

Reaching Out

Issue #87

Welcome to *Reaching Out*,
a Christian magazine to serve the community.
Our goal is to offer Biblical solutions to the
problems facing our society today.

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See You in Court!

—Clay Zimmerman

We all want things to be fair and right, don't we, especially if it concerns us? Thousands and thousands of individuals feel they have been wronged, and many have been. The courts are jammed with every imaginable case. People are suing for most anything you can imagine.

Probably more on the day-to-day level are the "little" squabbles in the neighborhood. With small claims court, you don't even need a lawyer. You get to air your grievances and hopefully get a settlement favorable to you. After all, "He owes me; it's just not right." You are determined to "secure your rights," which is what suing is all about.

Where does all this leave the Christian? Is he to be out there squabbling and picking with the rest? Let's see what the Bible says.

When Jesus taught us to pray in Matthew 6, He specifically stated in verse 12: "*And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.*" How are we going to forgive our debtors if we don't have any? If we would force the other party to pay, he would no longer be our debtor. "Forgive him" means to not hold it against the individual. Jesus further explains the thought after He is done talking about the prayer. "*If ye forgive . . . your heavenly father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither*

will your Father forgive your trespasses." That's serious! It's also very simple and easy to understand. If we don't forgive, we will not be forgiven. Who can afford unforgiveness?

Some people can't stand the thought that *others* would get away with the wrong that was done. But they won't. Read this from Romans 12:19: "*Dearly beloved avenge not yourselves, [don't take it in your hands] but rather give place unto wrath: [some translations say the "wrath of God"] for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.*" God will take care of this thing in His way. It might be in this life or in the life to come. Hebrews 10:30 and 31 say that the Lord will judge His people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God. In light of this we need to not only forgive those who have wronged us but pray for them too. Who would want to show up at the great Judgment Day and not be previously forgiven?

So if you are wronged you can truthfully say "I will see you in court." However, be sure forgiveness from you was taken care of in this life, for God has a court you, too, will find yourself in. And remember, there will be no court of appeals. God's judgment will be just and final. See you in court!

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or do you know of a friend who might?
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Do you care to respond to any of the articles?

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Reaching Out Published Quarterly

Issue #87, 2-2016

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THE BIBLE AND SCIENCE

—Elvin Stauffer

Discerning Fact and Fiction

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

Each generation faces new things and, with the advance of time, changes are coming faster. New ideas are put forth in science and religion, creating confused thinking and many questions. The varieties of beliefs on the religious scene today are actually reruns in different guises—visions of men’s own idea of truth. Can there still be integrity in dealing with natural and spiritual issues? Are there consequences for what we believe and do? What is truth?

In contrast to this confusion comes God’s Word through the prophet, *“Stand ye in the ways, [many ways to take] and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls”* (Jeremiah 6:16). So amid the changing times, God’s children need to decide what can change and what does not change.

God’s standard of righteousness and right living never changes. *“I am the Lord, I change not.”* The Book of life never changes. *“Thy word is truth.”* The principles of life for those who accept the Creator’s salvation in Jesus Christ never change. Neither does the issue of the carnal human nature and unbelief in God’s plain words in the Bible ever change. Man’s natural course is away from God.

So the challenge of choice is to maintain the will to choose that which is right and can profitably be used in a righteous life of Christian service. *“If any man will [to] do his [God’s] will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God”* (John 7:17).

When Jesus ascended to Heaven, He did not leave us alone with these moral decisions to make. He established a body of believers called *“his body . . . the church”* (Colossians 1:24). Jesus said, *“I will build my church”* (Matthew 16:18). When this body of believers is controlled by God’s Word, *“All the counsel of God”* (Acts

20:27), and the Holy Spirit, it is a safe guide in discerning what is truth in the *“necessary things”* of life (Acts 15:22-29).

“I Am the Way, the Truth, and the Life”

The Roman governor of Palestine raised the question to Jesus, *“What is truth?”* (John 18:38). He did this in response to Jesus’ statement, *“I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.”*

Do we take Jesus at His word? Many professing Christians believe that they must interpret Jesus’ teaching and then put their own construction on it. We need to humbly acknowledge our need for an understanding of truth and study objectively with an open mind to God’s revelation. Research to bring out and explain the textual meaning while comparing Scripture with Scripture is called *exegesis*. Reading into a text one’s own ideas is *eisegesis*. The Scriptures did not come *“by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”* (2 Peter 1:21). Neither can we receive them according to our own will. *“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: . . . because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Many have been the attacks on the reliability and historicity of the Bible. The school of “higher criticism” in the 1700s freely slandered the Bible as a myth wherever they could not find secular evidence. But the Bible has stood the test of time while its accusers have been silenced.

God did this by raising up the science of archaeology in the early 1800s. Inscriptions were found that confirmed, for example, the existence of a King Belshazzar and a kingdom of Hittites.

The Jews were in Egypt under the Pharaohs and came into Canaan around 1400 B. C. as the walls of Jericho came tumbling down. Jericho was excavated and thoroughly analyzed by John Garstang in 1929-1936. Kathleen Kenyon, a skeptic, excavated in 1951 and challenged Garstang's date. Bryant Wood, more recently in the 1990s, reconfirmed Garstang's findings. A New York Times headline about this said, "The Believers Win One." This conflict was called "the second battle of Jericho" and shows unbelievers' efforts to subvert evidence.

Fact or Fiction in Science

An ethical foundation in Biblical absolutes is the foundation for constructive thought in the physical world. The advances in science in Europe in the 1600s came alongside the Protestant Reformation (1500s), which encouraged independent, factual, creative thinking. Out of these times significant advances in science came from scientists such as Boyd, Newton, Halley, Hooke, Pasteur, and others who discovered many of God's fixed laws in nature. The rest of the world fell behind, including Spain where the Inquisition was begun, driving out and killing Jews and Protestants who were considered heretics.

Today, educators have moved into the paranormal, including an occult mix with the spiritual. They try to advance from Einstein's relativity theory to one uniting principle in the natural and spiritual realms, without God. Courses in universities explore chaos theory, new age spiritism, and the like.

Scientists increasingly venture their imaginations into the unknown and make bold, irrational statements. In times of more humble Christian ethics, scientists were careful about making claims based on a lack of information.

False Faith = Bad Science

Back in 2007 I saw a newspaper headline, "In Ten Years We May Find Life in Outer Space." I immediately wondered what they saw that produced such a statement. So I bought a paper to find out. My guard was up, of course, because of the many hoaxes put across to the public to "prove" evolution.

1. In 1912, the "Piltdown Man" was claimed to be the missing evolutionary link between apes and man. This was published in textbooks and accepted as "evidence" by the highest authorities in paleontology for over 50 years. In 1953, after indoctrinating two generations of school children, it was admitted to be a stained ape's jaw with filed teeth fit to a human skullcap.

2. "Nebraska Man" was claimed to be man's evolutionary ancestor during the Tennessee

Scopes trial in 1926. This was a trial accusing John Scopes of teaching evolution in the public school, which was against the law at that time. This "missing link" was built upon a single tooth, which was later found to be the tooth of a peccary (a pig).

These hoaxes and others all served one by one, in their time, to build the impression that evolution was fact. So I wondered what people saw in outer space to support the claim that life would be there. The newspaper reporter said that astronomers had concluded that some stars had a wobble. This indicated that they have a planet orbiting them, and that on these planets there could be life! I could hardly believe that anyone could have such blind faith. We have plenty of planets in our own solar system. The combinations of details to sustain life are multitudinous. To communicate, let alone travel thousands of light years to contact these beings, is irrational.

In 2015, a creation magazine told of the exposure of the faulty science of this "life in outer space" claim. The two planets they thought they discovered were named Gliese 581d and Gliese 581g. Scientists were sure they were the right distance from their star to have liquid water, and if water, then life! One astronomer stated, "the chances of life on this planet are 100%." Then he said, "I have *almost no doubt* [italics mine!] about it."

In 2014, however, astronomers decided there were no planets after all. The "Doppler shifts" ascribed to planets came from the stars themselves. This was another example of biases causing people to see what they wanted to see. The lesson is, don't believe sensational, "conclusive" claims made by evolutionists.

We all have some predisposition on issues. The bent of our minds should be toward God's infallible Word. There we find that the earth alone was specially created and orbited to sustain life.

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.

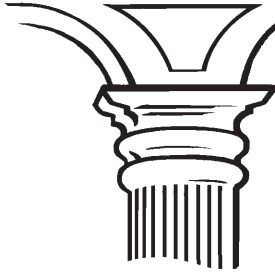
Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? . . . Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men"
(1 Corinthians 1:19, 20, 25).

Resources: The Bible (God's Word)

Tombs, Tells, and Treasures, by Robert T. Boyd

Scopes: Creation on Trial, by R. M. Cornelius and John D. Morris

Answers Magazine, January-March, 2015, "Not so Sure After All."



—Lester Troyer

Restoring Christian Solutions

Recently, in Chicago, two men were engaged in a lively street-corner discussion of religion. One was a Christian, motivated with the purpose of promoting the Bible message of salvation. The other hailed from a commune-like setting, where they had a zeal for the practice of yoga. The yoga man took a nonjudgmental stance on religions. He wasn't hostile toward religion, but believed that religions are not to be judged right or wrong. The reason? A lot of conflict and damage result when one religion is exalted above another—holding one to be right and the other wrong.

In contrast to this view of religions, our old *World Book Encyclopedia* (copyrighted 1970), introduces God as follows: “God is the Supreme Being, the Creator and Ruler of the Universe. All Powerful, Infinite, and Ever Present.” It also states that “The Old Testament, or the Hebrew Bible, does not concern itself with speculation. It proclaims [God] as a fact . . . and teaches that he must be obeyed, worshiped, and loved as the one true God.”

We could concede the yoga man's position, based on positive evidence of three things:

1. Credible evidence that God does not exist.
2. Evidence that nature functions without design and without order of right or wrong.
3. Evidence that people can live out their days with no attention to guiding principles, and this without consequences.

Let's take the last one first. We quickly discover that random acts of “no right/ no wrong” do not fit everyday living. We spend our days constantly calibrating our choices on some internal standard of right or wrong (or better or worse). For many of us it begins with whether we heed the alarm, what we will have for breakfast, how much time we allow for getting to work (or to class). It includes other mundane decisions—do we heed traffic signals, and look both ways before crossing the street? Or perhaps we board a flight, not chosen randomly, but one actually destined for Chicago. We also check time and seat number on the boarding pass, and whether there is still

time for a burger or latte on the way to the gate. To live as though nothing was right or wrong won't get you through the day. It could also land you in jail, in the hospital, or even the morgue.

I'm not suggesting that the above are necessarily moral choices. (It may not be a sin to miss your flight.) The question is—why would we think we can relegate moral standards (such as the Ten Commandments) to the trash heap of unwanted history, when even the common daily decisions readily become life or death matters? There is something deeper going on as well. Nobody truly lives without concepts of right and wrong. Without God, we merely misconstrue them. That's how cutting down trees for lumber, burning fossil fuels, wearing fur coats, or not baking wedding cakes under certain conditions, become “evil” in godless cultures, even while committing adultery, or cheating to get ahead in business, or taking life in the womb, is considered fair game.

The second point (that nature can simply function randomly), fares no better. There is no end to possible examples. The one we'll consider is the orbit of the planets in our solar system.

The earth (the only suitable habitation of life), orbits the sun at 93 million miles, just the optimum distance for life on our planet. But the earth doesn't accomplish this feat independent of its fellow planets. A few planets are closer to the sun (at least 600 degrees Fahrenheit on Mercury today)! Our orbiting company also includes a few really huge ones—Saturn and Jupiter. There are also Uranus and Neptune, way beyond us, and much too cold for comfort. If we think the other planets have no “bearing” on earth's orbit around the sun, we are mistaken. The tremendous spin, the gravity, and the velocity of these fellow travelers, produce a stabilizing effect for the orbiting pattern for the earth lest we be consumed into the sun on one hand, nor take off into an eternal deep freeze on the other. The combined effects, though invisible to the eye, have provided a safe orbiting pattern for the earth from its very creation. This essential balance is so fine-tuned that we

can now assume that no single planet could be spared, nor any new major planet added without earth's orbit being thrown out of kilter. There is no known safe merging into this "freeway" of the orbiting pattern.*

The larger planets, with their greater forces of gravity, also serve as a magnet for stray meteorites or other threatening space debris, mostly keeping earth's "highway" free of dangerous litter. However, a sure defense has been earth's legacy from the beginning of time. We've stayed the course now for several thousand years, in a system that is not evolving upward, but one that is aging and decaying. Once time is up for planet earth, no dreams of men, or emergency measures can save it. In fact, changes in climate and more disastrous weather patterns may well be evidence of an aging solar system.

So what shall we say, on the first question, the one on evidence for God? The rejected words from the old *World Book* seem a perfect fit: Supreme Being, Creator, Ruler, All Powerful, Infinite, and Ever Present. Every natural system, whether in the universe or in the human body itself, points to an incredible, even incomprehensible level of intelligence. Yet, dare we pretend that there is no evidence for God? Do we blindly believe that it came from no intelligence whatsoever?

What do we find? Whether it is ongoing life on our planet, or just another day at work, or how to spend a leisurely weekend, truth is narrow by definition, and violated truth carries negative consequences. The "no right/no wrong" philosophy doesn't work. It doesn't work to keep us living and breathing, and it doesn't work in holding down a job. More importantly, it doesn't work in morals or religions.

We have thought to invent our own religions, making Christianity unnecessary. We thought the old moral norms fair game to be swept into the dustbins of history, along with the belief in God Himself. We wanted God out of the way, and thought to take His place. We thought to leave no morally binding rules (the now dominating view of the educational and media elite that has engulfed the vast majority of college students). This means that cheating on an exam is a perfectly viable option in getting a better grade. It also means that sleeping around is sensible experimentation, in case you did decide to get married someday. In the meantime, birth control and abortion are necessary gods, providing an alternative to self-control. After all, isn't everyone entitled to a few mistakes? Finally, of what avail is partying, if it doesn't include pot smoking and binge drinking?

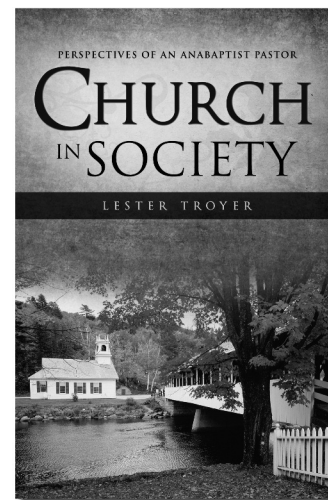
Now for the greatest woe of the "no right/no wrong" mentality. It yields no motivation or means of correction. In the denial of moral right, we stand by, wringing our hands, engulfed in things going wrong, too numerous to mention. Where there is no sin, there is no salvation either. We are arguably among the most privileged, richest, and best situated

nations of all time. But our claimed "freedoms" have made us slaves. There are the nagging problems: dysfunctional governments and economic woes around the globe. But there is also the personal blackness and heartache that goes with the dismantling of marriage and family. The replacement? Prison cells, domestic and sexual abuse, acceptance of perversions, addictive drugs, and tons of medications. We weren't afraid to do away with the unborn, but now live in fear of mass shootings, and homegrown terrorism, with no relief in sight.

That's what is left after we have stripped ourselves of the sacredness and dignity of being made in God's image.

Isn't it time then, to agree with the God of Heaven, and turn from our sin and rebellion? Isn't it time to turn our hearts to God's provision of mercy and forgiveness, found exclusively through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died and rose again to save us from our sins?

**Acts and Facts*, December 2015, Institute for Creation Research



CHURCH IN SOCIETY

A collection of 50 essays, by Lester Troyer, dealing with a wide range of subject materials including theology, apologetics, science, atheism, evolution, morality, politics, and religious and cultural issues. It's a book suitable for live group discussions, and may well be the catalyst for changing your thinking and, along with it, your life.

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Feature Article for Youth . . .

Habits!

After a delicious Sunday dinner, I sat down for a friendly visit with my cordial hosts. On the bookcase lay a large, attractive photo album. Curiosity got the best of me.

“May I see your album?” I queried.

“Why, certainly,” responded the wife, “I wanted you to see the pictures we took when we were first married.”

Much to my surprise, I hardly even recognized the just-married couple in the front of the album. Thirty years really had made some changes, especially in *him*!

Back then, he had a curly shock of brown hair. Now—well, it’s almost completely gone. Just a little straight, graying hair on the sides is about all that’s left.

I wonder if they could have guessed, on their wedding day, what thirty years would bring.

Baldness, you know, does not happen all at once. Probably my friend and his wife hardly noticed it at first—it happened so gradually. Finally it became noticeable. Eventually it became a permanent part of this man’s appearance.

In just the same way, habits begin in a small way—hardly noticeable. But gradually they get control of you. Then they become noticeable.

Youth is the time many men start becoming bald. Youth is also the time you start forming habits, both good and bad. The things you do now, as a young person, will largely determine your appearance and your personality for the rest of your life. These things can make or break your life. They can affect your eternal destiny.

I once heard a man glibly remark, “Well, a boy’s got to sow his wild oats first, then he’ll settle down. Boys will be boys, you know.”

This philosophy has led many a young person to disaster. Many have been the young man or woman who followed the crowd because it was easy. They didn’t want their friends to think they were odd or “chicken.” But God loves each one of us and expects the best of us. He is “*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*” (2 Peter 3:9).

I recently read of a young fellow from a respectable home who got in with the wrong crowd. Soon he was carousing around the neighborhood “living it up.”

One night he took just a few drinks too many.

On his way home, he lost control of his car, slammed into another car, killing himself and the occupants of the other car.

He brought shame on his parents. And worse, he went into eternity without Jesus Christ. There were no more chances to “clean up his life” or to break his youthful habits.

This young man “sowed his wild oats” but, in the end, he reaped DEATH.

The Bible’s sentence on “living it up” is plain: “*Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*” (Galatians 6:7). “*For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind*” (Hosea 8:7).

Don’t hope that you can have a “high old time” now, then “turn over a new leaf” sometime in the future. You may never have the opportunity. And even if you do have the opportunity, you may find yourself helplessly bound by the habits you have formed.

Biologists tell us that if you throw a frog into hot water, he will jump out. But if you put him in cold water and gradually heat it, he will boil to death. Why? Because he gradually grows accustomed to the heat and is scalded before he realizes what’s happening.

Habits, too, can so gradually enslave us so that we don’t realize the grip they have on us, until it’s too late to change—till we can’t break the habit. It’s too great a risk now to get involved in something you may not be able to change later.

God wants you to live for Him now. Your youth may be the only time you will ever have. You have no guarantee that you’ll live to be old or that you’ll ever have more opportunities to try to improve yourself. God wants YOU—all of YOU—NOW. Form good habits NOW—habits that will stand the test now and forever. “*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them*” (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

– R.L.B.

“Sow an act, reap a habit;
Sow a habit, reap a character;
Sow a character, reap a destiny.”



The Christian Home Series

—Marlin Kreider

When Death Touches Our Homes

No truer words were ever uttered, than when God spoke to Adam in the early days of human history. The Bible records these words in Genesis 2:16, 17: *“And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”* Later Satan, a liar and the father of lies (John 8:44), came and questioned God’s Word. Adam and Eve chose to disobey God’s clear command, and death has been part of the human experience ever since. God’s Word was, is, and always will be true.

Our first parents experienced immediate spiritual death in that their sin separated them from God, and they were driven from the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3). The processes of decay and physical death were set in motion. So today, we still live in a dying world. The old must die and the young can die. The poet says it well: “Change and decay in all around I see; O Thou who changest not, abide with me.”

Sin brought an awful curse upon humanity and the entire creation (Romans 8:22). That is why we have turbulent weather and other natural calamities. But, not only did Adam sin. We all have sinned and come short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23). But God promised a Redeemer, which we have in Jesus Christ. Upon personal repentance for our sins, and faith in Christ’s finished work of redemption, the spiritual relationship between God and man can be restored. We can have the hope of Heaven and eternal life with Him.

God has given every human being an eternal living soul (Genesis 2:7). What we do with the sin issue, determines our destiny—Heaven or Hell. Death for the saved ushers us into an endless hope, while death for the lost ushers them into a hopeless end.

Until Christ’s Second Coming and the resurrection, physical death will continue to be the experience of all humanity, saved and lost. Death brings parting, sorrow, grief, and pain. But the Christian does not sorrow as others who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). We feel a great loss, but in Christ we have not lost loved ones, because we know where they are. Be encouraged by this short poem:

“Death can hide but not divide.

They are but on Christ’s other side.

They are with Christ and Christ with me.

United still in Christ are we!”

God, in His wisdom, established both the home and the church for man’s welfare. It is His will that man’s basic needs, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, are met in these two entities, from the cradle to the grave. Failure in the roles of either home or church, as is happening in our society today, results in a multitude of neglected, abused, disconnected, and hurting people. God bless every stable home and faithful church. We desperately need them! Along with a personal relationship with God that is anchored in Christ, both the extended family and the local Christian church body are meant to be there for us when death touches our lives and homes.

Home is where we are bonded together in love; in the most intimate physical relationships on earth. Marriage, one man and one woman for life, is the closest. The Bible calls it “*one flesh*” (Genesis 2:24) and likens it to Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:22-33). Parent and child bonds, sibling bonds, and on out to the extended family bonds, are meant to be strong. That is a blessing.

But then death strikes! Death is the last enemy to be destroyed (1 Corinthians 15:26). Our physical world is shaken and forever changed. How can we bear it? Will we survive the jolt and shock? Death

comes in many different ways. There are deaths caused by long terminal illness, unexpected deaths, infant and childhood, prime of life, accident, and old age deaths. Any way it comes, death is real. It brings sorrow, grief, tears, pain, loneliness, and anguish of heart, soul, and spirit. Even Jesus wept at the grave of a beloved friend (John 11:35).

The deeper the bond of love, the more difficult the parting and the deeper the grieving. The healing process is usually slow and gradual. So do not forget your grieving friends after several months, thinking by now they ought to have gotten over it. Vance Havner said: "You don't get over it, you learn to live with it. And thank God you have One who walks with you." This One is Jesus, the Friend who sticks closer than a brother (Proverbs 18:24).

Let's consider our great God who is able to sustain us in these difficult times, along with some right responses and practices related to death.

First, a word to parents who have had to part with young children. The Bible teaches that children are innocent and safe in Jesus (Matthew 19:13, 14), so we can find comfort and rest that Jesus takes their souls to Heaven. There is also a note of comfort, that in this world of sin and suffering, where many innocent ones die of hunger, sickness, abuse, or abortion, God claims them all for His own. Perhaps there will be more souls in Heaven than in Hell. Be encouraged!

God is all He promises to be in His Word. He is the God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3, 4). Jesus our great Mediator says: "*I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you*" (John 14:18). The word *comfortless* literally means "orphans." Our Saviour and Lord will be there for us in our grief as bereaved parents, orphans, siblings, widows, and widowers. He comforts us by the Holy Spirit. And when our sorrow is too deep for words, the Spirit makes intercession for us (Romans 8:26, 27). Dear grieving friends, get a hold on God's precious promises (2 Corinthians 1:20, 21) and trust His everlasting arms (Deuteronomy 33:27).

Songs and poetry have been a healing balm to many. Songs like: "Does Jesus Care?" with the answer, "Oh, yes, He cares, His heart is touched with my grief." Cards, letters, and visits (James 1:27) along with understanding and encouraging words are appropriate. Grief has its own language. If you have been there, you know it. In your visits feel free to talk about the departed. Most of us enjoy that, even though it brings tears.

God has given us the gift of tears. We never need to be ashamed of heart-touching tears. When bereaved, let the tears flow freely. Those tears will help bring healing to a broken heart. Romans 12:15 says believers are to weep with them that are weeping. More tears in our homes and churches would be good for us. They are usually an indication of a soft heart and a tender spirit.

The prayers of God's people are very effective and precious. Some of us are convinced that is what kept us going in our hours of deepest grief. Family and church support are invaluable during times of death. True Christianity is always at its best when under test.

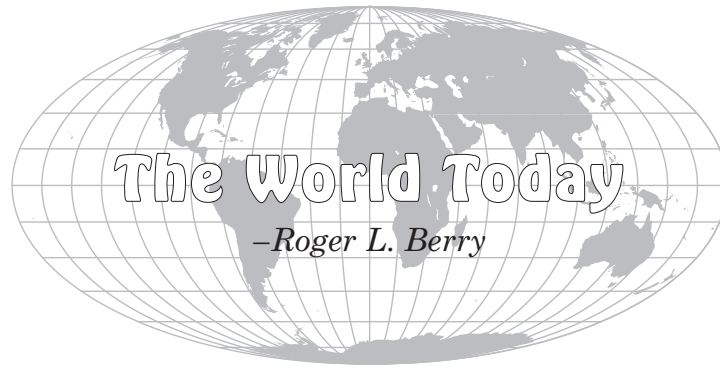
Paying our respects to the departed, by a church funeral service, viewing, and burial of the body (if possible) has been a long-standing tradition of the Christian heritage. This is a value Christians do well to hold to in these days when absolutes and norms are being challenged and changed. The humanist, anti-God agenda to limit population, and cremate the dead for lack of space lacks validity in the face of all facts. Some have used cremation to attempt to defy any accountability to God. Bible history gives an account where God punished one king because he burned the bones of an enemy king into lime (See Amos 2:1-3). This gives us some understanding of how God views cremation.

Death and its related realities must be reckoned with, not minimized as some have done. Ecclesiastes 7:2 tells us: "*It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart.*"

In our grief, we can thank God for the years we had to enjoy life with our loved one. Resignation to God's will and thankfulness are aids to the healing process. Reaching out to others and keeping busy in the work of God, are healthy and healing. There is a large ministry of comfort and understanding to others who have also experienced tragedy and loss. Who is better equipped to do it, but the ones who have been there?

Psalms 84:5, 6 says: "*Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee [God] . . . who passing through the valley of Baca [sorrow] make it a well.*" We need to dig some wells in our valleys (Psalms 23:4) to assist and encourage the multitudes who will surely follow us. Many suffering believers have done this, and we still benefit today. John Bunyan, while in Bedford jail, wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*. Fanny Crosby, in her blind condition, wrote a multitude of poems that Christians still sing today. Horatio Spafford, upon the death of his daughters in a shipwreck, wrote "When Peace Like a River." The Apostle Paul, while in prison in Rome, wrote valuable books of our New Testament Bible. We are still drinking from these wells today. They can be examples to us.

We all know that we are not here to stay. Let death's reminders draw us closer to God, adjust our priorities, and refine our character. God wants to prepare us for His presence in the eternal world, united again with those who are saved. One of these days, all of time will end, and all will be ushered into an endless eternity (Revelation 10: 5, 6). A prophet of old wisely admonished us: "Prepare to meet thy God!"



Living to Please

We live in a world where people desperately seek approval from most anywhere they can get it. Psychologists link approval to self-esteem and feeling good about ourselves. However, even secular teachers and psychologists see the dangers of ordering our lives according to what people think. People have even committed suicide over worry about whether or not they are pleasing certain people.

Desperately trying to please people is a common problem among young people, but it is by no means limited to young people. Former President Bill Clinton was a proponent of schools using dress codes and forbidding designer clothes. He once commented that young people "are killing each other over clothes."

At the heart of people-pleasing there are motives of wanting to be liked and to gain acceptance at any cost. In the final analysis, people pleasers are really living to please themselves.

There are a number of dangers of living to please people:

1. Pleasing people enslaves us to the people we try to please. We are afraid to do anything that would offend them. We live in constant fear of their disapproval. This fear will keep us from doing what we know is the right thing to do.
2. The love of approval leads us to focus on people's opinions of us. We cannot develop our own talents and abilities in spite of what others may think.
3. Love of approval entices us to say "yes" to wrong doing when we know, deep in our hearts, we should say "no."
4. Love of approval tempts us to give in to peer pressure and allows others to control our minds. We then conform to their way of thinking and even lose our ability to think for ourselves.

5. Love of approval often leads us to choose the wrong kind of friends or to choose friends for the wrong reasons. We end up choosing friends that damage our character and our reputation instead of helping us.

Whom Should We Please?

The Bible, God's Word, says a lot about pleasing people and also about pleasing God. The writer in the Book of Proverbs said, "*The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe*" (Proverbs 29:25). A snare was a trap used to catch birds or other animals. The traps were hidden or covered so that the animals would fall into them without realizing in advance what was going to happen. Striving to please others, at any cost, will lead to deception and eventually ruin. But pleasing God will bring blessing and safety.

The one we really need to please is God. "*Do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ*" (Galatians 1:10). Romans 12:1, 2 teaches us not to be conformed to the corrupt world around us but to be renewed in our minds to do "*that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*"

Pleasing God now will give us purpose for living. We will make our decisions based on what is good and right. We will not worry so much about pleasing those who are not good for us. We will be able to stand on our own and be at peace within ourselves and, most importantly, be at peace with God.

The Bible says that comparing ourselves with other people is not wise (2 Corinthians 10:12). The writer must have known about the dangers of trying to please people that would hinder us and lead us in a wrong direction. It is most important to be people that God commends!

The Bible teaches that, in the end, we will be judged by whom we seek to please. *“Wherefore we labour, that . . . we may be accepted of him [Christ]. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad”* (2 Corinthians 5:9, 10).

To get right with Jesus Christ, we need to confess our sins, our wrongdoing, which includes pleasing the wrong people. Then, when we please God, we will no longer be in misery, bound by the opinions and pressures of those who really do not care about us but only seek to mold us into their way of thinking. We will then be free to live joyfully to glorify God.


The Way to Repentance

A world leader becomes “involved” with the wife of one of his trusted generals. For a time, he successfully covers the sordid affair.


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1. Recognize that God is the only way out.

“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions” (Psalm 51:1).

2. Admit it all and acknowledge that it is sin against God.

“For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me” (Psalm 51:3).

3. Ask God to clean up your life.

“Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin . . . Purge me . . . and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Psalm 51:2, 7).

4. Ask God to give you new thoughts and desires.

“Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10).

5. Ask God to grant you salvation and happiness.

“Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit” (Psalm 51:12).

