



## What Would You Do?

Steve Wolfgang

What follows is fictional, of course. According to some, it is pure fantasy. Indeed, it is imaginary.

As many have said, the truth is often “stranger than fiction.” Consider the following hypothetical situation:

Imagine a scenario in which you employ a trusted friend of long standing to watch over your home while you are away on a trip. You pay her a modest fee, leave her the key to your house, with a few instructions and authorization to come into the house to check on its condition.

Upon your return, you discover that many items are missing from your house, mostly items of value that would not be noticeable to anyone who did not know where to look for them. Despite your initial disbelief and consternation, it becomes obvious you have been the victim of the crime of theft by this trusted, long-time friend.

- What would you do? Would you call the police to report this obvious crime? Isn't this what most people, including Christians, would do upon discovering such a theft?

But imagine further that this friend is also a fellow Christian. Imagine that you decide that, rather than immediately report this crime to the police, you should first go to your sister and friend to resolve this problem privately, if possible.

Imagine that when confronted, this sister/friend finally makes a confession of sorts after attempting to deflect the responsibility by talking about her “depression” and other excuses. She also pledges to make restitution of what has obviously been stolen.

Imagine your shock and dismay when you go to the bank within the next few days and discover that this trusted friend and sister had stolen other assets,

having gained access to your bank account numbers and passwords due to the trust you placed in her by giving her access to your property.

The amount you now realize has been stolen from you is several times greater than what your sister/friend originally admitted, even though it is obvious by now that she was well aware of the much larger scale of the theft when she made  
*see “What Would You Do?” on p. 212*



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## The Christian and Civil Government

Mike Willis

The following true cases all involved Christians and families of Christians:

- A husband learns that his wife is having an affair with another man. After efforts to get her to cease her affair with the man fail, he files divorce papers against his wife to divorce her for the cause of fornication.

Does the husband violate 1 Corinthians 6? Does the husband cause the grief that his wife and children may have to endure? Is the husband somehow the “guilty party” in the above case because he turns the case over to civil courts for their adjudication?

- A young man and his wife decide to murder his father and mother in order to receive his share of the family inheritance. The father and mother fight off the attack on their lives. The mother draws a pistol from her night stand and threatens to shoot unless they stop their bloody attack. Having subdued the young couple at gun point, they then call the police. The son was arrested, prosecuted, and convicted of attempted murder.

All of those involved in this incident were Christians. Should that change the response and the reaction of the victims? Is it biblically authorized for the world to report the crime to the police, but wrong if Christians are involved?

- A young man in his early twenties molested several children in the church of which he was a member. The members reported the case to the police. The man was arrested, prosecuted, and imprisoned.

Did the one who reported these crimes to the police violate 1 Corinthians 6? Was he responsible for the suffering of the molester because he reported this to the police? Should the molester be abused in jail, is this the fault of his victims who reported his crime to the police?

- An accountant embezzled money from his employer. After efforts to have him repay the money failed, the company reported his crime to the police.

*see “Civil Government” on p. 213*



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## Easter Parade, Easter Piano?

Larry Ray Hafley

**Easter Sunday!** Even some liberal churches of Christ celebrate the day as a part of their spiritual and religious service. From Texas to Tennessee, churches are sponsoring “Easter Egg” hunts, special musical programs, and worship services as part of their acknowledgment and acceptance of the “Easter tradition.”

If all these activities are “of God”; that is, if they can be incorporated into the work and worship of the Lord’s church, why not also include mechanical instruments of music? If churches may have an “Easter parade,” *why not an “Easter piano,” too?*

One is as scriptural as the other. One is as much a part of the New Testament as is the other. One was as integral a part of the worship of churches in the New Testament as was the other. Hence, if we may have one, we may have the other. Easter and the instrument — Easter parades and Easter pianos — they stand or fall together.

### TO OUR “UNCOMFORTABLE” BRETHREN

To those of our brethren who tolerate, but are still a tad “uncomfortable” with the involvement of the church in the Easter hoopla, relax. You soon will feel better and not be troubled by it. Your conscience, which is now sticking you, will give in. You see, your children and grandchildren, who have not been taught the distinction between human religion and divine religion, between the traditions of men and the traditions of God, between churches of men and the churches of Christ, shortly will have such an active role in Easter services that you will drown your doubts, applaud, and beam brightly as they perform and entertain the brethren in skits, singing groups, and other types of Easter escapades.

On the other hand, you might allow (“But secretly, for fear of the Jews”) your heart to read and ponder the following:

Teach . . . them to observe all things *whatsoever I have commanded you* (Matt. 28:20).

And they continued steadfastly in the *apostles doctrine* and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:42).

Teach *no other doctrine* (1 Tim. 1:3).

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(You are) making the word of God of none effect through *your* traditions (Mark 7:13).

Therefore, brethren, *stand fast*, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle (2 Thess. 2:15).

*Whatsoever ye do* in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus (Col. 3:17).

*Whosoever* transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ *hath not God*. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son (2 John 9). If we worship God “in spirit and in truth,” we will not

be led away and led astray “by every wind of doctrine,” but, rather, “by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.” Thus, will we be enabled to “serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” By abiding in the truth, as it is in Jesus, we can have the church involved with neither Easter nor the instrument. But, again, if one why not the other?

(Save this article. The same principles may be used at Christmas.)

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## Some Things People Left

Johnie Edwards

Careful reading of the Scriptures will tell us of some things people left. We may learn that there are some things we must leave behind. What are some of the things people left?

**1. A Woman Left Her Waterpot.** John records a Samaritan woman meeting Jesus at Jacob’s well. She was amazed at what Jesus knew about her and the teachings he made known to her. This woman was so excited about telling others about Jesus that the Bible says, “The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto him” (John 4:28-30). When we get excited about telling others about the Lord, perhaps we will leave our waterpots!

**2. Peter Left All.** The teachings of Jesus “astonished” many (Mark 10:24). Being moved by his teachings, Peter said, “Lo, we have left all, and have followed thee” (Mark 10:28). Every thing must take a secondary position if we expect to be a follower of the Lord. Jesus affirmed, “. . . There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel’s, But he shall receive . . . and in the world to come eternal life” (Mark 10:29-30). Have you left all to follow the Lord?

**3. Peter and Andrew Left Their Nets.** Peter and Andrew “were fishers” (Matt. 4:18). Jesus approached these two men and, “saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him” (Matt. 4:20). In order to be the “fishers of men,” we may have to leave our nets behind. What have you done with your net?

**4. James and John Left Ship and Father.** The Bible records, “And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him” (Matt. 4:21-22). We must all learn that when the Lord calls, we better leave what we are doing and go!

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## Observations and Experiences Regarding Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage (2)

Bill Cavender

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For a decade or more years in our country, the divorce rate has been about fifty to fifty-two percent, i.e., about fifty to fifty-two out of every one hundred marriages end in divorce. This is a sad and sobering moral and spiritual problem to those of us who are Christians and believers in God's will and laws regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage, and who were born into and reared in families where marriage was held in honor, where our parents lived in faithfulness and devotion to each other, and maintained the marriage ties in love and respect until death separated them one from the other (Heb. 13:4; Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:3-9; Rom. 7:1-4). Divorces in such numbers (fifty percent; one-half of all marriages) are an amazing and staggering social, political, legal, and spiritual phenomenon and problem, with all the attendant ills of hatred, violence, illegitimacy, adultery, abortion, alcohol, drugs, public welfare, crime, and the deteriorating spiritual and moral climate of common decency and acceptable behavioral standards.

All faithful preachers and elders of age and experience have taught God's will to many people for many years regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage. We have all observed the heartaches, the traumas, the sadnesses, the emotional distresses, the tears, the loneliness, the perplexities, the anxieties and fears of children as they witness their parents misbehaving and separating, and all the wounds inflicted when "breaking up and starting over" is a stark, unwanted reality and necessity, after one has invested so many years of life, labor, love, and legacy in another person. There is nothing nice or pretty about separations and

divorces. It is a heart-rending, soul-damning experience in most cases. Fortunate and blessed, indeed, are the marriage partners who will keep their vows of faithfulness and commitment to each other and to our Father in heaven and to our Saviour, Jesus the Christ. Fortunate and blessed, indeed, are the parents who are spared and who escape the terrible tragedy of seeing their children marry and then divorce, the parents being helpless to intervene and to salvage the marriage which may have begun with such fanfare, hopes, promises, and prospects.

Through all these years of preaching and twice serving as one of the elders where I preached, I have had many, many occasions to teach, preach to, talk with, and discuss many marital questions and problems of people. Any preacher of my age and experience could "write a book" relating the stories, incidents, events, and circumstances of

the many, many marriage problems that we have encountered in working with, observing, and listening to people. There are the basic essentials that we always teach and insist upon, that marriage is a lifetime covenant and commitment, that death itself is the only honorable and truly godly way that a marriage is ever dissolved, and that the only *cause* and *reason* ever for a divorce is because of *adultery* committed by a husband or wife, and that only the *innocent, guiltless, moral* companion, who has kept his/her vows, has the permission and concession from the Lord to reject and repudiate the immoral companion and marry someone else. I have always stressed two other matters: (1) that the guilty, immoral, adulterous husband/wife has no permission and concession from Jesus our Lord to ever remarry, and (2) that the innocent, moral, guiltless companion in



a divorce, where adultery has been involved and is the *cause* of the divorce, must be *absolutely sure* that he/she did not contribute to (by words, attitudes, deeds, failures to do his/her duties and meet the needs of the immoral companion) the delinquency and unfaithfulness of the guilty companion. Sometimes the innocent is not so innocent, and sometimes the guilty is more guilty than has ever been made known, except to God Almighty! I have refused to baptize a person, in a few cases, because I knew beyond any doubt that the person was an impenitent adulterer. Sometimes, as an elder, I, along with fellow-elders, have refused fellowship in a local church to someone who was obviously and clearly “living in adultery.” Possibly there were times when fellowship should have been extended to a person who was denied fellowship, and possibly there were times when fellowship in a congregation ought not to have been granted when it was. There can never be one hundred percent accuracy in dealing with human problems. There are no “Solomons” when it comes to dealing with marriage problems, even though you might conclude, by reading some of the writings of some of the brethren, that there are present day, self-anointed “Solomons” among us, with all the answers. The real and only “Solomon” in the Scriptures made a “mess” (as brother W.R. Jones used to say) of his life and his heart was turned away from the Lord (1 Kings 11:1-13). Through the years I’ve noticed that some folks who have had the most difficult and disastrous marriage problems are the hardest and most adamant in dealing with the problems of others. Our Father in heaven tells us not to do that (Matt. 7:3-5; Gal. 6:1-5).

Moral and marriage problems of people are the most difficult of all human problems that we have to deal with in life: in our own personal, individual lives, in our relationship with our own husband/wife and learning to live with our companion as we are taught (Eph. 5:22-33; 1 Pet. 3:1-7; Col. 3:18-21), in the courtships and marriages of our children, in the marriages of brethren, friends, and neighbors, whom we may have occasion to teach and/or discuss their difficulties with them. There is no man who has all the answers to everyone’s marital difficulties. Some may think they do, especially preachers, but they do not, the reason being that we cannot know the hearts and motives of people, their deeds and attitudes, their words and conduct in their marriages. All we can do is listen and take someone’s word for what they say, understanding that even the person with the problem(s) may be, and probably is, biased and does not know, remember, and realize *all* that has been said and done to create the problems in their marriage.

In these fifty-seven years of preaching and working with people, I have only known three married couples who separated because they came to sincerely believe they were living in unscriptural, God-forbidden marriages. One couple separated, never divorced in a court of law, but continued to live in the same house, sleeping in separate

bedrooms, refusing further co-habitation (so they avowed; I had no reason to doubt them, as only God and that couple really knew, and I didn’t have to know), because they had to complete the rearing of two children still at home. One man and wife separated, never divorced in a court of law, lived in the same city, worshipped with the same congregation, remained friends, enjoyed their family, did not live in the same house, and said they never co-habited again. One man and wife divorced each other in a court of law, moved to different parts of the state, visited occasionally and remained friends, but never co-habited again, they said. Five of these six people are now dead. Only by teaching the word of the Lord ahead of time to people, to our children, to our young people, will we inoculate and immunize some (but not many) to the dangers and pitfalls involved in immorality and unfaithfulness to our marriage vows, and to the tragic consequences, for time and for eternity, of disobeying God and ignoring Jesus. Serving God and obeying his holy will is *always* from the heart, the *mind* of man. Teaching ahead of time, preventive instruction before courtship and marriage, is the only real and effective way to save souls from disastrous relationships and marriages. After the errors are made and the sins are committed, and the marriage counselors, lawyers, and judges are involved, then in one hundred out of ninety-nine cases (as brother N.B. Hardeman used to say) it is too late!

I grew up in a time, in the thirties, in which divorce was almost unheard of. In the little town of my early years, I can only remember two cases of divorce. I heard my parents, my maternal grandmother, and neighbors who would visit, talk about these folks in the community who had the problems. Everyone knew everyone else’s business in that village, due to comparatively few people in the area; neighbors would visit neighbors on spring and summer evenings as there were no automobiles, no radios or televisions for sure, no electricity; plus the eight and ten parties to a telephone line (there were no “private lines” and folks could easily “listen in” on their neighbor’s conversations); plus the two barber shops and the one “beauty shop” in the town were hotbeds of town news and gossip. It is interesting, to me at least, that the two cases of divorce were with couples named “Williams” (no relation), one of them being my mother’s oldest sister.

My maternal grandmother was Frances Sherman Parker. She was born at Saultville, Tennessee, a village on the banks of the Tennessee River, down the river (for here the river flows north) a short distance from Shiloh Battleground. She was born in 1865, shortly after Lee surrendered to Grant at Appomattox Courthouse on April 9, 1865. She was named after General William Tecumseh Sherman, the Union general who laid waste the state of Georgia and burned the path of destruction from Atlanta through the Carolinas to the sea. The Parkers, for the most part, were Republicans, very anti-slavery, and devout Methodists.

In the war there were Parkers, of that family, who fought for the Union and for the Confederacy, uncles and cousins of my grandmother, a house divided against itself. When I was a little boy she would tell me stories of the war, of the Yankees coming, of the destruction to the countryside, of the stealing of the food and livestock, and the suffering of the people at the hands of the Yankees during the war and by the “carpetbaggers” who came later. She had heard some of these sad stories from her parents and some she remembered from her own childhood experiences.

When she was eighteen years old, she married John Henry Parrott of Lookout Mountain, Tennessee, born in Dalton, Georgia. They had five daughters, Ida Ann being the oldest and my mother being the youngest, born in October 1898. Some years later Ida Ann was married to Joe Williams. They had two daughters. In the early thirties Joe “took up with” another woman in that little town where we lived. He was openly “shacking up” with her. He wanted a divorce but “Aunt Ida” would not divorce him, as all that Methodist family did not believe in “the disgrace of a divorce.” Joe persisted in his adultery. He would not repent. He had rejected Ida, his lawful wife, and wanted to marry his “sweetie.” After some time Ida said he could have a divorce, provided he got the divorce “for adultery,” admitting his guilt. He did. He got the divorce on the grounds of his own adultery. He soon married his paramour. Ida was an innocent, put away, divorced woman. Jesus gave her the right to remarry. Soon afterwards she moved to Knoxville with her two girls, had a good job with the Tennessee Valley Authority, but never remarried. Her two daughters never married. Death has long-since called upon each person involved in that human tragedy and taken them away.

Jim Williams was the owner of one of the barber shops in the town. Jim’s wife was Minnie. She had a “beauty shop” in the back of the barber shop, the only “beauty parlor” in town. Jim “began courting” another woman. He was committing adultery with her. Jim wanted a divorce

from Minnie. Minnie would not divorce him. She loved her sorry husband and wanted him to stop his philandering. He didn’t. Everyone in town was “on Minnie’s side.” “Old Jim Williams” was the most disliked, despised, and disfellowshipped man in town. His barber business suffered. “If Jim can’t see who his wife is, how can he see to cut a man’s hair?” Jim and Minnie continued to work in the same building, saw one another throughout every day, and spoke, but he “shacked up with” his woman-friend. Finally Minnie divorced him for adultery. Jim died within the year after the divorce in the court of men, but Jim had already long-since divorced Minnie in his mind and affection, “mental divorce” you could call it, I suppose. Minnie never remarried. She was one of the town’s best known, respected women. She could give the best “boy’s bob” haircut to a woman than any other “beauty operator” in those regions ‘round about in the nineteen thirties!

Back then, if you got a divorce, it had to be “for adultery.” The divorce papers and decree of the courts had to say, “For Adultery.” The Baptists and Methodists in that town, and area of Tennessee, were “as strong as horse radish” (or “as strong as Aunt Mary’s breath” [as W.R. Jones would have said it]) on that point. I didn’t know anything about the “Church of Christ” at that point in my life, except what I heard from my Methodist grandmother. She never cut her hair. It was long and beautiful, brushed every day, and “done up” into an attractive “bun” on her head. She was an elegant-looking, stately lady. She read her Bible every day. She would sit on our big, wide and long front porch, read the Bible, fuss about her girls, their husbands and her grandchildren, how some of them played with those “old spot cards,” and she often said that the “Campbellites and Johnson grass are taking the country,” and “that Church of Christ is bad.” When I obeyed the gospel in February 1946, “Granny” had been deceased for several months. When I first began hearing sermons and reading papers of the brethren, I learned they said the same things about divorce as I had heard in the Methodist Church, that divorce had “to be for adultery” and the divorce papers had to say so! I don’t ever hear that anymore. Now the divorce decree will say “irreconcilable differences” or “incompatibility” or “no fault” and my brethren say nothing about it! They are as silent as the tomb. What happened? What changed our minds and our preaching? Now it is popularly said that “one must know in his heart that adultery has been committed” (“mental divorce,” I suppose) for the divorce to be scriptural and it doesn’t really make any difference what the legal, divorce papers say. (To Be Continued)

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# “Ask, and It Shall Be Given You”

Jim McDonald

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**Ask, and it shall be give you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened (Matt. 7:7f).**

Some view these instructions as actions which increase in intensity. Perhaps. It may simply be “parallelism”: the same truth stated but with “different clothes on.” Whatever, the Lord’s promise is that those who ask, receive; seek, find; and knock find an opened door. To ask is a reference to prayer.

Just as prayer must be free from vain repetitions nor offered to receive the praise of men (Matt. 6:1, 5f), other factors also determine whether our prayers will be heard. Let us consider at least four such prerequisites.

**1. To receive forgiveness when we ask, we must be willing to forgive those who have sinned against us.** In the model prayer Jesus taught his disciples, they were to pray “and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us” (Matt. 6:14f). We cannot forgive those who trespass against us who neither ask, nor want that forgiveness, but we must always be ready to forgive when we are asked (Luke. 17:3). He who holds grudges against those who have acknowledged wrong and asked forgiveness, has not forgiven nor will he obtain forgiveness.

**2. For our prayers to be heard, we must ask in faith (Jas. 1:6f).** To pray in faith does not necessary mean that we believe we will receive our petition; it means we believe God is able to do what we have asked, if it be his will. A distraught father sought Jesus to heal his son who was vexed with a demon. He said, “If thou canst do anything, . . . help us” (Mark 9:22). This man doubted the ability of Jesus. Thus Jesus responded, “If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth” (Mark 9:23). For some things we might ask for, God has already revealed his will. He has promised forgiveness to his sinful, but penitent child, thus when we have truly repented of sins we have committed and asked God’s forgiveness, we must not doubt

that he will forgive. But there are some conditions which we face in life where our will may not be his will. So we pray, confident he can do what we ask, but not certain that what we ask will be granted because we are not sure that what we have asked is according to his will.

**3. Our prayers must be prayed with the right motive.** “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures” (Jas. 4:3). If our reason for asking is a selfish purpose or for sinful gratification, we are not promised God will grant that request.

**4. Finally, all petitions must be in submission to the will of God.** “And this is the boldness which we have toward him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us” (1 John 5:14). Jesus prayed, “If it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I wilt but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39). So must we pray. We cannot see the future. Those things which are best for us may be things we would not want. Our confidence must be that God will always do what is for our benefit and so in trust we submit our will to his. Jesus said: “Or what man is there of you, who, if his son shall ask him for a loaf, will give him a stone; or if he shall ask for a fish, will give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?” (Matt. 7:9-11). This assurance of Jesus is our assurance that God is concerned for our well being and will do what is best for us, just as we will do what we believe is best for our children.

Prayer is a wonderful blessing. Use it often but use it properly.

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# Tattoo Parlor Wisdom

Kevin Maxey

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**While you, most likely, are not in the market for a tattoo, you are making lifelong decisions every day, and God's word certainly teaches that you need to make good ones. Like bad tattoos that stain the skin for life, bad decisions can stain your soul for eternity.**

"Make your next lifelong decision a good one." So reads the sign of a nearby tattoo parlor. The owner of this permanent skin painting establishment is apparently doing his best to convey that if you decide to get a tattoo, realize that tattoos last for a lifetime, and make sure you get a good one. Even though, upon first glance, my title may appear to be a contradiction in terms, there is much wisdom to be found in this tattoo parlor quotation. While you, most likely, are not in the market for a tattoo, you are making lifelong decisions every day, and God's word certainly teaches that you need to make good ones. Like bad tattoos that stain the skin for life, bad decisions can stain your soul for eternity.

Life is filled with countless decisions. You make literally hundreds, if not thousands, of decisions every day, from deciding when to get out of bed, to what to wear, what to eat, what to say, where to go, and this choice-making marathon continues until you decide when to go to bed. Advertisers shout, phones ring, televisions blare, salesmen persist, children tug, commercials flash, work demands, and Satan tempts, all crying out, "Choose me!" Every moment of every day you must choose. Since you cannot deny this reality, you must ask yourself, "Am I making good decisions; decisions about how I use my time, my money, my speech, my life and my heart?"

Some decisions have a lifelong impact. While many of these daily deci-

sions seem relatively inconsequential, understand that some choices you make will intricately impact the rest of your life, like a spiritual tattoo you take with you wherever you go. Many spend their whole lives with regret, pain, and suffering because of impetuous decisions of folly (Eccl. 10:1), while others continue to be blessed because of carefully made decisions of wisdom (Prov. 4:1-9). Choose wisely.

Make good lifelong decisions in your youth. This lesson is particularly relevant to the young. This is not to say that adults can no longer make lifelong decisions, but it is obvious that the younger someone is, the more opportunities he will have, not only to make decisions, but to reap the fruits born from the decisions sown in his youth (Gal. 6:8).

What an amazing and exciting time it is to be young. Your whole life is in front of you and opportunities abound. You will never have the chance to relive this time again. Ponder and appreciate that fact (Ps. 90:12). You have a clean slate. God has given you a pure life (Eccl. 7:29). Your parents have lovingly raised you and now you are ready to spread your wings and fly (Prov. 1:8-9). Where will you decide to go? Choose wisely.

The choices of youth can be overwhelming. The decision about if and where to go to college, for example, can impact who your friends are, who you may marry, what kind of job you

will get, your financial income, where you will live, and it can even influence your eternal destiny. Who you marry can determine your future state of happiness, it can effect whether or not you have someone who will help you get to heaven, it will determine what type of co-parent you will have to help mold the souls of your children, and it will have an influence on whether your children or even your children's children will go to heaven. Each time you make a lifelong decision you are throwing a rock that sends countless ripples into your future. Choose wisely.

Even a small pebble can put an endless wave of ripples into motion. Your lifelong decisions begin when you get up tomorrow and decide what kind of clothes you are going to wear (1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:3-4). It continues when you turn on the radio and decide to which songs you are going to listen, when you turn on the television and decide what program you are going to watch, and when you turn on the computer and decide what web sites you will visit (Ps. 101:3; Prov. 4:23; Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:1-4). It starts when you open your mouth and decide what tone of words you are going to speak to your parents, and what kind of language you are going to use at school (Eph. 4:29; 6:1-3). It starts when you decide what you are going to do this Friday night, what movie you are going to see, what party you will attend, what friends you are going to go out with, and who you are going to date (1 Cor. 15:33; Matt. 7:13-14; Exod. 23:2). These daily decisions may seem to be like small pebbles, but combine them together and they will make a large lifelong wave for either good or evil.

Don't wait until you are on the other side of a bad decision to ask, "How did I get here?" Start now. "Choose for yourselves *this day* (not tomorrow, km) whom you will serve" (Josh. 24:15). Stop wavering in indecision. "How long will you falter between two sides?" (1 Kings 18:24;

Matt. 6:24). Don't wait until a heated moment of rage to decide if you are going to get violent and return evil for evil (Rom. 12:17-21). Don't wait until you are pressured by your peers at a party to decide if you are going to drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, or take drugs (1 Pet. 4:1-4). Don't wait until you are in a passionate moment alone with your date to decide how far you are going to go. Confidently decide right now that you will, "Flee . . . youthful lusts" (2 Tim. 2:22) instead of seeing how close you can get. While the world bombards you on a daily basis with sexual promiscuity, remember that if you decide to engage in such, you are making a lifelong decision. You can never get your virginity back. The sexual act may only be to you a one night stand, but the child that may be born will be your responsibility for a lifetime. Once the rock is thrown the ripples continue.

You hold within your hand the power to choose a godly life. Protect it. Protect your innocence. Guard your heart (Prov. 4:23). Defend your virginity (1 Pet. 2:11). Protect your future. When you stumble, cleanse your way (Ps. 119:9-16). Listen to your parents (Prov. 1:8; Eph. 6:4), talk with the elderly (Prov. 16:31; Tit. 2:3-4), study Bible characters and learn from their lives about the good and the bad choices they made (1 Cor. 10:11; Heb. 11). Above all, listen to God.

While the seriousness of youthful decision-making can be rather overwhelming, don't despair because God has some encouraging instruction. "Rejoice O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment. Therefore remove sorrow from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity. Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come" (Eccl. 11:9-12:1). God wants you to be happy, enjoy your youth, chase your dreams,

make a good life, but remember him as you decide.

It's not too late for adults to make lifelong decisions. Adults continue to make decisions that have lifelong effects. Every day adults neglect their marriages, commit adultery, get divorces, abandon their children, and choose to do many things that have negative lifelong consequences. Don't wait until the end of your life to ask, "What happened to my life, my marriage and my children?" Don't wait until you are ninety-eight years old, like trembling Eli, to say, "What does the sound of this tumult mean?" (1 Sam. 4:12-18; 3:13). Make positive choices right now that will bless your life, rather than destroy it. This week will you decide to lead your family (Deut. 6:6-9), have the courage to give your children what they need instead of just what they want (Eph. 6:4), love your children enough to discipline them (Prov. 13:24; 29:17; 22:15), and cherish your family enough to make time for them (Pss. 127; 128; Eccl. 9:9)? Or, will you sit back, do nothing, neglect your family, let worldliness abound and allow Satan to creep in and devour your family and your soul (1 Pet. 5:8)?

A different attitude among some adults may be that, since they made foolish decisions in their youth, they now think it is too late for them to change. Just because you made bad decisions in the past, don't torture yourself by continuing to make the same mistakes (Isa. 1:5-6). It wasn't too late for Paul to change from the wrong religion to the right religion (1 Tim. 1:12-17), for King Manasseh to change from an evil life to a good life (2 Chron. 33:13), for Jacob and Esau to reconcile after a bitter family rivalry (Gen. 33:4), or for Joseph and his brothers to find the blessing of forgiveness (Gen. 45:1-15). It is not too late for you. As long as you have breath, improve the remainder of your life on this earth by repenting of sin, reconciling relationships, learning to forgive and growing in the Lord (2

# Those Who Love to Hate

Donnie V. Rader

---

John, the apostle, has been called by some the apostle of love since he writes so much about it. Three of the five chapters of his first epistles have sections of verses devoted to loving our brethren. A quick summary of what those passages teach would be timely.

**1 John 2:7-11.** Here John's point is that one cannot hate his brother and walk in the light at the same time. One who loves his brother abides in light, but he who hates his brother is in darkness.

**1 John 3:10-18.** Here we learn that love for brethren is evidence of our being sons of God (v. 14). One who hates

his brother is a murderer and cannot inherit eternal life (v. 15). We also learn that one of the reasons one may hate his brother is that his brother's works are righteous and he own are evil (v. 12).

**1 John 4:7-21.** This is the fullest discussion of love in 1 John. One who truly loves his brother is born of God and knows God (v. 7). The love that God had for man in the sacrifice of his Son serves as an example of how we should love one another (vv. 9-11, 19). If we love our brother, God dwells in us (vv. 12-16). If we love God, we will love our brother also (vv. 20-21), which means if there is a problem loving our brother, we have a problem

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Pet. 3:9).

Some decisions are not just life-long, they are eternity-long. Don't just make your next life-long decision a good one, make your next eternity-long decision a good one. Any decision to sin can have not only lifelong effects, but eternal effects. Those who die in sin will wake up to "everlasting punishment" (Matt. 25:46; Rev. 14:11). The decision to sin may bring "passing pleasures" (Heb. 11:25), but be assured it will bring eternal suffering (2 Cor. 5:10). However, the decision to become a Christian can bring blessing not only to your whole physical life, but also to your eternal life (Ps. 84:11; Rom. 8:31; Phil. 4:13; 2 Pet. 1:3-4). The hundreds of decisions you make on a daily basis, when made from a godly perspective, will not only bless your earthly life, but most importantly, it will bring you everlasting life.

Consequences of bad life-long decisions don't have to be eternity-long. While you may, for the rest of your earthly life, have to face the physical consequences of a decision you made long ago (Lam. 3:39), there is good news. God's grace provides eternal forgiveness for past decisions of folly. Without God there is no hope. Just like one cannot take soap and wash off his own tattoo, we cannot, on our own, wash off the stains of sin. "Although you wash yourself with lye and use much soap, the stain of your iniquity is before Me" (Jer. 2:22). But if you become

a faithful Christian, God will remove your sinful stains of the past (Rom. 6:23; Acts 22:16). Your loving Father will cast the eternal spiritual consequences of your "sins into the depths of the sea" (Mic. 7:18-19), he will remove them "as far as the east is from the west" (Ps. 103:8-13) and he will remember them no more (Heb. 8:12). Your soul is no longer stained with the tattoo of sin (Isa. 1:16-20). Praise be to our God.

What will you decide? Right now you must make, not just a lifelong decision, but an eternal one. "How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him" (1 Kings 18:21). Determine to become and remain a faithful Christian today (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rev. 2:10). "I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore *choose life*, that both you and your descendants may live; that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for *He is your life and the length of your days*" (Deut. 30:19-20). "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve . . . as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:15). Make your next eternal decision a good one.

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loving God. He ends the section with a reminder that love is a command (v. 21).

As John uses the term “hate” in these passages it means a lack of love and not just to despise, detest, or abhor. Notice that what John calls “hate” in 1 John 3:15, is described as “does not love his brother” in the previous verse (v. 14). If that point is true, then one who does despise his brother is unquestionably wrong!

“Bitterness” is a word closely related to hatred. Paul instructed that all bitterness should be put away from us (Eph. 4:31). This word means “acridity (especially poison)” (Strongs #4088). Arndt and Gingrich includes the word “animosity” (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* 657).

How far hatred can go is illustrated in the attitudes and actions of Joseph’s brothers. The text says, “. . . they hated him and could not speak peaceably to him” (Gen. 37:4).

I suppose that everyone reading this has those who hate him. Those who comprise the Guardian of Truth Foundation are no exception. I have known many of the men associated with the foundation and the magazine for many years. I began writing for the paper in 1993 at Mike’s invitation. I was invited to sit in on board meetings as an advisor about six years ago. I am now serving as a board member. I mention that to say, that since my association with the foundation I have been amused and amazed at the degree and the depth of the resentment toward these good men. I must confess that I don’t fully understand why so many love to hate as they do.

There are those who delight in anything that might contribute to the “downfall” of *Truth Magazine* and those associated with it. The disdain and ridicule among some for the magazine is openly manifest. The names of those connected with the magazine and board are belittled and maligned. Motives are impugned. There are those who seem to relish in embarrassment of this organization. Many seem to be ready to believe any tale told (whether true or not, whether verified or not) that paints the foundation in a bad light. It is my judgment that some of the recent criticism is based upon *who* it is. If the matters being criticized were to involve someone else, I have a hard time believing that the critics would be as critical.

Perhaps the reasons for such resentment is varied. I am not blind to what creates enemies. However, I fail to understand the reason for the degree of it. Why some “love to hate” *Truth Magazine* to the extent they do is beyond me.

I have heard the stories of the resentment of the *Gospel Guardian* (and the men associated with it) in the days of the institutional battles. Many who read these lines, like

me, are not old enough to remember those days. Others, though, can never forget the bitterness they witnessed in those days.

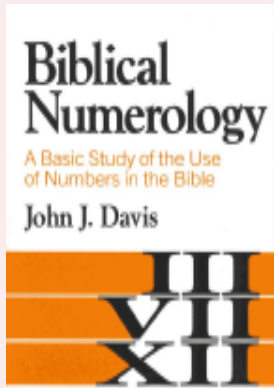
The Guardian of Truth Foundation is not just a magazine and two bookstores. It is board of ten men. The board consists of Connie W. Adams, Andy Alexander, Dickey Cooper, Ron Halbrook, Dan King, Fred Pollock, Donnie V. Rader, Weldon E. Warnock, Mike Willis, and Steve Wolfgang. The men I serve with are honorable men. The animosity shown toward the foundation is animosity toward these honorable men!

To disagree with something one of these men has said or written is one thing. But this degree of resentment is another. To challenge some decision made is understandable. But loving to hate brethren and assume the worst of them is a different matter.

I hope this article will challenge every reader to examine his heart to see if there could be any malice, bitterness, or hatred for brethren. This should be a warning to all of us, self included. We who comprise the board of directors of the Guardian of Truth Foundation, and the staff of the magazine must not let the actions of our critics cause us to hate them.

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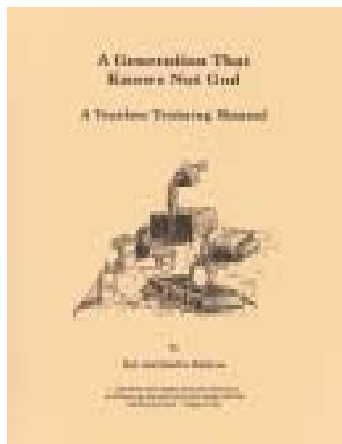
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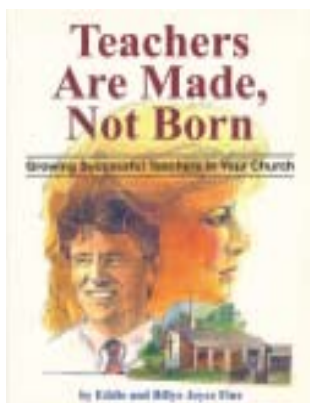
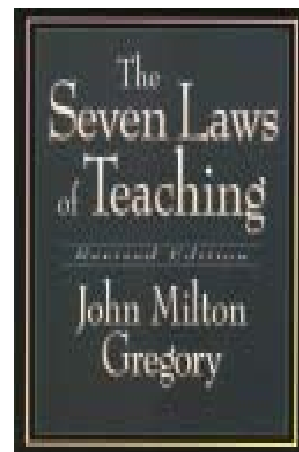
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# “Casual Sundays”

John Isaac Edwards

Joe R. Price

This was the headline of a December 13, 2003

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AOL Sports News story that called attention to a writing, by Richard Sandomir, appearing in the December 10 *New York Times*, in which the garb of today’s National Football League coaches was contrasted with the dress of NFL coaches in days gone by. When it comes to dressing for worship, a fashion statement needs to be made.

## TIES TO TURTLENECKS

Mr. Sandomir says, “Take a look at National Football League coaches. Dressed down. Every game is Casual — or Sloppy — Sunday, time to don the caps, turtlenecks, windbreakers, jackets, sweatshirts, golf shirts, parkas and knit hats . . .” Sandomir further observes, “Dressing in jackets, suits, ties, and overcoats like Vince Lombardi, Hank Stram, Tom Landry and, in his earlier years, Dan Reeves, has turned to dressing for a day at the mall.” Mike Brown, owner of the Cincinnati Bengals, said that his father, Paul, was “there to teach, and he dressed as a teacher would dress. He wore a coat, a tie, an overcoat and a hat in cold weather. Guys like my father would roll up their pants to keep from getting splattered by mud; otherwise, they’d be dressed for church.” We are not so much concerned with what coaches wear on the playing field as we are with what brethren wear in the assembly of the saints, yet this shows how times have changed.

## DRESS CODE OR RESPECT CODE?

When we pick up the pen and make a few flourishes with respect to dress, there are those quick to accuse us of imposing upon them a code of dress. We have as much right to charge them with formulating a dress code as they do to accuse us. To hold, as a general rule, that one can wear whatever he may choose is no less a code than calling men and women to a standard of behavior befitting propriety and respect. At any rate, some questions are in order before we dress for worship:

**1. Is this pleasing to God?** Am I wearing that which pleases me, or am I seeking to put on apparel with which God will be pleased? Pleasing God must be my chief concern (Gal. 1:10). It’s not about what is acceptable to men, but what is acceptable to God!

**2. Is this modest?** A divine dress code was revealed when the Holy Spirit dictated that men, as well as women “adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety” (1 Tim. 2:9). If my clothing does not fit the teaching of this Scripture, then it is of the wrong size and shape!

**3. Is this something I would deem appropriate to wear before the judge, governor, or king?** When we come before God in worship, we appear before “the Judge of all the earth” (Gen. 18:25). In pointing out a lack of respect for divine service, the Lord said, “offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person?” (Mal. 1:8). My dress should exhibit due respect for the person and office of Christ, “who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:14-15). There is something amiss when I choose to wear in the worship of God that which I would not even think about wearing before a civil judge, governor, or king! Is it possible that God may look upon the assembly of the saints and say, “where is mine honour? and . . . where is my fear?” (Mal. 1:6).

## DRESS OF PREACHERS

Something needs to be said about the dress of those who go about doing “the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5). Certainly it is out of place for the preacher to robe himself with clerical costume, as to canonize himself, but it is never out of place for him to dress neatly, in such a way as to show respect for the work. Some go from the pew to the pulpit (which some are replacing with sofas and lounge chairs) dressed as if they were going to the golf course, as there is a trend, among some of my cohorts, to get away from “the traditional.” One who does not have enough respect for the word of God to dress in such a way as to show it has no business in the pulpit! And there is no excuse for a preacher going around the community dressed like a bum!

When we look at those who make announcements, lead singing, teach and preach, read the Scriptures, and wait at the Lord’s table, could it be that our Sundays are “Casual

# He Wants a Date With Him?

Harry Osborne

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There is a great amount of discussion in our time about the practice of homosexuality. The “same sex marriage” issue is under growing discussion in political circles and has even been at issue in several recent ballot proposals across the country. In the case of the slaying of an avowed lesbian sheriff’s deputy last year, the homosexual rights advocates in Tampa engaged in open and strident protests for the surviving “partner” to receive “spousal benefits” on par with “straight” couples. In the denominational world, the mainstream religious groups of our time are not only refusing to condemn homosexuality, but are engaged in open efforts to “ordain” homosexuals into their “clergy.” More and more, those who maintain the Bible ground of condemning homosexual behavior find themselves under assault as “bigots” and denounced as out of step with reality.

While the controversy is raging, there is an active effort to portray homosexuality in a positive light. Its practitioners are rarely termed “sodomites” anymore. The new word is “gay,” a word which before its recent abuse referred to one who was light-hearted and cheerful. The present attempt is to redefine homosexuality as an alternate lifestyle rather than a sinful practice.

The entertainment industry has played a significant role in attempting to transform public attitudes towards homosexuality. The movies and television shows which depict homosexuality do not view it as a case of immorality, but

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or Sloppy” Sundays? Many times, all it takes to change one’s dress is an adjustment of attitude! I may be of the old school, but I believe that our garments ought to be finely woven with the splendid fibers of admiration, consideration, and veneration for God!

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*P.O. Box 462, Salem, Indiana 47167*

of “civil rights.” They realize they have a public relations problem with which to deal and they are doing their best to change popular opinion. *Newsweek* (July 20, 1992, 55) revealed a study comparing the values of Hollywood to the national average. When asked whether they believed homosexual acts were immoral, only 20% of those in Hollywood answered “yes” versus 76% of the rest of the nation. In the ten years or so since that poll, there is no doubt that the entertainment industry has made advances in their agenda to legitimize homosexuality in law and public opinion. Do you think they are going to stop now? Or do you expect them to press their agenda further? How far will they go to flaunt homosexuality as an acceptable, alternate lifestyle. The disgusting and telling announcement below is reproduced verbatim from the Bravo channel web site and it is indicative of how far our society has digressed from decency:

“Boy Meets Boy” is Bravo’s distinctive take on the popular dating show format. It is a gay dating show that goes beyond the expected with twists that explore the unexpected.

Hosted by Dani Behr (“Extra”), “Boy Meets Boy” centers on a handsome leading man who spends 8 days in a luxurious location with 15 potential soul “mates.” The suitors vie for his affections by participating in group activities and going on one-on-one dates, while the leading man, with the advice of his best girl friend, who is also on hand, whittle down the dating pool as he eliminates guys at the end of each episode. The series culminates with the leading man making his final choice. Adding to the suspense is an element of surprise — midway through the series the leading man discovers that some of the “mates” are actually straight — a twist that allows for numerous avenues of social exploration that challenge preconceived notions of what is considered gay and straight behavior.

If that is not enough to make one sick, he is too far gone to help! A few years ago, such depravity would not have been tolerated in public, but now it appears on television — not the paid “premium” channels, mind you, but on the regular cable channel where all, including children, are encouraged to tune in! Lest anyone be under the delusion

that Hollywood has some limit on the wretched conduct it would put on the screen, let it be understood by this show that there is no limit to the disgusting and abominable behavior they will parade in public view in the quest for their agenda to make homosexuality accepted in this society.

### WHAT DOES GOD SAY ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY

Though our society may be bombarded with efforts to reprogram our values, God's standard has not changed. His values are the same "yesterday, today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8). What does God tell us in his word about homosexuality? Does he view it as an alternate lifestyle or as a practice of sin which is an abomination to him? Let us see what he says:

**Leviticus 20:13:** "If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them." That does not sound like God accepted it as an "alternate lifestyle." He condemned it as a mandatory death-style.

**Leviticus 18:22:** "You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination." Homosexuality is not "progressive," "open," "broad-minded," and "accepting" in God's eyes. It is an *abomination*.

**Deuteronomy 23:17:** "There shall be no prostitute of the daughters of Israel, neither shall there be a sodomite of the sons of Israel." God did not want Israel to tolerate homosexuality. God wanted the practice eliminated!

**1 Kings 14:24:** ". . . and there were also sodomites in the land: they did according to all the abominations of the nations which Jehovah drove out before the children of Israel." When Asa put away the sodomites by the death penalty commanded in the law, God approved of the cleansing of such immorality (1 Kings 15:11-12). Whenever sodomites were tolerated in the land, it was a clear indicator of rebellion against God and assured God's condemnation

of those tolerating it.

**Romans 1:26-27:** "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due." Whether male or female homosexuality, God denounces it as *shameful*.

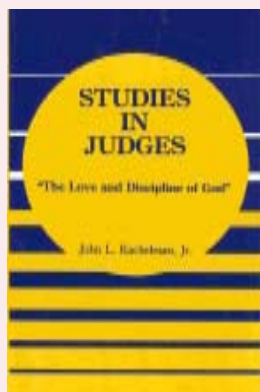
**1 Corinthians 6:9-10:** "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God." No, God does not tolerate homosexuality nor does he offer equal opportunity access for homosexuals into his eternal housing. Homosexuals will be excluded from heaven!

### CONCLUSION

God's attitude towards homosexuality is plain — he abhors it! No amount of Hollywood redefinition or changes of terminology will change his mind on the subject. God will not tolerate one to practice homosexuality and still approve him. It is just that simple.

What must be done by one practicing such to be right in God's eyes? The same as any other practice of sin would demand. The homosexual must see that the practice is sinful, repent of the sin (which involves ceasing the practice), and obey God's conditions for pardon or forgiveness of that sin (Acts 2:38; 8:22). One must cease the practice of homosexuality and not practice it again to be acceptable to God.

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# Are You a Pleaser of Men?

Don Wright

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In the letter to the brethren at Colosse, Paul wrote, “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God.”

One of the lessons that we learn from this passage is that a Christian is to give his all in everything that he does. Even in the most difficult situation like being a slave in the slave/master relationship that was so prevalent in the Roman empire (it is said that there were over 60 million slaves in the Roman empire in New Testament times), the Christian is instructed to serve heartily and with singleness of heart.

In giving these instructions, Paul refers to men-pleasers. What is a men-pleaser? Thayer says that the Greek word translated men-pleasers means, “Studying to please man” or “courting the favor of men.” Do we have any of these in the church today? If so, who are they? The answer to the first question is a definite “yes.” There are some among us who live their lives courting the favor of man. Let me give you a few examples of such.

**1. Preachers who want to itch the ears of brethren.** Paul instructed Timothy to avoid this kind of preaching, but instead to preach the word in season and out of season, reproving, rebuking, and exhorting with all long suffering (2 Tim. 4:2-5). There are some preachers today who will only take a doctrinal stand when it is popular with the majority of people. When a controversial issue arises, preachers who are men-pleasers are the ones who wait to see which way the wind is blowing before committing themselves to a position and then they take the position that seems to be most popular.

There is nothing wrong with taking a position that happens to be popular if the position is based on the truth of God’s word. But to take a position just because it is popular, or to refrain from making a stand on a particular issue just because it will be unpopular is to show a stronger desire to please man than God. Paul once said, “For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: But as

we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts” (1 Thess. 2:3-4). We must always put pleasing God before pleasing man and preachers willing to do this will declare the whole counsel of God regardless of how man may feel about it (Acts 20:26-27).

**2. Those who act differently around Christians than they do when in the presence of non-Christians.** We call this hypocrisy and the ultimate motivation behind it is a desire to impress man. This is what drives those who are men-pleasers. They crave impressing others because of an obsession with what others think of them. The moment we become more concerned with what man thinks of us than what God thinks of us we fall into the category of men-pleasers. This will be evident by the way we live our lives. We will go places we shouldn’t go just to be cool in the eyes of our peers. We will talk in a way we shouldn’t in order to be viewed as one of the guys. We will get involved in conduct we know is contrary to God’s will and thus displeasing to him because we would rather displease God than our earthly friends. However, when we find ourselves in the midst of Christians, knowing that they desire to do good and are impressed by godliness, as men-pleasers we will act as godly as we can. The godliness we demonstrate in such a case is not real. It is not a demonstration of our respect for God but rather a facade to help us fit in with and impress those we happen to be around.

**3. Those who refuse to preach the gospel because of what others might think.** This is a touchy point because it reveals that we all might sometimes be men-pleasers. Who among us has not hesitated to spread the gospel to the lost because we have been afraid of the reaction we might receive? It is good to think about this because it can help us to be better personal workers. There are several reasons why we sometimes do not engage in evangelistic activity, but a common reason is that we think too much about what man will think and not enough about what God has commanded and what man really needs. When it comes to winning souls we should not worry about popularity or about what kind of negative reaction we might get. To allow

# Hide It In Your Heart

Mark Mayberry

## INTRODUCTION

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Psalms 119 admonishes us to hide God's word in our hearts (vv. 9-11). Yet, Psalm 40 cautions against the same: "I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart" (vv. 8-10). How does one harmonize this apparent discrepancy? What is the meaning and message of these two passages?

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee (Ps. 119:9-11).

I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation (Ps. 40:8-10).

## HIDE IT IN YOUR HEART? YES!

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those kinds of things to interfere with our attempt to win souls is to spend too much time worrying about pleasing man. Let's not be men-pleasers in this important area. Let's determine to do what we know is right in the eyes of God and take advantage of every opportunity that comes our way to teach others the gospel.

To live our life studying to please men or courting the favor of man renders us useless in the kingdom of God. Whenever we place more emphasis on pleasing man than God, we cease to be servants of Christ. Paul once said, "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." Men-pleasers become servants of man, not God. Let's do our best to always remember who our true Master really is.

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God's word provides us with a reliable standard for living (Deut. 6:4-9). It leads to a state of blessed fruitfulness (Ps. 1:1-6). It offers favor and high esteem, direction and understanding (Prov. 3:1-8). It keeps us back from sin (Pss. 37:30-31; 119:9-16).

## HIDE IT IN YOUR HEART? NO!

We must proclaim the good news of God's righteousness, faithfulness, and salvation unto others (Ps. 40:8-10). Consider the courageous declaration of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego (Dan. 3:16-18). Observe the open obedience of Daniel (Dan. 6:10-13). Note the bold confidence of the apostles (Acts 4:7-31). Therefore, from the days of our youth until we are old and gray, let us tell of God's righteousness and his salvation (Ps. 71:15-18).

## CONCLUSION

Should we hide the word in our hearts? Yes! Those who refuse to do so will be destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:1-6). Therefore, may our hearts be like the good soil — cultivated, cleansed, capable — where the implanted seed/word bears much fruit (Luke 8:8, 15).

Should we hide the word in our hearts? No! Those who refuse to confess Christ will be rejected in that final day (Matt. 10:32-33; Mark 8:38). Therefore, be not ashamed of the Lord or his cause (Rom. 1:16-17; 2 Tim. 1:8-18, esp. vv. 8, 12, 16). Let us defend our convictions and be willing to suffer for the cause of Christ (1 Pet. 3:14-17).

(Note: The full text of this lesson, along with other sermon notes, can be found at the following web address: <http://www.ascoc.org/biblestudy/sermons/index.htm>.)

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**Renew Promptly!**



## “What Would You Do?” continued from front page

her original “confession.”

- What would you do? Would you now call the police, or do you again try to confront your sister/friend personally in an attempt to resolve this theft as Christians should be able to? What should you do?

Imagine your sense of betrayal, and your grief over the loss of a long-term friendship. Imagine also the sense of personal violation in having been defrauded. While you still have some of your assets, your ability to pay your bills is impaired, and funds that you perhaps had planned to use for your children’s future benefit have been stolen — by a fellow “Christian.”

Even so, unwilling to take personal vengeance and sue your sister in a civil suit to recover what she stole, you offer several alternative proposals for restitution (at “pennies on the dollar,” not demanding even that the entire amount be repaid, since it is obvious that it is so large — imagine that it exceeds \$100,000 — that it will never be fully repaid).

Imagine now that your sister totally ignores your initiatives, leaving the state without even acknowledging your attempts to settle the matter privately.

- What would you do? Should you allow this sister to freely go her own way without taking full responsibility for her criminal behavior, or even acknowledging the extent of her crime? Imagine that she might seek to do the same with other unsuspecting people, even with other fellow-Christians. What is *your* responsibility if you help cover up these sins and crimes, potentially placing others at risk? What should you do?
- More importantly, are you contributing to this sister’s spiritual delinquency, keeping her soul at risk by enabling her to deny full responsibility for her behavior? Without accepting complete responsibility, truly repenting without excuse or equivocation, and sincerely

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attempting to right the wrongs, will God forgive her? Would you leave her unaccountable with her soul in jeopardy? What should you do?

Imagine that you decide to call the police and report these crimes. Imagine that after they conduct their investigation, the result is that the state — performing its divinely-ordained function to punish evildoers per Romans 13 — indicts her and decides to prosecute such felonies.

Imagine that, when confronted with a trial date, this sister pleads guilty to multiple charges of theft rather than go to trial to “have her day in court” and attempt to defend her innocence.

Then imagine that, while awaiting the court’s sentence, this sister — with help from her family and a few close friends — makes her “defense” by circulating letters to churches which attempt to diminish her guilt, omitting many relevant facts and mis-stating others.

Imagine that these letters attempt to make it appear that it is *your* fault that she stole (implying that since you gave her the key to your house, she was authorized to access your bank accounts to pay her “expenses,” or that you were too trusting and should have been more vigilant and suspicious), and that it is *your* fault that the state prosecuted her crimes.

Imagine that she invokes emotional images of her innocent children who will suffer because of her punishment for the crimes she committed, and attempts to make you the culprit for putting this poor woman in jail.

Imagine also that some brethren buy into this national “victim mentality” in which criminal perpetrators are seen as the innocent “victims” rather than those who are truly victimized by their crimes. Imagine that several such brethren — without extending the common courtesy (to say nothing of brotherly kindness) to call or contact you to ascertain the veracity of such allegations — begin to circulate e-mails far and wide, post letters in churches filled with half-truths and significant omissions, and attempt to absolve this sister while placing the blame for her condition on you, rather than on her own behaviors.

- What would you do?
- What would you say to others who confront you, having heard only her version of the “truth”?
- What *would* you do? What *should* you do?

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## “Civil Government” continued from page 2

The police examined the evidence, filed criminal charges against the man, the man pled guilty, and is now serving time.

Is the one who reports this crime to the police guilty of violating 1 Corinthians 6? Is he responsible for the suffering of the one who embezzled the money? Suppose this accountant (a Christian) had come to the store in a clever disguise and robbed that same employer (also a Christian) with a gun. However, his voice gave him away, and the employer called the police who arrested him a short time later at his home. Would that change the response? Would reporting the crime committed at the barrel of a gun differ from that committed at the click of a computer key?

All of the above cases actually happened. This article addresses whether it is scriptural to report such crimes to the civil authorities. Of course, if it is not scriptural, it is sinful. Some brethren would argue that, at least in the last case, sin was committed because one Christian reported a crime to the police that another Christian had committed. The charge is made that reporting the crime to the police is a violation of 1 Corinthians 6 which condemns one Christian taking another Christian to law.

### CONSISTENCY

In a personal conversation with a brother who charged that sin was committed in the last case (but not in the others), I asked him, “If a Christian man entered your house and began raping your wife, could you call the police?” His reply was, “Yes, but that’s a criminal act.” So is stealing!

The idea that one Christian cannot report to the police a crime that is committed by another Christian can be reduced to absurdity, showing its logical fallacy. Suppose a Christian is walking toward a bank and sees that someone is in the process of robbing it. Can he take out his cell phone and call the police? If the man who is robbing the bank is a Christian, has he violated 1 Corinthians 6 by calling the police? Should he approach the robber and say, “I need to know whether or not you are a Christian. If you are a Christian, I can’t call the police lest I violate 1 Corinthians 6; if you are not a Christian, I am going to call the police.”

Think about the ramifications of this idea. A Christian is president of a local bank and oversees other Christians in that bank. The president discovers that a Christian is embezzling money. What should he do? Has he violated 1 Corinthians 6 if he reports the crime to the police? That seems to be the logical conclusion to which some are forced.

In another case, some Christians own a local bookstore and one Christian oversees other Christians in that book-

store. The owners become aware that one of the Christians is stealing money from the bookstore. What should they do? Have the owners violated 1 Corinthians 6 if they report the crime to the police? That seems to be the logical conclusion to which some are forced.

What say the Scriptures? “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20).

### DO NOT EXERCISE PERSONAL REVENGE

In laying out what the Scriptures teach about handling matters such as have been described above, the Scriptures forbid personal revenge. Paul wrote,

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good (Rom. 12:19-21).

An individual does not have the right to “take the law into his own hands” and retaliate against those who sin against him. Nor does he have the right to allow hatred, bitterness, and wrath to consume his heart.

### GOVERNMENT: GOD’S INSTRUMENT FOR AVENGING CRIMINAL BEHAVIOR

Having forbidden personal revenge, Paul immediately moves into the following discussion about the role of civil government in the very next verses.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour (Rom. 13:1-7).

Notice the following points observed from this passage:

- God instituted civil government. The “powers that be are ordained of God.” Government exists by divine arrangement.
- Government is in place for the purpose of protecting

those who obey the law and punishing those who violate it. "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil." The governmental powers are "the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

Those who assert that one who calls the police to report criminal behavior has been guilty of violating a divine prohibition against personal vengeance have completely overturned Paul's teaching. Calling government to punish criminal behavior is put in juxtaposition to exacting personal vengeance. Using government to protect the innocent and punish the violator is God's means of controlling criminal behavior and to prevent personal revenge.

Do the principles taught in Romans 12:18-13:7 apply only to the world, to the Christian versus the worldling, and not to such matters between two Christians? Is there one law for the children of God and another law for the world with reference to vengeance? Is Paul saying that a Christian can take personal revenge against a non-Christian (by reporting his crime to the governmental authorities) but not take revenge on a Christian? Are two Christians excluded from the provisions and principles of "the powers that be" as they carry out the ministry of God in their realm? Was the Christian who reported the child molester "guilty" of sending the molester to jail? Did he violation 1 Corinthians 6? No, the punishment of the wicked is the realm of civil government. Is the Christian who reports stealing, whether done at the point of a gun, the click of a computer key, or with the pen to write unauthorized checks to himself, guilty of sending the thief to jail? No, again. His own crime is what sends him to jail and it is the realm of the "powers that be" to punish such criminal behavior.

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well (1 Pet. 2:13-14).

Peter also instructs that governmental authorities are put in place "for the punishment of evildoers." He goes on to say, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters" (1 Pet. 4:14-15). The point is that if someone suffers as a murderer, thief, or evildoer, he is suffering deservedly. There is no virtue in suffering the punishment that God has put in place for the punishment of criminal behavior.

I understand that the Old Testament is not our authority. I am using it to establish certain principles and distinctions as are relevant, as per Romans 15:4 and 1 Corinthians

10:6, 11. Consider what the Old Testament shows about this subject. The distinction between the proper use of civil government and personal revenge is demonstrated for us in the following passage:

If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him. If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft. If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double (Exod. 22:1-4).

Notice the distinctions in this verse. A man who kills a thief breaking into his home is not guilty of murder. However, should he go after him and kill him the next morning (take vengeance), he has been guilty of murder and should be punished for murder. (Note the distinction between self-defense and murder.) However, the thief does not escape without punishment. If he is caught, he should make full restitution – five oxen for one ox, four sheep for one sheep. If the item stolen is still in good condition when he is found out, he shall restore double. These judgments of the court were not personal vengeance, but were divinely legislated punishments for the wicked.

Since that was true then, is it not still true today? Both were children of God in the case above. So, today, a case involving children of God may involve and include the same principle. It is not vengeance that the bank president or the store owner seeks; it is justice as assigned to those who are established to render it.

### **THE CHRISTIAN'S RIGHT TO APPEAL TO CAESAR**

That the Christian has the right to appeal to Caesar should be obvious on the surface. God instituted government for the purposes of protecting those who obey the law and punishing those who disobey the law. Why should it be judged sinful that one should use what God himself instituted? Nevertheless, some brethren have such reservations. Consider the following examples of a Christian who appeals for government to punish criminal behavior or to protect the innocent:

**1. Paul appealed to higher government to protect himself from the actions of lower government.** In the case when the centurion was about to beat Paul after he was arrested in the mob scene at Jerusalem, Luke records:

The chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourging; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him. And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? When the centurion

heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman. Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born. Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him (Acts 22:24-29).

Though Paul was a citizen of the kingdom of heaven (Phil. 3:20), he was also a Roman citizen. His citizenship in the kingdom of heaven did not preclude his authority to exercise his rights as a citizen in the Roman kingdom. On this occasion, Paul appeals to his Roman citizenship to prevent the centurion from beating him as an uncondemned citizen of the Roman Empire. Can a Christian follow an apostle's example? If not, one has undermined apostolic example as a way of learning the Lord's will.

## **2. Paul appealed to civil government to protect himself from the Jewish (his racial brethren) mob.**

While he answered for himself, Neither against the law of the Jews, neither against the temple, nor yet against Caesar, have I offended any thing at all. But Festus, willing to do the Jews a pleasure, answered Paul, and said, Wilt thou go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged of these things before me? Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar. Then Festus, when he had conferred with the council, answered, Hast thou appealed unto Caesar? Unto Caesar shalt thou go (Acts 25:8-12).

Again, a Christian appealed to government to protect him from unlawful conduct. He recognized government's obligation to punish criminal behavior and expressed his willingness to submit to it. Can a Christian follow an apostle's example? Have we not argued that one learns the will of God through command, example, and necessary inference? We have God's direct statement that he established government for the protection of the law keeper and for the punishment of the law breaker. We have an apostle's example of using the law to protect himself from law breakers. We should be able to infer what is taught by necessary implication, that a Christian can use civil government for the purpose that God created it to be used by man.

## **THE THINGS THAT ARE CAESARS**

Jesus recognized the distinction between the kingdom of heaven and civil government when he was asked whether or not one should pay tribute to Rome. Matthew records the exchange as follows:

And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodi-

ans, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way (Matt. 22:16-22).

Notice Jesus recognized the distinctive realm of two kingdoms: Caesar's kingdom and God's kingdom. God's kingdom pertains to salvation, worship, and other spiritual things. Caesar's kingdom involves armies, building roads, governing men, and other such things. There are some things that the divine kingdom was never set up to adjudicate such as taxes (sales taxes, property taxes, gasoline taxes, etc.). Were the church to try to adjudicate such matters, she would be operating outside the realm in which God established her to function. The church is not qualified to adjudicate many issues such as the judgment and punishment of criminals, property lines disputes, whether or not a medical doctor committed malpractice, who is at fault and has liability in an automobile accident, and paternal issues. (Remember that King Solomon adjudicated between two Israelite women who fought over parental guardianship of a child [1 Kings 3:16-28]. Did the two women sin in bringing their case before Solomon?)

Roy E. Cogdill, besides being an effective gospel preacher, was also an attorney. With this background his comments on the subject of a Christian's use of criminal and civil law are interesting. I have a photocopy of the following handwritten comments from Roy E. Cogdill on this subject:

### **Civil & Criminal**

Jurisdiction under government jurisdiction. Christians have recourse to these and their benefit.

Because a man is a Christian does not give him an understanding of legal matters as procedure and would not qualify him to adjudicate them.

No comparison between civil courts and heathen judges in Corinth.

Brother Cogdill obviously did not see an inconsistency between using the civil and criminal courts and being a Christian. Nor do most other Christian lawyers who naturally have had more opportunity to think through this matter than most of us.

### **OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES**

When Israel existed as a nation, Moses instituted civil



judges under divine inspiration. Notice these divine instructions to bring such matters to civil government to have them adjudicated:

If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman's husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay *as the judges determine* (Exod. 21:22).

If a man shall deliver unto his neighbour money or stuff to keep, and it be stolen out of the man's house; if the thief be found, let him pay double. If the thief be not found, *then the master of the house shall be brought unto the judges*, to see whether he have put his hand unto his neighbour's goods. For all manner of trespass, whether it be for ox, for ass, for sheep, for raiment, or for any manner of lost thing, which another challengeth to be his, *the cause of both parties shall come before the judges; and whom the judges shall condemn*, he shall pay double unto his neighbour (Exod. 22:7-9).

And I charged your *judges* at that time, saying, *Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously* between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him (Deut. 1:16).

*Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates*, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and *they shall judge the people with just judgment* (Deut. 16:18).

If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the *judges*, which shall be in those days; And *the judges shall make diligent inquisition*: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you (Deut. 19:16-19).

*If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them*; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked (Deut. 25:1).

God instituted the judicial system for man's good and gave instructions for his people to use them for settling matters between Jewish brethren and to submit to their decisions. The purposes of government are to protect the righteous and punish the wicked through its legislative, judicial, and executive branches.

### UNLAWFUL SYMPATHY

Sometimes men have unlawful sympathy for the criminal. God intentionally made the way of the sinner hard so that those who might not learn from divine instruction might learn from suffering the consequences of their crime.

The wise man wrote, “. . . the way of transgressors is hard” (Prov. 13:15). God expressly condemned as unrighteous that sympathy which tries to prevent the criminal from being punished. Read the following:

If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; Namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; *neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him*: But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage (Deut. 13:6-10).

The instructions given here pertain to the punishment of a false prophet who leads God's people into idolatry. The Scriptures instructed that such men were to be publicly executed (Deut. 13:5). The Lord then described a situation in which one's kinfolks — one's brother, son, daughter, wife, or friend — were involved. The Lord said that one should not pity the one who was being punished for his crime: “neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him.” R.M. Edgar said, “Not only is the insinuation to be put away, but the person making it, no matter how nearly related, is to be treated as a public criminal, and put to death. All the sympathy which blood relationship ensures is to be set aside before this crime of appalling magnitude, and the relative is to cast the first stone at the apostate, the execution being completed by ‘the hand of the people’” (*The Pulpit Commentary: Deuteronomy* 234). The relatives had to be the first to bring judgment because they were the witnesses to the crime. How tragic is the situation when relatives know about their kin's crime and then cover it up because they are “blood.” It is not only tragic, it is sinful.

The same principle forbidding sympathy for those who are justly punished for false prophecy is applied to other crimes in the following passages:

But if any man hate his neighbour, and lie in wait for him, and rise up against him, and smite him mortally that he die, and fleeth into one of these cities: Then the elders of his city shall send and fetch him thence, and deliver him into the hand of the avenger of blood, that he may die. *Thine eye shall not pity him*, but thou shalt put away the guilt of innocent blood from Israel, that it may go well with thee (Deut. 19:11-13).

If a false witness rise up against any man to testify against him that which is wrong; Then both the men, between

whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests and the judges, which shall be in those days; And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother; Then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother: so shalt thou put the evil away from among you. And those which remain shall hear, and fear, and shall henceforth commit no more any such evil among you. *And thine eye shall not pity*; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot (Deut. 19:16-21; cf. 25:11-12).

In the cases cited earlier above, it must be determined if the child molester committed the crime. It must be determined whether or not certain brethren lied and falsely accused him. The bank president's charges must be examined. Has embezzlement actually occurred? Once the guilt is determined, let us say that the offended admits, under oath, in court that he did, indeed, commit the crime for which he is charged. Can he later charge his accusers as being the cause of all his problems? Are his victims somehow to be seen as the "culprits" in the above mentioned cases? Who, but only the most blind partisan, could accuse the parents of the molested children, the bank president, and the store owner if the one they charged admitted his guilt and agreed to accept its consequences?

Those who defend the guilty might need to be asked if they are seeking some sort of "vengeance." What is their motive in charging the victims of a confessed felon?

Many of us have witnessed unlawful sympathy at the protests against the executions of murderers. Such actions undermine the effectiveness of the punishment of the criminal by encouraging men to think that criminals should not be punished for their crimes. These actions ultimately fall back on the head of the criminal to his own harm. Instead of his crime effecting repentance to the salvation of his soul, he is encouraged to deny responsibility for his crime and to burn in his hatred against those men who discovered his crime, those who reported it to the police, and those government officials who prosecuted him. Is unlawful sympathy acceptable in the case when the punishment of "Christian" child molesters, bank robbers, and store bandits is carried out?

### 1 CORINTHIANS 6

The Scriptures forbid a Christian to take some matters before the civil courts when those matters could be handled by the local church. The context in question addresses a case in which all participants were members of the same local church. This was not a case in which one brother was in Athens and the other in Corinth. In what local church should these matters have been handled? Which local church has jurisdiction over, for example, Guardian of Truth's business affairs? Are these who object to Guardian of Truth reporting a crime to police calling for a brotherhood court? Who is

trying to activate the church universal?

Albert Barnes made the following very pertinent remarks about the proper use of courts:

Where a Christian is *injured in* his person, character, or property, he has a right to seek redress. Courts are instituted for the protection and defence of the innocent and the peaceable against the fraudulent, the wicked, and the violent. And a Christian owes it to his country, to his family, and to himself, that the man who has injured him should receive the proper punishment. The peace and welfare of the community demand it. If a man murders my wife or child, I owe it to the laws and to my country, to justice and to God, to endeavour to have the law enforced. So if a man robs my property, or injures my character, I may owe it to *others* as well as to myself that the law in such a case should be executed, and the rights of others also be secured. But in all these cases, a Christian should engage in such prosecutions not with a desire of revenge, not with the love of litigation, but with the love of justice, and of God, and with a mild, tender, candid and forgiving temper, with a real desire that the opponent may be benefited, and that all his rights also should be secured. . . .

Barnes has correctly assessed the Christian's relationship with the courts. The courts are not to be used for trivial controversies that can be settled by judges within the local church, but they are established for an ordered society and Christians sometimes have need of them.

Again, we consider the parallels mentioned by Barnes to a case in which a brother rapes a Christian woman. Many women who were raped make a choice not to report it to the police to avoid the public scrutiny and humiliation which inevitably follows reporting the rape to the police. She has a choice of whether or not to call the police. But, should she choose to call the police, has she violated 1 Corinthians 6? No! 1 Corinthians 6 is not dealing with a situation in which civil law has been violated. That issue is addressed in Romans 13.

### CONCLUSION

The courts of the land are part of the governmental system which God established for man's good. They are not to be abused as a means of perpetrating injustice (against Christian or non-Christian) and should be resorted to only after every other effort to settle differences has failed. However, one would be drawing a wrong conclusion to assert that when a Christian reports a crime committed by another Christian to the police, he is guilty of sin.

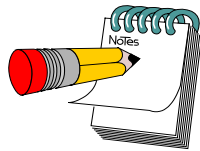
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6567 Kings Ct., Avon, Indiana 46123 [mikewillis1@attglobal.net](mailto:mikewillis1@attglobal.net)

## Web Site Information On Embezzling Problem at Truth Bookstore

On February 9, 2004 the former bookstore manager at Truth Bookstore began serving his prison sentence for embezzling money from the Guardian of Truth Foundation. Alan Birdwell pleaded guilty to taking over \$370,000 from the Guardian of Truth Foundation over the period of 1997 to 2003. Some of our readers may have heard about our problems and rumors spreading about them. Because of the circulation of letters critical of the Foundation, the Board asked that a statement be written that presented our understanding of the facts in as objective manner as possible. The statement was approved unanimously by the Board. Should you desire to read an account of what transpired, you may obtain a copy by visiting the *Truth Magazine* web site ([www.truthmagazine.com](http://www.truthmagazine.com)). Should you not have access to a computer, you may contact us and we will mail a copy to you.

### Quips & Quotes



#### A Law That Shouldn't Be Cloned

"Social conservatives are decrying a New Jersey law that permits creating cloned children for research.

"The bill, signed January 4 by Gov. James McGreevey, is the first to allow any human cloning. It permits implanting a cloned human embryo into a woman's uterus, where the embryo can grow into a fetus. In addition, the law allows "embryonic or cadaveric fetal tissue" to be donated for research.

"We laid out a vision to make New Jersey a leader in medical research and medical care,' McGreevey said, 'to give hope to the hundreds of thousands of families across the state affected by chronic and life-threatening disease.'

"Efforts to ban all forms of human cloning have stalled in the U.S. Senate. In July 2002, the President's Council on Bioethics recommended a complete ban on human cloning for reproduction but only a four-year moratorium on cloning for research" (Christianity Today [March 2004], 19).

#### Challenging Canyon Orthodoxy

"Efforts by mainstream scientists to stop a book defending young-earth creationism from being sold at the Grand Canyon have backfired. Sales are growing, and the controversy is evolving into a test case for free speech.

"Last summer, the Grand Canyon Association began selling *Grand Canyon: A Different View* (Master Books, 2003) in its six bookstores after receiving unanimous approval from a National

Park Service review board. The hardback book, compiled by Christian river guide Tom Vail, combines beautiful photography with essays from scientists. They argue that the canyon was created suddenly several thousand years ago.

"A park employee complained about the book. Last December, the leaders of seven national geological associations asked Grant Canyon National Park Superintendent Joseph Alston to remove the book because of its 'narrow religious view'" (Christianity Today [March 2004], 21).

#### California Court Refuses to Halt Gay Weddings

"San Francisco — The California Supreme Court declined a request by the state attorney general Friday to immediately shut down San Francisco's gay weddings and nullify the nearly 3,500 marriages already performed.

"The decision marked yet another setback to conservatives in their fight to block the rush to the altar by gay couples in San Francisco since the city began issuing licenses two weeks ago, under the directive of Mayor Gavin Newsom.

"At the prodding of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Attorney General Bill Lockyer asked the justices to intervene while they consider the legality of the marriages. But the justices declined and told the city and a conservative group that opposes gay marriages to file new legal briefs by March 5.

"Without taking a position on whether same-sex marriages should be deemed constitutional, Lockyer told the justices it was a matter for the courts — not the mayor — to decide" (The Indianapolis Star [February 28, 2004], A4).



# First Annual Truth Magazine Lectures

## The Renewing of Your Mind

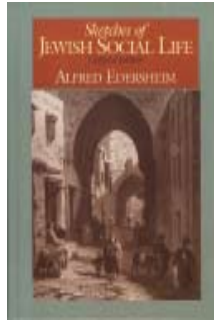
July 12-15, 2004

Bowling Green, Kentucky — Convention Center

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Rom. 12:1-

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
8:00 - 8:50	Scientific Fore-knowledge and the Bible (Larry Dickens)	House Churches (Harry Osborne)	Testifying in the Worship Assembly (Bobby Graham)
9:00 - 9:50	Renewed View of Morals (Aaron Erhardt)	Renewed View of the Church (Larry Hafley)	Renewed View of Jesus (John Isaac Edwards)
10:00 - 10:50	Renewed View of Sexual Morals (Lewis Willis)	Renewed View of Unity (Russell Dunaway)	Renewed View of Biblical Interpretation (Marc Gibson)
11:00 - 11:50	Renewed View of Marriage (Brett Hogland)	Renewed Commitment to Balanced Preaching (Ron Halbrook)	Renewed View of Worship (Jason Longstreth)
<b>Lunch Break</b>			
<b>Ladies Classes</b>			
1:30 - 2:20	Material available for Children's Classes (Vernita Goodall)	A Biblical View of Femininity (Anne Stevens)	Issues for a Preacher/ Elder's Wife (Bobby Adams)
<b>Auditorium</b>			
1:30 - 2:20	Evangelism in Canada (Brian Sullivan)	Evangelism in India (John Humphries)	Evangelism in Nigeria (Karl Diestelkamp)
2:30 - 4:00	Open Forum: No Assigned Topic	Open Forum: role of Government in Divorce/Remarriage (Mental Divorce): Ron Halbrook, Harry Osborne, Donnie Rader, Greg Gwin	Open Forum: Sunday Evening Communion (Al Diestelkamp, Dick Blackford)
<b>Singing: 7:00 - 7:30 Led by R.J. Stevens</b>			
"The Renewing of Your Mind" (Rom. 12:1-2) (Mike Willis)	Renewed View of Parental Discipline (Weldon Warnock)	Renewed Commitment to Evangelism (Connie W. Adams)	Recommitment to Biblical Authority (Bill Cavender)

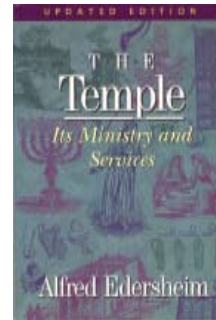
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