"The age in which we are living is similar to the first century in many respects. The old world was exhausted then. The flowering period of Greek philosophy had come and had gone. Rome in a sense had passed her zenith, and there was the same kind of tiredness and weariness, with consequent turning to pleasure and amusement. The same is so true today; and so far from saying that we must have less preaching and turn more and more to other devices and expediets, I say that we have a heaven-sent opportunity for preaching."

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

Editorial: The Problem with Numbers

Evangelists are often accused of loving numbers, and I admit that I do love them—not because they are notches in my belt, but because numbers represent real, life-and-blood people that God knows by name. When it comes to people finding a secure place in God's kingdom, more is clearly better. (And obviously, if it is just about notches in your belt with little regard for the people themselves, there is a problem.)

There's another set of numbers often tied to evangelistic endeavors that can prove problematic, however. Before I head into any city, I always make myself familiar with all of the demographic data I can lay my hands on. I want to get a general sense for the makeup of the community: age, gender, culture, religious preference, income ... you name it. It's very useful information.

But there are dangers in the data, because it can give you a false impression. I've heard people suggest that because a community polls as highly secular, the work is going to be tougher. Likewise, I've heard people suggest that if a community polls as highly Christian, the work is likely to be easier. Experience, however, has shown me that the opposite is usually true: in secular communities, I often find much better results. That may not be true for every evangelist, but generally speaking, it's been true for me. If I developed plans with a strictly academic approach, I'd miss the mark far more often than necessary.

There are a number of things to bear in mind as you peruse demographic data:

1. The data can make us overconfident. If you assume too much based on favorable data, you
may find yourself unready for the realities of a great controversy raging behind the scenes. There
is no such thing as a place with no resistance; if the devil's been there, you'll see his work. (If you
never do, you might want to ask yourself why he never seems to resist your efforts.)

2. **The data can make us overly concerned.** The converse is true. I've seen people bemoan the
fact that a city is 'unreachable'-or virtually so-because the data tells them that very few people
are religiously inclined. But pollsters can't see the lives that have recently fallen apart. They can't
sense burgeoning conviction in a person's heart. They can't see what's been going on behind the
scenes on a daily basis before you showed up to preach. There are always that have heard the
voice of the Spirit, people who wrestle with quiet disappointments and conviction. I've never yet
seen the community that had nobody ready to hear the gospel.

3. **The data can make us overly dependent on our own efforts.** At the end of the day, we're not
in charge of the evangelistic process. There is nothing we can do to bring conviction to the truly
secular mind (see 1 Corinthians 2:12-14). We simply aren't clever enough, no matter how well we
are armed with studies and numbers. Conviction is the province of the Holy Spirit, and we cannot
forget that our plans will always fail - no matter how well strategized - if we are not found
cooperating with Him.

4. **The data can lead us to forget God's promises.** When the children of Israel sent twelve spies
into Canaan to conduct what amounts to a feasibility study, ten out of the twelve were definitive
in their answer: impossible. Judging by the mournful (and fearful) response of the Israelites, they
were effective in stating their case. But they were wrong. God's work has always been a matter of
faithful men and women answering His call in spite of the odds. It's a faith-based venture,
designed as much to build our confidence in God as it is to win the world.

By all means, collect the data. Make intelligent decisions about resources. Know what kinds of
things would clearly be counterproductive. But never let it stop you or slow you down, because
God's work has always defied all the numbers. His promise? A numberless crowd on the sea of
crystal.

**On Methods of Evangelism**

"Let's do a full evangelistic series!" someone in the room said.

"That's a good idea, but it doesn't have to be one of those 24-night
meetings; it could just be a weekend or a few nights," the pastor quickly
retorted.

"When was the last time we did an evangelistic meeting at this church?"
someone else asked.

"It's been quite a few years ... more than five, I think," another member
volunteered.

The meeting was a brand new action committee the church formed to decide what the church
should be doing for evangelism. It was clear that the church was doing really good things to help
the community-Adventist Community Services was active in giving away clothes and other
necessities, a monthly dinner for the needy, a Sabbath morning breakfast for members and the
community, and no one could miss the friendliness of the church-there was no doubt, the church
was doing a lot in the community. But in spite of all these worthwhile efforts, the church was not
experiencing growth.

The pastor had lots of contacts in the community; he even made several personal visits each week
to members and unbelievers alike. The church even had non-members attending regularly. But
why was no one making a decision? Why was all this effort seemingly in vain for "kingdom growth?"

Ideas and opinions and frustrations with church growth and evangelism exist from the smallest
church to the largest, and even up to the conferences and unions-everyone wants a magic bullet
that will get people to join the church, or else they're certain that "the way is narrow" and few
will come no matter what we do.

Click [here](#) to finish reading.
Writing for Preaching Requires Different Approach

"A sermon is not an essay on its hind legs," writes Haddon Robinson, because people don't speak the way they write, and people don't listen the way they read. "You can't prepare sermons the same way you prepare an essay or a book. Write as though you were talking with someone, and as in conversation, strive for immediate understanding. Readers can examine a page at leisure, reflecting on what they have read, argue with the ideas, and move along at any rate they find comfortable." Click here to read the rest of Haddon's ideas on sermon preparation, many of which have direct bearing on evangelistic preaching.

The Role of Bible Stories in Evangelism

What is the role of Bible stories in evangelism? Why bother to tell these stories when we could easily give a tract or make a conventional presentation of the gospel? What is it about telling stories that makes their influence different from just giving evangelistic information?

Click here to read three answers to these questions as they apply to a world of people who learn from oral presentations, and as they apply to the often indifferent world of postmoderns.

Clarifying Rumors

Last month, rumors were spreading across the internet that the Pentagon had forbidden Christians in the American armed forces from sharing their faith with fellow soldiers - under threat of court martial. On May 2, the Department of Defense issued a statement aimed at debunking the rumor, stating that it was forbidding "proselytizing," but not evangelism. You can read more about it here.

Four Lies About Introverts

It comes as a surprise to many people that large numbers of pastors and evangelists are actually introverts, often because introversion is often confused with shyness. Susan Cain's best-selling book Quiet, an exploration of introversion, features a lengthy section dealing with introverted clergy and the expectations that the public has about people who work up front. It's well worth reading.

In this blog post, Amie Patrick explores four lies about introverts, and makes several astute observations that will come in handy if you happen to be an introvert, or happen to be working with one.

The Effects of Pornography on Mind and Marriage

The typical public evangelistic meeting spends little time covering subjects like marriage and family, in spite of the fact that there is an ever-increasing need to cover such topics publicly. We've become proficient at dealing with minor addictions like tobacco, and yet a surprising percentage of a public audience is dealing with an addition to online pornography. (And, sadly, it's not just the public audience: Christians are increasingly falling prey to it as well.)

To that end, it makes good sense for the evangelist to begin stockpiling useful information to include in presentations dealing with the moral challenges of western culture. You might find this article (and others like it) a good place to start studying up.
Ten Reasons that Kids Leave Church

From Focus on the Family: ten reasons that kids leave church. Some of these will come as a surprise to you. Number ten? The church is trying too hard to be relevant. Normally, "relevant" is a positive term, the author explains. In this case, it labels the problem: we've couched our faith in modern trappings to the point that 2,000 years of history and rich tradition have been diminished.

Ready to have some assumptions challenged? Read all ten reasons [here](http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs169/1101578508634/archive/1113366872188.html).

Register now for a FREE Webinar: Sharing the Good News in the 21st Century

This month's webinar presentation will take place **Tuesday, May 21 at 1:30pm EST**. Sung Kwon, Director of NAD Adventist Community Services and Co-founder of the Nonprofit Leadership Certification Program, will present *Sharing the Good News in the 21st Century*.

Because community outreach is the essence of our mission, Dr. Kwon will address why we have dualistic piety in our approach to community and church. He will focus on the essentials of community connectedness and share examples of church growth addressing these essentials. He also will share a better understanding of serving God and His people in Isaiah 58. Join us as we discuss the real essence of reaching communities around our churches.

Find more information and [register at our website](http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs169/1101578508634/archive/1113366872188.html).

Follow NAD Ministerial on Twitter

If you haven't started following NAD Ministerial on Twitter, you haven't lived! OK, perhaps it's not as earth-shattering as that, but we would love to keep in touch and let you know what we're up to. And it's easy. Just click the link to follow.

[@NADpastors](http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs169/1101578508634/archive/1113366872188.html)

C'mon - you know you want to help!

Remember what it was like when you got started with public evangelism? How challenging it seemed? Then remember how, later on, you discovered that someone had already discovered solutions to some of the problems that plagued you most - years ago?

Someone out there is just getting started. You have already faced a number of challenges, and God has blessed you with ideas to make life easier. Don't let them discover - years from now - that you've already solved some of their biggest problems. Let them discover it now!

[*Find out how to contribute to the discussion here.*](http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs169/1101578508634/archive/1113366872188.html)

Please write as if you are writing for an audience. We're happy to do some light editing, but if you address it personally to the editors or submit it in the form of bullet points, it's not nearly as useful.
Have you started preaching from an iPad? You might want to check out PDF Expert. Save your sermon notes as a PDF and open it in this amazingly useful app: it allows you to highlight, annotate, underline, scribble ... in every color under the rainbow. If you're accustomed to preaching straight from a Bible, try scanning the relevant pages into a PDF document—this app will allow you to mark those pages without permanently marking your physical Bible. It also turns pages intuitively; instead of swiping up or down (as you would with Pages or most other apps), you swipe from right to left, as if you were working with a real paper document. Add pages, rearrange them, highlight with 100% opaque white to completely erase a section of your manuscript. It's well worth the ten bucks you'll shell out for it. You'll find it in iTunes, or by clicking here.
North American Division Ministerial Association - Thoughts on the Simplicity of Evangelism

Thoughts on the Simplicity of Evangelism

By Jason Worf

Before people benefit from the Good News, they're likely to be bothered by the bad news. If our goal is to avoid conflict, we need a different message. If, on the other hand, our goal is to be truthful (something more difficult than open-minded) and loving (something far better than tolerant), then we have the perfect message and the ideal model of how to proclaim it. ~ Randy Newman

“Let’s do a full evangelistic series!” someone in the room said.

“That’s a good idea, but it doesn’t have to be one of those 24 night meetings; it could just be a weekend or a few nights”, the pastor quickly retorted.

“When was the last time we did an evangelistic meeting at this church?” someone else asked.

“It’s been quite a few years... more than five I think.” another member volunteered.

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The meeting was a brand new action committee the church formed to decide what the church should be doing for evangelism. It was clear that the church was doing really good things to help the community—Adventist Community Services was active in giving away clothes and other necessities, a monthly dinner for the needy, a hot chocolate ministry on cold mornings to the public high school students, a Sabbath morning breakfast for members and the community, and no one could miss the friendliness of the church—there was no doubt, the church was doing a lot in the community. But in spite of all these worthwhile efforts, the church was not experiencing growth.

The pastor had lots of contacts in the community; he even made several personal visits each week to members and unbelievers alike. The church even had non-members attending regularly. But why was no one making a decision? Why was all this effort seemingly in vain for “kingdom growth”?

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Ideas and opinions and frustrations with church growth and evangelism exist from the smallest church to the largest, and even up to the conferences and unions—everyone wants a magic bullet that will get people to join the church, or else they’re certain that “the way is narrow” and few will come no matter what we do.

I don’t have a masters in church growth, a degree in evangelism, or anything like that—but I believe that we can trust the things that God has revealed to us. I also believe that the methods and principles that God gives us in the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy are not dated, culturally irrelevant, or in need of “modernizing”—if He says to preach, then preach, if He tells us to visit people in their homes, then let’s visit people in their homes.

With that in mind, let’s see what God tells us to do:

From Matthew 28:19-20:

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.
1. Go
2. Disciple, Baptize, Teach

Notice the purposeful, intentional nature of the word “go”. Can you “go” without wanting to, choosing to, and putting all your effort towards it? Going is not passive or accidental.

In the command to disciple, teach and baptize we find that there is a relational component to evangelism (discipling), intentional instruction in righteousness (teaching), and that the end result is to bring them to the water to be baptized and join God’s church. There is no preference towards discipling, no high calling in teaching, and no blessing in baptism alone—each of these elements is important, necessary and inextricably linked. The church that goes about discipling without any intention of teaching clear doctrine, does not fulfill this command. The same is true for the church that only baptizes or the church whose whole focus is doctrinal teaching. In fact, you can’t even say you’re obeying this command if you do two of these three.

Ellen White breaks this process down into finer detail in the book Ministry of Healing page 143. She says that Jesus’ method is the only way that we will have true success in evangelism.

From The Ministry of Healing p 143:

The world needs today what it needed nineteen hundred years ago—a revelation of Christ. ...it is only through the grace of Christ that the work of restoration, physical, mental, and spiritual, can be accomplished.

Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour (1) mingled with men as one who desired their good. He (2) showed His sympathy for them, (3) ministered to their needs, and (4) won their confidence. Then He (5) bade them, "Follow Me."

1. We are to reveal Jesus by:
   1. Mingling with people and desiring their good
   2. Sympathizing with their needs
   3. Ministering to their needs
   4. Winning their confidence (a happy byproduct of actively loving someone)
   5. Then, calling them to follow Jesus.

2. As we reveal Jesus, we bring mental, spiritual, and physical restoration.

Let’s start with mingling. Can you mingle while sitting at home? No, you intentionally go to where people are, and you spend time with them “as one who desires their good.” You might mingle at work, at a social gathering, in someone else's home, bringing people to your home, in a hospital or nursing home, or anywhere you might find people. The key is the intentionality of desiring good for the people you are mingling with. And notice that Jesus mingled mostly with people who were not his friends—though He had a way of getting his friends involved.

When we sympathize with people we pay attention, we listen, and we seek to understand. What is it that is keeping this person from Jesus? What barrier is there to their understanding of God. Maybe they’re struggling with something physically—a sickness, an addiction, or a hygiene problem. When we sympathize with them we understand them and find ways to help them get closer to Jesus.

The word, minister, literally means servant. “What do you need? Let me serve you.” That’s the work of a minister. Yet somehow we have transformed the meaning into an elite group of people who administrate the work of the church and preach sermons to us. The best ministers are the ones who, after sympathizing with those they intentionally mingled with, care for the needs they find.

Think back to our quote from Ministry of Healing. The restoration described there is holistic—mental, physical and spiritual. That means ministry needs to be holistic too; all the parts working together to accomplish restoration in peoples’ lives.

As we understand people and care for their mental, physical and spiritual needs, winning their confidence comes naturally. Winning their confidence is the bridge to what you really want for them. Most of us know that we shouldn’t just walk up to someone in the street and say, “You’re a sinner, come to Jesus!” But isn’t that the basic goal of evangelism—to show someone their need and point them to follow Jesus? But know this: it’s not until you’ve won their confidence that you have the right to call them to follow Jesus. Winning their confidence is the trigger point.
When all is said and done, we want everyone we come in contact with to come to heaven with us. Why then are we so often afraid to ask people to follow us? Why did this pastor friend of mine shy away from a “full” evangelistic meeting? Why hasn’t his church had a “reaping” meeting for over five years? Maybe it’s because we’re afraid of the “hook”. You know, where you put some bait out in the water hoping a fish will spy it and want to come take a big gulp, and then, SURPRISE! You just ate a hook. We share clothes with people, we feed them, we’re friendly, but the feeling is, if we do these things with the express purpose of asking them to follow Jesus, then we’re putting a hook in our kindness. If that’s what we’re afraid of in evangelism, then let’s be more honest about our intentions, not less evangelistic. We are to work “disinterestedly” for the good of our fellow men—without regard for personal gain. But our good works must be connected with the call to “come out of babylon” or we’re not showing people true love.

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What are we to do? Should we pour hundreds of thousands of dollars into public meetings? Should we invest more effort in member training so people will be more confident to give Bible studies? Should we hire a slew of Bible workers, youth leaders, and outreach coordinators? Should we set up homeless ministries, or do VBS in the park, or start restaurants, or..., or..., or...?

Here’s Ellen White to answer the question:

House-to-house labor, searching for souls, hunting for the lost sheep, is the most essential work that can be done. Evangelism, p. 110

Wherever a church is established, all the members should engage actively in missionary work. They should visit every family in the neighborhood, and know their spiritual condition. Testimonies, Vol. 6, p. 296

This is really basic stuff. Here’s the principle: as a Christian, God asks you to claim the community around your home as your mission field; as a church, God asks you to claim the community around your church as your mission field. Now, start visiting those people and get to know what their spiritual condition is. Ellen White knew that if you just start visiting people (mingling) you’d soon figure out what kinds of things you can help them with (sympathizing), you’d recognize what kinds of ministries your church needs to engage in (ministering), and as a result you’d be in the perfect position (their confidence won) to tell them present truth and call them to follow Jesus. Nothing is left out in this plan. You’ll be doing good things for people, and giving Bible studies, and doing public evangelism, but all that stems from the first and most basic step, going out to understand the spiritual condition of your neighbors.

You could say that I’m an idealist, or not yet experienced enough in ministry. But here’s what I know from watching those who do have lots of experience and are pragmatic—the churches that are growing are the ones that care about people and are constantly preaching the three angel’s messages.

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It seems a little ridiculous for me, the director of an evangelism training school, to write a message that suggests that evangelism is pretty basic stuff. Why should you come to Northwest Mission Institute (NMI) if all you need to do is visit your neighbors? Let me add one more nail to the coffin of my school—if you would heed the following advice, then you would not need the training that NMI provides, “It is in the water, not on the land, that men learn to swim” (Ellen White). What we do at NMI is ground our students in the Bible, teach them how to share the Bible and how to train others, and then practice, practice, practice.

If it were up to me, you and every other Adventist would adopt their neighborhood right now, and NMI and all the other evangelism schools would be empty and unneeded. But if I know anything about prophecy, then I know you will most likely read this article and quickly move on to something else, without giving it another thought. And that is why NMI is here; because we need leaders to come into our churches and start shouting, “WAKE UP! JESUS IS COMING SOON, AND WE HAVEN’T TOLD ENOUGH PEOPLE!”

Maybe you’re like me, and you want to see your church awakened out of sleep. Come to NMI and be trained to lead them in outreach evangelism. Or, maybe you’re ready right now to do something for God. Then adopt your street as your mission field, and do everything in your power to move the rest of your church to do the same.

Jason Worf, Director, Northwest Mission Institute

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Writing for Preaching Requires Different Approach

In an issue of the PreachingTodaySermons.com newsletter, Haddon Robinson writes:

"While rules governing good writing also apply to the sermon manuscript, a sermon is not an essay on its hind legs because what you write serves only as a broad preparation for what you will actually say. Your manuscript is not your final product. Your sermon should not be read to a congregation. Reading usually kills a lively sense of communication. Neither should you try to memorize your manuscript. Not only does memorization place a hefty burden on you if you speak several times a week, but an audience senses when you are reading words off the wall of your mind.

"Agonize with thought and words at your desk, and what you write will be internalized. Rehearse several times aloud without your manuscript. Make no conscious effort to recall your exact wording. Simply try to get your flow of thought clearly in mind. When you step into the pulpit, your written text will have done its work to shape your use of language. Much of your wording will come back to you as you preach, but not all. In the heat of your delivery, your sentence structure will change. New phrases will occur to you, and your speech will sparkle like spontaneous conversation. Your manuscript, therefore, contributes to the thought and wording of your sermon, but it does not determine it. "Writing a sermon differs from writing an essay or a book. Write as though you were talking with someone, and as in conversation, strive for immediate understanding. Authors know their readers need not grasp an idea instantly. Readers can examine a page at leisure, reflect on what they have read, argue with the ideas, and move along at any rate they find comfortable. Should they stumble across an unfamiliar word, they can get up and consult a dictionary. If they lose a writer's path of thought, they can retrace it. In short, readers control the experience. "Listeners, on the other hand, cannot afford the luxury of leisurely reflection. They cannot go back to listen a second time. If they do not take in what is said as it is said, they will miss it completely. Should they take time out to review the speaker's argument, they will miss what the speaker is saying now. Listeners sit at the mercy of the preacher. Speakers, unlike writers, must make themselves understood instantly." (The article is adapted from Robinson's book Biblical Preaching.)
The Role of Bible Stories in Evangelism

By J.O. Terry
October 2006

What is the role of Bible stories in evangelism today? Why bother to tell these stories when we could easily give a tract or make a conventional presentation of the gospel? What is it about telling stories that makes their influence different from just giving evangelistic information? Following are three of the early answers to these questions that we have learned in the oral learner world, increasingly in the secondary orality world and even in the often indifferent world of postmoderns.

1. **Stories, whether Bible stories or personal stories, interest us because they are about people.** Often in stories we are telling what happened to us or what we saw or heard happen, so they have an eyewitness authenticity as we tell them. Simon Peter mentioned this in his second epistle when he said, “We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty…when the voice came to him from the majestic glory, saying, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the mountain.” (2 Peter 1:16-18).

2. **Stories, especially Bible stories, give an opportunity to “try on” truths mentally as we hear them.** The stories in the Gospels and Acts tell about the followers of Jesus as well as those who came to hear Jesus and see his miracles. Some listeners, like the rich young ruler, went away disappointed because they found the teaching too costly. But others, when they heard the parables of Jesus and saw his works, believed.

3. **Because stories are memorable they stay with us and can continue to speak to us long after the story is told.** Hearing stories told in a vivid and culturally appropriate way made it easy for the people of Jesus’ day to remember what he said and have his words continue to speak to their hearts long after the stories were told. Remember the words of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus? They commented how their hearts burned within them as Jesus related his story of how the Messiah must first suffer and then enter his glory. The same heart response is illustrated in the video *Ee-taow!*, where Mark Zook relates how when he told the story of Abraham following God’s command to sacrifice his son Isaac, one of the elder listeners came to him to share how he was troubled by the story, and then expressed his belief that somehow God was going to save Isaac.

Relating to Their World
Bible storying allows listeners to identify with the story characters and with what happens to them. In *Ee-taow!*, when Zook told the stories, the Mouk people responded, “We are like that!” The stories that I prepared for Muslim women (*The Grief Stories*) were motivated by the desire to show how God was aware of these women’s needs and able to redeem their lives. Many of the stories tell of situations like barrenness with which the listeners can identify. The same is true with stories like that of The Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32), the rich man in the story of The Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) or The Rich Fool (Luke 18:18-23) who was more concerned with his wealth than his soul.

**Stories are relational.** Among the oral peoples of the world there is a lively interest in stories which attracts listeners to hear the storyteller. Those of us who have used Bible stories in our evangelism strategies have been able to gain a hearing because “we were telling stories.” The storytelling setting is a communal setting where individual and religious differences are laid aside for the duration of the story; both storyteller and listener enter into the story and share a relationship through its telling. Stories are relational in that, as mentioned previously, listeners identify with characters in the stories. Once when screening the *JESUS* film near the seashore in Mangalore, India, we invited the local fishermen; however, since the film was being shown in the territory of farmers, the fishermen stayed at a distance. They remained far off until the point when Jesus instructed his disciples to let down the net. At that very moment the fishermen came running toward the screen and joined in watching the remainder of the story. The film story had touched their world and they related to it.

Telling stories also provides an event for listeners to gather together and enjoy the entertainment. **Oral people are far more event-oriented than information-oriented.** By providing the event, the opportunity exists for relationship to develop, as well as for the focused attention on
the story which can lead to identifying with the story and its outcome. Stories are memorable so the listeners can take them home and pass them along to others. Among some oral peoples stories are put into song and can best be remembered that way. Calvin Fox, a former agricultural worker among the Kui people of India, taught his pastors the Bible stories and told them to leave their Bibles at home as having a Bible in hand surely marked them for opposition by radical Hindus. Instead, the men were to tell the Bible stories as they worked among the people they were helping in agricultural projects.

**Overcoming Difficulties in Bible Storying**

There are some recognized difficulties in using Bible stories for evangelism. The question has been raised whether theology derived from story telling is too shallow or incomplete, as opposed to a more propositional systematic theology from traditional teaching. It is true that it may take many stories and, in fact, a whole set of stories to give the proper theological perspective. A single isolated story can be misleading. Therefore, stories need a matrix, as discussed by Jacob Loewen in his book *Culture and Human Values*, where he tells the effect of a recorded story of the flood along with sound effects on a Central American people. They were terrified and stopped their work.

Another problem that we have faced is that of stories getting corrupted or influenced by local cultural stories that are similar. This has been observed among some of the Mayan peoples, where those retelling the stories brought into the Bible stories details from their cultural stories. In my own experience I saw that on some occasions the story-tellers “fixed” the stories so they would have a “better” ending, an ending more in line with their expectation. Countering this required telling a larger matrix of stories so that the story they wanted to “fix” was locked in and interpreted by the preceding and following stories.

Akin to changing or negatively restructuring stories is the problem of story fading. Although heritage stories on the whole do have a longer and more accurate life span, there is a noticeable fading of Bible stories unless they are periodically refreshed. One thing that keeps this from being a greater problem is the “group story.” This is the effect of the group members all contributing to the story so that to some extent the fading is self-correcting. Still we found it good practice to periodically refresh evangelism and discipleship stories.

For those oral learners who do not have scripture in their spoken or mother language it is paramount to give them an Oral Bible. The Oral Bible concept came about as an observation of what was happening as selected Bible stories were told first to evangelize people and then to organize them into churches and continue their discipleship and growth as Christians. The listeners were having an Oral Bible formed in their memories. True, it is a limited Bible as it only consists of what they have heard and can remember, but it is a functional Bible which can be used for further evangelistic witness, preaching and teaching.

**Using Bible Stories for Evangelism**

There are two basic philosophies regarding using Bible stories to evangelize.

*The first is to take a chronological presentation of Bible stories that (1) can lead to salvation and (2) deal with primary worldview issues that are stumbling blocks to the gospel.* This process can take months to complete and can only be speeded up a limited amount as oral learners can easily overload if too much information is presented at one time. It is a time-consuming and labor-intensive strategy.

*The second philosophy of using Bible stories to evangelize presents three related choices.* The first is to use a more compact set of stories that are basically the critical stories leading to salvation. The primary objective is to get an emotional and spiritual response rather than to equip listeners to remember the stories. The *Storying Scart* from West Africa is a good example of a well-designed compact story set that is being used both “as is” and with local modification in many places. One suggested strategy in Central America was to have a team of three men tell seven stories a night and after all the stories were told to have a discussion and response. *The second option is to use a “micro-strategy” of five to ten stories with a majority of the stories about Jesus.* This strategy is proving of manageable value to many going on short-term mission trips where longer strategies are not possible. *A third option is to use a “fast track” presentation of many stories joined into a panorama which are told at one time as a continuing story that includes all the appropriate stories needed for evangelism.* Here there is no stopping for discussion of individual stories along the way; instead, listeners are swept along from story to story so that the emotional impact builds and climaxes in the story of Jesus. Afterward there is discussion or opportunity for response or invitation.

Stories speak to everyone. Among young worshipers in the Church and among post-moderns outside the Church, stories are proving their value in communicating spiritual truths. We literate evangelists must overcome our reticence just to tell Bible stories. *We are in a partnership with the Holy Spirit to tell the stories so the Spirit can then use them to bring salvation to listeners.* We must be prepared to tell the stories of our Savior—stories we should know by heart.

**Endnote**

J.O. Terry served as a media missionary in the Asia Pacific region for thirty-two years. He worked in Bible Storying until his retirement in 1985. Terry currently co-teaches Bible Storying classes at Southwestern Theological Baptist Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, USA.
Pentagon refutes reports of anti-Christian policies

David Gibson

(RNS) Christian conservatives have grown increasingly alarmed in recent weeks over reports and rumors that the Pentagon is considering new policies aimed at discriminating against Christians and disciplining or even court-martialed those who share their faith.

But the Department of Defense on Thursday (May 2) sought to debunk that speculation, saying that while aggressive proselytizing is barred, evangelization is still permitted and the rights of all believers – and non-believers – will be protected.

“The U.S. Department of Defense has never and will never single out a particular religious group for persecution or prosecution,” Pentagon spokesman Lt. Cmdr. Nate Christensen said in a statement. “The Department makes reasonable accommodations for all religions and celebrates the religious diversity of our service members.”

“Service members can share their faith (evangelize), but must not force unwanted, intrusive attempts to convert others of any faith or no faith to one’s beliefs (proselytization),” Christensen added.

He also said that “when religious harassment complaints are reported, commanders take action based on the gravity of the occurrence on a case by case basis.” He did not specify what the range of penalties could be.

The latest statement was aimed at refuting widely circulated reports in conservative media outlets that Christian soldiers could be court-martialed for sharing their faith.

Whether the push back will be successful in dispelling suspicions, even within the ranks, is uncertain. Even as Christensen released his statement Thursday, Rear Adm. William D. Lee of the U.S. Coast Guard warned of threats to faith within the military while speaking at National Day of Prayer observances on Capitol Hill.

“I am not talking about proselytizing; I am vehemently against that,” the admiral said in remarks that drew a standing ovation. “I’m talking about gently whispering the gospel.”

The current controversy seems to have originated with Fox News contributor Todd Starnes, who on Tuesday wrote about a Pentagon meeting on harassment and tolerance issues; among the attendees was the head of the Military Religious Freedom Foundation, Mikey Weinstein.

Weinstein is known for his inflammatory rhetoric about religious believers and Christians in particular, and he didn’t disappoint this time: he told The Washington Post after the April 23 meeting that proselytizing in the military is akin to “spiritual rape,” among other things.

The Fox News report on Weinstein’s remarks also cited a statement from Christensen, the Pentagon spokesman, who reiterated the preexisting policy against proselytizing. But the Starnes piece went on to claim that the policy also applied to evangelizing, or sharing the gospel. In addition, the story highlighted court martial as a possible penalty.

Outlets like Breitbart.com then amplified the reports with stories such as “Pentagon May Court Martial Soldiers Who Share Christian Faith.” The Washington-based Family Research Council then launched a petition drive – which had more than 100,000 signatures as of...
Thursday – to urge the Pentagon “to scrub plans to court-martial Christians.”

But this latest dust up did not occur in a vacuum.

In recent years the U.S. military has become a battleground in the culture wars as the growing pluralism of the armed forces, along with increasing assertiveness of both Christian and secular activists, have led the Pentagon to clarify and develop policies of neutrality.

Those policies often do not sit well with Christians, and the Obama administration’s 2011 decision to end the military’s “Don’t Ask/Don’t Tell” policy on gay service personnel ramped up their fears still further.

Then in early April it was reported that during a U.S. Army Reserve presentation, an outside contractor had included Catholics and evangelicals in a PowerPoint show listing possible “extremists.” While the Army removed the offending slide, the incident was reported as another example of anti-Christian bias in the military.

Just three weeks later, when some soldiers and chaplains complained that they were blocked from logging onto the website of the Southern Baptist Convention, Christian conservatives accused the military of targeting evangelicals for censorship.

Even after it turned out that the problem lay with a glitch in the SBC’s own website, the Family Research Council and others still insisted the incident revealed a troubling pattern of military antipathy to Christians – a charge that critics said was akin to crying wolf.

“Conservatives are supposed to stand for truth against relativism. But that seems not to be the play in this case,” wrote RealClearReligion columnist Jeffrey Weiss. “Truth that doesn’t fit a predetermined narrative is stood on its head and square-peg-crammed into a round hole.”

The Christian activist group Alliance Defending Freedom on Thursday claimed victory, saying the Pentagon had “backtracked” on its previous position, but said it was still going to pursue legal channels to investigate “this gross error.”

(Adelle M. Banks contributed to this report)

KRE END GIBSON
7 Negative Effects of Porn

This is a rather frank post on porn, so proceed, or not, with that in mind.

Porn is a problem. It's a personal problem for many and a cultural problem for all. You may think you have not been affected by porn, but you have because it's embedded in the surrounding culture. The staggering size of the pornography industry, its influence upon the media and the acceleration of technology, paired with the accessibility, anonymity, and affordability of porn all contribute to its increasing impact upon the culture.

Pornography affects you whether you've ever viewed it or not, and it is helpful to understand some of its negative effects, whether you are a man or woman, struggling with watching it, or simply a mom or dad with a son or daughter. There is a plethora of research on the detrimental effects of pornography (and I do not think that what follows are necessarily the worst of them), but here are seven negative effects of porn upon men and women:

1. Porn Contributes to Social and Psychological Problems Within Men

Anti-pornography activist, Gail Dines, notes that young men who become addicted to porn, “neglect their schoolwork, spend huge amounts of money they don’t have, become isolated from others, and often suffer depression.” (Pornkind, 93). Dr. William Struthers, who has a PhD in biopsychology from the University of Illinois at Chicago, confirms some of these and adds more, finding that men who use porn become controlling, highly introverted, have high anxiety, narcissistic, curious, have low self-esteem, depressed, dissociative, distractible (Wired for Intimacy, 64-65). Ironically, while viewing porn creates momentary intensely pleasurable experiences, it ends up leading to several negative lingering psychological experiences.

2. Porn Rewires the Male Brain
Struthers elaborates,

As men fall deeper into the mental habit of fixating on [pornographic images], the exposure to them creates neural pathways. Like a path is created in the woods with each successive hiker, so do the neural paths set the course for the next time an erotic image is viewed. Over time these neural paths become wider as they are repeatedly traveled with each exposure to pornography. They become the automatic pathway through which interactions with woman are routed….They have unknowingly created a neurological circuit that imprisons their ability to see women rightly as created in God’s image (Wired For Intimacy, 85).

In a similar vein regarding porn’s effect upon the brain, Naomi Wolf writes in her article, "The Porn Myth,"

After all, pornography works in the most basic of ways on the brain: It is Pavlovian. An orgasm is one of the biggest reinforcers imaginable. If you associate orgasm with your wife, a kiss, a scent, a body, that is what, over time, will turn you on; if you open your focus to an endless stream of ever-more-transgressive images of cybersex slaves, that is what it will take to turn you on. The ubiquity of sexual images does not free eros but dilutes it.

3. Porn Turns Sex Into Masturbation

Sex becomes self-serving. It becomes about your pleasure and not the self-giving, mutually reciprocating intimacy that it was designed for.

4. Porn Demeans and Objectifies Women

This occurs from hard-core to soft-core pornography. Pamela Paul, in her book Pornified, quoting the research of one psychologist who has researched pornography at Texas A&M, writes,

‘Softcore pornography has a very negative effect on men as well. The problem with softcore pornography is that it’s voyeurism teaches men to view women as objects rather than to be in relationships with women as human beings.’ According to Brooks, pornography gives men the false impression that sex and pleasure are entirely divorced from relationships. In other words, pornography is inherently self-centered–something a man does by himself, for himself–by using another women as the means to pleasure, as yet another product to consume (80).

Paul references one experiment that revealed a rather shocking further effect of porn: “men and women who were exposed to large amounts of pornography were significantly less likely to want daughters than those who had none. Who would want their own little girl to be treated that way?” (80).

It becomes about your pleasure and not the self-giving, mutually reciprocating intimacy that it was designed for.

Again, it needs to be emphasized, that this is not an effect that only rests upon those who have viewed porn. The massive consumption of porn and the the size of the porn industry has hypersexualized the entire culture. Men and women are born into a pornified culture, and women are the biggest losers. Dines continues,

By inundating girls and women with the message that their most worthy attribute is their sexual hotness and crowding out other messages, pop culture is grooming them just like an individual perpetrator would. It is slowly chipping away at their self-esteem, stripping them of a sense of themselves as whole human beings, and providing them with an identity that emphasizes sex and de-emphasizes every other human attribute (Pornland, 118).

5. Porn Squashes the Beauty of a Real Naked Woman

Wolf, in her own blunt way, confirms this,

For most of human history, the erotic images have been reflections of, or celebrations of, or substitutes for, real naked women. For
the first time in history, the images’ power and allure have supplanted that of real naked women. Today, real naked women are just bad porn (Quoted in Wired for Intimacy, 38).

6. Porn Has a Numbing Effect Upon Reality

It makes real sex and even the real world boring in comparison. It particularly anesthetizes the emotional life of a man. Paul comments,

Pornography leaves men desensitized to both outrage and to excitement, leading to an overall diminishment of feeling and eventually to dissatisfaction with the emotional tugs of everyday life…Eventually they are left with a confusing mix of supersized expectations about sex and numbed emotions about women…When a man gets bored with pornography, both his fantasy and real worlds become imbued with indifference. The real world often gets really boring…” (Pornified, 90, 91).

7. Porn Lies About What it Means to be Male and Female

Dines records how porn tells a false story about men and women. In the story of porn, women are “one-dimensional”–they never say no, never get pregnant, and can’t wait to have sex with any man and please them in whatever way imaginable (or even unimaginable). On the other hand, the story porn tells about men is that they are “soulless, unfeeling, amoral life-support systems for erect penises who are entitled to use women in any way they want. These men demonstrated zero empathy, respect, or love for the women they have sex with…”(Pornland, xxiv)."

This article is adapted from BJ Stockman’s blog. For more information, check out the free eBook by Mark Driscoll, Porn-Again Christian.

A resource for victims of sexual assault and people who care for them is *Rid of My Disgrace: Hope and Healing for Victims of Sexual Assault*

Another resource for those struggling with any type of addiction, including pornography, is *Redemption: Freed by Jesus from the Idols We Worship and the Wounds We Carry*

« Newer Older »
Ten Reasons Kids Leave the Church

Daly Focus

Life is beautiful and imperfect, a source of wonder and a challenge so complex that it’s good to pause from time to time and check our perspective and priorities against eternal truth. ReFocus, promises to help you navigate today’s culture.

- RSS for posts

Ten Reasons Kids Leave the Church

Rate This

Jim Daly

Apr 17, 2013 3:01 PM

- Comments 72

Of all the hats I wear in life, the one I enjoy most may be that of “dad.”

As much fun as Trent, Troy, and I have together, whether it’s camping or just throwing the ball around, not a day goes by that I don’t give serious thought to how my wife, Jean, and I are leading them spiritually. In the grand scheme of things, we only have a short window to help them build a solid biblical foundation before they launch out on their own.
If you’re a parent, I’m guessing you’re well aware of how challenging that can be. Even the statistics bear out the struggle we face. The exact percentages are up for debate, but we know that a significant number of kids walk out the church doors after high school graduation and never return.

Why?

Well, the specific reasons depend on which study you read, but most of them point out how adults fail to connect teenagers to God’s redemptive work in meaningful ways. A recent example of this comes from a website designed for workers in church leadership. The article’s author, Marc5Solas, lives in a college town. He interviewed a large number of twenty-somethings to get their take on why Christianity is no longer important to them and boiled down what he learned into ten reasons you might find interesting.

Take a look and see what you think.

10. **The church is “relevant.”**

Normally, “relevant” is a positive term. In this case, it labels the problem. We’ve couched our faith in modern trappings to the point that 2,000 years of history and rich tradition have been diminished. As the article suggests: “What we’re packaging is a cheap knockoff of the world we’re called to evangelize to. In our effort to be ‘like them,’ we’ve become less of who we actually are.”

9. They got into church, but the church never got into them.

Many young adults may have been taken to church by their parents, but the church wasn’t integrated into the fabric of their lives. Church was a Sunday event, not something that impacted the everyday realities of their lives.

8. They were treated as smart by others.

Many students interviewed felt they were spoon-fed a Christian worldview, while professors and others who held atheist viewpoints challenged their intellect and inspired them to ask questions and to use their mind.

7. **They were sent out unarmed.**

Many youth have mastered Christian lingo – the pithy catchphrases spoken regularly in churches and marketed through popular evangelical
campaigns – but they’re ignorant of deeper theological truths. They know what “WWJD?” means, and they’re familiar with how to “invite Jesus into your heart,” but they can’t explain what atonement or justification means or its relevance to life’s realities.

6. They’ve been given a “hand-me-down” religion.

Many kids leave the church feeling like they’ve been asked to accept their parents’ faith, instead of encouraged to ask tough questions, so they can incorporate Christianity into their lives and make it their own.

5. They exchange one community for another.

Our modern faith sometimes places a greater emphasis on community than on God. As a result, many of today’s youth see other people as the answer to their problems instead of God. When they leave home, they often seek out a community of people of any belief system rather than one committed to the God of the Bible.

4. They seek opportunities to “feel” better.

Much of modern Christianity is based on “feeling,” rather than on objective, eternal truth. It reduces the Christian faith to a search for good feelings rather than exhortation to conform our human nature to God’s standard of righteousness.

3. They got tired of pretending.

Some segments of Christianity suggest that being a Christian removes all struggle from life. But that message rings hollow for many kids who try to serve God and continue to face difficult challenges … or who see their parents teach a similar message while succumbing to anger or depression themselves. Many youth feel Christianity leaves no room for authenticity.

2. Christianity is reduced to “do/don’t do” instead of “be.”

Many church kids were taught it’s all about what they do, not who they are. The Christian faith was reduced to a long list of do’s and don’ts. They felt trapped beneath the weight of their own abilities, instead of freed by the work only God can do in their hearts and lives.
1. They don’t need it.

When church is perceived as nothing more than a place to learn good principles for living, or to have a happy marriage, or well-behaved kids… Well, you can find that in most any self-help book. You don’t need a crucified Jesus for that. What kids need is the gospel; what they’re sometimes given is “a cheap knockoff of the entertainment venue they went to the night before.”

These findings challenged me. For one thing, I think it’s important to listen carefully to those we’re trying to reach, even when what they say isn’t so easy to hear. Only when we dig beneath a person’s words can we hear the true cries of their hearts.

I should add that I have the utmost admiration for pastors and youth workers, who are often lone voices, speaking truth into the lives of young people against a cacophony of noise from the culture. Add in limited budgets and time constraints and reaching young people for Christ is often an uphill battle indeed. I feel confident that most churches are doing everything they can to minister to young and old alike in their community.

And what about us parents? Well, articles like this that suggest how much may be amiss in the spiritual lives of today’s youth can certainly be daunting. As such, it’s always wise to be aware of our kids’ struggles and to make adjustments as necessary. But it’s just as important to remember that our kids are ultimately in the Lord’s hands. Strip away all the research and facts and figures, and underneath is this bedrock of Truth:

God has called us to rely on His grace to do the very best we can and to trust Him with the rest.

I’d like to hear what you think.

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Sign in or Join now.

Comments

- beadie

Apr 17, 2013 4:08 PM

My son saw Christians disrespecting and mis-treating others; this includes me, his mom, being yelled at by a youth pastor. He also
felt that the church discouraged thinking – that he was just supposed to accept everything proclaimed and NEVER ask questions.

- beanie

Apr 17, 2013 4:16 PM

I meant Christians not Christsians, sorry.

- BBarrell

Apr 17, 2013 4:33 PM

Jim, good, thought-provoking article. I see a church which doesn't truly foster GRACE. I see parents who don't really live with a seven-day-a-week biblical world-view. I see parents who don't really LOVE - by showing patience, not taking into account a wrong suffered, etc. I see evangelical Christianity painting the classic "you're in a state of depravity; God sent the Son to die for you; if you accept it AND live a good/clean life, you're in; if you don't accept it and/or keep blowing it, you're out, destined for HELL. NET:NET - kids are missing out on the wonder of God's indescribable love, and the rescue mission Jesus came to deliver. They're missing out on the message that each and every person is immeasureably valuable and precious in God's eyes, EVEN ON OUR WORST DAY. If more of us - myself included - practiced the greatest commandment, we'd have far different results, both within our own families, and in society at large.

- DSanford

Apr 17, 2013 4:43 PM

Thanks for today's article! I'm surprised, though, that you didn't address the #1 most common reason why kids walk out the church doors after high school graduation and never return. It's where their parents decide to send them to college and--more importantly--why.

A successful businessman called me about visiting Corban University with his teenage daughter. I’ll never forget his first three questions. They were about Corban’s commitment to the Bible as God’s holy and inspired Word, about Corban’s robust statement of faith, and about Corban’s heritage over the past 75+ years.

I’ll also never forget his fourth and final question: “If I send my daughter to Corban, will she ever call me and say, ‘Dad, you won’t believe what my professor said in the class today’?” In other words, would her faith ever be attacked? Without hesitation, I assured him that would not happen. And I meant every word with the utmost integrity.

Sadly, just the opposite happens at all but a few dozen conservative Christian colleges and universities.

I'm NOT saying that conservative Christian colleges and universities are the only options available to us and our children.

* My oldest daughter attended Multnomah University (Portland, Oregon).

* My second daughter attended Trinity Western University (Langley, British Columbia), which accepts a large percentage of non-Christian students from all over the world.
* My oldest son attended Cal Poly (San Luis Obispo), which he describes as a brainy party school.

So, again, I'm NOT saying that conservative Christian colleges and universities are the only options. But why, oh why, would I send my son or daughter anywhere else if they're weak, questioning, struggling, doubting, drifting or walking away from the faith?

--David Sanford, Corban University, www.corban.edu

- **jamsession**
  Apr 17, 2013 4:43 PM
  Amen x 10. A big problem is kids get mixed messages from adults, leaving them unsure about who is right, and how to grow up in Christ. Kids will be helped greatly when the church integrates the family unit more, and does less age-segregation. Pastors should be aim their pulpit teaching toward youth and family more often. Youth leaders should be speaking, and listening to, and including parents more often. With these practices in place, kids will feel more like church is a true extension of home and family.

- **PValkema**
  Apr 17, 2013 4:51 PM
  Unfortunately 3 or our 4 children are not in church. One "doesn't need to go to church to be a Christian". One just doesn't need it. They are all about fun! The third one is at a very secular college exploring what is out there. This child is of the mindset, which a lot of our country is, that the God of many varied religions is one and the same God. And sadly, we attend a big church which all 4 of our children feels is just for entertainment, there's no depth there. We pray pray pray for them and now our grandchildren.

  Our churches are not feeding our kids meat. Our youth group said "we can't ban the kids from their cell phones while they're here or they won't come." The youth group has parties, plays unbelievably loud music, and with over 200 kids there is no intimacy/accountability at all.

  Our young children Sunday School classes did not teach scripture, memorization (which I grew up with). Again, party, entertainment. I quit teaching because I told them I could not teach something I do not agree with.

- **Sondra**
  Apr 17, 2013 4:53 PM
  Our kids, like the rest of us, too often are hearing much more about doing good works in the community and self-help, feel-good, "moralistic therapeutic deism" from the pulpit than about sin, repentance, the cross, eternal reward or judgment, salvation and the atonement.

- **slmynatt**
  Apr 17, 2013 5:00 PM
  My daughter is 19 and in college. She still attends church, but really has no where to belong at the church. She is old for youth, to young for young adults. Her schedule varies because of work and classes as do most in her age group. But churches do not seem to want to adapt to meet the needs of this age group. She does not even have a Sunday school class. I have called around to several
churches just to see if they offered classes for her age group, most do not unless it is a mega church. Sad, Sad, Sad.

- theajane

Apr 17, 2013 5:03 PM

The one factor, amongst many in our complex existence, is the culture. I lived a very sheltered, isolated life. When I was "free", I was ready to experience life! The 60's were it!

I can only look back and see how "ineffective" the culture was on my beliefs. Yes, I strayed, I sinned, but came back to what had been ground into me.

What about the present? I compare the present culture to a tsunami. As I watched videos of Japan's tsunami, where the black liquid churned everything in it's path and carried it along to create a giant monstrosity that nobody in it's path could survive, I asked: Is that not what we're dealing with? TV, video, internet, phones, cameras, music, porn, abortion, child abuse, divorce, terrorism, atheism, it's all a giant tsunami churning around us.

We've seen the sunset of Christianity, now we're in the dark. Christ is our light, He is our Rock while the tsunami swirls around us. Who will NOT get caught? who will stay grounded? No easy answers remain.

- icare

Apr 17, 2013 5:08 PM

The family is fatally eroded from decades of neglect and disrespect. Slow but steady re-building is happening in groups such as AWANA, Christian clubs, and awakening Christian churches -- with special emphasis on the God-ordained family. It will take a LONG time of consistent effort.

PRAYER and more PRAYER is essential, and especially within the families, if we are to rescue any further generations and this blessed nation. Everything said above is vital, too! God WANTS to heal us.

THANKS for your incredible work, FOTF!

- icare

Apr 17, 2013 5:15 PM

CORRECTION: "everything said above" does not necessarily include DKerr's statements.

Elaborate, please???

"God bless America!" is my prayer for each of us individually, and as His families.

- CBreakey

Apr 17, 2013 5:23 PM

I've been head-deep in this subject for the past year writing CALLED TO STAY (Harvest House, October 2013). I have to say that these points are some of the best I've seen on the web. Big thanks to you, Jim, for reposting. God bless you, brother.
What has me most concerned is just that the church itself has given way to the teachings of the world. We have no issue whatsoever telling our kids that evolution is an acceptable world view, even though it is completely anti-biblical. They hear all week in school that we evolved by random chance out of a pond billions of years ago and then became tadpoles, then creatures, then monkeys, then cavemen, and now here we are. The bible is clear that we were created perfect, the SAME day as all land creatures, including dinosaurs! When was the last time you heard that preached in church?

The ONLY ministry I see out there doing that is Answers in Genesis...Ken Ham hits the nail on the head when he says that the falling away from Bible as an authority on everything...science, history, etc. is what the church is doing, and so we have diminished Truth to "cute Bible stories" and then the kids are taught even in many "Christian" Colleges that the evolutionists are correct.

If you are like I was a few years ago and don't think this is an important issue...think about this a minute...look at the basic logic here: If there were dinosaurs that died millions of years ago before man stepped on the planet, then that means death and sin and disease were here before man too, wouldn't it? So why would we be in need of a savior if we were, as Lady Gaga states "born this way"? Then sin and repentance have no place either...so what are the kids in this generation of Rob Bell followers to believe and why would they bother going to church anyway if there is no Hell either?

That last/first reason shows that the church/family has not laid a good foundation of truth, authority of the first books in the Bible - God's word is living and does not change. The first book of God's word is ever so much important as the last. We learn about marriage, family, government, and raising children in those books. If we focus all our spiritual fervor on the gospel, we are missing most of the message. If you skip Genesis you don't need a Jesus! And if there is no need for Jesus, self-help is all there is - and what a confusing conglomerate of fallible-man ideas flow through those!

Those kids indeed need the gospel, but a gospel that has been built on the foundation of Genesis where God first speaks to us about a need for a savior.

While these may be very valid reasons, I think one of reason that has not been addressed is that some kids leave because they just want to rebel! This is what I did at 18 when I went away to college. I went to a Christian school from 2nd grade thru graduation and then to a Christian college where I had every opportunity to attend church but just chose not to. Call it my own form of rebellion I guess, but it was my choice and I do not blame my church or their programs, my parents or any youth leadership. I returned to the church when my husband and I had young children and am thrilled to be back but I wish I had not left. All of us, young or not so young, need to take responsibility for our own faith and our choices and not look to a...
church, a program or lack of program to blame.