

Reaching Out

Issue #83

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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Tax Time!

—Clay Zimmerman

Well, it's here again. After a year of labor, the government wants its share of your money. Taxes are nothing new. People's resistance to paying them has probably been around as long as the idea of government. Is there any cheating going on when it's time to pay taxes? I'm sure there is. Did you ever walk into a business and pay cash for a service? They promptly tear up the ticket and state that if you are going to pay cash, they aren't going to report it. The reasoning goes that if the government can't prove you made the money, they can't tax you on it.

People use a lot of reasoning to avoid taxes. Some would say, "I don't approve of all the dumb things they waste our money on." Neither do the rest of us, but if we all withheld for one reason or another, there probably wouldn't be anything paid.

According to the Bible, paying our taxes is a moral obligation. We have the example of Jesus Himself. He said, "*Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's.*" In other words, give the government what is theirs. It is also on record that Jesus paid His taxes (see Matthew 17:24-27).

We have similar teaching in Romans 13 on submission to government and paying taxes. Verse 5 says, "*Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.*" Then verse 7 says, "*Render therefore to all their*

dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour." All their dues? If the writer had been talking in today's terms, he could have said, "all state and federal taxes."

Was this some favored, God-honoring, Christian-friendly government he was talking about? Hardly. Paul spent too much time in prison for being a Christian to have any notions like that. He simply understood the fact that Christians are to be obedient to their governing authorities, and that involves paying up when it is required.

The Apostle Peter also spoke to this subject. "*Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors.*" This covers a lot of territory. Consider not only the tax laws but also the highway laws and game laws, to name a few. Just which of these doesn't come under "every ordinance"? For whose sake are we to be obedient? This verse tells us that it is for the Lord's sake. He is asking us to do this for Him. In light of this verse, it is very important to fall into line with my country's laws. Paying what we owe now takes on a whole new meaning. We are to do this as our Christian duty in service to Christ. Cheating is unthinkable if Christ is involved. But then He always was involved—"the powers that be are ordained of God" (Romans 13:1).

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or do you know of a friend who might?
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Send your thoughts and comments to:

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Feature Article for Youth . . .

It Just Depends—or Does It?

A slender young girl huddled timidly in the office chair. The blonde-haired receptionist called, “Jennifer, you’re next.” The girl steadied herself as she rose to enter the psychiatrist’s office.

On the familiar “couch” she began to pour out her heart—every sordid bit of it. She relived the last months and weeks and the thrilling dates she’d had with “the most handsome guy on campus.” She told of that fatal night when they went “all the way.” Then came the jolt when he dropped her “like a hot potato.” Life had become so empty—could she bear to keep on living?

“But we loved each other,” she sobbed. “That’s all that really mattered. If you ‘love’ somebody it must be all right. But why did he ditch me? Why do I feel so guilty?”

In another part of town, a young man, a bitter scowl on his face, sits in jail. The charge? Murder. The reason? An argument with his brother-in-law over a family property settlement. “Buck didn’t have any more right to that property than I did,” he spat. “I gave him what was coming to him.”

Society says these two young people in trouble are sick. God says they have sinned! The inevitable question is “why did they do it?” The reasons the newspaper article gives are about as varied as the cases of wrongdoing.

Such events have their roots deep in the fabric of modern society. A society rooted in secular philosophies has imparted to these broken lives a false value system.

Many are the parents, teachers, psychiatrists, and even churches that have been caught up in a modern philosophy which has led our society down to violence and hatred. This philosophy goes by several names: relativism (the idea that values depend on the situation), situational ethics, pragmatism (ideas are to be tested in practice and there are no absolute truths). These ideas are nothing new. They have been around a long time, influencing nearly all of society.

The relativist claims that you can’t categorize your acts and say that some are always right and some are always wrong. They claim that it may be right, at times, to commit acts like the two named above. Some claim that “love” is the most important thing. Anything is right as long as you can claim “love” for another person. But these people are hazy on what love really is. Others claim that you must stand up for your rights—it’s only right

that you get the same breaks someone else does.

You can soon see that this philosophy theoretically makes lying, theft, murder, immorality, and a host of other things “right” if the situation demands it. “The right thing to do,” they say, “just depends on the situation.”

Such situational ethics seem to have permeated schools and universities, many homes and, sadly, many churches. What about the elementary school student who comes from a “Christian” home who says, “He hit me first! He ought to get punished. My dad says I’ve got to stand up for my rights.” Or what about the “church” people who are out to squeeze every dollar out of their neighbors—the “dog eat dog” philosophy?

God’s way, when facing such issues, is to go to His Word, the Bible, for guidance. There is no room for hazy morals or situational ethics in God’s sight.

The Bible says that sin is the “transgression of the law.” What law? God’s never changing laws found in the Bible. When God said “*thou shalt not commit adultery*” or “*thou shalt not kill*,” He meant it. It doesn’t depend on the situation.

When it comes to dealing with other people, the Bible teaches the primacy of love. This is not the “love according to me” idea, but love according to God who said, “*Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*”

If we are going to follow situational ethics let us follow “Christian situational ethics.” This means that some things are always wrong because the Bible says so. Then some things may be right in themselves, but may become wrong if we offend or neglect others.

For example, it may be right for a Christian to go to the store to buy something he needs. But suppose he sees an automobile accident on his way to the store and mutters to himself, “But I’ve got to get to the store before it closes. Maybe someone else will stop and call for help.” Obviously the “better” of two rights here is to stop and offer help or at least call someone who can help. The first “right” can actually become wrong in that situation.

Let’s surrender all of our situations to God, doing what is right in His sight. Yes, it just depends on God’s will revealed in the Bible.

—RLB



The Christian Home Series

—Marlin Kreider

How to Teach and Train Children

Part 5

Developing and Instilling Character

To conclude this five part series, we want to consider the importance of developing and instilling character in our children. *Developing* has the idea of an ongoing project. *Instilling*, according to the dictionary, means “to put in little by little, drop by drop; cause to enter the mind, heart, or feelings gradually.” This describes child training well. It is an ongoing task, happening over time. God has given parents the responsibility to make sure good training *is* happening day after day and year after year.

Character, as we are using it here, has to do with one’s moral nature, moral strength, or weakness. The ways in which any person feels, thinks, and acts, good or bad, make up his character. Moral soundness, self-control, and integrity are expressions of good character. Character has to do with our reputation. Character is what we truly are!

Good character does not just happen. Children are born very impressionable, something like a blank sheet of paper. They are born with a sin nature. If neglected and left to do their own thing, they will go the wrong way. Proverbs 29:15 says: “*The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother [parents] to shame.*” Good character, the absolutes of right and wrong, must be taught and trained into children. This is a strenuous, full-time job, but the rewards of well-trained children are priceless. Fathers, do not become so busy with lesser things and neglect your children. Mothers, no career outside the home is worth as much as your children. Many children today are growing up with very little of the moral and character-building training so badly

needed to successfully face a hostile world of sin and vice.

The babysitter, the daycare center, the television, the Internet, and computer games are not able to produce good character in our precious children. The evidence in America is testimony enough. Will we wake up and change? God blesses those who are, by His grace, rearing their children for Him, instilling noble character.

So what are some of the ingredients of good character development in children? In past articles we have already considered the teaching and training of children: physically, academically, socially, and spiritually. Here we want to summarize and highlight some basic principles and practical areas necessary in the teaching and training of children.

1. Children must be wanted and loved. They must never feel or be told they are a bother or a burden. They must never be told or get the impression they are no good or worthless. If you visit prisons or correctional institutions, you will repeatedly hear: “I just wanted someone to love me.” Praise God, some of them learn to know that “*God is love!*” (See 1 John 4:7-11.) True love and acceptance bring security and teach children how to love others. So love the children you are responsible for!

2. Children need direction and wholesome correction. Contrary to many philosophies, this is a necessary and foundational ingredient for good character development. The “no discipline, no absolutes” theory is producing an abundant and bad harvest! The words of the prophet in Isaiah 3:12 are

applicable here. *“As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead thee cause thee to err, and destroy the way of thy paths.”* We need to return to the truth of God’s Word, the Bible! So parents, give guidance and correction to your children.

3. Children need a relationship with their parents. Sons and daughters need both their father and mother if at all possible, living together and working together in harmony. This is a security factor in the life of a child. The epidemic of divorce results in many single-parent families. No wonder we have so many socially maladjusted, sexually disoriented people today. Parents, be there with and for your children. The biggest favor you can do for your children is to be faithful to and love your marriage partner. Then together give sacrificially of your time to build relationships. Establish your own relationship with God so that you will be able to lead your child into this ultimate relationship.

4. Children need good, godly role models. The Bible says, *“Be thou an example.”* Parents teaching by example is most effective. This goes beyond parents to extended family, friends, and others children tend to admire and follow. This applies to school, church, and social life. Our society is lacking in good, exemplary role models. We must be discerning about the influence we allow our children to be under.

5. Children need to learn to face hardships, changes, and disappointments. Life is not always fair. Change of plans, disappointments, and death are all a very real part of human experience. Help your children to face these issues and not try to deny and escape as many do. This is one of the reasons we have such a huge alcohol and drug problem today. The poet says it so well: *“Change and decay in all around I see; O Thou who changest not, abide with me.”* Have a faith anchored in God and lead your children to the same. This will contribute to good character development and give courage to face difficulties.

6. Children need to be taught obedience and respect. People of good character have respect for God and sacred things. They have respect for human life, for authority, and for other people. Abortion and euthanasia are a reflection of the loss of both respect and upright character. God begins life. Letting Him end it, is what we need to believe and teach to our children. People who kill, even in the name of religion, are simply revealing their loss of good character and respect for God and their fellowmen. The New Testament law of love, taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount is more powerful and will accomplish more now and eternally than force, war, and violence ever have. Teach your children to obey and respect authority.

7. Children need to be taught the blessing of serving. Jesus taught that if you want to be great,

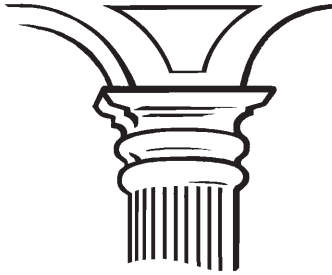
be a servant (Matthew 20:25-28). True Christians understand that Jesus saved us to serve God and others. No welfare mentality here! Teach and show your children the joy, blessing, and fulfillment of reaching out and helping the needy and less fortunate. Life centered on ourselves makes for a small and distorted world. Lead your children in serving God and others.

8. Children must learn to be humble. By nature we are proud. Humility is a virtue of godly character. For all we learn and know, there is so much we do not know. For all we can do, there is far more we cannot do. We are dependent on God and other people. If we are humble, we are willing to learn and benefit from others, even those with fewer assets or gifts than we have. Humility and service are inseparable companions. Jesus exemplified humility. The greatest contributions to society have come from humble people. Blessed are the children who are taught and learn humility.

9. Children must be taught work, honesty, and personal responsibility. Prosperous, soft living and the growing welfare state does not build strong character or teach personal responsibility. Children must be taught that the government is not our god and others do not owe us a living. The Bible standard (for the able bodied) is found in 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12: *“If any would not work, neither should he eat.”* Ecclesiastes 5:12 says: *“The sleep of a laboring man is sweet.”* Teach your children the joy of working and a job well done. Along with honesty and hard work, teach thankfulness—another good character quality. Our society is under great stress because many are taking much more than they are contributing. If we want to save the day, especially for our children, we need to hurry back to the character qualities of hard work, honesty, and taking personal responsibility!

10. Children must be protected. This is best done in the confines of a stable home structure. Our homes must be for our children what a greenhouse is for young and tender plants (see Psalm 144:11-15). Many very sad things are going on today in the exploitation of children and youth. True God-fearing parents will raise up a standard against this moral decay of New Age humanism, mass social media, ungodly music, immodest dress, the occult, and a host of other Satan-inspired destructive influences. Satan wants to destroy us and our children! We must train up our children to live useful, God-honoring lives in this wicked world!

Take courage no matter what this world says or does. Be like Noah who *“prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith”* (Hebrews 11:7). Build to the saving of your household. With God’s help, do all you can to develop and instill upright character in the children God has given you!



—Lester Troyer

Why the Bible Stands Above Nature

“Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

There are those who promote the idea that God has given us two books of comparable value—the Bible and the “book” of nature. This is similar to the claim that being alone with nature is a spiritual experience, even superior to gathering in church with the saints. These ideas may appeal to Christians from the backdrop of God creating the world. But, though nature is the work of God, it is spoiled by sin and is readily misinterpreted through the deceitful lenses of unbelief. There are many nature lovers—or nature huggers—in hot pursuit of their particular agenda on how to save the earth. These ideas are often contrary to the good of the human race. They show a marked preference for animals and are based on evolutionary “science,” not on a true understanding of nature. These piecemeal solutions will do more harm than good.

On the other hand, the Bible is the verbal communication of God and the only direct information on the power of God to bring eternal life. And yes, it is an authoritative manual of human responsibility and accountability for human good. The Bible gives understanding for living in a world where the highest good is to do the will of God.

So whatever nugget of fact the “nature book” contains, if pursued apart from the Bible and the knowledge of God, the effects will turn destructive.

So let’s back up and look at the truth in nature as observable by science. The sun itself leaves a daily demonstration of the glory of God wherever people are found (Psalm 19:1). The wonderfully rich complexity of created things bears witness to the unseen God. This leaves the agnostics, athe-

ists, and all unbelievers without excuse (Romans 1:20). Nature actually commands a search for God.

In fact, this creator-friendly evidence found in nature has generated the so-called intelligent design movement. This movement comes from scientists who have documented compelling evidence that nature could not have generated itself. Yet they stop short of identifying with the God of the Genesis Creation account. For some, this may represent an opportunity to make the Christian faith plausible. To me, it’s a rather meaningless pursuit, a bit like proving that Santa Claus doesn’t descend our chimneys, yet not introducing the birth of Jesus, the Saviour of the world. While it’s refreshing to see remarkable evidence showing Darwin’s theory of origins wrong (evidence readily available to any inquiring mind), we will see why this has not really led to a return to the God of the Bible.

To understand this, we need to distinguish between Darwin’s claim that we had a “no God” beginning, and its result—the powerful shift brought into modern western philosophy.

Without God, why not turn this world into a vast playground where everyone can pursue every desire, undeterred by the God of the heavens? What could be more liberating than to live with no commandments, no sin, and no judgment? Isn’t it only logical—and certainly with great relief to many—that people can happily and shamelessly discard the old moral virtues? (I say shamelessly, because our culture proudly promotes the things that were once considered shameful, even while Christians are increasingly ashamed of the tenets of Christian faith). People have no more worries

about the claims of conscience and no weight of absolute truth upon irresponsible behavior.

But we need to understand something else here. The godless model has done much more than remove the restraints to personal “fun.” It has completely revised the of meaning and purpose in human existence. It bleeds integrity from every aspect of culture, whether marriage and family, education, business, media, politics, government, or science.

And there is still a darker side. Sure, we always had people living contrary to law, such as drunkards, liars, thieves, adulterers, rapists, baby killers, murderers, and homosexuals. But then, even they knew they were wrong. These were simply not the acceptable norm. These were behaviors to be restrained and punished.

Now the tables are turned. This new worldview is diametrically opposed to the Biblical standards of justice and morality that once dominated the culture. The old view is now the “wrong” one. The process has moved from the claims of Biblical righteousness being discouraged, to being vilified, to being banned, and currently even to being criminalized. (Witness the current strong-arm tactics propelling the same-sex marriage issue).

But no, the godless model is not turning the world into a vast happy playground. It spawns costly, but ineffective science. It turns governments against their own people. It undermines security and corrupts financial markets. Worst of all, it destroys the very cradle of civilization, eroding human values, morals, and dignity to animal level. It turns traditional marriage into a superficial option, and leaves children physically and morally destitute—easy prey for violence and crime.

This Darwin-inspired philosophical system has taken on a life of its own. It is now independent of the evolutionary zeal that brought it to birth. While true science has the necessary evidence to close the door on Darwin’s theory of origins, this does not translate into a readiness to reopen the door to God.

How can this be? The Bible calls it a “reprobate” mind (Romans 1:28). It’s tragic enough to be ignorant of God, but far more lethal to live in defiance of God. It destroys sound judgment and provokes the enmity of God. *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being under-*

stood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.

“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.” (Romans 1:18-25).

This, then, is the essence of the sad story. Once people refuse Bible truth they lose their capacity for understanding the truth about themselves and about the natural world. Ancient cultures imagined gods in nature and turned to the worship of the sun, moon, and stars. They cast off the God of creation and elevated nature and animals into sacred positions. They fashioned and worshiped gods of their own making, as some still do in various regions of the world.

Today’s secularists hold themselves to be wiser than the ancients. They don’t stand and pray to the sun, neither do they bow the knee to material idols of their own making. Rather, in the denial of God, they fancy themselves to be in the place of God. This allows them to disengage the conscience and to practice their basest perversions. These moderns are worthy of greater judgment than the ancients. For the most part, the truth is readily accessible. If they don’t own a Bible, they could quickly find one.

We are all exposed to the glories of nature every day. But obviously, nature will hold still for whatever truth or lies may be assigned to it. Nature is not a very specific or accurate teacher. Even while the world and its two inhabitants were still perfect, Adam and Eve rated the forbidden fruit above the commandment of God. That’s the problem with holding nature as a book comparable to the Bible. It lends itself to disconnecting from the truth. It is the Scriptures—not nature—that unerringly point to God and to the answers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Bible clears up misunderstandings about nature. Nature does not resolve misunderstandings about the Bible.



THE BIBLE AND SCIENCE

—Elvin Stauffer

Technology Issues?

“And God blessed them and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish . . . the fowl . . . and over every living thing” (Genesis 1:28).

The First Great Commission

Adam was the crown of God’s creation in the new, perfectly created earth. He was made a steward with a duty to fulfill. This “dominion mandate” given to man (Genesis 1:28) was his first “great commission.” Man was given a charge to restrain and bring the animals into his service, take minerals and metal ores out of the earth, find healing drugs that God put in nature, and such like. He was to enter into enterprise and develop resources for his survival and success. Science is the acquisition of knowledge. Technology includes the techniques, tools, and processes with which people put knowledge to use in daily life.

Laboring Against the Curse

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God and fell from their first state, life became more difficult. *“Unto Adam he said, . . . cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee . . . in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground” (Genesis 3:17-19).*

The principle of entropy (degeneration) causes our goods to rust, rot, and fail. Much of our labor is to repair, replace, improve, regain health, and prevent future loss. As this earth *“waxeth old as doth a garment” (Psalm 102:26)*, its resources are depleted and we battle against deteriorating materials. Coal is mined out of mountains in Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania, and in its place, mountains of garbage are covered with grass. Man also fights against disease, sickness, and death. Vast fortunes are spent to preserve and recover health. The Bible calls this *“the bondage of corruption”* in which *“the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Romans 8:21-25)*. Through “miracle” drugs today, many more people are living longer. But *“We with patience wait . . . for the redemption of our body.”*

Early Technology

Man was developing technology from the most

primitive beginning of shaping a wooden stick, to breaking up the ground, to harnessing an animal to plow a field. In the first world man was advised that there was gold in the land of Havilah *“and the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone” (Genesis 2:12)*. (Thousands of years later, gold foil and rare metals would be used in space modules to land on the moon.) It wasn’t long until men were developing livestock and teaching the skills of fabricating brass and iron. Other inventors catered to man’s “soulish” love for beauty and harmony by developing “the harp and organ” (Genesis 4:20-22).

God made man a free moral agent. He could live in a God-honoring way, developing and utilizing his resources and inventions, or he could spoil and deplete them for selfish purposes. Throughout history, cultures rose and fell according to their righteousness or wickedness in using resources. There were many early advanced cultures in Egypt, Babylon, China, and the Americas, where many people today subsist in poverty. Where these cultures fell, some technologies were lost, never to be regained again. The ancients alloyed metals and moved massive weights of rock in ways unknown today. Archaeologists find evidence of advanced mathematics, electroplating, and other surprising artifacts.

Advances in Technology

While many in third world countries are still commuting by walking or donkey cart, the industrialized nations have made advances that are now progressing at exponential rates. The proof of man’s distinction from animals is that a human baby starts with little but learns and learns with no apparent stopping place. As technology advanced throughout history, knowledge was built upon the discoveries of others. We have little original thought today.

Block printing (700 A.D.) and gunpowder (900 A.D.) came from the Chinese in the Far East. By the 1500s changeable type presses made books widely available in Europe. Scientists like Galileo and Isaac

Newton advanced the scientific method of experimentation, observation, and mathematical analysis.

Rapid technological innovation sprang up in the 1700s, producing an industrial revolution. Machines brought mass production, and dramatic changes came to the way people lived and worked. Roads and railroads developed to transport goods and people from place to place. Interchangeable parts, brought in by such inventors as Eli Whitney and Henry Ford, made life's conveniences more usable and affordable. Many people moved to cities to work in factories. People's lifestyles were permanently changed.

The Age of Electronic Technology

At the turn of the 19th century, the use of electricity and electromagnetism brought in the age of electronics. Electric motors could now do work that once had been done by hand. Inventions produced many devices that make life easier at home and at work. But the greatest advances were in communication. Telephones, radio, and television made it possible for people around the world to receive sound and pictures almost instantly.

The computer age began in the 1940s. Thousands of calculations could now be done per second. Large masses of data could be stored and utilized. Then the transistor was made to control minute amounts of current. In the 1960's, the integrated circuit was developed. Thousands of transistors were put on a small silicon chip. These could even act as small computers called microprocessors. These are in our cars (ABS systems) and phones and keep many of our other gadgets working smoothly. Computers became smaller, lighter, faster, and affordable for everyone. This technology in the 1960s launched the space age. In the 1970s and 1980s, the government, universities, and businesses were using telephone lines to link their computers into networks. By 1990, thousands of networks were joined into one network called the Internet.

A portion of the internet called the World Wide Web now provides graphics, text, sound, and moving pictures. The World Wide Web has become a way of life for much of society. Instant information and graphics are now freely transferred between businesses, stores, and individuals. Medical records are available for all doctors and hospitals to see. And the information explosion goes on. The more knowledge that is discovered, the more areas that are waiting to expand.

Biotechnology can solve medical problems and aid industrial processes. Genetic manipulation provides new ways to fight disease. Plants are made resistant to disease and insects, producing larger crops to feed the world. Research into the atom has led to treating cancer with radiation. X-rays help doctors see inside the body and do noninvasive surgery. These inventions are possible because God has created life and established fixed laws in nature. Man should give God the glory for what He has done.

The Christian Response to Technology

The Christian will feed at the springs of living water in church fellowship where true love and the fruit of the Spirit build character. We must keep a safe distance from the world and be slow to accept new things until they have proved to have a practical and not harmful value in home and business. Technology has made life easier. We are no longer strapped down just providing the necessities of life. We have more time for family life, Christian service, and personal pursuits.

Apprehension has grown concerning the use of electronic technology and of numbers to identify people. Was taking a Social Security number joining us to the antichrist system? Do credit cards with a chip in them give the system a way to watch us? Is using the Internet, as communications are united into one information superhighway, joining the antichrist system? Technology is often first developed for war, space travel, and the popular entertainment culture—atomic bomb research led to radiation cures in medicine.

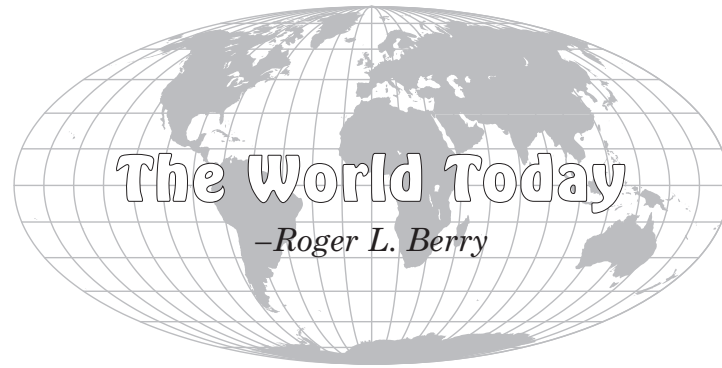
Multitudes are bound by materialism, lust, and the occult today through the internet. Satanic influences lead people to occult contacts, body piercing, and mass murders. Immorality and deranged characters are prevalent among Satan's victims who were enticed by "fun" and occult power.

Identification numbers, along with many other conditions of the end times, are upon us. The nations are affiliated as a "global village" under the United Nations. With bloody evil systems at large on the world scene, nations are ripe for an ecumenical leader.

However, we should not let Satan create hysteria and divisions because of the changing times. "*Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this*" (Ecclesiastes 7:10). If we would try to avoid all potential evil influences, we would need to go out of the world. Jesus knew these times were coming and prayed for us that we would be kept from the evil in the world (John 17:15, 16). Jesus left the Holy Spirit with us, giving power to discern and reject the evil and choose the good (John 16:7, 13).

It is God who established scientific principles and mandated their correct use. Satan often puts them to an evil purpose, but it is up to the Christian to honor and serve God with them where he can. However, much pornography and other corruptions have pervaded such technology as the World Wide Web. Christians must abstain from uses of this and other technology that would ruin morals and destroy our relationship with Christ. Many opportunities for good lie before Christians if they are faithful to the Bible and use God's gifts wisely.

Resources: *World Book Encyclopedia*
Unlocking the Mysteries of Creation: Dennis Peterson



The Christian and Pluralism?

In January, a university in North Carolina that was founded on Christian principles decided to begin broadcasting the traditional Muslim call to prayer from the bell tower of the chapel. Muslim students at the university hold a public prayer at 1 p.m. each Friday in the chapel basement. Someone decided that the university, in the name of inclusion or pluralism, should broadcast the call to prayer from the bell tower.

The associate dean for religious life at the university said that religious pluralism is at the heart of the school's mission. Needless to say, this move brought opposition from a wide variety of people. Why wouldn't the university broadcast a Jewish call to worship or a reading of the Lord's Prayer from the bell tower? The attempt of the university to encourage Muslim worship did not sit well with many people in an era when there have been many attempts to remove Christian symbols in public places or copies of the Ten Commandments displayed in courtrooms. University officials reversed the decision concerning the call to prayer.

Traditionally, western countries have promoted freedom of religion. Religious groups have been given the liberty to practice their beliefs and even to promote their beliefs as long as they are not forcing these beliefs on other people. The state has attempted to be careful not to promote one religion over another or to discriminate against certain religions among its people.

However, pluralism is a growing movement in our society. Pluralism is the belief that there is more than one kind of reality and more than one way that is right. In the government, it has become "politically correct" to make policies that would actually promote certain systems of belief or religion. But to promote one religion while severely restricting another is not in harmony with

the concept of religious freedom. Pluralism becomes even more serious when it enters schools and churches.

Pluralism is not just respecting different religions or allowing people of different religions to practice their beliefs. Pluralism within the "Christian" church promotes the idea that many, or maybe even all, religions are seeking God and that there are many ways to God. And so not only schools, but also churches start emphasizing the areas where we agree with other religions, even holding ecumenical or joint religious services to show that we are together in many things.

While true Christians should be kind toward those of other religions and not persecute them in any way, it is also true that Christianity is an exclusive religion. Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father [God], but by me*" (John 14:6). The early church preached: "*Neither is there salvation in any other [than Jesus Christ]: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*" (Acts 4:12).

For this reason, Christians need not be ashamed of their faith or of being identified as Christians. As the early church leader, the Apostle Paul, said, "*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek*" (Romans 1:16). Neither should we be ashamed to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with people of other religions or of no religion. We cannot force, nor should we try to force, Jesus Christ on other people. However, because the Bible teaches that the way of Christ is the only way to God, we need to let others know how they can find the God we serve. The choice will be theirs to make.

Jesus and the early church did not crusade to

try to force the government to tolerate them and give them their “rights.” They simply preached the truth and the way to God. Christians today should not become involved in political lobbying to try to force their beliefs on society or to force toleration for Christian beliefs. The call of the Christian church is rather to proclaim the message of salvation through Jesus Christ to all who will hear the message. Christians also need to live out the teachings of Jesus and of the Bible in a world that needs to see how Jesus can transform lives and bring peace in men’s hearts in a troubled world. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth” (John 14:27).

Are You Ready for Christ’s Coming?

Can you answer “yes” to each of these questions?

Do I believe in Jesus Christ?

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12).

Have I repented of my sin?

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19).

“Repent, and be baptized . . . in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38).

“Put off the old man with his deeds; and . . . put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him” (Colossians 3:9, 10).

Have I confessed Christ as my Master and Saviour?

“If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9).

Am I following Jesus as master?

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matthew 16:24).

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

Am I part of a spiritual fellowship of believers?

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together” (Hebrews 10:24, 25a).

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41).

Am I watching for Christ’s return?

“Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:36).



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