



Shepherd's Voice[®]

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M A G A Z I N E

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Front Cover: Sunlight shafts illuminate scenic landscape surrounding Lake Naivasha, a fresh water lake near Naivasha, Kenya

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Shepherd's Voice.

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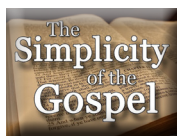
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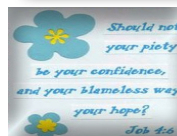
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Greetings!

The content of and direction *Shepherd's Voice Magazine* has evolved since the first issue in the summer of 2010. New contributors and editors from various groups have joined in this work and with the Lord's continual guidance and blessing we are able to serve those who have a need for the content and open up an opportunity for other fellowships and individuals to connect and find community. This has encouraged interaction and collaboration between groups.

In keeping with this direction we have an inspiring story of a young fellowship in Kenya that the members of the Judeo-Christian Foundation have served in the last few years. This is an inspiring story of a group of individuals discovering the Sabbath and God's Holy Days. We believe that this will become an increasing occurrence as time goes forward through the ability to communicate over the internet making this possible. Please take a moment to read and to put your best thoughts for our brethren in Kenya.

We continue with the Children of God Series into young adulthood where parents and young adults face the challenging task of nearing the completion of transference of responsibility, which is the letting go for parents and



the taking on for young adults. Everyone is different, but perhaps a biblical example to consider is the story of the Prodigal Son where we can derive a lesson in learning when it comes to critical times in relationships where both parents and siblings are involved.

We thank our Father and Lord Jesus Christ in blessing our efforts to preach the gospel.

In Christ's Service
Jim Patterson



Pastor John with children

The Simplicity and Beauty of the Gospel Message *And the Perils of Complicating it* (1 Timothy 1:3-11)



Through our increasing abilities for observation, we learn more about the nature of the world around us and the universe. We begin to realize the intricate balances that exist so that life can survive on this planet. Centuries of study have gone into understanding the observable universe, and mysteries still continue to befuddle the scientific mind.

We may begin to think life and creation is complicated, and perhaps from our standpoint it is. However, there is simplicity and beauty in God's creation. God intends that all His creation to be perfect, including life. Perfection presumes no issues or problems to resolve.

Sin however is a complicated matter. It wreaks havoc in minor and major ways, subtle or obvious, seen and unseen. Sin cloaks itself in deception, and results in destroyed relationships, pain or a liturgy of other maladies. So complicated is sin that only God can comprehend it and provide a solution for it.

The Bible may seem like a complicated book, and indeed it is, as it is dealing with a complicated subject. One of the Bible's principle teaching demonstrates the complicated matter

of sin, it is a witness to what it is, and how to mitigate its effects on life. It deals with life in a fallen world that needs a remedy. When Jesus Christ entered the world John reported that:

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend (overcome) it (John 1:5).

The light was foreign to the world. The world could neither withstand nor integrate it into its corruption, but not for the lack of trying, and with efforts that continue to this day.

The Gospel message of faith in Jesus Christ is not complicated. Jesus Himself does not present Himself as a complicated Savior (Matt. 11:29). If we are to understand the Gospel message, God must give us the opportunity. This is not an indication that the gospel is complicated, and you need to be very intelligent to figure it out; it is a testimony to the darkened state of the world. In this article we will look at the intended simplicity of the Gospel message. We will do so without an exhaustive proof, which is not necessary, and would be even contradictory.

It appears that we like to complicate things, and as recent and past

history teaches us, the temptation to complicate the Gospel message is no exception. I think this has existed with all who have made efforts to minister to others. Succumbed purveyors and listeners of a complicated gospel have made the gospel less effective, perhaps even unrecognizable. Institutionalized presentations of God's will, which the Pharisees cultured in the time of Christ, and the modern day variety, pervert the gospel to such an extent that the Word has no effect (Mark 7:13). The Gospel message as presented by the Christ and the Apostles continually point to the simplicity in our calling, and this is consistent with God's will in creation.

In past issues of *SVM* we have touched on some of the complications introduced by men (see Kingdom Misconceptions, Spring 2011, and To the Angel of the Scattered Churches, Winter 2010) and we will touch on a few more in this article. We will also examine the perils that may await those who complicate the message, and those who believe them. Indeed the road to perdition is paved with good intentions and this is most applicable to teachers, and we are well to take heed.

Paul's Warning to Timothy

Paul in his letter to Timothy warned him of teachers that were to come that complicated the gospel such as those who perverted the truth for selfish gain (1 Timothy 6:3-5). It may seem improbable but the reasons typically revolve around seeking recognition by men, or recognition by God. All the corruption seems to follow suit.

As I urged you when I went in Macedonia—remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, (1 Timothy 1:4-5).

Love from a pure heart, from a good conscience and sincere faith will not complicate the gospel. The efforts of such a person will glorify God and edify others.

... from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the thing which they affirm (1 Timothy 1:6-7).

Here we pause to consider the ideas and teachings that Paul recognizes as causing disputes and complications. Speculative fables and genealogies are catchy and attractive and are able to gain traction, particularly if they emanate from confident teachers. Today there are some genealogical teachings that some insist are Biblical, which include claiming their church organization has a lineage of some kind that goes back to the first century church. These kind of claims are placed in the forefront to compete for converts. They are not necessary or Biblically warranted. Paul further portrays individuals who begin to affirm (that is, having great confidence in their teaching) irrelevant material that does not accompany sound doctrine matching the Law Giver's intent.

The Law Giver's intent Paul then goes on to emphasize:

But we know the law is good if we one uses it lawfully, knowing this that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and or sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murders of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, ...

And take note of this:

... and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine (1 Timothy 1:8-10).

Those who claim to be proliferators of the gospel should take sober notice of Paul's assertion of the law's application here. Most would not identify with murderers and other acts of hatred, but a common transgression are false ideas that complicate the gospel (see text box inset) that have caused division and confusion. The law has an answer to those who, in Paul's words, affirm these ideas on other brethren (v 7).

Unhealthy teaching leads to controversies, arrogance, abusiveness, and strife. When presenting scripture, it should be presented with the original intent of its divine Author. There appears to be room for speculation, so long as it is understood to be speculation, but Paul's point here is abuses of the gospel message are a serious offense and can lead to judgment.

Paul later identifies two such individuals Hymenaeus and Alexander who strayed from a sincere faith and resulted in a shipwrecked faith (v 19-20). They suffered shipwreck not because the faith was too complicated, but because they complicated the faith. We are not to do the same.

Sincerity and Simplicity

For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you. For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end (2 Corinthians 1:12, 13).

Sincerity and simplicity go together. Simplicity in gospel terms is purity and liberal bestowal of the truth. This can only be done with faithful sincerity, as Paul explains, because there can be no agendas (competition for members, concern over perception more than the truth, competing against another feast site, decisions based on financial concerns instead of Christian truth, denigration of other churches etc., ad nauseam), no coded message and nothing between the lines. With agendas such as these, the gospel message becomes complicated to the hearer and the faith of many has become sidetracked and shipwrecked, and judgment of the law becomes increasingly inevitable on those who have any such agendas as Paul told Timothy.

But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3).

We are tempted by a desire to be "in the know", that there must be something more we need to be getting, and there are heresies since the early days of the Church of God such as Gnosticism and Asceticism that try to inject other requirements, creating insecurities in the believer. Satan made this same suggestion to Eve and she partook of the forbidden tree. This same temptation, an appeal to an ego or our natural insecurities, is the genesis of corruption. The darkness has always used this in an attempt to stop the truth. The work behind this publication and I am sure other ministries have been subjected to those with perverted ideas of the Word of God looking for a launching pad to purvey their ideas. Some hope to make themselves look and feel credible by discrediting what is the genuine work of others, something Paul experienced in Corinth. Some think they are too advanced in their studies to be taught or corrected by anyone, and become disconnected from others, having a shipwrecked faith, yet still always affirming their "advanced" ideas.

But an exhaustive study of Paul's epistles should always leave us with the strong sense of the sincerity in the man. He does not come across pretentious, worried about image or perceptions. We want a sincere faith, which takes effort and sound doctrinal teaching. A sincere faith has spontaneity and other positive attributes, all coming from a good conscience and exceptional self-awareness.

“For My Yoke is Easy and My Burden Light”

The Pharisaical message was “do” followed by a long and growing list. The message Jesus’ brought was an invitation that said “Come!” with a short list. Today, there may be a number of church goers who have spent years receiving a gospel delivered in a series of “do” messages. “Do” belong to this group, and “do” believe that this is the group to be in. The “do” message will eventually leave the hearer with the uneasy underlying feeling of inadequacy, and dependence, resulting in a bondage.

The message Jesus brought was not “do”, but “Come!” followed by belief in Him and true repentance. The “Come” messages combats the “do” message and all the complications that come along with a “do” message so that the believer has a full chance of being successful in the faith.

“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden light” (Matthew 11:28-30).

When the Lord asks for you to take something from Him, what is implied here is that it will be well fitting and tailored to the taker. What He then wants us to learn is the deeper peace with God, and the peace of God which brings us rest. He is offering each of us the power to repent and overcome our sins, not to do a long list of works. Life unified with Christ is simplified essentially, as rest is simple, not needing to contend with the beggarly elements that seek to bring us the bondage of slavery.

The above was given in the context of Jesus praising the Father hiding the Truth from the wise and prudent, but revealing them unto babes (v 25). The wise and prudent would be tempted to incorporate the gospel into their own understanding, which is in reality an attempt to master the Truth, instead of surrendering and letting the Truth master them. Conversely, the babes Jesus Christ has in mind are the type who instinctively accept what is given to them, which transforms them according to the Father’s will, not their own.

The Ministry of Self Promotion

At the time when Jesus’ disciples concerned themselves with who would be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus taught them a fundamental lesson about conversion and greatness.

“Assuredly I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

“Become” implies a process. For Christians, the way down is the way up. And His words are consistent with the Father’s wishes of revealing Himself to babes.

There then comes a warning:

“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin (stumble, be offended), it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6).

Complicate the faith of a child of God, who has accepted the Jesus Christ as Savior, then judgment is pending on the offender. This is commonly done when a person places themselves between a believer and Jesus Christ. We need to get out of His way, as we are only going to complicate things.

“Take heed you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 18:10).

Brethren are not a statistic, where a leader of a group or organization can claim growth, in particular, percentage growth. Only God can claim growth (Acts 2:47). There is an arena of competing ministries where each have claimed preeminence, and like to report statistical growth. The Internet is full of their claims. To promote a ministry, the person(s) or the work, the volume of literature, the buildings, ahead of the gospel message, is to despise the little ones, for it is the offerings of these that finance such goals. Paul in his defense to the Corinthians demonstrated the proper service to little ones:

For we did not preach ourselves (promotion of their own ministry), but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake (2 Corinthians 4:5).

Promoting the ministry for the ministry’s sake lacks sincerity and credibility. That message says if you are good with us, or we find you good for us, then you are good for the kingdom. This error complicates the message for the hearer. Promoting the ministry for Christ’s sake is the answer, which is subjecting oneself for the hearer’s needs, not for the needs of the ministry (see also Ezekiel 34:4, 10).

What is Sophisticated?

We have a garden at the side of our house where our favorite vegetables are growing. I know enough to water it and give it occasional fertilizer. If I take the time I can read about how some of the plant’s specific mechanisms might work in how it may grow. Perhaps I can hire a Ph.D. in the field that studied these plants in particular who could educate me further. However, I don’t think we truly now understand the miracle behind the life of the plant, and how it knows to flourish. It is too sophisticated at the molecular and genetic level for our complete comprehension.

Such is the growth of the kingdom. We see the stages, but the process is too complicated, and is in the hands of the Creator.

Things that are contrary to sound doctrine (1 Timothy 1:10) that some affirm on others and have been widely accepted or tolerated:

Introducing various government models to describe the Kingdom of God—The Kingdom of God is not of this world (John 18:36), and man’s vision of government will fail to resemble the Kingdom. This kind of thinking gives birth to the idea the church should be governed in a central manner. The familial understanding with elders in local congregations is Biblical. Beyond this, a hierarchal or head office control of congregations goes beyond scriptural boundaries.

That the Seven churches of Revelation are Church Eras— this has brought only division, and is often used for ministry self-promotion. This often entails presenting the group as legitimate for having some kind of lineage from a previous group leader, or from the first century Church, or being a remnant of a Philadelphian “era”. It is also used to criticize others who may be deemed as Laodicean. There are few places in the Bible where a sentence is repeated seven times for emphasis, but in Revelation 2-3 seven times the Bible repeats the message “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” Christ tells everyone with ears to listen to every message to every church. Why should we listen to men who tell us that there are “church eras”, a phrase never in the Bible? See also <http://www.cbtm.info/prophecy/Church%20eras%20in%20Revelation%202%20&%203.html>

12 Hour Sabbaths: This writer disagrees with those who have written hundreds of pages in an effort to contradict clear Scriptures like Leviticus 23:32, “...from evening to evening, you shall celebrate your Sabbath”. But rather than discuss those arguments let us suppose for a moment that they are right, that the Sabbath should only be kept for the daylight portion of the day. What are we arguing about? Most people sleep eight hours in the night, so we are only talking about four hours per week that may or may not need to be kept as a Sabbath. Do we believe Christ will hand out a big reward to those who saved the rest of his brethren from keeping too much of a Sabbath? Why do they not simply keep it as they see best, and try to avoid offending their brothers over a minor point of doctrine as Paul taught in Romans 14? Jesus is not God: The nature of Christ, whether He existed before His human birth, and to what degree He is God has been argued for 2000 years. The Bible says that believers will all stand before Christ’s judgment seat some day (Romans 14:10; 2 Corinthians 5:10). We will be judged by the work we let Him do in our lives. It is a terrible mistake to think we will be there, judging Him, explaining His nature to Him. Christ prayed that He, the Father and all of us would be “One” someday (John 17:11, 21). We can trust Them to get it right.

Lunar Sabbaths: (see Scribes Square, SVM Winter 2010)

Calendar Debates: (see Ask Norm, this issue)

Sacred Names: While one can appreciate the respectful attitude of wanting to pronounce what one considers God’s name as It was spoken to ancient Israel, the New Testament writers do not find this necessary. Even though many New Testament believers were Gentiles who did not know the Name, the New Testament contains no attempt to transliterate it--represent the sound of the Hebrew in Greek letters. However, this is done in numerous places with other Hebrew words (Mark 15:34; John 5:2; 19:13, 17; Acts 1:19; Rom 8:15; 11:4; Gal 4:6; Rev 9:11; 16:16). Mark records our Messiah addressing his prayer to “Abba, Father.” The Greek has Abba (Hebrew for “father”) and pater (Greek for “father”). If our Messiah prayed using our Father’s name or mentioned it at any other time, it would have been easy for these authors to include it in their manuscripts--but they did not. The claim that all the New Testament manuscripts originally contained the devine name, but that it has been removed in the copying process is indeed dangerous. If that much alteration could be done to the scripture without detection, how can anyone trust the New Testament at all?

In General: We must be very careful with doctrines that are not clearly commanded by Scripture, may cause brethren to cease worshipping and working together.

And He said, “The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatters seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the

full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come” (Mark 4:26-29).

This should bring the calling of a Christian perspective. That is, how much do we even think or

know or understand amounts to little compared to what is most important to the Father: that we bear fruit to His glory (John 15:8). What are we going to impress Him with in knowledge of something we deem a sophisticated understanding? What are we going to impress each other with?

I believe we find an example of what makes a great impression in Romans 13. It is interesting after 12 Chapters of what some may consider a sophisticated discourse in theology, most of it is written to encourage a paradigm shift away from the complicated reality of life under the law, from concerns over national heritage, to a new and simple reality of life and oneness in Christ. It would appear that undoing past ideas and perceptions takes some work, but out of it comes the conclusion of it all which is relatively a simple request:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service (Romans 13:1).

What follows in Romans 13 is call to transformation, community thinking, kindness, service and other Christian attributes. These things do not appeal to carnal and vain aspirations.

Solid Food Belongs to Those Who are of Full Age

I recall a time in a congregation where some claimed that they were not learning from the elder's sermons. Apparently, according to them, they needed solid food and not the milk, which was a reference to Hebrews 5:14.

The question of "milk", messages for the new believers, versus "meat", teachings for mature believers has existed ever since there are been religious services. In general, it is much better to reach the new believers who may be struggling in the faith. The mature believer can always view these messages as instruction on how to reach new believers.

It is said that gratitude is an attitude, and this also applies for the lack of gratitude. Mature believers



should be grateful to be around new believers and hearing the basics or the "milk" of the Word therefore supporting their needs. If I start to vainly entertain the idea, and let others know, that I am worthy of a more sophisticated Biblical learning I can cause others and in particular new converts to stumble and will undoubtedly stumble myself.


Before we look at what the writer of Hebrews might mean by this, are we to first suppose that Peter was writing to less mature Christians than ourselves?

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby if indeed you have tasted the Lord is gracious (1 Peter 2:1,2).

The kind of enlightenment that the writer of Hebrews refers to is a gift from God to be used for His purposes (Hebrews 6:3,4). This gift reveals the power of Christ's resurrection, which then becomes the thrust behind the message for the writer of Hebrews, and those worthy of it will not use it for vain reasons, but digest it for the right reasons.

Concluding Thoughts

It may seem naive to write of the simplicity of the Gospel message; how we are saved through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. One can be accused of apostasy in some circles. However, when we read an epistle like Hebrews, how the writer routes the reader through a sophisticated presentation, from the past intercessory work through the fathers and the prophets, to the superior order of Melchizedek, and of faith in Jesus Christ as High Priest of a New Covenant, he actually takes us back where we started but with even greater confidence. That confidence is the solid food.

I believe when a person comes of full age in the faith, with love in his/her heart, they will look at the truth of God and see the beauty and simplicity of the calling, and, with some reflection wonder why they did not see it so clearly in the first place. This beauty pervades all of creation that has been unmarred by sin. The day is coming when there will be a New Heaven and a New Earth and oneness with God. One day soon all the complications and toil that we are accustomed to now will be gone, and that is simply, if we can get our minds to receive it, Good News. 

Our Kenyan Brethren

A Report by Jeff Patton of the Judeo-Christian Foundation



Three years ago in October 2010, we received an email from a Kenyan man named John Barta who had watched one of our Nanaimo, British Columbia webcasts. He was fascinated by what he was hearing and so contacted us.

At that time, John was a pastor in a Sunday-keeping church who became convicted in his online conversations with my son, Joshua, about the truth of the 7th day Sabbath and preached it at his then church. Of course, this soon resulted in John's being kicked out. Undaunted, John, his wife and family began keeping the Sabbath at home. Neighbours and friends dropped by and soon a congregation of Sabbath-keepers was born in the rural, agricultural region of western Kenya, about 150 kilometers northwest of Nairobi and about 40 kilometers east of Lake Victoria, known as Kilgoris.

Kilgoris is about 51 kilometers from the nearest town with Internet access that is called Kisii. When John wants to communicate with us it takes him a full day to travel to Kisii and then back. John Barta and the brethren at Kilgoris are subsistence farmers in a region where the average cash income officially ranges from 1000 to 1500 Kenyan shillings per person or about CDN\$12 to \$18 per year, which is not a lot no matter how you cut it.

Here in Nanaimo, our fellowship has helped John Barta and the Kenyan brethren with spiritual guidance—sermon notes, answering questions, suggestions, etc.—and some material assistance as well. Being so far away, we encourage them to exercise wisdom and self-sufficiency in

solving their own problems in a way that leads to growth due to their initiative rather than dependency. We also don't want them to become targets of jealousy and envy by others in their region who are not in their fellowship. Most of the Kilgoris brethren are Masai tribesmen who speak Masai, though now there are also non-Masai, Swahili-speaking brethren attending. These Masai brethren make a significant sacrifice to be part of the church since they must give up their tribe's traditional practice of drinking the blood of their cattle to obtain high-protein nourishment (Leviticus 19:26 & Acts 15:20, 29).

To assist in the spiritual growth of this mixed language group we donated money for the purchase of 20 Masai language bibles (red covers) and 20 Swahili language bibles (blue covers) to be freely distributed to the congregation.

Last year for the Feast of Tabernacles we sent about CDN\$ 900 or about 75,000 Kenyan shillings to enable the group to rent a tent and chairs for services to protect them from rain, and to provide lunch for the brethren who walked to services. Previously, they would meet in the shade of a large tree sitting on the ground, but that wouldn't protect them from getting wet on rainy days.

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Kenyan women enjoying fellowship.

A New Defense System

Instinctively, almost without thought, Peter drew his razor sharp sword and swiped off the ear of Malchus the high Priests' servant (John 18:10). Peter had been challenged earlier that he would deny Jesus, and his response was that he would rather give his life (Matthew 26:22-25). He was thus in anticipation of having to defend his master and did so in Israel's customary way...with the sword. His sword was not a primitive fish-scaling device, but rather the traditional short dagger-like weapon carried for general purposes and for self-defense. His action resulted in swiping off the ear of the servant. He was ready to fight for the cause at hand just as his forefathers had fought for God and Israel, but Jesus told him to put away his sword (Matthew 26:52). Things would now change, the battle would be different, and a new defense system was being put into place.

When conditions are favorable God sets before the church an open door as He did for the Church in Philadelphia (Revelation 3:8, NIV), *"I know that you have little strength"* {the expression *"little strength"* means "small spiritual power" GR.- *mikros dunamis*}; the body must be in a healthy state, all

parts working together properly. The Church in Sardis was dead in terms of works because it was not a healthy functioning body. The solution to the problem was given to the Church in Laodicea. It was complacent, a church that in some ways had inherited the blessings of knowledge and understanding and failed to appreciate the hard work it took to get there. They had no drive to peruse the truth any further it seems, they were lukewarm. They were wretched, poor blind and naked, and in need of some eye salve to help them see their condition (Revelation 4:17-18).

The circumstances and opportunities facing the Church at Laodicea cannot be compared to those of Philadelphia, but the reason for failure or success lay in the state of the body. Philadelphia was working together as a healthy body (*I know your works*) and its "little miraculous power" was sufficient to accomplish the job God laid before it. We need to take a lesson from the council given to Laodicea, take a good look at ourselves, and repent. To repent means to acknowledge mistakes and fix them, and in this Laodicean case it is clear that the condition of the body was like the body of believers at Corinth...sick!

God does not discriminate between the rich and the poor, the mighty and

the weak, or the educated and the uneducated. God's purpose is to have all whom He has called to be in the business of learning and growing and becoming a viable member of one body. It seems this is the lesson that gift-rich Corinth had to learn. The first lesson that we learn about spiritual gifts, is that they are most active and effective in a healthy functioning body.

Changes to Customs and Traditions

In a previous article we learned about barley and wheat and from that perspective discovered a significant difference between the old covenant and the new covenant, in particular the work of God in His servants being done in a different way. The new covenant was the time for a new harvest of firstfruits to begin, the harvesting of wheat (new covenant elect) which we learned last time would be dealt with in a much different way than the harvest of barley. It would appear that Jesus emphasized this difference by a way of living that would be consistent with calling of the elect under the new covenant when He told Peter *"Put your sword back in its place, for all who draw the sword shall die by the sword"* (Matthew 26:52).

Saul, a Pharisee of the highest order and a man of impeccable obedience to the law of God, was one who stood up for the rights and practices of the

old covenant agreement made with God by taking to task those who walked against the rules when he found himself struck down suddenly and forced to accept a major practice change to his belief system. That change was great, as we read about in his own words:

Are they servants of Christ? (I am out of my mind to talk like this) I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea. I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own country men, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all of the churches (2 Corinthians. 11:23-28 NIV).

Paul had gone from persecutor to the persecuted it seems. Our modern day Pharisee, in the same form of the old, would say of the likes of Paul that his lack of abundant blessing was a result of disobedience to God. The truth is however, something had changed under this new covenant, a change that affected Paul's customary practice and impacted his life significantly. Where physical blessing was part of the old covenant, trials and tribulations are blessings of the new.

Paul's experience tells us much about the trials the new covenant church would face in trying to exist as a body of believers in the world and bring the Gospel message to it. In these trials we can see the need for divine intervention on several levels. A ship wreck on a rocky shore line with tumbling surf is next to impossible to survive: surviving in the open ocean is perilous as well. What greater gift could one want in times such as these than the gift of faith, patience and miraculous delivery by some passing Angelic help. "In deaths often" suggests that Paul was perhaps raised up by someone who had a special gift of the spirit. In times of persecution when one is mocked, ridiculed, falsely accused and publicly condemned for what is the truth, a gift of the spirit can provide the faith and soundness of a sane thinking mind to withstand the social pressure to conform and be compliant to accepted norms.

When we consider Paul's words we must first of all understand that He was not only a Jew in good standing with God and man, but also a Roman citizen with rights. It was against Roman law to persecute him or beat him or accuse him falsely without a permit or a trial, much the same as it would be for us today as citizen of our free country. It is evident from the content of his discourse that he has willingly subjected himself to much of the tribulation in fulfilling his new covenant commission. His troubles clearly are a backlash from an enemy of the Gospel, an enemy of the new covenant operation of God. It was a backlash that came from two places, the synagogue through which he was obligated to work, and from the Roman government officials (worldly government) that had jurisdiction over, and had infiltrated, that religious order.

"The Hasmoneans, originally leaders of the popular revolt against the Hellenizing elite, were non-Zadokite usurpers of the high priestly office. The high priestly families which Herod brought in and which monopolized the chief priestly offices right up to the Jewish revolt were, some of them, not even Palestinian Jewish families, but powerful families from the Diaspora. More serious was their increasingly exploitative behavior vis-a-vis both the ordinary priests and the people generally, as Josephus indicated. One major reason for such behavior was the fact that the priestly aristocracy owed its very position of wealth and power to the Romans. As a result, and in order to stay at the head of Jewish society, it had to collaborate with the Roman imperial system." See *Bandits Prophets and Messiahs* by Richard Horsley, pg. 62.

Special help was obviously needed for the people of God in this new age, and it was given as promised. It was poured out in a stunning way on that eventful day of Pentecost 30-31 AD (Acts 2:2-7), ordinary men from Galilee, unskilled in linguistics, spoke to men from every language in the Empire. Both Paul's and their experience gives us a taste of why it was needed so much, for an earthly church with a heavenly country needs heavenly help. As surely as Jesus promised it, it came.

Spiritual Gifts

In bringing the gospel message to the world and caring for the converts we can appreciate the need for divine intervention and help. The special gift it provided on that eventful day in 31 AD served the purpose of the day, for the very important message on that day was given by one person and heard by all in their own tongue. It visually descended from heaven to verify the reality of the promise made by Jesus. But as time went on we see there were more gifts given, and it is to Corinth one must go to see more of the gifts and understand better their purpose and how they should be used.

As we saw in a previous article (*Significant Symbolism of Barley and Wheat, SVM Spring 2013*), Paul does not want the Corinthians to be ignorant about spiritual gifts. He first makes it clear that there are three purposes served by these gifts, miracles, administrations, and operations (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). Paul was a gifted writer and used the art of writing that was developed in that time, and thus purposefully lays out the parameters “for which he is now about to give specifics.” It is left to the reader (and the Corinthian) to understand where certain gifts should fall. For instance, the gift of

healing is a miracle and does not necessarily warrant the need for any special standing or recognition such as deacon, elder or apostle. It was obvious to the Corinthian that some of them had that gift and they were not an apostle such as Paul was who also had it. Paul healed many because he was, by commission, the purveyor and deliverer of the gospel and its benefits to the Gentile. Often men will insist that their followers “teach as they have been taught” thinking to be applying a biblical principal drawn from Titus 1:9 which gives credence to their ideas and interpretations, all the while failing to understand that what was ordered to be taught here was from an apostle (someone who had the firsthand experience—2 Thessalonians 2:15). The blind have obviously been involved in teaching over the years for we find many in the ditch teaching what they have been taught.

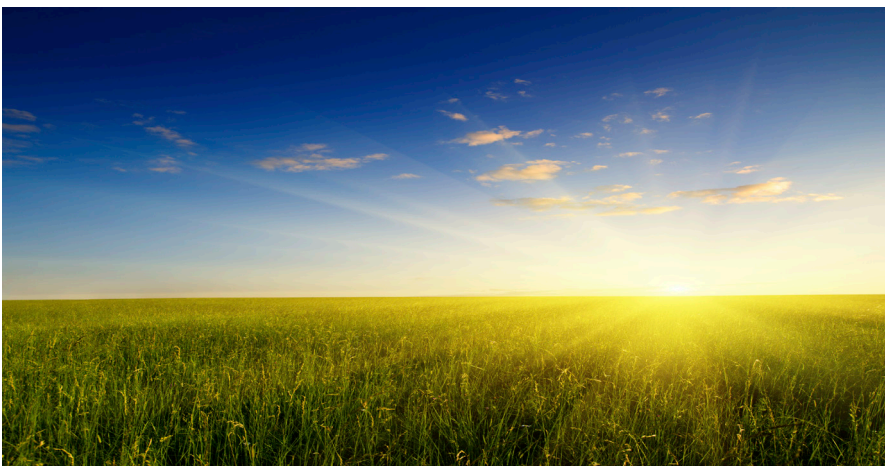
Ignorance about spiritual gifts was a problem in Corinth and it precipitated problems for them in this area. Because Corinth was primarily built upon the spin-off industry from ships being hauled from the northern Corinthian gulf two miles over an isthmus to the Saronic Gulf. Many entrepreneurs were made rich from this traffic of people and goods. The historical backdrop is very well

painted for us by Paul Sampley in *the New Interpreters Bible* pg.773-775, (a good history here is a valuable asset in understanding the problem concerning Corinth’s ignorance about spiritual gifts).

It becomes evident from the social make up we have read about Corinth that the rich ruled the roost. If money talked it did so here. The shabby treatment of the poor was spread into the church as well. It becomes easy to understand why Paul had to set in place a policy for speaking, where more than one should speak, and if anyone had a revelation, he should be permitted to speak. This policy helped to break apart the stronghold of the powerful and influential person. It was not culturally acceptable to have a poor servant teaching the rich and famous, but with God giving the gifts to whomsoever He wished was inevitably the reality. Paul’s measures to allow a variety of speakers (1 Corinthians 14:29-31) was an effort to put inspiration by the gift of the spirit back into its rightful place in the body.

Desiring Spiritual Gifts

People in the first century sought after gifts, tongues being one of the chief ones, perhaps because of its need in that great empire of conquered peoples, and because of its outward obvious presence. It appears also that gifts were sought after to simply be used for personal gain and even counterfeited for the purpose of gaining preeminence in the body. For Paul to make edification of the body, the first requirement for spiritual gifts was a measure put in place to help manifest the genuine article. Desiring spiritual gifts should be an automatic reaction to a need. One should desire a gift of healing out of compassion for those who suffer in sickness desiring a gift of understanding so one can help the church grow etc.



Gifts Serve Needs

“In Paul’s time Corinth was a Hub commercially and religiously. Corinth was perhaps best known for its artisans’ products, such as bronzes, but it also did a thriving business in pottery and earthenware. Religious diversity was ensured by Corinth’s location. By portaging the couple of miles across the Corinthian isthmus, shippers of goods between the regions of the Mediterranean basin and Rome could avoid the considerable hazards of storms in the exposed Mediterranean sea (Acts 27:2-44). Sailors and travelers brought with them their religions and planted them so successfully in Corinth that modern archaeologists find the evidence for most of the more of the two dozen temples, altars and shrines that the mid-second century Greek chronicler Pausanias described. The archaeological evidence confirms that Greek and Egyptian religious shrines coexisted there along with the Roman Imperial cult. In fact, Pausanias records that alongside the forum at Corinth there was even “a Temple for all Gods”. Also Jews, some like Priscilla and Aquila, no doubt expelled by Emperors Tiberius (19 CE) and Claudius (49 CE) found Corinth attractive and settled there. Politically Corinth enjoyed colony status, the greatest civic honor that could be accorded cities in the empire. Colony status assured a special relation with the Roman Empire in which Roman laws were operative, Latin was the official governmental language (even though the populace spoke Greek and Paul’s letters to Corinth are written in Greek), and as noted the imperial cult was established. Under the emperor Claudius (41-54 CE) the senate looked to Corinth even more than to Athens as the lead city of the Roman province of Achaia, and Corinth paid taxes directly to Rome well into the second century. Roman proconsuls, in effect governors, went to the provinces as agents of Imperial power; such a person was Gallio, who in 51 CE arrived in Corinth. Paul was hauled before Gallio (Acts 18:12-17), and Sosthenes, who in Acts is described as the synagogue leader (archisynagogos, Acts 18:17), was beaten in Gallio’s presence for his association with Paul and the Gospel 1 Cor 1:1).

Whether justifiably or not, cities sometimes get a reputation, coming to thought of as having traits, one might even say as having a sort of ethnos or personality of their own. So it was with Corinth. Apart from the renowned Isthmian games that were hosted in the area every two years, Corinth was said to have a “generally superficial cultural life,” which may in part ultimately be traced to Julius Caesar’s reestablishment of Corinth in 44 BCE and to its populating it, along with emigrants from other parts of the empire, with eager upwardly mobile freed persons who were unloaded from Rome’s burgeoning population. Understandably, the transitory nature of ancient commerce, with sailors relishing life in a city and then moving along, contributed to Corinth’s becoming known as “Sin City.”

Corinth’s reputation for wealth without culture and for the abuse of the poor by the wealthy was so well known that Alciphron, the second or third century CE composer of figmentary letters reflecting bygone times, could trade on Corinth’s reputation in two of his fictional letters. In one he rejoices that he was able to escape Corinth for Athens’ more friendly setting, and he characterized Corinthians as “persons without grace (or charm) and not the least convivial.” In the other letter, he called Corinth the “gateway to the Peloponnesus” and described it as superficially lovely enough, with its great wealth and its location “between the two Seas,” but he found it inhabited by persons whom he once again characterized as lacking charm and grace. In the same letter he calls wealthy people’s behavior disgusting, coarse, and objectionable and details the groveling of the abject, wretched poor for the smallest morsel of food. Paul’s letter confirms certain details of Corinth’s ethos.

Not only does Corinth have a long-standing ethos, but so does the Corinthian Church. First Clemente, a document written from the church at Rome a full generation after Paul’s time notes that the Corinthian Christians continue to “engage in partisan strife” just as in Paul’s time (1 Clem. 47:3). Paul’s letter will give evidence that the Corinthian reputation, both as city and as a church, is well deserved.” – New Interpreters Bible Commentary

As time moved along the need for tongues decreased and the need to expound the Gospel message became more important. Paul’s message to the Corinthian Church was one of setting in order the body so it could be able to function properly. Gifts were used to activate the church, and not for personal gain. Desiring spiritual gifts was encouraged, but it was expected that the gift given should be manifested and a service to the body as a whole. Paul encourages the Corinthian to desire the gifts, particularly that of Prophecy “*Follow the way of love and eagerly desire the spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy*” (1 Corinthians 14:1 NIV). His encouragement puts direction to the intention of the gifts, and exposes their purpose.

It would not be long before there would be a great need to survive in face of the backlash generated by the preaching of the Gospel message. And we read of such a benefit where Paul describes fighting the new war without the sword:

For though we walk in the flesh we do not war after the flesh. (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;). Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled (1 Corinthians 10:3-6).

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The Corinthian Gifts

The gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 are: wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miraculous works, prophecy, discerning of spirits, tongues and interpretation of tongues.

It cannot be emphasized enough that these gifts of that one same spiritual power from God were distributed in the body of a local church as God pleased. Paul makes that emphasis in verses 11-14 as though it were a major comprehension problem with them. We can suppose that many who had gifts were simply being denied the use of them by those who had the preeminence among them. It is indeed a sick body that has a mouth but cannot recognize that it has hands, feet, ears and eyes. Even sicker when one part of the body isolates itself from the whole, and tries to claim for itself the entire lot of spiritual gifts, and begins to use the rest of the body for its own gain and interests. Paul's instructions to have more than one speaker, and not to disallow someone who has a revelation to speak, was a deliberate measure to curtail the influential Corinthians attempt to capture the podium—gift or no gift—to speak. History should speak well to us here in this mistake when the early church refused access of the scripture to who might be deemed an “ordinary” church member. This sad mistake produces a gross lack of respect on the part of the ministry towards their fellow brethren, a mistake that still manifests itself today in some places where ministry treat and speak to the membership as though they are generally incompetent and incapable of a personal gain in deeper understanding. Corinth seemed

to be the forerunner of this attitude and produced a dysfunctional body which was written up for posterity's sake.



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Prophecy/knowledge

Considering the social/religious backdrop, preaching the Gospel in Corinth and caring for the converts presented an enormous job. It was vital for the success of this local church to be up to date with knowledge and understanding as the church was advancing and facing conflicts with the Roman government and the Jew as well. Prophecy (expounding and explaining the scripture) would bring more credibility to their message.



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Tongues/ discernment

We have already learned of the need for tongues in this diverse population with its constant flow of passing sailors and travelers, but also the need to discern their spirits. There is a difference between discerning an attitude, (something almost anyone can do) and that of discerning the inner working of a man's heart. The gift of discernment is a spiritual gift discerning spiritual things. Many men have the natural ability of cold reading, (an ability to read the general make-up and actions of an individual) and use it in things such as fortune telling and interrogation proceedings. Men would come as angels of light as we are told, and their seemingly faultless way and manner is difficult to assess at the human level: so God provided the body with those who could sense it in the spirit.

Wisdom

It may be that a Christian in Corinth would benefit to be as wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove. This talent may not have been shared by all, and perhaps for a good reason, for those involved with the works and activities of the church could easily find themselves absorbed and unaware of things around them. To have one who is tuned into the spiritual path of the church and able to see and hang on to the bigger picture, is helpful in times when God is advancing knowledge and understanding for His people. It is not wise for one who is an administrator or a Bishop, for instance, to treat badly someone who may be laying truth on the table just because he does it in an awkward way. Wisdom knows how to listen, when to act quickly or to wait, and knows what to do with information. Much can be said of wisdom, and certainly Solomon was given that gift of the spirit from which we all learn. Knowing when God moves is not observed in this age by a pillar of fire

and smoke, but by those in the body who are wise in using that which knowledge and understanding has laid on the table.



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Miracles

Exactly what miracles were performed by this blessing of the spirit is difficult to say, other than they would be those things invoked in the line of duty. One would have to have known the special needs or predicaments the church faced to give answer on this. Paul gives us some information in his discourse; surviving a day and a night in the deep, being stoned, in danger in rivers and in travels amongst men, or perhaps as Peter and the other apostles who were miraculously broken out of jail.

Gifts Work Together For the Common Good

Whenever one observes the gifts of the spirit given under the new covenant they are always for use in aiding the church as a whole as it faced the world's powerful governments and religions with the Gospel and the care of the church. They also worked together in the effort at hand. In Acts 11:28 a devout man named Agabus spiritually gifted with insight into prophetic things

foresaw and warned everyone in the church about a pending famine, (which came to pass) and the church was able to be prepared. In this day and age there are those who have similar gifts, those who have a keen sense about the political and financial situations that threaten this present world. In Acts 21:10-11, we see Agabus once again (now a proven prophet) give prophetic warning to the Apostle Paul. His interest in, dedication to, and keen sense of reading the situation at hand was enhanced by that promised helper—the Holy Spirit. His deep feelings about what he knew of Paul's message to the Gentiles and the Jew's attitude towards it, stirred him, and the Spirit moved him to make his comment and symbolic gesture. Paul was an apostle, but it was Agabus that had the gift of prophecy. We see also in Acts 21:8-9 Philip who had the gift of evangelism (a gift of preaching the Gospel), and his four daughters who had the gift of prophecy (*Propheteuo* = to speak under inspiration). All of these things worked together for the edification of the church as it marched along in its job of preaching the Gospel and taking care of the flock. Paul did not take the preeminence and disregard Agabus. The church as a whole did not dismiss the prophesying of the four daughters of Philip. In Corinth it may easily have happened. It should not happen with us!



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Tares and the Separation of the Body

Separating from the body to gain the preeminence is what happened to the early Christian church (it became a Christian counterfeit partly because this). All gifts eventually were considered to be by providence the spiritual tools of a ruling class, a crippling idea that plagued the church throughout the ages and continues in some places to this day—a by-product of the presence of tares. This stronghold was not broken until the advent of the printing press which spawned a great number of inspired teachers and prophets to come forward. It opened the door for the true Gospel to be freely preached once again.

The tares will always be with the new covenant church, even though a new field is planted and things begin to grow. Making a stand for the truth brings trouble, but we see that it is part of the necessary process. What makes taking a stand fruitful and possible is the help God gives through gifts of the spirit. Because we are wheat and not barley it became a necessity of this giving of spiritual gifts, not only for the growth of the body, but for its very survival. The tares are like a cancer invading the body looking for a weak place to attack. The immune system (soldiers) need to be armed and ready for this invasion. As the very elect of God we need to be asking for these gifts as He sees fit, giving them where they will do the most good. We need, as the new covenant church in the 21 century, to be aware that we have an enemy of the gospel who divides and conquers (Daniel 12:7); his successes scatter the church in the end. As a church we need to love one another and pray for the giving of these gifts, not as we see fit but as God sees. 🙏

Ask Norm!



Questions? asknorm@shepherdsvoicemagazine.org

Dear Norm,

Hi how are you?

I had a question about the biblical calendar which I am hoping you can help me out with. My question is as follows: Lets say I have a start date in the Gregorian calendar. I also have a length of time IN THE BIBLICAL CALENDAR TIME FRAME, 483 years.

My question is with just these two pieces of information, can I do some calculations to find out what new Gregorian date I would arrive at 483 biblical years after the first Gregorian date, or does this not take into account how the biblical calendar work?

Please explain as best as you can if the answer is that you can't just calculate the new Gregorian date. Thank You very much for your help.

—Jaime M. via e-mail.

Dear Jaime,

The answer to your question is almost certainly, “no”. The Gregorian calendar was not implemented until February 24, 1582, so it has only been in operation 430 years--less than the length of time in your question. Before it, we had the Julian calendar, which was similar, but used exactly 365.25 days per year, rather than the more accurate 365.2425 days per year of the Gregorian calendar. Nevertheless, people frequently project Gregorian calendar dates backward into history, even though they were not used at those times. However, this results in errors if, for example, you read an ancient document with a date of June 15, 1215 A.D., which is the Julian calendar, but fail to convert it to June 22 1215, the Gregorian dating system with which we are most familiar.

The exact length of a biblical year is an even more complex issue. The Jewish Rabbis have maintained a calendar from which they celebrate the Biblical Feast Days. The days of “Passover, “Rosh Hashanah” and “Yom Kippur” are typically printed as Jewish holidays on typical calendars of our day. However, nearly every scholar would agree that the calendar used by the Rabbis is not the same one used at the time of Christ or during the Old Testament. Today’s Rabbinical Calendar is calculated, whereas Jewish history records the ancient calendar was set by observing the moon and sun. Knowing exactly which “biblical” calendar was being used at any point in ancient history, or knowing exactly what the “true biblical calendar” should be, are questions of great debate.

Yes, there are many religious teachers who claim to have historical calendars worked out to know exact dates of multiple calendar systems throughout history. But these teachers do not all agree with each other. And every one of them will have either a set of rules that are not clearly commanded by scripture (they are “deduced from scripture”) or will rely on some kind of governing body (even if it is themselves) to determine exactly when to start a new month or new year in certain situations. Such situations would include: How does one know when to begin a new month during cloudy weather when the moon is not visible? Should calculations be used instead? Should a new month begin when some people within a country or congregation can see the new moon but others cannot? (that happens when the new moon is barely visible.) Do

the majority of people need to see it or just the leaders? What should be done if the leaders cannot agree? In order to accept a sighting of a new moon, can the sun be anywhere? Or, does it all have to be below the horizon? Or, does it have to be so dark that stars are visible or even completely dark? There are more questions like these that the Bible does not directly answer. Yes, there are verses where one can draw inferences, but sincere teachers differ on their meaning.

You can learn a lot from my article, Biblical Calendar Basics on the Internet. While it explains calendar technicalities at length, it also shows the reason why some of this is not as important as we might think it is.

There are calendar conversion programs available, but I do not think these will completely solve your problem: <http://www.fourmilab.ch/documents/calendar/>

I am sorry that this took so long, but I think it was worth answering.

February 2013

Attention: Norman Edwards

I have been a member of the Church of God since my involvement with the Worldwide Church of God in 1981. I am presently involved in the Education Ministry at our local congregation here in Toronto, Ontario, giving sermonettes recently on “Spiritual Warfare”

I am writing to you in response to reading your article in the Mar/Apr

1999 issue of “Servants News” on “What the New Testament Teaches Us About Demons”. I came across your article as I was searching on Google for material on “deliverance ministries” from the perspective of the Church of God.

On further research, I found another article you wrote on Harry Potter (which I have yet to read and on which my wife, Patrice, has written articles on) in the Jul/Aug 2002 issue of “Shelter in the Word”. In that issue there was a list of books on “deliverance ministries” in a section entitled “Books Can Help.”

I have done study on “spiritual warfare” since 2005 and the best material I found on the subject was “Winning Your Spiritual Battles” by Gary D. Kinnaman. Recently I have read material by Derek Prince.

The reason I am writing is to find out your recent viewpoints on deliverance ministries. I would like it to come from our “Church of God” perspective rather than from a “Professing Mainstream Christianity” perspective because I find their material to be based a lot on their experiential knowledge on top of scriptural knowledge. I am more interested in finding information from the perspective of scriptures and from the experience of the Church of God ministries who keep the laws of God.

What are some of the excellent books on the subject that you have recently come across and would highly recommend? I have partially read “The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare” by Dr. Ed Murphy in which another book was mentioned by Neil T. Anderson entitled *Bondage Breaker*.

Some members of our group in Toronto have read “*Bondage Breaker*” and are reading another one by Anderson entitled “*Victory Over Darkness*”. Anderson also wrote “*Winning Spiritual Warfare*”. But I feel that they are falling into error and trusting too much in the “experiential knowledge” of professing mainstream Christianity and not proving all things according to scripture. I’m planning to pickup and read some of these books during the Feast.

I would appreciate that you would write back on your further viewpoints on the subject of “spiritual warfare” and “deliverance ministries”. Could you also send names and contact information of other ministers and ministries within the Sabbath and holy day keeping congregations of the Church of God that have further information on the subject.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I await your reply.

— Laurent M. Bourgeault

Dear L.M.B.,

Thank you for asking a difficult question that many Bible believers have a difficult time dealing with. But let me assure you, Jesus Christ has never had any trouble dealing with it. He spoke about demons numerous times and cast out demons to cure both of what we may in some cases today call mental illness and physical illness.

I appreciate your desire to learn from the scripture as opposed to the experience of some who may or may not be following the scripture. The men in Acts 19:12-17 were called “exorcists” and they obviously had some experience casting out demons. However, they were no match for the power of the demons they had taken on here. The Bible does not say, but experience shows that most non-believers charge a fee for casting out demons. This is something that Christ and his apostles never did. Even today, there are “Christian” ministries that make a profit from their books, DVDs, seminars, counseling or deliverance regarding demons. While that does not mean they are wrong about everything, I would certainly not accept all that they do.

The Bible never lists the “casting out of demons” as a spiritual gift. It seems to be something that any believer can do. However, there are “kinds” of demons which require a great deal of faith, along with prayer and fasting to cast out (Matthew 17:20-21; Mark 9:28-29).

However, the Bible does mention a spiritual gift of “discernment of

spirits” (1 Corinthians 12:10).

I have known people with this gift. They are generally aware of the presences of angels or demons—some actually see them. These people are very helpful in delivering others from demons—they can detect demons that pretend to be gone, but are not. They can also distinguish a person who is demon possessed from one who is mentally or physically ill. Most of the people whom I have met with this gift are not dynamic powerful preachers, but quiet, humble believers. Most do not want to use their gift unless they are wanted—they are often doubted by members and ministers.

During the last 20 years or so, that I understood what the Bible says about the demonic world, I have only rarely encountered demons, and usually did not have the aid of someone with the discerning gift. Most of the people did not believe they had any spiritual problem, or did not want their demons to leave. A few appeared to be delivered from minor demonic problems, but without the ability to see the demon before or after, I cannot be sure. I have never seen an example of super-human feats of strength as Bible mentions (Mark 5:3).

I have read some of the books you mention and have learned from some of them, but as you say, there is much that is extra-biblical. I do not know of anything that I can recommend beyond them. An extensive scriptural source on the subject is the list of scriptures in an old article of mine on page 10 at <http://servantsnews.com/sn0207/sw0207.pdf>. I think prayerful study of those scriptures reveals a lot of truth that we need.

Beyond that, I encourage believers to pray and have faith that God will work in them as they trust in Him. We should neither shrink back from someone who is troubled by demons and wants deliverance. Nor should we go out looking for demonic spirits when God has not brought us into such a ministry.

-Norm.



Did The Prophet Isaiah Really Walk Around Nude For Three Years?

Scribe's Square

A lawyer's discussion of Biblical laws

To demonstrate his prophecy about the Assyrians defeat of the Egyptians and Ethiopians, Yahweh, the God of Israel, instructed the prophet Isaiah to remove his sackcloth from his waist and his shoes from his feet. Isaiah did so, and walked “naked and barefoot” for three years.

In the year that the commander in chief, who was sent by Sargon the king of Assyria, came to Ashdod and fought against it and took it, —at that time Yahweh had spoken by Isaiah the son of Amoz, saying, “Go, and loose the sackcloth from your loins and take off your shoes from your feet,” and he had done so, walking naked and barefoot— Yahweh said, “As my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot for three years as a sign and a portent against Egypt and Ethiopia, so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians captives and the Ethiopians exiles, both the young and the old, naked and barefoot, with buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt. Then they shall be dismayed and confounded because of Ethiopia their hope and of Egypt their boast. And the inhabitants of this coastland will say in that day, ‘Behold, this is what has happened to those

in whom we hoped and to whom we fled for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria! And we, how shall we escape?’” (Isaiah 20)

Did Isaiah literally walk around “buck” naked? Not necessarily. Just as biblical writers used euphemisms (e.g. “And Adam knew his wife Eve”), they also used hyperbole. Just as “to know” another man’s wife was an understatement describing adultery, walking around “naked” may have been an overstatement describing walking around without an outer garment (Mark 14:51-52; John 21:7).

In the Bible, the Hebrew word *arom* does mean naked or bare and indeed refers to a state of absolute absence of clothing. But the word naked also can refer to one who is scantily clad or even raggedly dressed. (Job 22:6; Job 24:7-10; Isaiah 58:7; 1 Samuel 19:24).

Please note that God specifically told Isaiah to remove his sackcloth. Sackcloths were rough looking clothes often made of camel’s hair, goat hair, hemp, cotton, or flax and worn as a sign of mourning. They were apparently worn by prophets and served as their customary gear. Elijah and John the Baptist were attired in sackcloth. (2 Kings 1:8; Zechariah 13:4; Matthew 3:4). Therefore, it may have been the removal of

Isaiah’s special prophetic garment that made Isaiah naked rather than a complete removal of all his clothing. A modern-day illustration is a scene in the television western series *Death Valley Days* in which a saloon owner pointed a gun at an unarmed cowboy and said, “*You feel naked without your gun, don’t you?*”

Please also note that in describing the Egyptians and Ethiopians’ captivity at the hands of the Assyrians, God says that these people would led away naked, barefoot, and with buttocks uncovered.

In modern western culture, it takes a person to be fully nude to shock the conscience. And in some cases, full nudity does not even shock the conscience. But in a strict ancient Hebrew culture in which even so much as exposing one’s thigh was considered nakedness, Isaiah did not need to remove all of his clothes to prove his point. Removing his outer garments and taking off his shoes would have sufficed. Total nudity was detestable to the ancient Israelites!

At this juncture, the reader might be asking, “What is the point to all of this?”

As mentioned above, Isaiah was being commanded to prophecy against Egypt and Ethiopia. The



Image from <http://www.illustrationartgallery.com>, artist Don Lawrence

Southern Israelite kingdom of Judah led by King Hezekiah was hoping to form an alliance with Egypt and Ethiopia to protect themselves against the aggressive regional superpower nation of Assyria.

Isaiah's stripping of his garment was designed to be a sign to show that the Egyptians and Ethiopians would be unreliable allies as they would soundly be defeated themselves by the Assyrians, carried captive, and stripped of all their possessions – and perhaps even literally of their clothing.

Isaiah's physical enactment of


God's prophecy was used to teach Hezekiah and the Israelites to trust God – not the Egyptians or Ethiopians – to protect them. And true to the word of God, the Egyptians and Ethiopians were no match for the Assyrians who crushed them in 720 B.C.

Egypt and Ethiopia proved to be the unreliable allies, but at least King Hezekiah did not have to learn the hard way. Hezekiah had wisely headed God's warning and had not joined forces with these two nations.

Wealth, power, beauty, popularity, intelligence, physical talent, ethnic ancestry, self-righteousness, and

church membership are all examples of things upon which people erroneously rely instead of their Creator.

Just as Yahweh ultimately exposed the nakedness of two false sources of refuge upon which the Israelites were tempted to rely upon, our God today will expose the nakedness of any false sources of refuge upon which we may be tempted to rely.

King Hezekiah and his countrymen listened in time to the warnings of Isaiah – fully naked or partially naked. We should listen as well. 

Children of God

Part 8 — Adult Children, Caring without Controlling

The title of this article nearly says it all. When children become adults, their parents must still love and care for them without commanding and controlling their lives. While this is simply said, it can be very difficult to accomplish.

Parents are used to telling their children what to do. They have done it all their lives. They have hopes and dreams for them. They want the best for them. They cannot bear to see them hurt themselves or hurt others. “Their lives would be so much better if only they would...”, but they will never be adults if someone else is always making decisions for them. Letting children become adults is an imperfect process of allowing them to become responsible for all of their lives—not just segments.

We need only think about the time when we became an adult. Did we automatically start doing everything right when we left home or when we achieved a certain age? Did our parents at some time “grant adulthood” to us when we started doing everything just like they would do it? Of course not! That did not happen to us, or to anyone else we know. There are always times when young adults make mistakes their parents would have avoided. There are always times when parents do not realize that their children are more capable than they think.

The previous two parts of this series emphasized the turning over of responsibility to teenagers for various aspects of their lives. Adulthood effectively occurs in one of these two situations: 1) when parents turn over complete control to their children, or 2) when their children take control themselves. This process varies tremendously in each situation. At one extreme, some children move away from their parents and drop all communication—they are certainly on their own. On the other side, some children remain at home into their

Vital for Non-parents, Too

Most adult children are no longer spending much time with their parents. They are talking to others—people like you! They look to others to help confirm their thinking—whether good or bad. Are you helping them in their relationships, or hurting them?

Are parents always right, always wrong or somewhere in between? When do you encourage young people to follow their parents and when do you encourage them to disregard their parents?

This subject is so important for the non-parent that we are including a series of boxes in this article for non-parents to think about their opportunities to be a blessing to other families.

30s, 40s, 50s even 60s—not becoming fully responsible for themselves until their parents pass away. While these extremes are unusual, they occur—along with every other imaginable possibility in between.

The Age of Adulthood

While the Bible has few specifics about when a child is old enough to set his own bedtime, stay out over night or move out of the house, there are some very helpful guiding principles. At age 12, Jesus Christ began to take on adult responsibilities discussing the Scripture with the leaders of his day (Luke 2:41-51). This is keeping with the Jewish tradition of 12-year-old children learning from their religious leaders in preparation for their bar mitzvah or bat mitzvah at age 13. This tradition dates from several hundred BC to the present, the latter words meaning “son/daughter of the covenant”. The 13-year-olds do not

have all rights of an adult, but they enter into adult situations and begin to take on some adult functions, such as reading from the Scripture at services.

But there must come a time when a person becomes responsible to their country and to God for themselves. When the courts were interrogating the parents of a man who was born blind and healed by Jesus, the parents responded, “He is of age; ask him” (John 9:23). There must come a time, ready or not, when people become responsible for their actions. If a young man damages his neighbor’s property, what would happen if he said, “my parents have not made me responsible for my actions yet, please sue them,” and his parents said, “He is of age, sue him?” Would there be no reimbursement for the loss, because there is no agreement on whether or not he is an adult?





The Old Testament introduces the age of adulthood by showing that people 20 years and older are independently responsible to God:

“Everyone included among those who are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering to the LORD” (Exodus 30:14).

Age 20 marked the beginning of counting members of the nation as adults. Also, it is the year when men could enter military service (Numbers 1:3, 20-45; 26:2; 2 Chronicles 25:5). Levites began their service to God at that same age (1 Chronicles 23:24; 2 Chronicles 31:17).

The ancient method of counting generally began at one, not zero. A new baby was counted as a year old. A king who reigned at all reigned a year, and was said to have reigned two years after the first anniversary of his kingship. So, a person in the Bible who is 20 years old, is only 19 by our modern recognition. Of interest, 19 is the prime age in the USA for inducting people into the military services. It is also the lowest age at which the majority of people are high school graduates—many are still in high school when they turn 18.

However, the legal age of adulthood is 18 in most states. An 18-year old can legally do the following without parental or government permission: own real property, enter into contracts, marry, represent himself in a lawsuit, vote, disregard his parents’ authority, purchase tobacco, have sex with other consenting adults, buy pornography,

make pornography, be tried as an adult for crimes, etc.

Some states extend some of these freedoms to age 17 or 16, with varying amounts of parent or government supervision. But in general, becoming age 18 in our country grants the single greatest set of opportunities to both do good and do evil.

The one year difference between the Biblical age 19 and the legal 18 is not huge. A Christian parent should certainly be willing to let their children remain at home through age 19 unless there is some compelling reason not to. On the other hand, parents must teach children that they are legally responsible for their own actions at age 18, and that they are expecting them to fully assume those responsibilities by age 19.

The Bible teaches age 30 as a time of maturity when adults are able to accept great responsibility. Those with important responsibilities in the temple began serving at 30 (Numbers 4:3, 23, 30-47) The Scripture gives more examples of “big jobs” beginning at age 30: Joseph serving pharaoh (Genesis 41:46) Saul and David becoming king (1 Samuel 13:1; 2 Samuel 5:4) and Christ beginning His ministry (Luke 3:23). We do not have any such general law in our present society, though some government offices do have minimum ages in the 20s or 30s. But today’s parents should expect to continue instructing their children to some degree, provided their relationship will allow it, to age 30 (29 by modern counting).

Every Child Is Different— Especially at Adulthood

So often this writer has heard parents of grown children say things like this:

“I raised my all children in the same manner; yet some turned out so well and some had so much trouble.”

“We tried to give all of our children opportunities for success. Some were interested, some where not.”

Children are different, even if they were raised in a similar environment. Secondly, parents change their approach a lot more than they sometimes think: Sometimes they learn from the first children become a better parent as time goes by, other times they become tired or lazy—a worse parent as the years go by. Young people absorb both good and evil from:

- their parents
- their friends and relatives,
- from their own hearts,
- God and the demonic world.

When we enter into conversations with young adults, we rarely think:

“I should be careful what I say. They may be paying more attention to me than their parents.”

But that does happen. Young people frequently reach a time when they feel they know how their parents think on nearly every subject and they are listening to others much more carefully.

We can never really know the exact percentage of influence of each. The Bible records many examples of people and their descendants who have been blessed or cursed in some way. We cannot hope to control all of the outside influences that affect our children. We can do what we understand to be right, teach when we may be heard, and pray about those things that are beyond our control—but well in God's hands.

Some children who experience good will imitate it; others will reject it as requiring too much work and look for an easier way. Some children who were the victims of evil in their own lives will go on to victimize others; some victims of evil will vow not to pass it on—and succeed.

When a parent sees their child involved in a sin, it is easy to become angry at the child or his friends who may have led him into such trouble. But we cannot repent of our children's sins for them—we cannot always convince them when they are sinning. If we, as parents, have been a bad example to our children, we can always repent of our sin, ask God to change us and set them a better example (Psalm 51:10 Ephesians 4:22-24). That has a very powerful effect on children—much more than arguing about their faults.

We as parents want to teach our children as much as we can so that they do not have to suffer things that we suffered. This is good desire, but it will never be completely fulfilled. We must remember that much of what we learned is from the mistakes we personally made. The goal of the parent should be to save children from devastating mistakes, to help them learn from the lesser ones, and not to argue about personal preferences and unimportant things. Even so, how we need to deal with each child varies greatly. Some need to be pushed, some need to be restrained. Unfortunately, struggling parents sometimes try to simply do much more of what they have always been doing—which will not work if they have been doing the same thing all along.

The Prodigal Son

With that in mind, we are going to learn from a marvelous Biblical lesson on how to deal with adult children, the story of the Prodigal Son.

Then He [Christ] said: "A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood" (Luke 15:11-12).

For many years after reading this parable, I wondered why the father did this. He did not legally have to give him his inheritance until he died. Many parents would want the son to grow up and learn to be responsible first. Some would give him the inheritance slowly or try to control how he spent it. But this father knew his son. He knew the younger son was no longer listening to him—he knew he needed to learn lessons on his own. He felt it would be better for the son to learn the lessons sooner, when there was time for him to change, rather than later. He may have done it at the beginning of his adulthood.

"And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living" (Luke 15:13).

One has to wonder what kind of friends this young son had. Who had encouraged him to waste all of his inheritance on sins? Who told him this lifestyle would be fun? Certainly not his father or older brother. The truth of the matter is a prodigal life-style is full of heart-aches and not very fun.



This younger son was ready to go; it is likely he had already made his plans. Why did he go to a far country? Were there no places for prodigal living near home? Of course there were. His son knew his family and friends would not approve of what he was doing—so he went far enough away where he did not have to face them.

"But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want" (Luke 15:14).

The son learned his first important lesson. People who join in riotous living have no loyalty or faithfulness. While they may treat you like family and call you their family when you are sharing your money with them, when your money is gone, they are gone too.

“Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!’” (Luke 15:15-17).

The son “came to himself”. He began to see that his father’s concern with righteousness and justice was not such a bad thing. He was now living on the other side of injustice. He knew his father paid his servants fairly for their work, But his current master did not care if he had food—or if he lived or died.

The Prodigal Son

“I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.’” (Luke 15:18-19).

This is what the father wanted in his son. He wanted him to come to his own conviction that his lifestyle was sinful. The father could have withheld his inheritance and fought him over it for years. The son would probably have always faulted his father for not giving him full access to it. Would he have tried to prodigal lifestyle after his father had died, and was no longer able to help him out of it? The parable shows it was not until the son had expended his entire inheritance that he realized he had sinned against God (“heaven”) and his father. The inheritance was lost, but the son was being saved.

“And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him” (Luke 15:20).

The father had certainly been hoping for the day when his son would come home—praying he would survive his riotous living and come to himself. He was not looking for the inheritance back; he was looking for his son back.

“And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’” (Luke 15:21).

This was a wonderful event. The son’s repentance was genuine; he was willing to only acknowledge his sin, even to his father. He did not ask for more inheritance; he did not make up a story about how “somebody stole his wealth.”

“But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet. And bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry; for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ And they began to be merry.” (Luke 15:22-24).

The father did not ask how much of the family fortune was left. The father was happy that his son had repented and come to God. He was happy that he had the courage to return home after such a shameful performance. There would still be time for him to do something with the rest of his life.

“Now his older son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. And he said to him, ‘Your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.’” (Luke 15:25-27).

There is little doubt the older son was upset when his brother left with half of the family fortune. Family lands,

livestock and equipment were sold. The older son had to do the work of both sons—and there was less to do it with. The older son was also tempted to live a sinful life, but he resisted.

“But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him” (Luke 15:28).

The father was interested in the heart of his older son has well. This son was faithful, but he needed to develop the love of his father—and his father was going to patiently teach it to him.

“So he answered and said to his father, ‘Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. 30 ‘But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him’” (Luke 15:27-30).

The older son was right in his assessment of the younger son’s sin. He was right that the family had worked for many years to earn what the younger son had lost in a short time. He was right that his good works had never been celebrated as much as his wayward brother’s return. But the brother had yet to learn the importance of a sinner repenting. The father knew how hard it would be for the younger son to face up to his old friends, with them knowing exactly what he had done. The “biggest family celebration ever” affirmed the family’s love for him and emotionally held him up during this difficult time.

“And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.’” (Luke 15:31-32).

The father reminds the older son of two separate and distinct blessings for his years of obedience. The older son had a loving family to live

with—a much happier place in life than living with the prodigal liars and cheaters. Secondly, the rest of the family inheritance was his. The older son had learned well from his father how to work hard and stay out of trouble. Now he needed to learn from his father about loving and forgiving those who made mistakes and repent. If this older son learned that lesson, he would make a wonderful husband for a pure, faithful and capable woman: he had not lived with harlots and he had substantial wealth. The younger son was compromised and poor. Nevertheless, his repentant heart will make it possible for him to have a good marriage and family—if he can also learn to enjoy working hard and stay out of his sinful living.

The father was dealing with two very opposite needs of his sons—and doing it very well. What would have happened if he would have sided with the older son, and angrily dismissed the sinful younger son? It would have putting a great burden on the younger son: if he had great faith, he could remain repentant and go elsewhere, trusting God to provide for him. On the other hand, rejection by his father may have caused him to reject God and return to a live of sin and depression. Similarly, the lessons of love and forgiveness, which the older son desperately needed, would have been lost.

As we can see, the parents of adult children still have a huge impact on their lives—not so much with what they teach on a regular basis, but what they do at critical times. May God grant those who read and consider this the wisdom to know what to do with their adult children.

Knowing What to Do

Like Prodigal Son's father, today's parents must work with a great diversity of adult children. The question most parents ask is:

How do I get my adult child to do what I know is right for him?

Whereas the real question should be:

How do I encourage my adult child to choose what God knows is right for him?

These questions are all-critical for adult children. They are nearly opposite of how parents should treat little children. For example, if a three-year old says “God wants me to have a jumbo candy bar for every meal”, the good parent will tell him, “God did not say that,” and will not permit such excess. Whereas, if an adult child sincerely says the same thing, it is time to talk about how God speaks to people and how His messages never conflict with the Scripture. If the young person is still convinced it is the right thing to do, it is time to let them try it, pay for it and see how it works. What will happen to his skin after a while? Will he be healthy?

With the example in the above paragraph, there are some readers saying, “Why be concerned, my children do things a whole lot worse than that.” Those parents may need to do so more teaching and deal with their young people in a more structured way. There are also some readers “freaking out” that a Christian writer would dare suggest allowing adult children to do such an unhealthy, harmful ridiculous thing. Those parents may need to let their children make some non-disastrous mistakes on their own, such as this, on their own so they can develop experience to learn that so much of what you taught them was right.

As you encounter young adults, are you a source for good times and crazy ideas? Or are you a source for sound wisdom, encouraging young adults to maintain open communication with good parents?

How is a parent to know if they are doing the right thing for each of their children? The overwhelming tendency is for parents to think, “I've known these children since they were born, and of course I'm doing the right thing!” But a second opinion is always very helpful. Where can you get a good second opinion? The

best place is from other successful Christian parents who know you and each of your children well. If you cannot find all of that in one place, then look for people who simply know your family well and are willing to share their thoughts, or someone who is a successful parent and willing to talk to you about it. Finally, ask you children. There is no guarantee that anyone will be right. However, when most of the people you talk to agree, they are certainly worth listening to.

With those words on how to get help from friends, let us consider some generalizations of different types of young people and different types of parents. All people are more complex than these generalizations, but they are useful in helping us understand the great diversity of actual situations that occur in the billions of parent and young adult relationships that occur in the world.

Four Types of Parents

CONTROLLING Parent:

Very dedicated parents can become controlling parents without even trying. All they have to do is continue their good early child-rearing tactics into the teen and adult years. These parents simply do not grasp the magnitude of the difference between their child “doing right things” and “deciding for themselves to do right things”. They want to save their children from hurtful mistakes. Some even want to try to relive their own young adult lives through their children—telling them what to think and do about every instance in life. The controlling parent spends money on a child for things they approve of. Some controlling parents threaten to cut off the entire relationship if a child goes against their commands on any point. On the other side, some parents turn over decisions in some areas of life, but remaining controlling in other areas. None of these are the best way to raise a child

SELF-CENTERED Parent:

Some parents never fully grasp or take on the magnitude of the job of raising children. They may still be consumed by their jobs, entertainment, social life or even

addictions. Self-centered parents are frequently single parents as they were not thinking of their children when they conceived them. Many have unplanned pregnancies, others had children because they wanted to be loved by somebody, not to share their parental love. Even so, some of their lives are still consumed with romantic attractions and break-ups. But self-centered parents can come in pairs, also. The worst of these parents either give up their children to others while they are little or have them taken away by government agencies. Some keep their children through a combination of daycare and friends or relatives. The self-centered parent generally spends as little money as possible on their children, because they are using it for their own purposes. Sometimes, a self-centered parent will invest time with one favorite child and largely ignore others. The bottom lines with self-centered parents are that they do not spend the time, effort and money that children need. By the time their children are young adults, they know this.

PAMPERING Parent:

These parents have time and money for their children, but they use it for things that are harmful. When their children are younger, they have a tendency to buy them things to make them happy: toys they do not need, between meal junkfood, etc. They will replace toys or other things they break—not holding them responsible. If their child behaves difficultly toward others, they will be way more concerned that others are “tolerant” of their child, rather than correct their child. When the children become adults, they continue to enable negative, juvenile behavior. They continue to provide for their children’s needs and some of their wants even though the children are showing few signs of responsibility on their own. These parents will frequently furnish money to their children, even though they know (or could know) that they are using it for alcohol, drugs or other destructive things. Pampering parents have been known to borrow money, even go bankrupt doing these things.

BALANCED Parent:

A parent can be balanced without being perfect—God is the only

The non-parent needs to understand these different types of parents so that they can reasonably talk to a young adult who is not getting along with his parents. Does he have a problem parent? Or do most of his problems lie within himself? Should he be encouraged to work with his parent? Or does he need to “work around” his parent? Many people seem to either blindly encourage or blindly discourage cooperation with parents.

perfect parent. The balanced parent prays, seeks understanding and seeks counsel to understand what each of their children need and how they can best be helped. The balanced parent is not afraid to help children differently—just as God does not help everyone the same. If the balanced parent realizes he mistreated his children when they were young, he repents to them and to God, but still avoids the traps of the controlling, self-centered and pampering parents, as those traits are never helpful. The balanced parent does not have an infinite amount of time, talent or money to do “everything right”. Balanced parents effectively use whatever resources they have to help their children and avoid pampering and wasteful practices. They trust God for the rest.

Four Types of Adult Children

The following four types of adult children are certainly an oversimplification of the complexity that God has created. There are dozens of more important characteristics where young people may excel or struggle. But these four categories apply to many young people, and for some, they are the primary factor resulting in their success or failure in their early years. How these four types of children interact with the four types

of parents, above, give us a clear vision as to why children from the same family turn out so differently.

SELF-STARTING Young Adults:

These young people who want to do what is necessary to become independent of their parents. When they are in high school they want to get good grades, join sports teams, get jobs, excel at other activities, etc. They may not be good at all those things, but they take initiative in the areas where they have abilities. After high school they make their own plans for jobs, college or a place to live. These plans may vary from ones that please the parents, to reasonable plans that do not please the parents to bad plans. For example, self-starters often want to get a job when a parent wants them to prepare for a while, then get a better job. But the self-starter’s desire to do it his way is not bad—he will probably learn the lesson after working at the more difficult job for a while. On the other hand, some self-starters will want to sell drugs or take on other illegal jobs. These are worth parental efforts to dissuade.

If you have friends with controlling parents, help them recognize that it is a problem with their parents. But also, encourage them to make peace and ask them to be less controlling. Running away is an extreme and sometimes more troubling solution.

Controlling parents clash with self-starters. They need to learn to let these young adults to what they plan and serve as friendly advisors, not controllers. The controlling parent who does not learn this usually finds the young person leaving home or breaking off the relationship. Self-centered parents often work out well with self-starter children: they don’t have much time or money for them, and the young adult is willing to make it on his own. Many “rags to riches” stories come from this combination

of parents and children. However, self-starter children frequently resent their parents' laziness.

Pampering parents can ruin self starters if they find their child's weakness and pamper that. For example, suppose a young person works hard, has a good job, is responsible in romantic relationships, does not abuse substances, but has a tendency to drive to fast and wild. The pampering parent who is willing to pay for their car wrecks, their higher insurance and related problems is not helping that child. On the other hand, the self-starter can sometimes talk the pampering parent into doing useful things—like paying for college or a business start-up where they will work hard and succeed.

Balanced parents will recognize and praise self-starters for their good actions. They will encourage and help fund, to their ability, reasonable activities. They will refuse to help or fund bad and evil activities. Even when a promising young adult decides to forego a promising college career take on a low-paying job that he or she enjoys, the balanced parent will honor the decision. When their child is intent on making bad decisions, they will peacefully tell them the likely results of those decisions, but maintain their relationship so that they can continue to be a blessing to their child when they have seen the fruit of their bad decision.

DEPENDANT Young Adults: These are the opposite of self-starters. They tend not to face the big issues of life or make decision on their own. Sometimes they struggle academically, physically and socially. But even when this is the case, there are characterized by using these things for excuses, not for doing the best they can with what they have. Because of their lack of assertiveness, dependant young adults are greatly affected by their type of parent. For example, they tend to yield to a controlling parent. If that parent pushes them into a reasonable life-style, things may work out all right if the young person eventually learned to take responsibility for themselves. Other controlling parents can push and weird, unrealistic life-style onto their dependent young adults. For

example, this writer knew of one set of parents who had controlled to make sure he never did anything bad. When he was 30, all he did in life was work a simple retail job, eat, sleep and make copies of TV shows—he had made thousands of them.

Non-parent friends need to encourage dependant young adults to make decisions and take initiative on their own. This is especially true when they have self-centered parents. The more people who are saying "you can do it," the better.

Self-centered parents and dependant young adults are a bad combination. The children don't know what to do and the parents do not care very much. The young people can frequently drop into depression and substance abuse. Some will see their parent is bad and replace them with another person. They will begin taking orders from a boyfriend, girlfriend, gang-leader or pimp type of individual. These often abusive individuals want the young adult to remain dependant upon them, and they try hard not to help the person become independent.

Pampering parents and dependant young adults can live a long time together: the parent will supply whatever the child lacks. Hopefully, after some years, they may grow to figure out what the child needs to become independent. But if that does not happen, the child can stay dependent all the way till the parent becomes disabled or dies. In some cases, wealthy pampering parents set up trust funds to take care of their dependant children until they die. It is nice to care for their needs, but it is terrible to deprive them of a meaningful life if they could have had one.

The balanced parent will see the dependant tendencies of their child and work hard to teach them to make decisions for themselves. They will develop a plan with their

adult children so they know what is expected of them. It should be a combination of work around the home and payments for rent, utilities, food, etc. If a child is largely busy going to school and/or involved in some kind of charitable service, there is nothing wrong with parents largely subsidizing them. But the good parent will not hurt a son or daughter's future by letting him or her stay home and do nothing productive. When a child first begins to work, parents should always make sure that they are partly paying for their own support, and partly allowed to do some things that they want with their money. It will be highly discouraging if a parent wants their whole paycheck for support. However, children will never leave home if they do not learn to pay their own way. They should first learn to pay for their daily needs: food, gasoline, cell phone, etc. As they earn yet more, they should learn to pay for their own clothing, utilities, appliances, rent, insurance etc. Parents who still can and want to financially help their children after they are largely on their own should limit their help to the big things such as college expense, houses, automobiles, business capital, etc. In the sad situation when an adult child spends many months resisting finding a job and helping with household work, it is time to begin removing benefits of the home: use of automobiles, entertainment systems, etc. If these things do not work, it is ultimately best to require the child to leave the home. The hard lessons of moving from one friend's house to another, living on the street or in homeless shelters are more likely to stir a person to self-responsibility than having a free place to do nothing.

SOCIALITE Young Adults: These young people want to do what their friends do. God has put this tendency in all teens and young adults, but some have it to an extreme. Marketers know this and make billions of dollars from young people who "have to" wear the latest clothes, listen to the popular songs and go to the "right" places. While most of these young people will claim to be "thinking for themselves", they are provably not as most all of them like exactly what their friends like—which is usually what is marketed to them or what

some popular person likes. The group with which a socialite identifies with is all critical. If the young person is with a good group, it will be a force for good. However, if the young person is with groups that are into alcohol, drugs, theft, promiscuous sex, occult practices or things like that, they are likely to do those things as well.

Friends of socialite young adults are critical. They are driven by their desire to “fit in” and every one timely comment—good or bad—can make a big difference in their lives. For example, when a young person acquires an extreme hairstyle, they may be praised by their peers.

But they may think twice about it if just one trusted adult friend says: “you will probably want something different that when you apply for a job.” Even more importantly, promiscuity and abortions may be acceptable in the socialites’ friends.

But their life actions can be changed by one off-hand comment from a non-parent friend like: “It is wrong to make a baby if you are not dedicated to spending your life to raising a child.”

Controlling parents usually clash with socialite children because the parents’ goals differ from their young adults’ friend’s goals. The socialite will talk to their friends about their parents and figure out that not all parents are as controlling as theirs. If the parents do not yield to them, their young people will frequently leave home and live with their friends.

Self-centered parents with socialite young adults make for a classic “disconnected” home life. The young people are with their friends nearly all the time and the parents do not know what they are doing. This arrangement can continue a long time as long as the young people do not get into serious trouble. If they do get involved in crime, substance abuse or pregnancy,

the self-centered parent will often simply “kick them out” of the home to solve the problem. They do not have the patience to figure out how they can help their struggling son or daughter.

Pampering parents and socialite children are an interesting mix. They frequently provide the home where many other socialite young people “hang out”. If they happen to be a largely good group of young people with good goals, these pampering parents can sometime provide a refuge for the children of controlling and self-centered parents. But in today’s society with such a media emphasis on sinful ways of living, indulgent parents often enable young people to seek pleasure above work, sex above stable relationships, and substances above God.

Balanced parents will recognize their children’s socialite tendencies in high school and make an all out effort to encourage positive friends. This may mean finding a church with a strong youth group, helping to fund activities with good friends, placing their children in moral schools or even moving to a new town where they have some assurance that their friends will be good there. The parents of socialites want their children to bring their friends to their home where the parent can be a positive influence on them. This almost certainly means tolerating some things that they would rather not have in their home—immodest clothing, profanity, movies, etc. But the wise parent will weigh their opportunity for positive influence against negative influence on other younger children that they may still have at home.

CONFORMING Young Adults:

These young people largely try to do what their parents ask them to do. That does not mean that they can “get straight A’s” in college or earn \$100 an hour just because their parents told them to. But it means they will generally try to follow their parents’ guidelines and requests. However, in the hands of unreasonable parents, these young people can be ruined—or become so frustrated that they break off relationships with them.

Controlling parents often get along well with conforming young adults. Parents lead; children follow. If the

parent is reasonable and gradually realizes that they need to exert less control as the child ages, things will go well. But if there is no clear plan to turn responsibility over to the child, controlling parents can turn a conforming child into a dependant child. When parents are too demanding and set unrealistic or impossible goals for conforming children, great difficulty results. Sometimes children will have illness and injuries with seemingly no explainable source. Other times, they will live out the weirdness that their controlling parents drill into them: washing their hands hundreds of times per day, refusing to befriend anyone unless approved by parents, dressing in 50-year-old styles, performing numerous religious rites of some kind, calling parents every few hours, etc. Controlling parents are the ones most in need of counsel from other parents to understand the harm they are doing. Unfortunately, they are often the least likely to seek it, as they think they know that they are “right.”

Self-centered parents are also a great frustration to conforming young adults. They often provide a lack of consistent goals to which their child may conform. Sometimes, their children become selfish people just like their parents. Other times, the conforming young adult adopts a mentor in school, church, scouts or some other organization and conforms to that person. God has a way of providing for good-hearted children, even when parents do not.

Pampering parents and conforming young adults are like a strong ship without a rudder. The parents are willing to listen to their children and the children are willing to listen to the parents, but neither one is steering. If both are in a positive church or social environment, it will go well with them. But in negative environments, both are likely to go astray with everyone else. A conforming child can be doing well, but then develop one weakness and the pampering parent can make it so much worse.

This writer remembers talking to parents in their 50s who had a very successful son in his 30s. Yet they were discussing how they had to pay for his car registration and insurance every year, because without them, he would never think about it or do it. That was about 20 years ago. Has he learned to do it on his own, or if he had to pay some big fines or lose his license first?

Conforming young adults need the help of friends. They need help recognizing controlling or pampering parents—they need help recognizing that it is all right not to go along with some of their unreasonable requests. Similarly, they need encouragement even when they have balanced parents. It is not easy to conform in a world where most people do not.

Balanced parents and conforming young adults are a great combination. They provide a means for much of the good learning of the parents to be transmitted to the next generation. (Whereas, self-starters learn on their own, socialites learn mostly from their peers and dependant children let other people learn.) The balanced parent will make a strong effort to find out where their child excels and encourage him to use those talents, in some way he enjoys, to serve God and his fellow-man. The balanced parent will also gradually retreat from the decision-making process, turning it over to the young adult so that he or she becomes fully responsible to conform to God for decisions—not just to the parent. The balanced parent is not afraid to face up to problems, talk to their child about them, pray and seek wise counsel for solutions.

Don't Get "Stuck in a Trap"

Even though many people clearly fall into one of the above categories of parents and young adults, it is not necessary to remain there. We can ask God for help in doing goodness and He will provide it (1 John 3:22). When we see ourselves with negative tendencies, we can pray to do the right thing—one issue at a time, and for the

long-term as well. When we realize that we have made big mistakes in the past, the solution is not to ignore them, not to justify them, not to repeat them, but to repent and change (Acts 17:30-31). The worst thing a parent can do about past sins is to "make it up" to their child and end up enabling destructive behavior. This writer has known several parents who felt bad because they were substance abusers when their children were little—but they could not find the courage to stop funding their children when they got into similar habits.

Both parents and children need to avoid the situation where one or the other is "holding the relationship hostage". The above situation is a good example. The drug-addicted child may say to the parent, "If you don't keep supporting me financially, I'll never talk to you again." On the other hand, parents may threaten the same thing if the child does not hold down a job, stop a bad behavior or whatever. The solution to anyone reading this is never hold a relationship hostage. Parents may refuse economic support and require a child to leave their home if his behavior is unacceptable—but they can still maintain open communication. Similarly, a young adult may have to decline to obey his parents or refuse to be in certain situations with them—but he still should not cut off all communication.

What should one do if the other party demands something harmful in exchange for a relationship? For example, what should a parent do if a child threatens to never speak to his parents again if they stop paying for his car—even though he is using it mostly for parties and not for work? The parents should tell the child that they love him and want to keep in contact with him, but that they do not believe it is right to provide a car for such purposes. They realize he is refusing to talk to them if they withdraw that support, but they know that he will eventually see it was the right thing to do and know that he will talk to them again someday. As it often happens, holding the relationship hostage only lasts a few days. When one is in that situation, continue to initiate whatever contact is possible: phone calls, texts,

e-mails, letters etc. Make them short, loving and unconditional. Sometime it may last years, but it is worthwhile to never give in to such a demand. Once one gives into it—performs an action they think is wrong in order to keep a relationship—the hostage relationship tactic will be used again and again. It is better to stand up to it the first time, rather than let it become an ongoing tool.

How God "Parents" Mature Nations and Churches

Many Christian parents struggle with the concept of keeping an open relationship with their children when they are involved in a significant sin. It seems right to insist they change or have nothing to do with them. But is that really our way to run away from the problem so we do not have to be embarrassed by it? What does God do when His children sin?

Much of the Old Testament is the story of Ancient Israel sinning and how God dealt with it. He continued to send them prophets and teachers, even though they usually did not listen (Matthew 23:34). It was only after many years of disobedience that He eventually punished them on a massive scale (v 35-36). "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

God deals similarly with churches. Most of the New Testament letters are corrections of various sins in the Churches—yet God has not cast them away from Him or disowned them. The letters in Revelation 2 & 3 also detail sins of the churches. Yet the command to each church is to repent. God keeps an open line of communication and is patient as long as His churches are listening to Him. We as parents should do the same with our children.

We want to see our adult children grow, overcome their mistakes and be ready for the great responsibility of relationships, marriage and raising children of their own.

Next time: Part 9 – Relationships and Marriage 



continued from page 9


During the Feast of Tabernacles in 2012 services would begin in 10 a.m., and then break for a lunch of rice & beans, and ungalı—a sort of maize/corn meal mixed with a bit of beef, chicken and/or green vegetables plus a dessert of mandazi, something like a sort of sweet French cake. Besides preparing and cooking the food, the church ladies would also fetch the water for the group by walking down to the nearest river and then return carrying the water on their backs or heads. This is the Kilgoris version of running water, you run to get it.

Later in the afternoon, the brethren would hold a second service that would consist of a Bible teaching and then hold a prayer session about 7 p.m. to close the day. Services would be given in Masai and translated on the fly into Swahili. They also hold youth Bible classes for their many children.

This year John Barta informed us that they have had too much rain in the first part of the year—their winter—and this resulted in flooding and damaged crops. This is a serious problem for subsistence farmers, and a painful economic blow. As a result many families are going hungry. John asks for our prayers in this regard.

The group has wanted to construct a building in which to hold services and I have written to them about how they should go about this, giving some legal and organization points, suggesting they use local architectural and construction methods rather than Western ones to keep the costs down and to build incrementally step by step. One of the members donated a piece of land and now they are working to

raise enough money from among themselves to first erect four corner posts and then put on a roof. This would give them shelter from the rain during winter and protection from the hot sun during summer. The air conditioning is free. The next step would be to think about walls and then a floor, etc. Nevertheless, the whole project has been delayed until the harvests improve and they have some money to spend for something besides food.

Again, for 2013, we recently sent John Barta and the Kenyan brethren another CDN\$900 to help provide shelter and food for this year's Feast. If anyone would like to contribute to the Kenyan brethren, please contact us at www.cogwebcast.com or through the Shepherd's Voice Magazine contact information on page 2 for details. 



PABC Update

Progress on Many Fronts

With over three full years of operation, the Port Austin Bible Campus is becoming fairly well known in Michigan's Thumb. There are dozens of local people who are helping with the operation to varying degrees: food, clothing, transportation, counseling, etc. We receive referrals from local housing agencies, hospitals, churches, police, jails and other shelters that are full.

At this writing, we have had 219 Guests stay with us: 86 men, 76 women and 57 children. Their average length of stay is 79.3 days—a total of 17,369 bed-nights we have provided. We had four separate people ask for emergency housing today. We will probably accept three of them. With our lack of staff, we sometimes have to turn down people whom we believe will take too much effort to help. But there is progress on that front too.

A month ago, we had a trusted man come to live in our men's dorm and help out. Today, we had a woman call who believes God has stirred her up to move here and help our female Guests. She has already read our website. Another couple who have helped in the past is returning later this week. If all goes well, we could have a volunteer staff of seven—more than we have ever had in the past.

Sometimes people will ask us “Are not you helping mostly people who are criminals or just lazy?” The answer is “some of them”, but not “mostly”. Most of the people we help have simply had several things go wrong at once and need help getting back into a stable situation. Some have been victims of crime or accidents. We frequently read news stories about terrible accidents or crimes where some family members are killed and others severely injured. They may receive an outpouring of aid right when the disaster happens, but what about a year or two later? Often, medical expenses consume any amount of money that may have been received. Some of our Guests have had debilitating accidents where family and friends were killed; two have had their children murdered. Many well-off people simply do not want to think about these horrific things and simply want these devastated people to “go somewhere else.”

Church v State Case Appealed

In our Fall 2012 PABC Update, we mentioned that our local Township was prosecuting us for having chickens in an area zoned for a business district. We explained how the citation came only a few days after local Village and Township meetings where the community leaders made it clear that this was a tourist area intended to bring in money from tourists and they wanted the homeless people to “go somewhere else.”

The judge never acknowledged reading the content of the minutes of those meetings, but refused to allow them to be presented in court, stating that there was no evidence of vindictive prosecution. Many other items of evidence we offered were denied in various pretrial conferences for no stated reason. We asked several times in the process of discovery whether the Township would accept us moving our chickens to the part of our property that is zoned industrial. The judge allowed the prosecution to refuse to answer that question in discovery, yet that fact was brought up by the prosecution at trial.

On July 31, 2013, we filed an appeal to the Huron County Circuit Court.

Rather than Our brief on appeal will be due at the end of October and the prosecution will then have 21 more days to answer it. In order to effectively appeal an issue, it must be properly preserved on the record and properly presented on appeal. We are still learning those things and may lose some arguments because they were not done correctly.

The most important issue we are presenting is whether or not zoning applies to an unincorporated church. With so much emphasis on “separation of church and state today”, with prayers, Bible reading and Scriptural standards of right and wrong disappearing from nearly all government functions, why should secular governments have control with what a church does with its land?

As we explained in our *SVM*, Fall 2012 issue, the local zoning law asserts jurisdiction over “an individual, a corporation, a partnership, an incorporated association, or any other similar entity.” Notably missing from that list are military bases (which our property once was), government entities and churches.

While most churches incorporate and thereby ask to be regulated by governments, ours has not. It is not that we do not care about our neighbors. There were no complaints in the court case from anyone who was disturbed by our chickens.

Now that we have moved them to temporary housing in the “industrial district” part of our property, they are actually much closer to a building where someone lives. But we think it is more important to care about people who are at a very difficult time in their lives. There are times when we help someone find a shelter in another city closer to their family, friends, job connections, etc.

Several times in the last year, shelter managers in these other cities tell us they are full and every other shelter in their city is also full. This did not happen three years ago. Most of these shelters are church-sponsored.

From a purely economic point of
continued on page 31

Practicing Pure Piety

After Jesus gave the “beatitudes” as recorded in Matthew 5 in which He warned His disciples against the corrupt doctrines and opinions of the scribes and Pharisees and gave lessons about anger, murder, reconciliation, adultery and divorce, oaths and retaliation, enemies and neighbors, and other matters; Jesus then warns and instructs His followers about hypocrisy, false piety, alms giving, and prayer.

Beware of practicing your piety before men in order to be seen by them; for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. “Thus, when you give alms, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you . . . “And when you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by men. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you. “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matthew 6:1-6; 16-21, RSV used throughout).

Why might our Lord have given these warnings and instructions at this time? Perhaps it is because followers of Christ – after apparently overcoming temptations against the most classic and overt sins and vices such as drunkenness, greed and theft, violence, and sexual immorality are often susceptible to

self-righteousness, pompousness, and self-congratulation. Jesus first warns us to be careful not to practice our good acts before men (v. 1). He commands us not to sound a trumpet when giving alms as the hypocrites do (v. 2).

Does this mean we must do good things only in private? Is Jesus contradicting His prior command in Matthew 5:16 that we are to let our light shine before men that they may see the good we do and glorify our Father in heaven? The answer to both questions is no. The condemnation is not so much against the publicity of one’s good acts, but against an attention-grabbing motivation behind them. Those who make a public display of their good deeds for self-glorification may indeed receive the praise of men, but that is all they will get. God, however, is pleased with and will certainly reward those who do good deeds, public or private, when truly done to help others and to glorify Him (Matthew 25:31-46; Philippians 2:4; Hebrews 11:6; Hebrews 13:16).

This same principle applies to fasting. Fasting is the voluntarily abstention from some or all food, drink, or both, for a period of time and done as a means to humble oneself before God (Isaiah 58:3). A fast may be done to petition God for an answer to a prayer, prepare oneself for an upcoming spiritual challenge, remind oneself of one’s dependence upon God, or even as an opportunity to share with the hungry the food the one would have eaten if not for the fast (2 Samuel 12:15-17; Matthew 4:1-4; Isaiah 58:7). But a fast should never be done to bring attention to one’s self.

Jesus tells us that we are to store up treasures for ourselves in heaven and not on earth (v. 20). His servant Peter tells us that this earth and the works therein will one day all be destroyed (2 Peter 3:10). Works done for the approval and praise of men will not matter in the final analysis, but God keeps a permanent record of those things done for Him. (See 2 Corinthians 5:10). “For no other foundation can any one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 3:11

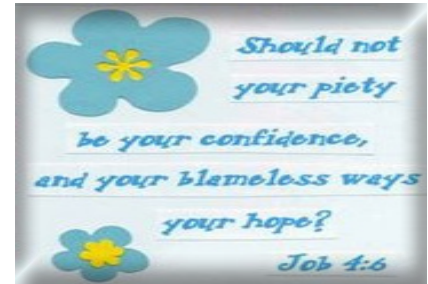


IMAGE FROM: Shower of Roses: Little Flowers Girls' Club
~ The Virtue of Piety showerofroses.blogspot.com

This principle is summed up well in the words of a hymn written by Raymond Raspberry:

*You may seek earthly power and fame,
the world might be impressed by your
great name, soon the glories of this life
will all be past, but only what you do for
Christ will last*

Living a good, clean life is always better than failing to do so. Helping others is always better than not helping others. But we must not parade our religiosity before people nor become self-congratulatory. We must be careful that in every good thing we do, our creator God gets the glory. We must aim to make God look good “in the eyes of the people” (Numbers 20:12). Any praise, thanks, or good will that we attain should merely be incidental to the goal of serving others and glorifying our Heavenly Father. As our God Yahweh said in Leviticus 10:3, ‘I will show myself holy among those who are near me, and before all the people I will be glorified.’”

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view, it might be cheaper to buy organic free-range eggs than to litigate this issue. But we are carrying it on because we believe that homeless people are created in God’s image, that they are important to Him, that they need to be taught that Scripture teaches the Way to a better life, and that civil governments should not use their powers to stop ministries such as ours, simply because they believe it might be harmful to their business and because they want the homeless people to “go somewhere else.”

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