature of the church Jesus bled and died for. As it was before the days of Moses in Egypt when a king arose that “knew not Joseph,” so it will be among us that a generation will arise that knows neither Joseph, Jehovah, nor Jesus.

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Immortally Arrayed: A Tribute to Mary Graham

Bobby L. Graham

When life on earth for me is past,
O Savior take my hand.
Lord grant that I might firmly stand
Upon the golden strand.

When I shall cease to walk life's road,
Let me come home to Thee;
Take me into Thy blest abode
To dwell eternally.

When all my labors are complete,
And I can work no more;
O Savior guide my weary feet
Thru death to heaven's door.

Chorus: For soon my journey here must end,
My earthly life must fade.
Lord grant that I might then ascend
Immortally arrayed.

Harry Presley; R.J. Stevens

These beautiful, moving, and comforting words, set to an equally beautiful melody, highlight the glorious hope of the child of God. It is variously described in the New Testament as the hope of eternal life, the hope of an inheritance, the hope of eternal salvation, and the hope of the gospel. In this hope the dying and the surviving can legitimately rejoice because of the work of Christ, both finished and unfinished, and because of the individual's faithfulness (Rom. 12:12).

The song depicts the immortal clothing of the spirit/soul, the real person, in the morning of the resurrection. Concerning that event the apostle Paul wrote in Philippians 3:21, "Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." In Paul's letter to Corinth there is more information about

the body of the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:35-55). We believe that Mother will be immortally arrayed.

This song was led by Mother's grandson, Richard, and sung by the large gathering of people at the funeral of Florence Mary Reynolds Graham, whose soul departed her frail and suffering body early on the Lord's Day, January 22, 2006. What a privilege it was to be the oldest of her and Riley Leon Graham's four sons (Don, Steve, and Dan being the others), and what a privilege it was to sing of the hope that we have for her and for ourselves if we remain steadfast in serving the Lord to the end.

Mother was arrayed with singing all of her life. In her early years she was blessed by the Lord with a beautiful soprano voice, which she used as a member of the college chorus at Berry College in Rome, Georgia. In this way she met and married another member of the chorus, Leon Graham. After conversion to Jesus Christ under the preaching of Franklin T. Puckett at the Poplar Street church in the early 1940s, she continued her enjoyment of good music and singing. My brother Don and I well recall her singing "A Wonderful Savior Is Jesus My Lord" in our early years as she went about the house. It was fitting that we use this, her all-time favorite song, in the funeral service. Other songs used were "Jesus Lover of My Soul" and "Blessed Be the Name of the Lord." During her final minutes various family members quietly sang "Precious Memories," "Amazing Grace," and "Blessed Assurance" in her small area of the Intensive Care Unit. She enjoyed singing with family at home on their 60th wedding anniversary, in the local congregation,



Mary Graham

at area singings, and a few times at R.J. Stevens' Singing School. It is ironic that she was little able to sing with force during her last years, but she did continue singing as able and receiving benefit from the singing of other saints.

Mother also was arrayed (adorned) with modest apparel, with good works, and with a meek and quiet spirit. Such is the spiritual adornment desired by the Lord, according to Paul in 1 Timothy 2:9-10 and to Peter in 1 Peter 3:4-5. Many received the benefit of her kindness and generosity, as well of her example through many years. College students at the University of North Alabama, young preachers moving to Florence or just passing through town needing a place to stay or a meal to eat until they were set up in town, visiting gospel preachers in meetings, and many others enjoyed her hospitality on numerous occasions. Young women studying at UNA sometimes competed for the opportunity to work at her house, because they knew Mary and Leon would work them some but pay them and feed them well. Kerry Cox recently said that she thought Mother had the girls come so that she could feed them and give them some money. She taught Bible classes for children for many years and in later years, women's classes. Different women who visited at the funeral home remarked about how much they learned from her example and her teaching. It is no surprise that many of them "camped out" at Daddy's house during the days following Mother's death, with largesse in food and service unparalleled in our experience. One woman told me that in the Helton Drive congregation Mother began the practice of having various women not only take food to the house

where there had been a death, but also serve at mealtime, clean the house, and stay at the house during the visitation and funeral. While Mother had bestowed such bounty on many in similar situations, those who had learned the value of such service in part from her reciprocated the same to her family in our time of need. It was a joy to experience such loving treatment, especially knowing the motivation and the example behind it.

Finally, Mother was adorned with the gospel of Christ. She wanted the true gospel taught, and she herself taught it in appropriate settings. She appreciated faithful proclaimers of truth and expressed her appreciation to them in word and deed. She set an example for her family, and her grandchildren "worshiped the ground that she walked on." Her life and commitment to the gospel made it possible for her husband to serve as an elder for many years. Two of her sons preach regularly, and a third one preaches some of the time. Mother enjoyed proofreading my commentary on Hosea as I was writing it a few years ago, and she looked forward to doing the same on my workbook on Paul's life. The spiritual was the major area of her life.

Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her . . . Give her of the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates" (Prov. 31:27, 31).

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Truth Magazine and Related Matters

Dick Blackford

This year *Truth Magazine* observes fifty years of publication, a milestone that few papers reach. Brother Willis also observes thirty years as its editor, another milestone. My congratulations and best wishes to him for his many years of labor and for a difficult task performed.

My Association and Role as a Staff Writer

In my initial article when I was first asked to write for the paper, I stated my feelings about the job. That being that I represent only myself and no one else has to answer for what I write or that any position I take should not be attributed to other writers. They should not be made “guilty by association.” Conversely, I reserved the same privilege for myself—that no one else represents me and no position taken should be attributed to me just because it appeared in the same paper.

I have always viewed the papers as a medium for the sharing and exchange of ideas. Have I agreed with every editorial decision made during that time? The answer is no, but I fail to see that it would have been any different had I been writing for any other paper. I have frequently seen editorial decisions of other papers with which I did not agree. Good or bad, those decisions are left up to the editor.

What Is Truth Magazine?

In recent years this paper has come in for criticism in what appears to be a vendetta by a few other editors. Part of the problem is because of a misconception of reality. *Truth Magazine* is not a coalition of preachers with an agenda, other than we all agree that truth should be pursued. It is a goal we shoot for. The name does not suggest that the paper has and always will have a monopoly on truth. Some of the staff writers I have never met, though they have written for a considerable time. Others, I barely know. Nor do I know all of the people who operate the business end of the bookstore and paper. I have never been asked to take a position or even to defend the paper. Nor has any pressure ever been exerted on me to coerce me to take a position. And this article is solely my idea.

For a while the paper bore the name “*The Guardian of Truth*.” This was not an arrogant claim. Some erroneously chose to put the worst interpretation on that to mean the paper claimed a monopoly on truth and was protecting it from everybody else! The truth was that *The Gospel Guardian* was purchased and merged with *Truth Magazine* and a portion of both names was retained for a period of time in honor of the good that had been done through the years by *The Gospel Guardian*. However, every Christian should be a guardian of truth and unashamed to admit it. “O Timothy, guard that which is committed unto thee” (1 Tim. 6:20).

A few years ago an open letter was written to Florida College. Some of the signers of the letter were men who write for *Truth Magazine*. Although I saw the letter prior to its being sent, I and others who write for the paper, of our own volition chose not to sign it, although I never discussed it with any other writer. No pressure was exerted on me either way whatever.

Some time before that there was a controversy over a “questionnaire” used by a congregation in Texas. Some writers defended it while others did not and an exchange of views was printed in the paper from men who write for *Truth Magazine*. No pressure was exerted on me to “line up” on either side.

More recently, two respected writers for the paper had an exchange on a question related to marriage, divorce, and remarriage. As a staff writer, I was never asked to line up or take sides with either man. Very few papers in recent years have endeavored to be this open and fair. Of course, it is always the editor’s prerogative as to how much space is given or how important he considers an issue to be, whether the reader agrees or disagrees.

Balance

The greatest challenge that faces any editor is balance in subject matter (it is also a great challenge to preachers in a

local work and it is good to keep good records for this reason). For convenience we have divided subject matter into different categories—usually (1) *first principles – doctrinal issues*, (2) *moral issues*, (3) *personal issues*, such as family matters, dealing with grief, suffering, discouragement, etc. But since *doctrine* means “teaching,” all of it could rightly be called doctrine.

For the most part *Truth Magazine* has presented a balance of views on a variety of subjects (from my viewpoint). My personal opinion is that I would like to see more material to help Christians in their daily walk (including their efforts at evangelism) than material that would mainly interest preachers who spend a lot of time in deep theological discussions behind a computer.

The man or woman who works on the assembly line and has chores to do when he/she gets home from work doesn't have time for long dissertations and may be discouraged from reading, though they may be looking for some material that will help them in a discussion they're having at work. The same for a high school or college student who already has loads of homework. Sometimes the editor will see a need for an in-depth study and it would make it more readable to print it in installments (which has often been done).

There are all kinds of situations and experiences that Christians face and trying to cover all the bases is a great challenge for any editor. If you have a topic you would like to see discussed, I am sure the editor would be glad to weigh the merits of it and use his best editorial judgment—or perhaps point you to a past issue that contains helpful material.

Brotherhood Control

Some have imagined that *Truth Magazine* wants to control the brotherhood. The only oversight God gave for the oversight of the brotherhood is Jesus Christ. He is the head of the church (Eph.1:22, 23). He did not designate “churchhood elders” (since he did not make a “hood” of churches—each one is independent) and that is one of the reasons we have opposed the sponsoring church arrangement in which one set of elders solicits funds from a plurality or all of the congregations for a project they have chosen to oversee for the “churchhood.” Elders are to oversee the flock “among you” (1 Pet. 5:2; Acts 20:28).

Likewise, he did not designate any preacher or group of preachers to regulate the brotherhood. I don't even want the job. However, we are to “love the brotherhood” (1 Pet. 2:17) and this may involve printing articles of general interest and concern for all Christians. These would include warnings as well as encouragement. But the primary work of the local preacher is the local congregation of which he is a member. That takes precedence over my association

with *Truth Magazine* and from time to time I have turned down requests for articles or study materials when my local workload was at its heaviest, knowing I could not do justice to the material requested. There would be no more reason to suggest that *Truth Magazine* wants to control the brotherhood (since it is not a coalition of preachers with an agenda) than to suggest the same of other papers that warn or encourage Christians in general.

If someone does imagine this to be the case, it is just that—imagination, *not reality*. And no such evidence has been offered. But if someone has a vendetta against the paper, it makes a good “straw man.”

Truth Magazine Lectures—A “Gospel Meeting?”

“Gospel meeting” is not a biblical phrase nor does it appear in any dictionary. It is a coined phrase that harmonizes with the Scriptures when we define what we mean by the term (much like the term “Great Commission”). I wish I had a nickel for every time a denominational person has asked me if a “gospel meeting” is something like a “revival.”

What most brethren mean by the term “gospel meeting” is a series of consecutive nights in which a local congregation has an outreach to the community to teach them the gospel. An invitation is extended for folks to obey the gospel at the close of each lesson.

While no one would “forbid water” if someone wanted to obey the gospel during a lectureship, the lectures are not designed as an outreach to the community but are usually in-depth studies on a particular theme or things that would and should be of general interest to all Christians (such as lessons on “the family,” in the upcoming lectureship). No invitation is extended at the close of the lessons and no invitation hymn is sung. It is therefore, not a “gospel meeting” as we have commonly understood and generally used the term. However, some editors, such as Floyd Chappellear in his paper, continue to criticize the lectures as the “Truth Magazine gospel meetings” as he did in his December issue.

I recently saw brother Chappellear at the Florida College lectures. It is one of the great mysteries of the universe why he refers to the *Truth Magazine* lectures as “gospel meetings” but does not refer to the Florida College lectures as “gospel meetings.” Inconsistency won't allow him to explain the difference. Is it a feud, a fuss, a grudge, jealousy, etc.? It would help us understand if he would tell us.

Giving credit where credit is due, I believe Floyd makes a valid point when he observes that fellowship is a local matter (I don't believe this denies that there is a broad sense in which Christians all over the world are in fellowship even though they may not know each other), but no congregation is given the responsibility of designating for

Politics and Religion

Jay Horsley

Many say never talk about these things because of the passions aroused. But a sage once observed that if these are what people are so passionate about, they must be the only things worth talking about. As a Christian, speak (or don't speak) about them as often and as passionately as you would like, but keep your politics out of the church.

Politicians in the Pulpit

Former Presidential Candidate Al Sharpton and Democratic National Chairman Terry McAuliffe shared a pulpit at a Miami worship service recently. Both directly called for the election of John Kerry, and McAuliffe said:

Bush has misled us for four years and will not mislead us for the next four years. Get out to vote and we'll send Bush back to Texas.

Were they ashamed to turn what should have been the house of the Lord into a den of politicians seeking votes?

Bishop Victor T. Curry, head of New Birth Baptist, said "It's our time; it's our turn," [and] made no apologies for turning his Sunday service into a political rally also attended by Democrats U.S. Rep. Kendrick Meek, state Sen. Frederica Wilson, [and] state Sen. M. Mandy Dawson . . .

This is sacrilegious and almost certainly illegal. Non-profit organizations are not allowed to engage in partisan political organizing or campaigning. Non-profit organizations are legally allowed to engage in voter registration, give information and voter guides, and engage in issue advocacy. Although the government allows limited political activity, is it *right* for the church to engage in these? Some of our institutional brethren in Ohio seem to think so.

Preachers Urging Political Action

Due to a petition drive, Ohio may soon amend its constitution to ensure that marriage is only between a man and a woman. Can individual Christians participate and help in such efforts? Yes, to the degree that their conscience, time, and resources allow. Should the preacher preach on homosexual marriage? Yes, we should preach on all issues of biblical morality whether they are of political and social concern or not.

But even knowing these things, are these activities things the church should do?

About 215 of those signatures [on the marriage amendment petition sent to the Ohio state government] came

the brotherhood who, all over the world, can or cannot be fellowshipped. And certainly, no publication has been given that responsibility. The phrase "withdraw *yourselves*" (2 Thess. 3:6) shows there had been personal interaction, thus local. Decisions on whether one can participate with a brother in another part of the country (or the world) will have to be made individually. God has given no mechanism for making brotherhood decisions.

Floyd closes his article by saying: "Fellowship" is local, "Love" is brotherhood (1 Pet. 2:17) (*Sentry Magazine*,

Vol.32, No.4, 14). The next phrase in 1 Peter 2:17 says, "Fear God." We all need to do that, tone down the rhetoric and get back to the major task and weightier matter of evangelizing the world and strengthening Christians. We have barely scratched the surface. I wish that for *Truth Magazine* and for all the papers published by brethren. "There is room in the kingdom."

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Airport Customs

Kevin Maxey

I saw an interesting sign at the Los Angeles airport when Earl Mitchell and I were returning from a recent trip to the Philippines. As we approached the customs inspection area we saw a sign that read:

**Claim it or Dump it
or
Pay the Price!**

Airport security in our country is at an all time high. Our government is deter-

mined to protect our nation from smuggling, illegal drugs, disease, unlawful immigration, terrorism, and numerous other crimes. As you take the long walk through the airport terminal you know that you are about to undergo a diligent inspection and you are warned: *claim it, dump it or pay the price!* We can find valuable spiritual lessons in this airport sign.

from the Northeast Church of Christ, Cincinnati. Church staff set up tables in the foyer and encouraged members to sign the petition.

And:

Members of the congregation who wanted to sign it could after I preached a lesson on God's design for marriage," said Mark Tonkery, minister for the South Point, Ohio, church.

Was this legal? Almost certainly. Is it wrong to preach about homosexual marriage? No. But petitions for political action (even on moral matters) that the members are encouraged to sign in the building after a sermon on the topic? Is that the mission of the church? What political role has Christ given preachers or churches? None. As individual Christians in a democracy help uphold public morality with your votes and other activities; but as the church and preachers of the gospel, get the disciples to put off the old man of sin and teach others to do likewise (Eph. 4:22). Jesus sent his apostles out to gather souls by preaching "repent!" He did not send them out to gather signatures for petitions (Matt. 10:7).

If Jesus didn't like the animal sellers or money-changers in his Father's house, what must he think of the politicians in his?

mined to protect our nation from smuggling, illegal drugs, disease, unlawful immigration, terrorism, and numerous other crimes. As you take the long walk through the airport terminal you know that you are about to undergo a diligent inspection and you are warned: *claim it, dump it or pay the price!* We can find valuable spiritual lessons in this airport sign.

Claim it. The airport officials are making it clear by this sign, that if you are carrying any goods that need to be declared or taxed, or if you have anything illegal, it is better for you to claim it now, than to hide it and get caught. You would be wise to do the same with your soul. One day you will undergo a spiritual inspection that will determine your eternal fate. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:11; Phil. 2:10).



Right now you are taking that long walk up to the judgment seat. Every day you are getting closer and closer. And as you walk, God is warning you to claim it. We all have sins that we need to claim, or confess (Rom. 3:23). We must confess our sins and repent (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; 1 John 1:9). The soul that tries to hide and deny his sins will face severe judgment. He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy (Prov. 28:13). Confess your trespasses to one another (Jas. 5:16). Have you sinned against your parents, spouse, brethren, and God? Claim it, make things right and find forgiveness.

Dump it. Get rid of everything that is illegal. A criminal cannot expect to get away with carrying firearms or illegal drugs through airport customs. The government is

Keep Thy Heart with All Diligence

Don Willis

Physiologically, the human heart is a very important part of the human form. When the heart is ill, the entire body suffers; one is unable to perform the tasks previously enjoyed, the human efforts must slow. Several illustrations are found from the Scriptures where the heart weakened (Gen 45:26; 1 Sam 4:13-18; etc.).

“A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones” (Prov 14:30). The sound heart enables us to properly function . . . but in the same verse, one is cautioned about envy as an impropriety of the heart. Thus, the Bible uses the term in a psychological manner, implying the *center of man’s personal activities*, the source from whence the principles of human action derive their origin. “And God saw that the wickedness of man *was* great in the earth, and *that* every imagination of the thoughts of his heart *was* only evil continually” (Gen 6:5). Genesis 8:21: “. . . the imagination of man’s heart *is* evil from his youth.” One can easily view the evil found in the world. Individuals mistreat one another, even are cruel to animals, nation kills

the youth of another nation in all manners of evil wars, the use of deadly gases, bombs, and physical contact.

God is interested in a penitent heart, after the purposes of divine instruction! “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Ps. 51:10). “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23, cf. Pss. 14:3; 53:3; Rom 3:10, 12). There is some good in the worst of us, and so much bad in the best of us, that it does not behoove us to be hypercritical of the rest of us (as the old saying went)! “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it” (Heb. 4:1).

God is interested in a learning heart, bent on the teachings of the word of God! We need to learn to “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov 4:23). When the heart is right, we have a positive outlook and an acceptability with God. When the heart is wrong, everything is wrong! Jesus said, “A good man out

giving a final warning before the security inspection, saying that you had better get rid of anything that is illegal. They are sending the message, we will not allow you to bring anything harmful into our county. Likewise God is warning you right now as you approach the judgment day. He will not allow you or anyone to bring sin into heaven (Isa. 59:1-3). This is your last chance. God says dump it. Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us (Heb. 12:1). God promises to dump your sins overboard if you repent and obey his will. He will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea (Mic. 7:19). Stop sinning and find newness of life (Rom. 6:1-4).

Or, Pay the Price! The airport sign finally warns you, get right or you will be caught and forced to pay a severe penalty. Too many souls think they will be able to get away

with sin (Prov. 1:20-33;sa.2). No sinner shall escape the judgment seat of God. false witness will not go unpunished, and he who speaks lies will not escape (Prov. 19:5). Be sure your sin will find you out (Numb. 32:23). The blessing for all of us is that Jesus paid the price for our sins (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Though we are guilty and deserving of punishment we can be free (Rom. 6:23). Why would you face God on the day of judgment unprepared? If you do so you will have to pay the unthinkable price of sin. In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (2 Thess. 1:8-9). Claim it, dump it, or pay the price!

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of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh” (Luke 6:45). God promised a new heart! “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Ezek. 36:26).

God is interested in a loving heart, manifest in godly action toward one another! “For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13). Love is “the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 13:10). “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. . . . He that loveth not his brother abideth in death” (1 John 3:10, 14). “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” (1 John 4:20). None is totally perfect! If others can love us; then, certainly we should be able to reciprocate by loving them! If we fail the *love test*, we fail eternally!



God is interested in a forgiving heart! “. . . Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. . . . But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:12, 15). Isn’t this a scary principle? Grudge holding is contrary to all of the teachings of God. One said, “I will forgive, but I can never forget.” Look at the bridge we build for our own life! Everyone makes mistakes. Everyone makes a lot of mistakes! When we attempt to present ourselves as sinless, we intend to show ourselves as being the perfect example, *we immediately close the door of teaching opportunity; for others know that there is none perfect, but God!* Humble tea is good for the heart of each Christian. Remember where we were and how good forgiveness is (was). God loves the sinner! God does not love the sin! Christ died for sinners—just like you and me. Jesus gives a word of caution here: “So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses” (Matt. 18:35).

God is interested in a thanksgiving heart, a complimenting heart! Tyron Edwards once said, “A deserved and discriminating compliment is often one of the strongest encouragements and incentives to the diffident and self-distrustful” (*A New Dictionary of Thoughts* 101). God

said, “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be *ye thankful*” (Col. 3:15). “In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thess. 5:18). *In everything give thanks! Wow!* One must be thankful for existence, teachers, education, health, job, employer, farmers, ranchers, chicken farmers, vegetable farmers, elders, deacons, preachers, co-workers in the Lord; family: wife, children, parents, grandparents, etc. The sun is shining today . . . but we must have rainy days in order to survive! Without difficulties, one would have trouble knowing when and how to give thanks for the good things!

Today is a day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice therein, finding the hand of God as it influences our lives! God lives! And, God lives in the heart of the meek and lowly of heart! The most acceptable worship is that which comes from a meek and gentle heart. H.W. Beecher said, “Pride slays thanksgiving, but an humble mind is the soil out of which thanks naturally grow. A proud man is seldom a grateful man, for he never thinks he gets as much as he deserves.” *Praise God that we do not get what we deserve—for, the wage of sin is death!*

The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Scriptures declare: “For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised: he also is to be feared above all gods” (1 Chron. 16:25). “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness” (Ps. 48:1). “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable” (Ps. 145:3).

Keep thy heart, and praise the Lord!

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A Suggestion to Those Who “Preside”

Craig Meyer

Men who “wait on the Lord’s table” (i.e., who lead prayers of thanksgiving for the emblems and/or who serve the elements) have an important work. “By love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13). “Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you” (1 Thess. 5:17-18).

Men who “preside” (i.e., who deliver words of edification to the assembly before the Lord’s supper is actually eaten) fill a vital role, too. “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Eph. 4:29).

Throughout the course of my life, I have noticed that sometimes very little (or nothing) is said before we partake of “the Lord’s table” (1 Cor. 10:21). Are we in such a rush that no words of edification may be uttered? Is it possible that we are throwing away opportunities to establish saints in “the present truth” (2 Pet. 1:12; cf. vv. 13, 15)?

May I make a suggestion to those who “preside” at the table? Please consider reading—and commenting on—any one (or more) of the following passages of Scripture: Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Matthew 27:32-56; Mark 15:21-41; Luke 23:26-49; John 10:11-18; 12:24; 15:13; 19:16-37; Acts 2:22-36; 3:12-26; 4:8-12; 5:29-32; 10:34-43; 13:16-43; Romans 5:6-10; 8:34; 14:7-9; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:23-29; 15:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Ephesians 2:11-18; Colossians 1:9-22; 1 Thess. 1:9-10; Hebrews 1:1-3, 8-9; 2:9-11, 14-18; 4:14-16; 5:8-9; 9:11-28; 10:1-10, 19-23; 13:20-21; 1 Peter 1:18-21; 2:20-25; 3:17-18; 1 John 2:1-2; 3:16; 4:7-16; Revelation 1:4-8, 12-18; 5:1-6, 9-14.

These Scriptures are only a small sample of texts appropriate in “helping to prepare our minds.” Really, anything in the Bible that talks about the love, grace, forgiveness of

God, the sacrifice of Jesus, his blood, death, burial, resurrection, etc. is appropriate.

Mark it down and mark it well: All who partake of the Lord’s supper have a fearsome task before God. And any *mental detachment or non-preparation* on either the part of the one who “presides” (Jas. 3:1) or on the part of the one who partakes (1 Cor. 11:27-29, 34) is just asking to be “cast into the great winepress of the wrath of God” (Rev. 14:19).

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip (Heb. 2:1).

“Think on these things.”

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The Nature Of Forgiveness

David Dann

Concerning Jesus, the apostle Paul writes, “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7). It is evident from this passage, as well as numerous others, that Jesus Christ has provided forgiveness of sins through sacrificing himself on the cross. However, as we consider the subject of forgiveness, there are some important points that must be raised with regard to the very nature of forgiveness. The New Testament Scriptures furnish us with a good understanding of the nature of forgiveness in relationships between men, and in relationship between God and man. The Bible teaches that:

1. Forgiveness is conditional in our relationship with God. As previously noted, the sacrifice of Christ provides forgiveness of sins. The apostle John writes, “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:1-2). While it is true that Jesus died for the whole world, not everyone in the world will receive forgiveness of sins, due to the fact that forgiveness is conditional. Jesus said, “For if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24), and, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). God is willing to forgive us (2 Pet. 3:9), but he will not forgive anyone who has not met the conditions of forgiveness. Once we obey the gospel, then we have met the conditions of forgiveness, for Peter said, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). Forgiveness from the Lord remains on a conditional basis for Christians as well. John writes, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Even after we have obeyed the gospel we must meet the Lord’s conditions for forgiveness when we sin if we expect to be forgiven of that sin.

2. Forgiveness is conditional in our relationship with others. The Scriptures also give us some guidelines concerning the nature of forgiveness between two or more in-

dividuals. Of course, we can choose to unconditionally forgive anyone who has wronged us at any time. Stephen displayed this attitude while he was being murdered as he looked to heaven and said concerning his murderers, “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60). However, the Lord does not demand that we unconditionally forgive anyone. Jesus said, “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, ‘I repent,’ thou shalt forgive him” (Luke 17:3-4). Clearly, Jesus teaches us that there are conditions for forgiveness between two individuals. As Christians, we are taught to encourage a brother to repent when he sins against us. If he repents, then he has met the conditions for forgiveness, and we are required by the Lord to forgive him. The wisdom of the Lord is seen here, since rebuking such a brother may bring about his salvation as he sees his error and repents. If we were to bestow unconditional forgiveness upon everyone who sins against us, then we would be doing nothing toward the salvation of the souls of those individuals.

3. We must be willing to forgive others, or God will not forgive us. While it is true that we are not bound to forgive others until they repent of their sin, we must be of a willing heart to forgive them once they do repent. Jesus said, “And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses” (Mark 11:25-26). If we withhold forgiveness from someone who has repented, then we will be guilty of sin ourselves. There is a direct relationship between our willingness to forgive others and God’s willingness to forgive us. Jesus made this clear as he said, “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:14-15).

Conclusion

“Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven” (Luke 6:37). Are you willing to forgive?

“Marriage” continued from front page

show this love? “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself” (Eph. 5:28).

4. Godly Speech (Eph. 4:25, 29, 31). In this category, I would include honesty (Col. 3:9), as well as speaking in a kind way to your spouse and children. Our children and spouses deserve honesty in this relationship. Children need to see fathers and mothers who speak words of truth to each other as well as to them. Spouses deserve to be told the truth. This is certainly the least that could be done. Implicit trust ought to be present in each and every family. When folks lack trust in the family, this leads to a multitude of problems.

Just as there are dishonest souls, sadly, it seems that we often reserve our kindest words for those outside our families; while those who ought to get our kindest treatment get the worst. (This writer needs improvement in this area as well!) The need for kind and godly speech toward spouses and children ought to go without saying! Let us read Ephesians 4:25-31 again. What kind word could you say to your spouse? What good word might you speak to your children? Let us think seriously about this and make applications in our family today!

5. Teaching the Truth at Home (2 Tim. 2:2). Sometimes, when Christians are encouraged to teach others the truth, the reply is heard, “I can’t talk to strangers. I don’t know how.” Friend, if we know what we did to become a Christian, can we not tell others about it? I believe we can! At the same time, if speaking to strangers bothers you, why not start your work by teaching those you *know*! Let us take time to teach our little ones, as well as study together with our spouse. Don’t be afraid! Do we not love our family? Do we not want them to go to Heaven? “Perfect love casteth out fear” (1 John 4:18)!

Paul said that fathers have a responsibility to bring their children up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). This has to do with teaching! Mothers are to teach their children, too (Tit. 2:4-5). How can one say he has a godly marriage and home if it is not based on God’s word?

6. Do Not Place Money Or Possessions Before Your Family (1 Tim. 6:10). One of the quickest ways to destroy a marriage is to pursue money and/or possessions. Often, when folks do this, they end up destroying a marriage! This is not mere speculation, but statistics show that 57% of all divorces are caused by money problems. In connection with this, of the total number of divorces in this country, some 70% of divorced couples said a contributing factor to their divorce was money problems.

Seeing that these facts are true, does it not become even more obvious why Paul would write, “For the love

of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim. 6:10)? The family who seeks God’s kingdom and righteousness first (Matt. 6:33) can avoid many of the problems now facing our “modern-day” married couples! Think about it!

Realize the Seriousness and Permanency of Marriage

Many problems come into a married life as a result of folks thinking that the marriage relationship is “easy come-easy go.” This is simply not true! God intended that man “leave” father and mother and “cleave” to his wife (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4-6). When a man and woman get married, God expects this relationship to last for the rest of their life (Rom. 7:2-3). The seriousness and permanency of marriage is second only to the seriousness and permanency of becoming a Christian.

When we are made aware of this fact, perhaps this will be a wake-up call to those still dating. While dating others is a special time in the life of young men and young ladies, please realize that a reason for dating is to look for a potential mate. At the same time, dating a person is not the same as being married to them! The Holy Spirit said that those not married must keep themselves pure and flee from fornication (1 Cor. 6:18). “Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4).

Is the person you are dating someone you could seriously consider marrying? Is the person you are dating someone with whom you are sharing your faith? Is the person you are dating treating you well? Is he/she a drinker? Does the person you are dating consider marriage and the home as permanent as you do? Is the person you are dating making unwelcome/sinful advances, or trying to get you to take actions which are reserved for married people? These are questions which demand an answer. May we find mates whose interest in following God is equal to our interest. Remember, Christians who marry are “heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Pet. 3:7) and both need to help one another go to Heaven! Consider this well!

Conclusion

Sadly, as we observe our society, we are seeing marriage on the decline. Godly marriages are needed across this land and this world. Mothers and fathers need to be showing their children what a godly marriage looks like. There needs to be Bible teaching taking place in each home. Will you make the decision today to pattern your marriage after the godly principles we have studied?

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“**Modern Issues**” continued from p. 2

expression of thought from one individual to another. How much more is that true with reference to the ancient Bible which was written in another culture by unknown persons who communicated their personal ideas which we then subjectively interpret. This is how the post-modern man thinks about the Bible. Whereas post-modern man does not believe that language can reveal the mind of God to man, post modern man publishes books to be studied in college classes, whose authors expect the students to understand and accept. Why should one believe that man can write so as to be understood but God cannot?

To address our post-modern contemporaries, we have to establish common ground. Do we accept a theistic or atheistic world view? First, let us challenge the atheistic world view. How does one explain what presently exists without God? Let us force the issue. Does order occur by chance? How probable is it that all of the natural elements needed to make life happened to be in the same place at the same time and at the right temperature? Have you studied mathematical probability? If one places ten pennies in his pocket numbered one to ten and intends to pull them out of his pocket in numerical order (1-10), his chances of doing so are slim. The probability of him putting his hand in his pocket and picking out number one by chance is one in ten. The probability of him putting that penny back in his pocket and picking out number two is one in 100; the probability of him putting that penny back and picking out number three is one in 1000. The probability of running the whole sequence of 1-10 is one in TEN BILLION! Yet this is dealing with ten elements that were by design placed in a common environment. Can you imagine how probable it is that life formed by accident? We have our smartest scientists working constantly to figure out how it could possibly occur and they are not able to explain it.

Having challenged the atheistic world view, we must present our reasons for a theistic world view. The intelligent design argument is a refinement of the teleological arguments for the existence of God; it argues that the universe evidences too much intelligent design to have happened by random change. If there is design in the universe, there must be a Designer. The evidences of design force one to admit the existence of a Creator. Clearly affirming our reasons for believing in God will resonate with common men even if the intelligentsia refuse to acknowledge God's existence. If one admits that God exists, then God is all powerful (by definition) and has the ability to communicate with the creatures he made. One cannot rule out revelation in a theistic world view.

Let us assert openly our confidence in the Bible as the revelation of God to mankind. The doctrine of inspiration affirms that God superintended the writing of the Bible to preserve it from all error, whether that be religious, histori-

cal or scientific. We believe in an inerrant Scripture. Boldly we need to affirm our confidence in Scripture affirming for it what it claims for itself: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). This is not the time to be questioning whether the Bible's record is accurate, working to harmonize Scripture to late-twentieth and early twenty-first century scientific theories. Should one wed the Bible to the science of our day, it will be a widow in the next age. Rather than trying to harmonize Scripture to present-day scientific theory, let us boldly preach that revelation. Let us preach what it says about creation, the fall of Adam and Eve, the flood, the virgin birth, and every other doctrine proclaimed in its pages. We proclaim them because God revealed them and God cannot lie (Tit. 1:2).

To assert the relevance of the Bible to modern man, let us boldly affirm that the Bible can be understood and that, when men understand the Bible, they necessarily will understand it alike. Jesus said, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Jesus believed truth was able to be known. Paul wrote, “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17). Paul expected his letters to be understood. In spite of these affirmations that men can understand the Bible, Peter acknowledged that some in his own day twisted and perverted Paul's writings. “And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:15-16). The problems we face in our society about understanding the Bible alike are not new; they existed in the first century as well. Nevertheless, the authors affirmed that what they wrote was understandable. Every exhortation to preach sound doctrine presupposes an expectation that Christians were to understand that doctrine alike (Gal. 1:8-9; 2 John 9-11; etc.).

Modern man, like the “modern” men of the first century A.D. who looked back over the thousands of years of human history and thought they were the latest and brightest, still need the message of human redemption revealed in God's word. Let's take it to them.

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PREACHER AVAILABLE

Justin Roberson (email: robsn40@yahoo.com; phone: 256-412-8146 or 256-764-4735): I'd like to introduce myself. I am twenty-two years of age. I reside in Florence Alabama. I am currently a junior in college and plan to graduate with my BA next summer. I work part time at UPS. I also am an assistant football coach at a nearby high school. I also have been a high school and college basketball official and baseball/softball umpire. I am currently single and am looking for a good Christian young lady to spend the rest of my life with.

Now that I've told you a little about my secular life I will discuss with you my spiritual life. I am a member of the East Florence Church of Christ in Florence Alabama. I preach part time at East Florence every second and fourth Sunday night. I also do fill in preaching work at many area congregations there. I have served to the best of my ability as a Wednesday night high school and college level Bible class teacher for around four years. I have worked on a regular basis with several congregations and have many referrals if needed. I served as the full-time song leader at Underwood Heights Church of Christ for a period of approximately two years. I also worked with the Washington Ave. church in Russellville, AL for around six months preaching for them part-time and teaching the auditorium class.

My hope as a Christian is to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where it is silent (Rev. 22:18-19; 1 Cor. 4:6) and to only speak as God's word (1 Pet. 4:11). Also my hope is that New Testament Christianity will continue to be preached and that institutionalism and denominationalism will continue to be preached against. And finally, I pray that young men and women will stand up and prepare themselves to lead the Lord's church in the future and live as Paul proclaims to Titus (Tit. 2).

Quips & Quotes

Maryland Ban on Gay Marriage Overturned

"Baltimore — A Baltimore judge struck down a 33-year-old state law against gay marriage Friday, declaring it violates the Maryland Constitution's guarantee of equal rights.

"Circuit Judge M. Brooke Murdock immediately stayed her order to allow the state to file an appeal with Maryland's highest court, the Court of Appeals. The attorney general office did so later in the day.

"Murdock ruled in favor of 19 gay men and women, rejecting a state argument that a traditional family is ideal for children" (*The Indianapolis Star* [January 21, 2006], A4).

Poll: College Sex Harassment Rampant

"Washington — Nearly two-thirds of college students say they've been sexually harassed and a third claim they've had unwelcome physical contact, according to a new study issued by a group that is helping universities set up programs to assist victims and deter inappropriate behavior.

"The survey of more than 2,000 college students by the American Association of University Women Educational Foundation suggests that sexual harassment—from crude jokes to unwanted groping—is prevalent on university campuses. It's part of a report titled 'Drawing the Line: Sexual Harassment on Campus,' that claims men are more likely than women to harass and that most incidents are never reported" (*The Indianapolis Star* [January 25, 2006], A3).

Tongues Tied

"Trustees for the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) International Mission Board (IMB) have voted to bar new missionary candidates who practice a 'private prayer language' from serving on the mission field.

"The trustees voted 50-15 for the new guidelines on November 15, during their meeting in Huntsville, Alabama. The move will not affect current IMB staff or missionaries. Worldwide, 5,122 IMB missionaries work among 1,194 people groups.

"Candidate guidelines approved by IMB trustees at the meeting state, 'In terms of worship practices, the majority of Southern Baptist churches do not practice glossolalia,' or tongues. 'In terms of general practice, the majority of Southern Baptists do not accept what is referred to as 'private prayer language.'"

"Because the ruling is not retroactive, it will not apply to IMB president, Jerry Rankin. 'I acknowledged even in the discussions that [tongues] has been a continuing practice [of mine] for 30 years,' Rankin told CT. The trustees who elected his president in 1993 knew he prays in tongues.

"When asked, Rankin told CT, 'I am assuming that this does not have anything to do with me, because it was stated that it doesn't'" (*Christianity Today* [February 2006], 21).

Major Case of Minors

"As the U.S. Supreme Court prepared to rule on New Hampshire's parental-notification law, an increasing number of states are requiring parents to be involved when their teenage daughter considers abortion.

"In all, 34 states now enforce parental notification or consent laws. Florida, Ohio, and Oklahoma each passed such laws in 2005. The statutes require minors to include their parents in the decision—Ohio requires parental consent, while Florida and Oklahoma mandate only notification.

"All three states allow judges to bypass the law, while Florida and Oklahoma also permit doctors to perform abortions during medical emergencies.

"The increase is partly due to a deliberate effort by right-to-life leaders. 'The strategy is to do this state by state,' John Whitehead, president of the Rutherford Institute, told CT. Mary Balch, director of state legislation for National Right to Life, said the remaining 16 states that don't require parental involvement represent 'the last frontier.' Among those is California, whose voters on November 8 narrowly rejected a proposed parental-notification law.

"Nine states that passed such laws have not yet enforced them. New Hampshire's suspended 2003 statute provides the basis for *Ayotte v. Planned Parenthood*, which went before the Supreme Court on November 30. Opposing sides in that case debated whether parents should be notified when their daughter is facing medical complications or only when their daughter's life is in danger. They also argued about whether the parents of a girl younger than 18 must be notified at least 48 hours in advance of the abortion" (*Christianity Today* [February 2006], 23).

Design "Flaw"

"A federal judge delivered a setback to Intelligent Design (ID) in public schools by ruling on December 20 that a Pennsylvania school district's policy promoted a variation of religious creationism.

"U.S. Middle District Judge John Jones ruled that Intelligent Design violates the First Amendment's establishment clause. The case pitted the American Civil Liberties Union and 11 parents in the Dover district against the school board's policy. Opponents said the board was motivated by religious belief, specifically Christianity, when it approved a one-minute statement that described evolution as 'not a fact' and mentioned Intelligent Design as an alternative explanation for the origin of life.

"'Intelligent Design has to be de-theologized,' Steve Fuller told *The Washington Post*. Fuller, a philosopher of science at the University of Warwick in England, testified for the Board's defense. 'But it will be a shame if a result of this decision is that we can't question Darwinism, which is not just a theory but an entire secular worldview that flattens the distinction between humans and other life.'

"Advocates of Intelligent Design said the decision will have limited effect because it applies only to the federal court

district in which it was handed down" (*Christianity Today* [February 2006], 24).

Two Cheers For the Vatican

"Evangelical seminary leaders applauded a Vatican document that forbids those with deeply rooted homosexual orientation from entering seminary. The statement also requires a three-year waiting period for those with 'transitory' homosexual tendencies.

"'The Church, while profoundly respecting the persons in question,' the document states, 'may not admit to the seminary and Holy Orders those who practice homosexuality, show profoundly deep-rooted homosexual tendencies, or support the so-called gay culture'" (*Christianity Today* [February 2006], 25).

100 Years After Split, Unity Events Bring Praise, Concern

"The way Wade Hodges sees it, a cappella churches of Christ and instrumental Christian Churches share too much in common not to treat each other like family.

"But in Truitt Adari's view, any attempt at unity that does not include an 'honest discussion of the things that divide us' risks creating more division than reconciliation.

"Such are the disparate views among church leaders 100 years after a 1906 federal religious census first reported the a cappella and instrumental churches as separate bodies.

"Today, the a cappella churches report about 1.3 million baptized members in the United States, slightly more than the instrumental churches' 1.2 million. Both groups believe that Jesus Christ is Lord, baptize for remission of sins and offer the Lord's Supper each Sunday.

"To mark the centennial, the Abilene Christian University Lectureship in Texas and the Tulsa International Soul-Winning Workshop in Oklahoma both plan tag-team keynote addresses featuring university presidents or ministers from both groups.

"In addition, about 40 ministers from a cappella churches of Christ will speak at the largest annual gathering of instrumental Christian Churches—the North American Christian Convention in Louisville, Ky." (*The Christian Chronicle* [February 2006], 1).

