

FRONT PAGE

ADVERT - INSIDE COVER

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First Word

We would like to begin this edition of 'Set Alight' first of all by thanking you, our advertisers and readers, for your valuable support as we launched this new endeavour. It is always risky starting something new; so thank you to all those who have had confidence in us and committed yourselves to support the vision. We trust that our partnership in the Gospel will grow from strength to strength. Thank you too to all those behind the scenes - for your sterling efforts in spite of the current difficulties.

Second, we would like to apologise for the 'gremlins' that got into our first edition and affected the quality of the production. We have taken steps to avoid that happening in the future. It is our aim to produce a magazine of quality, and we trust that future issues will reflect our work "as unto the Lord."

Third, you will see many new additions to improve the magazine. Not only have we increased it to 30 pages – giving more value for money – but we have reduced the price as well. On top of that, we have added a Children's Page, with fun quizzes; an Aunty Debbie column to answer your personal questions; a "Is there a Dr in the house?" column to answer all those baffling Bible questions and apparent contradictions; a Youth Page to address concerns from our young people; and a Testimony page for you to share what God has done in your life. We trust you will enjoy these extras!

In this edition of "Set Alight" we are focusing on "One God, One Church, One Body". Given the plethora of new churches and ministries – and the obvious questions about pride, ego and selfishness often raised by this apparent explosion – we felt it important to stress the Biblical doctrine of unity. The apparent contradiction between what Christians say we believe and what we do is difficult for outsiders to understand. That, in turn, impacts our ability to witness effectively. If the Body is supposed to be united, why are we so divided?

The well-known saying, attributed to the 15th Century prelate, Rupert Meldenius, but popularised by, among others, the 16th Century Puritan, Richard Baxter, puts it succinctly: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity [love]." Should we not be clear about, and focus on, what unites us – the one, united God and His Body, the Church – rather than responding in pride and self-centredness that divides us?

We look forward to your letters – brickbats and bouquets are equally acceptable – and your questions!

Yours in Christ,

Rob Heaton

Editor

THE ONENESS OF GOD

By Mathieu Pelletier

There is perhaps no single theological statement in the Old Testament that is more concise, compact, and condensed than that of the *Shemah*¹ in Deuteronomy 6:4-5. "Listen, O Israel, Yahweh² is our God; Yahweh is (the) one (God)³. And you shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might." These two short sentences are the central tenant of the Jewish faith. In fact it is these verses which Jesus quotes in Matthew 22:37-38 when asked which is the greatest commandment.

The first clause employs the divine name, revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:14-45, as the distinctive name of God. A form of the Hebrew word "to be", it is a profound statement about the existence of God, in contrast to the supposed deities of the ancient world. The divine name of God is one in which the Lord proclaims and defines existence. One could almost stop here and ponder this thought alone. Nevertheless, the *Shemah* develops from the divine name⁴ and further identifies the community by his name. So, it is this defining existence of God that establishes the existence of the community.

We should pause for a moment to reflect on this truth. In our African context we are fond of the expression of identity: "I am because we are." However, as we probe the depths of the above theological axiom, we are left with an expression of reality and existence that has God as its starting point. Hence, who God is and what he has done in history becomes the constant by which the very existence of our community is defined and in turn our own existence is redefined. The African Christian must then come to terms with his own existence as being one that runs counter to his human culture and is established in terms of his own community in the being of God. We can no longer say, "I am

because we are", but instead, "God is, and we are because he is." One cannot help but think of 2 Corinthians 5:14-17 here. Paul expresses this change from our old identity to our new one in terms of dying with Christ and dying to who we were and whatever defined us before we came to know him. Who we are is wrapped up in the Great I AM.⁵

ONE TRUE GOD

The *Shemah* proceeds from this incredibly profound and theologically dense statement to another that is equally profound and packed full of truth. As one reads the Old Testament, we can sometimes become overwhelmed with the marked history of idolatry and apostasy in Israel. Some may even wonder whether or not they were meant to be a *monotheistic* people, worshipping and believing in one God alone, or if they were instead *henotheistic*, that is believing in many gods, but worshipping only one as supreme. But here again, in the expression of the *Shemah*, we can see a declaration of belief in God alone.

In addition, as we explore the first statement of the Ten Commandments (which the *shemah* is meant to express), we find further evidence for this. The translation of Exodus 20:3 usually reads something like, "You shall have no other gods before me." While this is a perfectly acceptable translation, one must look a little deeper into the Hebrew and the historical context to fully appreciate what a great monotheistic statement it really is. Hebrew normally employs the word לִפְנֵי (liphnay) as the word which means "before" or "in front of". It can be used to express location (that is, physically in front of something) or order (that which is in the first place)⁶. If Exodus 20:3 had used this word, there might be some ambiguity as to which use of the word was being expressed. But the Hebrew of this verse is so wonderfully clear. Rather than using the word liphnay, we see the expression עַל-פָּנָי (al panay), literally "upon my face". The text is saying, "You shall not put other gods in front of me."

1 This verse is so called because the first Hebrew word of Deut. 6:4 is שְׁמָע (shema). This is the imperative (command) meaning 'hear' or 'listen'. The basic force of the command is that one would hear in order that they would do what was commanded.
 2 I have opted to use the divine name here rather than the English 'LORD' since the effect of God's divine covenant name is the focus in this verse.
 3 The final word is supplied in my translation. Hebrew will often elide (leave out) words in poetic arrangements for the sake of achieving a certain metric quality.
 4 As an aside, the Jews held such reverence for the name of God, they would never actually say it, choosing instead to say הַשֵּׁם ("the name") or אֲדוֹנָי ("adonai") lest they should by accident say the name in a way that was not completely reverent. In fact, the medieval scribes who added the vowels to the Hebrew even insisted on superimposing the vowels for adonai on the divine name so later readers of the text would always use adonai instead.

5 The "I AM" statements of John's gospel are a profound expression of Jesus deity. He is not just some created being. When Jesus declares, "Before Abraham was, I AM" he identifies himself with the same covenant name that we see in the *Shemah* and in God's revelation of himself before Moses in Exodus 3. Jesus is God Almighty, God by whom all existence is defined, contrary to the claim of Jehovah's Witnesses that Jesus is merely a god or an angel.
 6 A statement of primacy could well be argued is one of henotheism. But the Hebrew does not make such a statement.

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The text is condemning the ancient near eastern practice of capturing the gods of another nation and placing them in subjection to your own god.⁷ This was meant to be an expression of a spiritual reality that the god of the conquering nation had conquered the god of the conquered nation.⁸ The nations surrounding Israel were polytheistic and in some cases henotheistic. Nations frequently had a patron deity with whom they identified.⁹



So, in the second clause above, we see a very clear expression of Israel's monotheism. The central tenet of Jewish confession expresses in a wonderfully concise way that Yahweh is the one true God. This was a critically important truth for Israel, particularly if they were to be distinct from the nations around them.

ONE NEW COMMUNITY

As we reflect upon the wisdom of the *shemah*, we are left with the question of application. How does the Christian find relevance in this statement? First and foremost, I think the reality of being a new creation is one which cannot be understated. Who we are and how we define our community must be found in the pre-eminence of God. We live in a society that comes with a lot of racial or tribal baggage. We find that some wish to drive a wedge through society and dehumanise others because of their background, or because of what their forefathers did. But when we come to Christ, the great I AM, He offers us the opportunity to be transformed into something wholly other to what we once knew. What we were ceases to be, and we can now define our existence through and by

7 A good example of this is seen in I Samuel 5 when the Philistines had captured the ark of the covenant.

8 Consider also 1 Chronicles 32:9-23. Here Sennacherib and his servants "talked about the God of Jerusalem as if he were one of the man-made gods of the nations of the earth." (NET) God then sent an angel and wiped out his army.

9 Dagon was the patron deity of the Philistines, Marduk was the patron deity of the Babylonians, etc.

Christ. Remember, just as God called Israel out¹⁰, so we too have been called out and have passed through into a new state of being. We are a new people, a new community, a new nation in Christ. We are not defined primarily as Zimbabwean, South African, black, brown, white, or anything else but by our place in the body of the resurrected Christ, which is one because our Head is one.

Secondly, the reality of the one true God must be lived out in our lives. Even as God is one, so must the church be one. There may be many churches and many different beliefs in things like baptism, the gifts, and the end times, but we must remember that our identity is not defined by our theological positions. It is our belief and confession in Christ Jesus, as fully God, and his atoning death and bodily resurrection that have created us anew into a people reconciled to God. Surely, it should be this that unites us and not a difference of theological opinion that divides us. So, let our prayer be that God would make it so!

Because He is, we are!



10 In reading the Old Testament, one immediately is faced with an oft repeated phrase, "I am the God who called/brought you out..." What an individual has been called out from will vary depending on the context, but the fact remains that God seeks to give those being called a new identity distinct from the surrounding world. For an interesting study see the texts of, Gen. 15:7, Exodus 6:7, 13:9, 16:6, 31:13, Leviticus 11:45, Deut. 4:37, and many more. This formula is known as the historical prologue whereby God recalls his acts in the history of the nation.

ADVERT

SEVEN TIMES ONE EQUALS ONE: PAUL'S SEVEN REASONS FOR UNITY

By Dr R Heaton

The frequency with which churches and denominations split is saddening. The history of the Church is littered with tales of bitterness, anger, revenge, pride, arrogance – and plain stupidity! It is true that God is a God of variety – as illustrated through the vast array of Creation with its hundreds of thousands of species of plants, animals, insects, fish and birds. But the theological statement those differences in the natural world make is not a licence for churches to split!

UNITY IN DIVERSITY

God doesn't mind differences. In fact, there are many deliberate differences throughout life to illustrate the variety, breadth and depth of God Himself. Nevertheless, He has declared that He is one God (*Deut. 6:4 & 32:39*) and that we, His people, are to worship Him as such (*Exodus 20:3*). It follows, then, that His Church should function as one entity. Moreover, a body cannot function if its parts are separated.



The Apostle Paul is very clear about his theological understanding not only of the oneness of God – notwithstanding the Trinity – but also the oneness of the Body of Christ, the Church. In Ephesians 4:3-6, he lays out seven reasons for unity; in this case, 7x1 is not 7 but 1. Thus, he writes:

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit – just as you were called to one hope when you were called – one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.” (NIV)



He urges the brothers to “make every effort”. In other words, this is not a take-it-or-leave-it issue; rather, we are to do everything possible to maintain unity. The drive for this, he says, should be “through the bond of peace” (v. 3). The desire for harmony among each other, not only for the sake of personal relationships, but also for the sake of the Gospel of which he is writing, is the primary motive for unity. This exhortation is based on his experience and current situation as “a prisoner of the Lord” (4:1) in Rome. His status – as a result of his faith – is a prompt for the Ephesians “to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” In other words, their testimony must reflect the One who called them to Himself.

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit” he says. If there is only one God, there can only be one Holy Spirit. And, if we claim to be led by the Spirit, then we must claim to be in unison. Sadly, many church fights and splits reflect anything but our following one *Holy Spirit*! Indeed, fights and splits are the antithesis of peace, which should be a hallmark of our following the Gospel. Being peaceable is the opposite of the world's friction and divisions, pride and arrogance, selfishness and conceit. Peace involves thinking about the other person first; being more concerned about them than about me.

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Having urged the Ephesians (*and, indeed, all of the Body of Christ*), Paul gives the theological rationale for this principle. He lays out seven 'ones'. Three of these, notes John Stott¹¹ in his commentary on Ephesians, "allude to the three Persons of the Trinity (*'one Spirit'* - verse 4; *'one Lord'* - verse 5, i.e. *the Lord Jesus*; and *'one God and Father of us all'* - verse 6), while the remaining four allude to our Christian experience in relation to the three Persons of the Trinity."

ONE BODY



First, he says, there is one body because there is one Spirit and one Lord. This one body is made up of both Jewish and Gentile believers. It is the one, indwelling, unifying Spirit who animates it. This follows Paul's recognition elsewhere of such unity: "By one Spirit we were all baptised into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit."¹²

ONE HOPE

Second, says Paul, there is *'one hope'* (v. 4) which relates to the glorious coming and future of Christ in which all believers share. It is, notes Stott, "related to *'one faith and one baptism'* (v. 5) because there is only *'one Lord'*. It is Jesus who is the object of our faith, the One in whom we have believed, the One into whom we have been baptised, and the One for whom we expectantly hope." It is likely that "baptism" here refers not to Spirit baptism but to public water baptism, since the former is invisible, yet Paul links it to the visible Body and Lord. Baptism here is clearly about identifying in unity with the one God and one Body. Moreover, Paul tells us the Christian family

11 Stott, J 1981 (2nd ed.) *The Bible speaks today: The message of Ephesians*. Nottingham: IVP. p. 150.

12 1 Cor. 12:13.

is one because *'there is one God and Father ... who is above all and through all and in all'* (v. 6).

ONE TRIUNE GOD

The notion of unity is further heightened by reference to the Trinity. As Stott puts it¹³ "the one Father creates the one family. ... the one Lord Jesus creates the one faith, hope and baptism, [and] the one Spirit creates the one body." We thus have the unified Triune Godhead providing the unified results.

THE VISIBLE AND THE INVISIBLE

But the reality of the worldwide Church, with all its disagreements, divisions and dissensions, begs the question: If God is one, the Church is one (*at least theologically*), and the Body is supposed to be one, why do we have all these splits and schisms? It is important to note at this point, the distinction between the invisible Church whose members are known only to God (*that is, genuine, born-again Christians*) and the visible Church that we see both at corporate worship and individually in the market place, the members of whom do not reflect this unity. The one is indivisible because it is a spiritual entity; the other is seen and experienced as a physical entity. The former can be recognised when Christians from various denominations gather; there is a sense of the basics that everyone there believes; there is an underlying unity. But then we go home to the reality of "my" Church here and "their" Church there; we go back to our differences. Thus, there is a paradox: God and Paul stress unity, but practically there is disunity.



13 Stott, *Ibid.* p. 15

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Interestingly, Paul acknowledges this. We go back to v. 3, where he oddly exhorts: “*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*” This implies, of course, that Paul *anticipated* division! In spite of what he just about to say theologically about unity, he recognises human frailty and reality. Does this mean he approves of it? Not necessarily. He states emphatically that the Church’s unity is indestructible, but urges us to “make every effort” to keep it! Why should it require effort if it cannot be destroyed, and why must we make the effort when it is the unity “of the Spirit”?

Stott¹⁴ provides a useful answer. He suggests that Paul’s exhortation refers to the visible Church. Hence, “we are to demonstrate to the world that the unity we say exists indestructibly is not the rather sick joke it sounds but a true and glorious reality.” He uses the example of a family that completely disintegrates – with the adult children eventually changing their names by deed poll. Still, the husband and wife, although divorced, remain the parents; the children remain siblings. Invisibly, the family remains indestructible. Yet, visibly, there is no longer a family to talk about. As their relatives, do we just sit idly by and shrug our shoulders, asks Stott? No, we would urge them to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” We would seek to be peacemakers, and encourage repentance and reconciliation. “Just so,” says Stott,¹⁵ “the fact of the Church’s indestructible unity is no excuse for acquiescing in the tragedy of its actual disunity.” On the contrary, he continues, we are thus to “*make every effort*” – that is, continuous, diligent, urgent, passionate effort. This being so, where, he asks, “is this eagerness for unity to be found among Evangelical Christians today? Is this an apostolic command we are guilty of largely ignoring?”¹⁶

DEMONSTRATING UNITY

Clearly, Paul is referring here to unity within the local church. Rivalries between individuals or groups within the congregation should not be tolerated or allowed to fester. But, as Stott¹⁷ rightly points out, the letter to the Ephesians was intended as a circular letter to various churches in the region. By this time, it is quite likely that there were several house churches in Ephesus itself, as well as in surrounding towns. As such, “Paul may have in mind the need for unity *between* as well as

within the churches. If so, his concern would apply to inter-church relationships today.”

Notwithstanding our God-ordained differences physically, psychologically and emotionally, with Paul’s sevenfold emphasis on the unity of our Spirit, hope, faith, baptism, body, Lord, and Father, how can we then split from each other, all the while claiming to be “one”? Divisions based on pride, ego, position or the craving for power do not rightly reflect this thinking. Do we really understand our God and the significance of the Gospel? Are we genuinely concerned to manifest the visible unity of the indivisible God we claim to worship?



Let us “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.” The world is watching!

¹⁴ *Ibid.* pp. 152-155.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* p. 153.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* p. 154.

¹⁷ *Op. cit.*

ADVERT

SHOULD OUR DIFFERENCES DIVIDE US?

By Abraham Mabhena

One fact known to man is that we are all different and think differently. There is hardly a topic under the sun that has never been debated. The matter gets worse when we get into religious or philosophical biases. This was very true in the time of Paul as much as it is today. Today there are thousands of denominations in the world and even more theological stands on various matters. In some cases Christians condemn each other unnecessarily, and camps are set up. The Bible in Ephesians 4, points us to the fact that in our differences we have a greater reason to be united.



Paul introduces himself at the beginning of this chapter as a prisoner of Christ, just as he did in the previous chapter. This introduction is a title to give weight and reference for what was said prior and in the proceeding themes. Paul was in Rome at that time, in prison, for the Lord's sake signifying his devotion and qualification for the Christian faith and his teaching. Again, he repeats this title to prove that he was not ashamed of his bonds, well knowing that he suffered not as an evil doer. Paul wants his readers to understand that this Gospel is worth suffering for and ought to be taken with serious regard and dutiful observance.

Now that he has stated his qualification he urges, with tenderness, that the readers walk or live in a way that is worthy of their vocational calling. Paul uses an interesting word for calling, *kleesis*. This word is not very commonly used for calling and describes a free invitation from God to receive the privileges of the Gospel as sons and daughters, without obligation to observe Jewish rites or ceremonies. Their vocation, or calling, took in their Christian profession, with all the doctrines, precepts, privileges, duties, etc.

With the use of *kleesis*, it signifies a man's calling into his trade, or occupation generally and ultimately in God.

This brings us to seriously think about our Christian calling as a way of livelihood as it were. There are certain qualities that will denote our devotion to Christ.

As we live this life we ought to do it with *lowliness or humility*. According to Paul in Philippians 2, Christ is our best example of humility. Although highly exalted by God, and equal to God, he humbled himself to the form of a man and even was obedient to death on the cross. Humility is thus an integral aspect of our Christian walk. Titles and privileges are secondary to obedience and serving God.

He also mentions *meekness or gentleness*. Again we come across a word that Paul used in other letters, such as Galatians 5:22; 6:1; Colossians 3:12; Philippians 4:5; 1 Timothy 6:11 and 2 Corinthians 10:1. However, although these words are used interchangeably, in some passages they are used together. The emphasis nonetheless, of meekness or gentleness, refers to handling of relations with other people. We are called as Christians to be gentle with others as opposed to bullying and being inconsiderate of others.

Longsuffering and forbearing with one another in love, are used here to cement the fact that Christianity is about patience and being tolerant of one another in the bond of love.



In essence, none of the above mentioned qualities are independent of each other. They all portray the right way that the Lord expects our relationships as Christians to be - from humility to the love for one another, Paul teaches us here that our man to man relationships are very important to God.

In Verse 3 Paul qualifies that in all this, those *called into this lifestyle*, must endeavour to be united in the Spirit and maintain peace.

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It is interesting to note that there is no peace where there is no unity and there can be no unity if there is no peace. Perhaps Paul used the word "endeavour", because he knew this to be difficult and against our carnal tendency. In our 'Adamic' nature, peace is very difficult hence the need for spiritual unity to be maintained. Without maintaining a spiritual adhesion and motivation, peace will be the more difficult to have.

Verses 4 to 6 then help us to understand the spiritual unity. The nature of our unity as Christians is nothing but Spiritual. Our spiritual unity as Christians is the commonality of *one body, one spirit and one hope*. It is also in *one Lord, one faith, one Baptism and one father*.

Yes, we may have different forms of expressions of worship but we worship one God and Father who is above all, and through all, and in us all. We may have different ways of baptism but being in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit gives commonality. We may be at different levels of faith in our Christian walk, but we subscribe to the Gospel of Christ. At the end of the day these common denominators of our theological differences give us adequate ground for unity and peace in the body of Christ.

Therefore, this passage is not necessarily speaking against denominationalism, but theological differences in general. What I see Paul addressing, is the issue of oneness as spiritual beings in Christ as opposed to the ethnic and religious differences of being either Jew or Gentile. The motivation in this passage is that we can only go beyond and over our social, theological or preferential differences by focusing on the unifying factors and upholding the spiritual *qualifications* as mentioned in verses 3 and 4. Sometimes as Christians we fight each other unnecessarily instead of being united around what is more important. We label each other and lock ourselves in theological boxes that at times make us forget that we are serving the same God. Nonetheless, this is not to say there aren't heretical teachings or blasphemous theologies that deviate from the fundamentals that Paul alludes to in this passage: the Father, Jesus Christ and the Spirit.

In our common profession of the Father, Jesus Christ and the Spirit, we will be united spiritually. Humility, gentleness, patience and bearing with one another will help us as Christians to practically live in this unity and in peace.

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WHAT DOES GOD THINK ABOUT DENOMINATIONS?

By Dr M Ndlovu

The gospel of Jesus records that He built one church and that all saved people were in that church. He prayed for unity and rebuked division. Today hundreds of denominations exist in the name of Christianity, claiming to be Christian. Some are divided and contradict one another.

BIBLE MEANINGS OF THE WORD "CHURCH"

The word "church" is used two ways in the Bible:

(1) The church in the "universal" sense

The "universal" church refers to the body or group of all saved people everywhere.

In Matthew 16:18 (NIV), Jesus tells Peter and the others, *"And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."*

Jesus promised to build His church. The church is built on Jesus and belongs to Him not to man. Before we worry ourselves about denominations we must first and foremost have this settled in our minds – the church belongs to Jesus and nobody else. Someone said anyone is allowed to have their own church as long as they follow the set formula of dying for it and rising again on the third day; only then can you have your church. Paul, in Ephesians 5:23,25, shows us that Jesus is the head of this universal church. So the church is the body of all people who have been saved by Christ.

(2) The church in the "local" sense

The "local" church refers to a congregation of Christians in a geographical location who have united themselves to work and worship together. In the Bible, Christians were not just members of the universal body of all saved people, but they also associated themselves into local churches as we find some examples in:

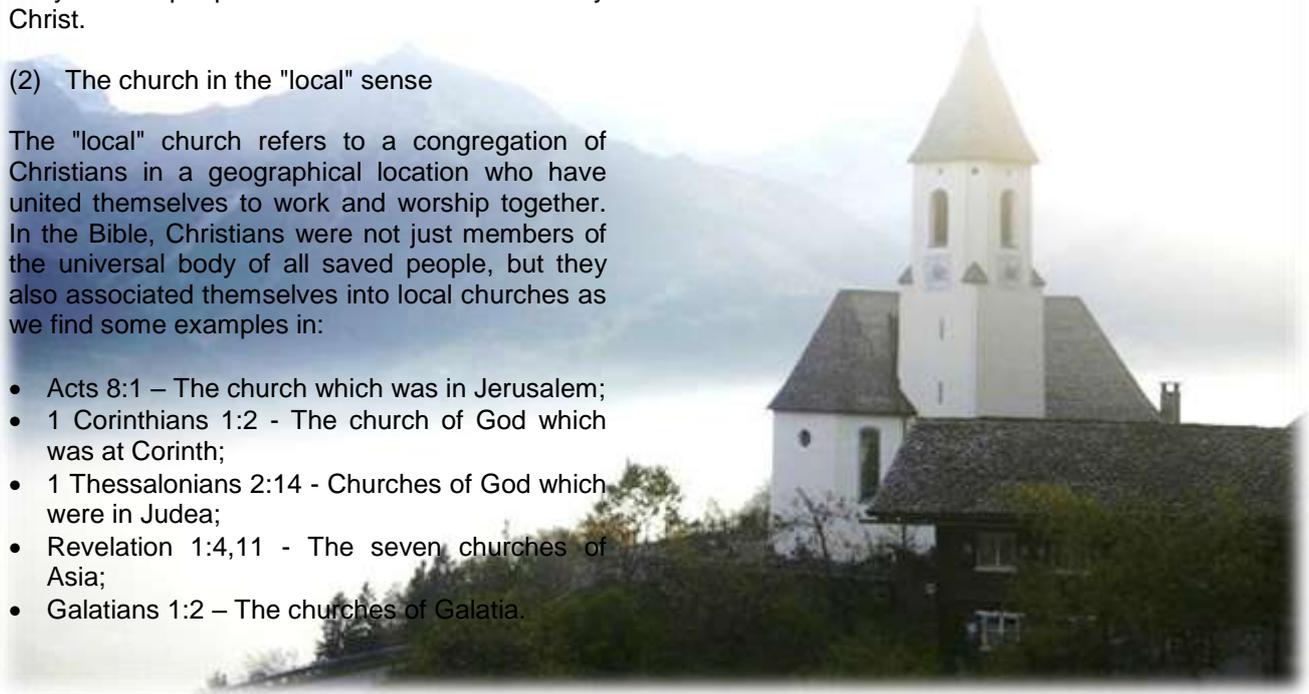
- Acts 8:1 – The church which was in Jerusalem;
- 1 Corinthians 1:2 - The church of God which was at Corinth;
- 1 Thessalonians 2:14 - Churches of God which were in Judea;
- Revelation 1:4,11 - The seven churches of Asia;
- Galatians 1:2 – The churches of Galatia.

These were churches in different geographical areas, built according to the foundation of the apostles who in turn received the pattern from the Lord Jesus himself. Paul, when referring to the church, says in 1 Corinthians 3v11 following that there is only one foundation to build upon. We all must be careful how we build on this foundation which is already laid.

THE DENOMINATIONAL CONCEPT OF THE CHURCH

Modern denominations include many local congregations which differ fundamentally on many things including issues of attainment of salvation, baptism, the day of worship, the nature and operation of the Holy Spirit, just to name a few. What gives birth to these differences, I believe, is drifting from the foundation that Jesus laid and which the apostles emphasised. I believe it does not matter how we are called as different denominations, who our leader is, and where we worship as long as we build on the same foundation that Jesus the Owner of the church laid down.

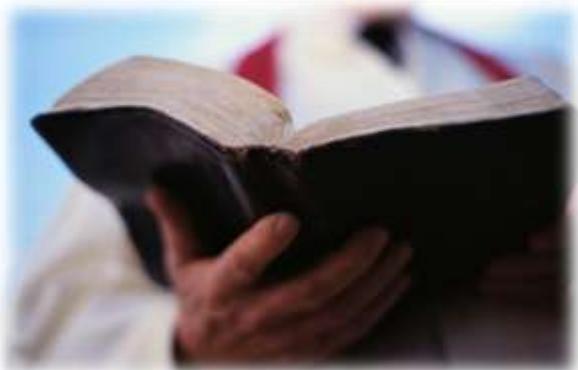
Remember, He is coming for one church, His bride, not many brides, meaning that all these denominational umbrellas will fall off. These I believe are necessary only for administrative purposes. The church needs to be administered well to be effective; but, remember, it is His enterprise. As we administer this enterprise, we must not deviate from the core vision of it's Founder and start building our own little empires. His blue print for the church is there – the bible; we must consult it all the time to avoid going astray.



ADVERT

WORSHIPPING ONE GOD

By Mike Burgess



What does it mean to us if we find ourselves worshipping just one God? We ask this from the point of view of being Christian. This is important because Jews and Moslems also worship just one God. We Christians, however, believe that the right "One" God is the Bible's trinity: Father, Son and Spirit. As Christians, we believe that there is only one saviour, Christ, and only one way of being saved, faith in this very Christ.

WHO DO WE WORSHIP?

Ephesians 4:4-5 tells us about there being one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism and one Father. This tells us that we should not listen to other alternatives being offered by other religions and cults. Rather, we should have confidence in the God of the bible and His saving grace. Thus, the one God we trust is the one God we worship.



Why, as Christians, should we ever be caught up in fearful appeasement of angry ancestors or spirits? We cannot walk two paths at the same time, or skip from one to the other, when we think it is convenient. This is an impossible and unnecessary burden to bear. Worshiping the one God of the Bible means that we need only to trust and relate to Him.

Sometimes we may be challenged by relatives or even spouses who worship and serve other gods or beings. At these times, we have to make a stand for our belief. We then realise that our worship of the one God of the Bible involves a dedicated commitment and a brave faith. It means relying on, trusting in, and relating to one God only. This is what following Christ entails.

WHY DO WE WORSHIP?

Why do we worship in the first place? Well, we wish to acknowledge our Creator-God, who also walks with us and meets our needs, as well as providing protection against the kingdom of evil. We wish further to show gratitude to the one God who loves us, has saved us, and who has given us purpose and hope, for this life as well as our future in heaven. In other words, we worship God because of who *He* is and what *He* has done, not because we have done anything or, even, because we think we can manipulate Him.

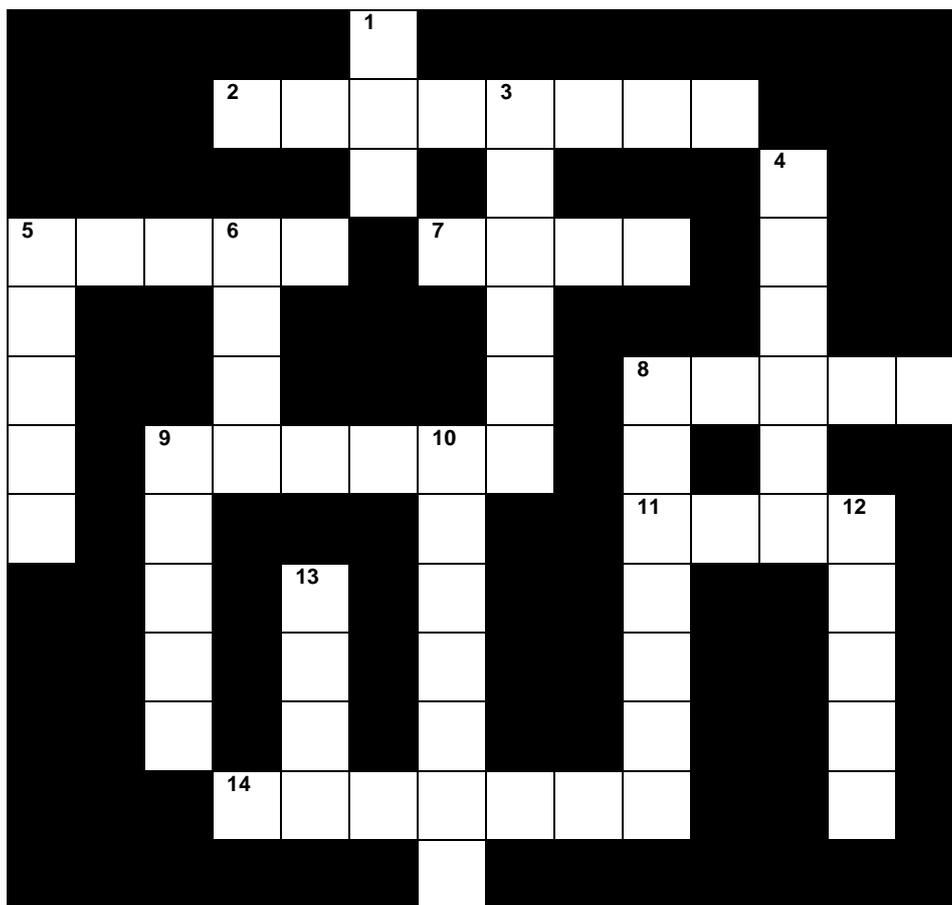


Thus, true Christians around the world ultimately worship the same God of the bible, walk the same road of faith, and look forward to the same destiny. We are part of a community formed and loved by Christ, moulded by the Spirit, and waiting to be presented to the Father.

All of this because we have dared to worship the one true God

ADVERT

BIBLE BOOKS CROSS WORD

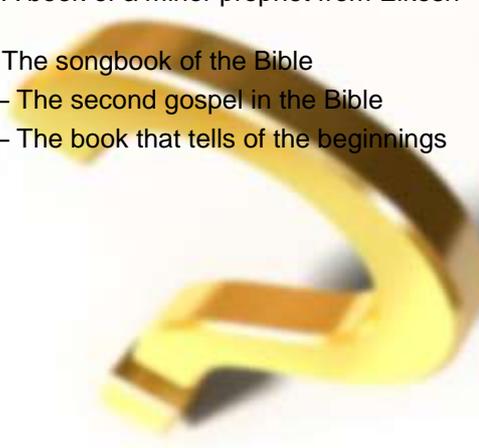


Across

- 2 – A book of wise sayings
- 5 – A book with a story of a large fish
- 7 – A book with 'Jesus wept', the shortest verse in the Bible
- 8 – A book of a minor prophet from Elkosh
- 9 – The songbook of the Bible
- 11 – The second gospel in the Bible
- 14 – The book that tells of the beginnings

Down

- 1 – The drama book in the Bible
- 3 – The book of the law that has the Ten Commandments
- 4 – The only book in the Bible that does not mention God
- 5 – The book that was written by one of Jesus' brothers
- 6 – The book that tells of the first Christian
- 8 – The book of the census
- 9 – The book written by the disciple who denied Christ three times
- 10 – The book written by a tax collector
- 12 – The books of the king of Israel
- 13 – The gospel written by a doctor



ADVERT

IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE?

WHAT IS THE BIBLICAL VIEW ON DIVORCE

What do I say to a close friend who is thinking of divorce? I hear so many Christians say “God doesn't allow divorce – full stop!” and the conversation ends right there. What does Scripture actually say, and isn't there a more helpful approach?

 It is disappointing that divorce is on the increase, even in the Church. And it is true that many Christians seem to have a very limited view, without having thought through what God has said. I thought it would be more helpful to give a detailed response, so here are some points to consider:

(1) The theological purpose of human marriage is that, through the physical and visible, the spiritual and invisible is illustrated, in particular, the spiritual reality of the Triune Godhead in relationship to each other – a relationship that cannot be broken.

(2) Human marriage is a joining physically, emotionally and spiritually (*Genesis 2:24*), thus pointing to the kind of comprehensive relationship that God desires for His people e.g., *Deuteronomy 6:4-5*.

(3) God's design for human marriage was that it be an unbroken covenant, one man with one woman, which also reflects His expected relationship with Israel (both geographical and spiritual). He entered into a covenant relationship, first with mankind (*Genesis 2:26-27; 9:16*), then with Abram (*Genesis 17:1-7*), Isaac (*Genesis 26:24,25*), and Jacob (*Genesis 35:9-12*), and then with Israel as a nation (*Exodus 19:3-11; 20:1-24:11; 2 Samuel 7:5-16*).

(4) Similarly, human marriage also represents the everlasting covenant relationship between Christ and His Church (*Numbers 25:10-13; Ephesians 5:25-32; Hebrews 1:5; Revelation 17:7-9; 21:2*).

(5) Grievously, though, Israel repeatedly broke her covenant with Him through their disobedience and idolatry (*Exodus 20:4; Deuteronomy 4:28; Jeremiah 3:6-14; Ezekiel 16:15-22; 20:8-20; 23:1-48; Hosea 1:2*). This led to His severing of the relationship as shown in the two Exiles (*2 Kings 15:29 with 1 Chronicles 5:26; and Jeremiah 52:28-30*), and His tragic departure from the midst

of His Temple (*Ezekiel 10:18,19*), all of which can be seen as metaphors for divorce. Thus, God Himself is a divorcee, having “experienced” adultery, infidelity, desertion and betrayal. Nevertheless, because of the theological significance of marriage, God still hates divorce (*Malachi 2:16*)

(6) Yet, in His grace and mercy, He had a plan: in the midst of Adam's sin, He had a way of escape (*Genesis 3:15*); likewise, in 'recognising' the impending breakdown of the first covenant relationship with Israel – the Old Testament – God warned us that He had already put in place another, better plan: the New Covenant (*Hosea 2:14-23; Jeremiah 31:31-33; Ezekiel 11:16-21*). Through this grace, His relationship with Israel – both national and spiritual – was retained.

(7) This new covenant is only possible legally because the required shedding of blood (*Genesis 3:19; Hebrews 10:20*) has been paid for by the blood of Christ (*Matthew 26:28; Romans 5:9-11; Hebrews 12:24*).

(8) Therefore, we come to see the twin issues of, on the one hand, the breaking of a covenant because of the fickleness of mankind, and on the other, reconciliation and restoration in spite of the sin because, for the God of faithfulness, the covenant with His people – His Bride – is everlasting. This is why Moses (*Deuteronomy 24:1-4*) allowed divorce, although Jesus limited it to adultery (*Matthew 5:31,32; 19:4-9*), and why the cup in Communion is a reminder of both the cost in shed blood as well as of the grace of the Cross through which this covenant relationship is kept, despite our continuing sin.

(9) Similarly, Paul also understood the purpose of marriage, and outlined an “exception clause” (*1 Corinthians 7:15*) to allow for or highlight the weakness of mankind, although this was his personal view.

Hence, marriage is intended to be a binding covenant relationship entered into through vows to one another and witnessed by both the community (*which makes it socially and/or legally acceptable*) and God (*making it divinely and spiritually acceptable*). It is a physical illustration of God's theological intentions of our relationship with Him. Thus, as a covenant, human marriage should be pure and faithful, and should normally end only with the physical death of one partner.

However, sin – reflected through selfishness and exploitation, and shown through abuse, violence, infidelity or desertion – is still part of the human condition. Moreover, the motive for such a marriage relationship in the first place may not be

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godly. This is in spite of being “new creatures” in Christ, with the resultant expectation of new attitudes and habits. The cancellation of the covenant comes, then, as the result of infidelity by one partner. Idolatry, which God views as spiritual adultery, is the basis for the testament being cancelled; hence, the parallel is allowed in human marriage – albeit reluctantly.

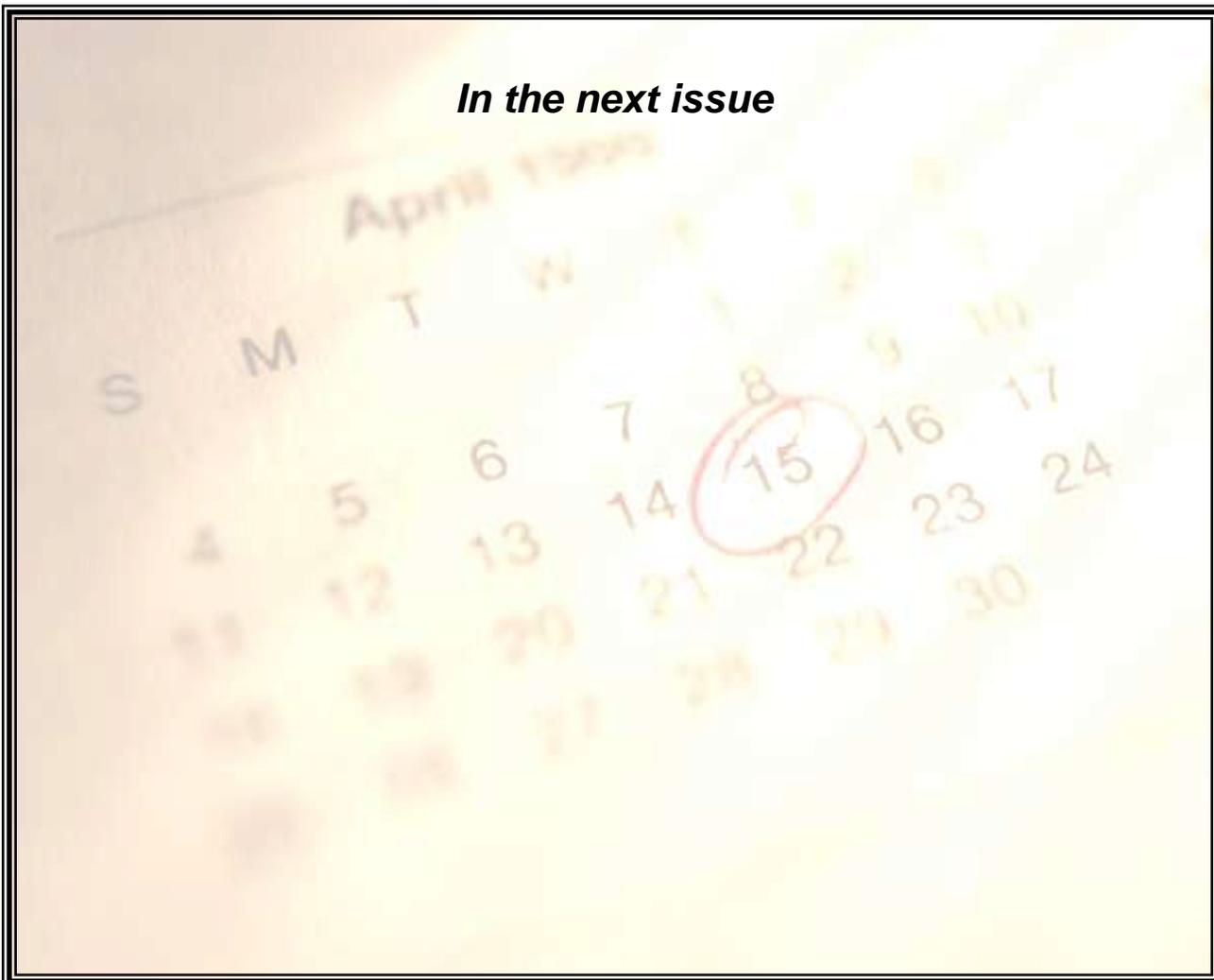
Although both parties carry some blameworthiness, in varying degrees one becomes the victimiser and the other the victim. Divorce, then, can only be a last resort when all else has failed and the relationship starts to destroy even one's faith and life. Therefore, the Church must highlight the wrong, while affirming faithfulness.

Those facing divorce, then, should be helped, first, to appreciate God's original intentions and motives for marriage, and thus to seek reconciliation and restoration, first with their partner and then with God (*Matthew 5:23,24 with 18:15-18*).

However, if this is not possible despite all practicable efforts, the “victim” in the relationship should not be ostracised further but led as a last resort to end an oppressive or unworkable relationship. Where both parties are Christians, the “victimiser” should be lovingly disciplined where possible and then restored to fellowship within the Body. Sometimes, divorce, although never “good”, is necessary in order to end the sinfulness of repeated and unrepentant breaking of marriage vows.

In the case of adultery, divorce is Scripturally permitted, together with remarriage, since the covenant has been broken deliberately. If divorce as a last resort must reluctantly occur for other reasons, despite strenuous efforts at reconciliation, remarriage should be allowed only after careful counselling, since the covenant has not been broken for reasons of infidelity.

In the next issue



ADVERT

PARENTING

By Mthokozisi T Ncube

I strongly believe that parenting is more than just feeding our children well, more than giving them expensive gifts, is more than allowing our children to stay for long hours watching television. It is more than showering our children with more gifts.

I see parenting as a process of instilling values in our children and giving them skills that will make them responsible adults. It is the process of raising children to be responsible citizens.

In Zimbabwe, we live in a time where parents are travelling out of the country in search for greener pastures and leaving their children with relatives, some with maids and others with cell phones, computers and television to parent the children on their behalf. Using the words "greener pastures" implies that, here in Zimbabwe the pastures are green as well. However, these parents are looking for pastures that are greener still.

Some parents choose to stay behind but are equally busy trying to make ends meet. These parents also do not have time for parenting their children.



Then, there is a third group of parents who have made schools into surrogate parents. This group sees its role as that of feeding their children, buying clothes for them, buying gifts for them, and driving them to school with the hope that the school will do the parenting on their behalf.

As long as there are gadgets keeping the children busy while the parents are away, all is thought to be well. What these parents have to realize is that the television is a stranger, there to entertain and not to parent their children. It is also important to note that, if the parents do not educate in their ways, the world will educate in its own way.



parenting for these parents is measured by type of food the child eats at school and at home. The type of cell phone the child carries around also measures it. It is also measured by the quality of toy the child plays with. At this point, it is important to suggest that it is best that the biological parents parent their children rather than pass their responsibility to other people or gadgets. Both parents ought to be involved in the process of parenting as it is what the children need.

In this article I want to emphasize the importance of teaching and modelling values to our children. I hope the reader will realize that there are many values that can be taught but I have chosen these few as a starting point. These are honouring God, hard work, importance of family, submission, contentment, concern for others, sexual fidelity and truthfulness.

HONOURING GOD

It is important that our children be taught that we were created by a living God and created for a purpose. We are not in this world by mistake, but created to worship and to honour God.

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FAMILY UNITY

Our children must learn that people are meant to be bond in loving families with a father and a mother. It is from a family setting that we learn to love, respect and care for each other. The family unity prepares us for living in harmony and peace in the wider community.

HARD WORK

We need to teach our children to love work. Money and food does not fall from the trees, but it's worked for. Our children must learn to do things for themselves, for example making their own beds, cleaning their environment, producing their own food. Children must learn to be productive.

SUBMISSION

Tim Stafford in his book, *Never Mind the Joneses*, hits the nail on the head when he says that, in many different settings and work, marriages, church, and government, we fit into a larger scheme and submit to the leadership for someone else.

CONTENTMENT

Our children need to learn to be at peace with whatever they have. They also need to learn that it is all right not to have and be at peace with that.

TRUTHFULNESS

Our children need to learn to tell the truth under all situations, as all good relationships are built on truthfulness and trust.

SEXUAL FIDELITY

Our children need to know that it is wrong to have sexual relationships outside marriage.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN LIFE

Man is created in the image of God and must be respected at all costs.

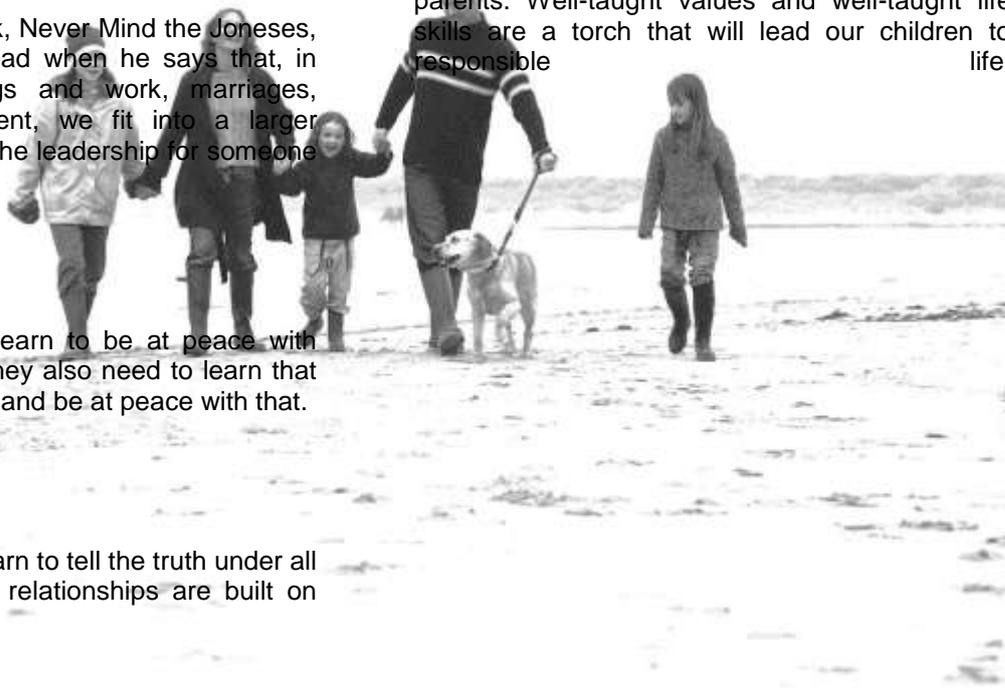
RESPECT FOR PROPERTY

Both private and public property needs to be respected. One's possessions belong to them; we have no right to use, abuse or damage them.

For our children to survive in this world we have to teach them some life skills so that they can survive on their own.



Parenting is the parents' job and no one should do it but you, the parent. Our children do not want only to hear these values talked about; they also want to see the values modelled and lived by their parents. Well-taught values and well-taught life skills are a torch that will lead our children to responsible life.



ADVERT

TECHNOLOGY – FACEBOOK AND CHRISTIANS

By Matthew Nierman

It is no secret that the advancements of technology have provided a myriad of attractions for modern people of all generations. Cell phones enable people to communicate with friends and family, no matter how far away they may be. Along with other portable devices, cell phones are also capable of storing a great number of songs that can be enjoyed anywhere and anytime the listener chooses. In most cities around the world, nearly every household contains at least one television, providing hours of entertainment to viewers.



Computers today perform an ever widening range of tasks, from the mundane ability to store massive amounts of information, to making possible corrections during the composition of written work in a way that typewriters and handwriting could never hope to mirror, to playing games and watching movies. Computers have also shrunk in size over the years, from the house-sized behemoths of the 1970's to the point that an individual today can carry a laptop around town in one hand.

Perhaps most fantastic of all is the internet. A wealth of information is at the fingertips of anyone with a connection to the internet. Academic works on any topic imaginable, discussions on politics, sport, health and medicine, and even gossip about celebrities can be easily and quickly accessed. Besides being a source of information, the internet has enhanced and simplified world-wide communication in an unprecedented manner. Email accounts and social networking sites are used by billions of people every day, sending messages back and forth between colleagues, friends and family members at the push of a button. Entertainment also abounds on the internet in the form of games, music, television programmes and movies.



COUNTING THE COST

The results of this technological overhaul of human life are not all happy and healthy, however. Some negative physical, mental, social and moral effects of technology have been observed in society. Cell phones, operating by emitting and receiving radio waves, have been accused of causing brain cancer. Further, the use of cell phones while driving distracts the driver from the road and traffic in front of them, resulting in many vehicular accidents around the world. As a result of this phenomenon, the use of cell phones while driving (*whether for talking or texting*) has been banned in many countries.

Though perhaps not as drastic as some of the physical consequences, the mental effects of technological saturation are equally real. Young people today are being raised in a world where television and the internet have made it possible for nearly any person to make an opinion known publicly. However, little assistance, if any, is given in helping decide which (*if any*) of these opinions and beliefs are correct.



It is easy for individuals growing up in such a society to lose their belief in an objective reality, and come to think that it is impossible to know if there is even such a thing as absolute truth. This is aided by the widespread notion that relativism is chic, and that to think that one can actually attain an objective understanding of any bit of absolute truth is outdated, ignorant and arrogant.

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Additionally, the constant stream of information has degraded the younger generations' ability to sustain a cohesive and logical stream of reasoning. Careful and critical thought must be taught and cultivated, but young people today are instead being fed a stream of informational non-sequiturs, which develops an inability to spend more than a few minutes wrestling with a concept and developing one's own thoughts on it.

VIRTUAL RELATIONSHIPS

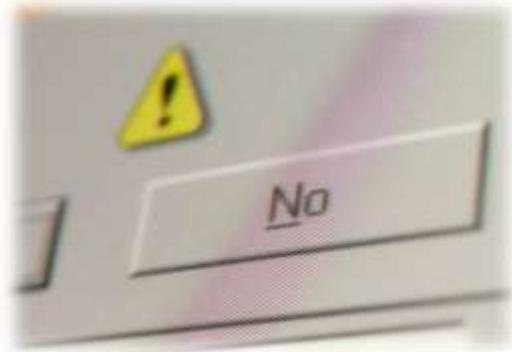
In a subtle and deceptive manner, technological advancement has also caused a decrease in the social health of our society. While it is easy to feel that people in today's society are *more* connected and *more* in touch with the rest of the world, the opposite can actually be observed. By means of the internet, people are now performing not only communicative tasks, but also shopping, finance, and even "social" interaction!



People today no longer need to go to a store, bank, or post office, since the vast majority of their needs can now be met by online services. People used to actually spend time in the presence of friends and family both by necessity and by choice. This actual interaction has been replaced by a mere sense of interaction that can be attained by looking at pictures of a relative's birthday party on Facebook, or by sending an email greeting to someone on a special occasion. Add to this the addictive nature of electronic entertainment, and it can be seen that people today are increasingly solitary; spending more and more time watching television, surfing the internet and playing video games, and interacting through an electronic medium instead of actually interacting with other human beings.

PUR-IT-Y

While it may be impossible to establish a causal link, technological development has certainly aided the moral degradation of society. The statistics concerning the number of people who struggle with pornography are staggering, even among those who are in full time Christian ministry.



Before the advent of the internet, an individual who wished to acquire pornographic materials had to undergo the shame and embarrassment of going to buy these immoral publications from another person, and risk being seen doing so by others. Now, with a computer and an internet connection, someone can view these explicit images and videos within the secrecy of their own home. There is no accountability to others, and it becomes much easier to fall into addiction and increasingly perverse thinking. In some places, the internet is even being used as a clandestine meeting place for individuals wishing to take part in extramarital affairs.

RAISE YOUR FIREWALL

While it would be foolish to throw out the baby with the bathwater, and eschew all forms of technology, Christians must be aware that not all of the effects of technology are positive. Caution, integrity, intentionality and accountability must be used if we hope to navigate the pitfalls involved in our daily use of technology.

ADVERT - INSIDE COVER

BACK PAGE