

Trends

Some secrets to a successful marriage:

- 1) Happiness isn't the most important thing; happiness comes and goes; godly living is what counts and lasts.
- 2) Your attitude counts: you are what you think!
- 3) Change your marriage by changing yourself: conform (change) yourself to the image of Christ. Your spouse will love you for it!
- 4) The grass is greenest where you water it: resist the "grass is greener" myth; it leads to more heartache than you can imagine.
- 5) A crisis doesn't mean your marriage is over: our faith and our marriage can be refined and strengthened by trials properly handled.

—adapted from *Focus on the Family*

Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,"

Sentence Sermons

"A happy marriage is the union of two good forgivers."

—Robert Quillen

News & Notes

Pray for one another: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (Jas. 5:16)

Please consider donating funds to Zach & Taya Martin. Zach is a medical student and he and his wife Taya are planning to assist Ron Halbrook on one of his preaching trips to the Philippines. The Martins are worthy of our support. You can contact Zach at: zcmartin30@gmail.com.

Please pray for one another! "comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Please pray for Ryan & Jennifer and the brethren of the Northern Michigan church of Christ. They are now meeting in their newly purchased building in Roscommon, Michigan.

Please keep sisters Virginia Brown and Wilma Cardwell in your prayers. Their faithfulness sets a great example and gives encouragement to all! Ditto for Al (our Barnabas!).

Pray for all the lost souls, especially those in the greater Bloomington area. Pray that Westside might be an influence for good in this community.

Pray for the all of our students: elementary, secondary and college. Our young people face many trials and temptations at school.

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"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

John 6:68



Our Doctrinal System

Some view us with suspicion and ask, "What is your doctrinal system, to what creed do you subscribe?" Evidently it does not occur to them that one may simply teach the New Testament without being tied or allied to any human arrangement or organization. Think of it. If the plain words of Scripture are taught, if showing what was preached and practiced in the New Testament is all that is done, the teacher is viewed with suspicion. "You must be part of some secret order; surely you must follow some officially prescribed 'church of Christ' creed." Such thoughts reveal a number of things.

1) **Lack of trust in the Bible.** Such thoughts show that many are unable to consider that it is possible for men to go by the Bible alone, to be guided only by the word of God, as they work and worship, and as they live and labor in the kingdom of heaven. There must be some spiritual society or "heavenly hierarchy" of some kind between a man and his God, or so they think. Such thinking certainly does not agree with Jesus' words, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (Jn. 8:32)

2) **No concept of the nature of God's word.** Such thoughts reveal that folks believe God's word cannot be the all sufficient, germinating, life-giving "seed" of salvation (Lk. 8:11; Jn. 6:63, 68; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 4:15; Jas. 1:18, 21; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17). But Peter wrote we are "born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever," (1 Pet. 1:23). Yet many believe there has to be something else, something more. There isn't (Acts 20:32; 1 Pet. 2:2).

"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

John 8:32

3) **The power human systems have over the hearts of men.** Many cannot conceive that they may come boldly unto the throne of grace without human intervention, without some special emissary or priest to pave their way to God. That there is but one God, and but "one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus," (1 Tim. 2:5) is a lost concept when men believe they can-

not come to God without crossing an intercessory bridge built by men (e.g., “saints”, Mary, clergy). What a shame and a sham!

We have no doctrinal system! We have no “church of Christ” doctrine! The “doctrine” belongs, not to the church, but to Christ! (2 Jn. 9) As His disciples we must “observe all things” He has commanded (Matt.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.”

2 Timothy 3:16-17

28:20); we must “abide” in Christ’s doctrine, not church doctrine! Thus, our only appeal is to His word, for it alone will be the word by which all will be judged (Jn. 12:48; Jas. 2:12; Rom. 2:16). Even if this Bible concept is foreign to many, we cannot alter or amend it without incurring all the wrath of that word (Prov. 30:6; Isa. 8:20; Gal. 1:8, 9; 2 Jn. 9-11; Rev. 22:18, 19). If your desire is to follow God’s word and it alone, give us a call!

Preachers & Prophets--False & True

Larry Hafley

From the introduction to his book on the minor prophets, we extract the following from the pen of Homer Hailey:

“Along with the true there arose false prophets (see Dt.18:20-22; Jer.28). These flourished from a very early period in the nation’s history to the time of the close of the Old Testament writings. The false prophets fall into the two general classes, mercenary and political; some prophesied for money, others for political favor (see Micah.3:5, 11). Oftentimes the false prophets were nationalistic--that is, they defended the national practices and rulers through ignorance; but whether false through ignorance or self-will, they and their messages were no less severely denounced by the true prophets. Albert C. Knudson has well said, ‘An ignorant conscientiousness may be quite as dangerous to a community as deliberate wickedness.’ When opposed by false prophets, the true prophets rise to their greatest heights of zeal and fearlessness.”

Many times have we warned of false prophets and false teachers. We cannot, perhaps, be intemperate when registering our disdain and disgust for their work. However, inadvertently, we may have neglected to speak of what brother Hailey calls the great heights of the “zeal and fearlessness” of the faithful preachers and prophets. Such was the disposition of Jeremiah when the fires of fearlessness raged within him (Jer. 20:9). A similar spirit possessed the apostles when they cried, “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20). This was the same determined attitude which provoked the polemic heart of Paul to contest Athens, the city wholly given to idolatry (Acts 17:16, 17).

Where, today, is our outrage, our “zeal and fearlessness,” in the face of a world wholly given to sensualistic hedonism and superficial, humanistic spirituality? Where do we hear ungodliness and worldly lusts “severely denounced by the true prophets” and preachers? Are there voices yet “crying in the wilderness”? Yes, they are there, and we must unite our voices in support and encouragement. Let the music of their anthems echo in our hearts as they thunder from our lips (1 Thess. 1:8). “I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest” (Isa. 62:6).

A Prepared Heart

Glenn Melton

“Ezra the son of Seraiah . . . the son of Aaron the chief priest . . . went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses . . . for Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments” (Ezra 1:1-10).

“So king Rehoboam . . . did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord” (II Chronicles 12:13,14).

What a contrast between Ezra and Rehoboam. Ezra was helpful in teaching Israel the law; Rehoboam was instrumental in the cause of division among the tribes. What a difference preparation of the heart made. May we suggest some things that may have contributed to the preparation of Ezra’s heart?

1) **The influence of godly parents.** Ezra’s father was a priest and possibly one who taught the law. The influence of such a man could tend to lead his children to God. Blessed are the children of the righteous.

2) **Seeing the consequences of disobedience.** Ezra had been in captivity and saw firsthand the results of disobedience. This could well have had a part in helping him to see how much better it is to please God.

3) **Moral uprightness.** Consider what it did for Joseph, David, and Esther. “Remember thy creator in... thy youth” (Eccl. 12:1).

4) **Purity of mind.** “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23).

5) **Ezra’s knowledge** of the law, Israel’s history, and the promises made to Abraham, Moses, and David could motivate him to please God. Also, Ezra may have known of Daniel, who would have been a good role model.

How well have we prepared our heart to seek the law of God, to do it, and teach it to others?

“The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes...”

Psalms 19:7-8