

Trends

Less than half of all dependent children (46%) are living with two parents who are both in their first marriage. An additional 15% of children are living with two parents, at least one of whom has been married before. Seven percent of children are living with parents that are cohabiting but are not married. Fully one-fourth (26%) of children younger than age 18 are now living with a single parent. The share of children living without either parent stands at 5%; most of these children are being raised by grandparents.

- via Pew Research Center

Ephesians 6:4: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Sentence Sermons

"A father's goodness is higher than the mountain, a mother's goodness deeper than the sea."

—Japanese proverb

Exodus 20:12: "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you."

News & Notes

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

Please pray for Malachi Darling & family. Malachi's mother, Donna, recently passed away.

Please pray for Justin & Jennifer Atkins and their three boys. They recently moved into the community from North Carolina. May God bless them as they make a new home here!

Please pray for Ryan & Jennifer and the brethren of the Northern Michigan church of Christ. Jennifer had her embryo transfer on February 5th.

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.

There are many needy saints, including preachers! Can you help?! Let me know.

Please let us know of any in need of our prayers! We'll announce it and post it.

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

John 6:68

Naming Denominations in Sermons?

William V. Beasley



If you saw a house, with a prominently posted sign which read "No Trespassing" burning, would you attempt to warn the people inside? Only the most hard-hearted would answer, "No!" If you believed that individuals were going to be lost in the torments of eternal hell, would you warn them? Countless thousands, by their actions or lack of actions, scream "No!"

A question was asked, during our period of preaching on the radio, in southern Indiana, concerning the practice of naming denominations in sermons or in worship services. We were happy then, on the radio, to deal with the question, and also now in this article. The asking of all honest questions is encouraged, it does not hurt our feelings to have our practices called in question. If the practice is right (scriptural), we can defend it; if it is not right, we need to repent and abandon it.

Naming Verses Name-Calling

There is a big difference in the naming of a religious group, denomination, or person (for identification or clarity) in a sermon, and, on the other hand, in name-calling (i.e., being insulting). Let me illustrate this difference (using, so as not to offend anyone, the church of Christ, the church of which I am a member): "To be a good member of the church of Christ all one needs is to be as stubborn as a mule, with the intelligence of an earthworm. The church of Christ is composed of a bunch of dunderheads who don't have enough sense to come in out of the rain." Surely, all would agree that this was, to say the least, unbecoming and inappropriate in a sermon. Such would be a violation of the command of Jesus in Matthew 7:12, and would not be "speaking the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). Nor, just to be perfectly clear, would it be the truth. On the other hand, no one ought to object to a fair representation of what is believed and/or taught: "Members of the church of Christ teach that water baptism, in obedience to Jesus' command, comes before salvation (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; etc.)." Nor should a denominationalist object when reference is made to the Discipline, Manual, Catechism, Minutes, etcetera of the denomination -- these were written to inform. Such, of course, must be kept in context. There should be no objections when a doctrine is fairly represented and scriptural objections raised thereto.

What Saith the Scriptures?

We have been given examples to emulate. The life of Christ was made known as

“an example that (we) should follow His steps” (1 Pet. 2:21ff). We are urged to be *“imitators”* (1 Cor. 4:16; 11:1) of Paul (and of the other apostles is implied). The example of Jesus is that of a hard, name-calling (identification, clarity) preacher in the 23rd chapter of Matthew. Repeatedly he says, *“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites”* (Matt. 23:13, 16, 23, 25, 27, 29). He also called them men-pleasers (*“to be seen of men”* - 23:5), *“son(s) of hell”* (23:15), *“fools and blind”* (23:17), *“whited sepulchres”* (23:27) and *“offspring of vipers”* (23:33). Did the Lord have a bad attitude? Was He a negative example as a teacher? Certainly not, but many people today (in the church and in the world) would say that Bill Beasley had a bad attitude if he preached like that. It is fully recognized that Jesus could see into the heart of man and could therefore judge motives. Even with this difference, the example is one of a hard, name-calling (identification and clarity) preacher.

The example of the apostles is of the same character. To Elymas the sorcerer, Paul said, *“O full of all guile and all villany, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord”* (Acts 13:10). He also rebuked, in writing, Brother Demas for *“having loved this present world”* (2 Tim. 4:10). Note also his word to Titus concerning the Cretans (Titus 1:10-13a). John, the apostle of love, wrote of Brother Diotrepheas as one *“who loveth to have the preeminence”* (3 Jn. 9), and that Brother Diotrepheas spoke *“lying words”* (3 Jn. 10), and that his example was *“evil”* (3 Jn. 11).

In preaching/teaching we need to be careful lest we give forth with *“an uncertain voice”* (1 Cor. 14:8). Ezekiel's admonition to the people of his day (Ezek. 33:1-9) is good food for thought for those who would teach or preach today. We, like Paul, need to be declaring *“the whole counsel of God”* (Acts 20:27) in terms that not only can be understood, but also cannot be misunderstood. Naming, in the proper spirit, helps in understanding. In Tennessee I preached a sermon showing that baptism is a burial (Rom. 6:3-4). A visiting Methodist lady complimented the lesson. Either I was unclear in my presentation (a very real possibility) or she refused to make the application. I would, thinking back on the situation, that I had said something like, *“This is not in keeping with Methodist doctrine which says (and quoted from my copy of the Methodist Discipline).”* In Kentucky I had preached a number of times on attendance (Heb. 10:25), with little visible results. One morning after services I cornered an elderly brother and said something like, *“Brother _____, you need to come to the evening services; your family comes, and I know you have a way to get here.”* The shocked look on his face let me know that this was the very first time he made an application to his life, to his conduct of the sermons he had been hearing. He began to attend the evening services.

Where Is Your Conviction?

The spirit of compromise is alive and well in our society. What we call tolerance might well be called a lack of conviction or simple cowardice. When one takes a firm stand, that one must be willing to defend what he believes and teaches (by word or example) – this many are unwilling to do. *“If the preacher calls names I might be called upon to defend what is said.”* If the truth is preached defend it; if the lesson is not true, rebuke the preacher. *“So-and-so is here from the _____ church.”* One may mean, preach what is needed (Acts 20:26-27). Another may be saying: *“Walk on egg-shells, don't say anything that might hurt their feelings.”* One has convictions, the other has a spirit of compromise!

The very closest of human relationships can be torn asunder by the preaching of the gospel (Matt. 10:34-39). The gospel divides! A gospel preacher presented a lesson, mentioning a prominent denomination by name, and comparing what that denomination teaches with what the Bible teaches. Among the visitors that Lord's day were two couples, members of that particular denomination. Results? One couple left in a huff. The other couple (individually) obeyed, to the salvation of his/her soul, the gospel of Jesus Christ. What made the difference? Certainly it was not the preacher, the message, the spirit in which it was delivered. These were identical. The difference was in the ones who heard the message. One couple was seeking truth (Jn. 8:32), the other may have received *“a working of error”* (2 Thess. 2:11-12). An unclear, compromising sermon has never helped anyone except the Devil.

Complaining Christians

William Stewart

“Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:14-15).

Few things can be more destructive to a child's future (both earthly and heavenly) as a propensity to whine and complain. Such is the manner of those who are ungrateful, greedy and self-seeking. Continued grumbling and griping is evidence that a child has successfully trained his parents to cater to his wantonness, placing in jeopardy not only the child, but also the parents (Prov. 22:6; Deut. 6:7; Eph. 6:4). If the routine is not broken (Prov. 2:15; 23:13-14), the murmuring child will become a murmuring adult, and an irritation to his peers.

Recall, when God brought the children of Israel from Egypt, they were a nation of complainers (Ex. 15:24; 16:2; 17:3). The apostle Paul candidly states, *“...with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness”* (1 Cor. 10:5). He cites the things which happened to them as *“our example, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted”* (vs. 6). Friend, you and are not to *“complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer”* (vs. 10).

A Christian complaining is no more acceptable than any child or the nation Israel doing so. If the Lord commands that we *“drive it far”* from the child, and if He scattered the Israelite bodies in the wilderness on account of their murmuring, then surely we can understand that such has no place in the child of God. The context of Philippians 2 supplies Jesus as our great example, through His obedience in going to the cross. Recall, the prophet wrote of Him, *“as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth”* (Isa. 53:7). If he endured such hostility and pain for us, without complaint, ought we not endeavor to serve Him daily without complaint?

Understand, my friend, our standing as children of God depends upon us laying aside all murmuring. If we are to shine as lights in this world, it will be through faithful obedience, and the knowledge that we are to be *“blameless and harmless,”* not whiners and complainers.

“He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.” —Isaiah 53:7