

... as goes the church ...

By Bill Johnson



God makes it clear that though He is loving, gracious, and exceedingly merciful, He is also Holy and just!

I think of this in the context of how God repeatedly showered Israel with grace and mercy. Yet, God deals with sin in any age including in our generation. God hates sin! Though He is exceedingly merciful, He is no “paper tiger.” As He dealt with Israel, He has dealt and will deal with others.

And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals. And they abandoned the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. They went after other gods, from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed down to them. And they provoked the Lord to anger. They abandoned the Lord and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth. So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them. And he sold them into the hand of their surrounding enemies, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. Whenever they marched out, the hand of the Lord was against them for harm, as the Lord had warned, and as the Lord had sworn to them. And they were in terrible distress.

[Judges 2:11-15]

This should have our attention, and, yes, bring us to our knees. But it doesn't. It would if we were a nation that feared the Lord and had leaders who were Bible believers, trusted in God for the security and welfare of the nation, and honored the people they represent as elected officials.

The obvious errors of so many leading us is best explained as something more concerning than stupidity. It is more accurately characterized as godlessness, unfaithfulness to the living God, unbelief - corruption at the highest levels. You and I know it to be true. Or do we?

Education. We have taken Biblical truth out of the public schools and with it the blessing and wise instruction that flows from it. What is right? What is wrong? Is there even such a thing as right and wrong?

Coming out of the doctor's office recently, I ran into two teachers (one recently retired) who, knowing I am a former teacher, stated, “You wouldn't even recognize it any more. Families are so much more messed up. The children are a mission field and so very, very needy. You can warn against drugs, but when their parents are using them it rings hollow in their minds.”

Families. Many homes are broken and too many children are dropped off at daycare. In all fairness, sometimes there is no other place to turn, and thank God for daycares dedicated to the Lord where prayer, Bible stories, and application are part of their ministry.

Where is God in our homes? In our schools? In our institutions of higher learning?

Churches. As I gave thought to how to offer a summary statement on the church, I couldn't help but think of the godless assault upon marriage - how it has fallen like a house of cards as one court after another has

gone against the vote of the people. With a vital church would this have happened with hardly a whimper?

This is indicative of the pathetic state of the church today.

Dr. Albert Mohler, one of the top theological/pastoral leaders of our day, recently offered a timely commentary on the condition of the church in America.

Based on the survey referenced on page 3 of this newsletter, Mohler laid out how, even among church-goers, there is great confusion and unbelief regarding basic biblical teachings and doctrine. Go to <http://www.albertmohler.com/?p=33168> to read his eye-opening report on how Americans view concepts such as:

- Beliefs about God
- Beliefs about Goodness and Sin
- Beliefs about Salvation and Religious Texts
- The Doctrine of Scripture
- The Issue of Hell
- Beliefs About Authority

As the head of the American Decency Association and an active member of a Christ-centered church and a father and grandfather who has the opportunity to love, engage, and play a role in discipling young ones, this report helps me see at what points Satan is attacking and to stand against the wiles of the devil. May God help each of us - for the stakes are high for those we love and our nation!

[continued on page 2]



From the desk of Bill Johnson

“... burdened for the church ...”

I have become increasingly burdened for the church. I'm going to try to explain why, drawing from some of my personal experiences outside the church and then inside the church as a Christian.

I didn't attend church much while growing up. I was baptized as an infant and served as an acolyte (at the age of 12 or so) in a Congregational church. My loving parents were largely unchurched, but they seemed to want me to have some church background.

I was an agnostic while I was a student at Michigan State University. I had become a liberal, was anti-war and a “free spirit.” I had little to no Biblical training - though I had attended a Nazarene church with a high school friend a few times and I had a positive experience and had a lot of respect for my friend's godly mother.

In 1969, though a few credits short of graduating from Michigan State University, I applied for a teaching job in my hometown, Portland, Michigan. That's where I met my wife to be. Jan had godly parents (and the best example of Christian parents I had ever seen) and was well taught in the Christian faith. I started going to church with Jan, not because I loved God, but because I was falling in love with her.

As I began going to church, I found myself weeping as I heard hymns. I wondered what was going on. I began to realize that God was meeting with me as I was learning to worship Him. He was alive in my heart. How exciting to know that God loved me so much that He was making Himself known to me in Spirit and in Truth.

God began to work in my heart as I began

to attend church regularly.

God, by His Spirit, was changing me. He revealed to me that He was displeased with my use of pornography. He called me out to “pursue holiness without which no man shall see the Lord.” [Hebrews 12:14]

As I sat under the teaching of God's word, I was learning about the character of God, how God created the Heavens and the earth and everything in it, how man was marked by sin through the fall of Adam, and about God's amazing grace and mercy. I learned what sin is, how to overcome sin, and how God blesses those who bless Him and brings curses upon those who willfully disobey Him. I learned that this world is not my home; that I'm a pilgrim in a foreign land; that He has prepared a place in Heaven for me.

Over time by faith I began to see that God changes hearts and lives; that faith is the victory that overcomes the world.

During my years of teaching in the public schools (18 years in four different school districts - my last year in 1988), I saw that incrementally that godlessness in the entertainment world and secularism in the public schools and universities was having its way with children and families and that my hands were increasingly tied in terms of pointing our youth to Christ and His Kingdom principles.

Yet, I think of a long list of godly friends (both young and old) who are followers (or were - some now deceased) of Jesus Christ and I see them characterized by the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Though all of these are far from perfect because they all are marked by sin - *all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.*

I think, too, of former classmates, friends, and family who clearly did not identify with salvation in Christ Jesus.

There is a profound difference.

Spiritual warfare is a part of the Christian life. It is an every day battle for what is truth and what is a lie.

The Bible tells us that the Israelites failed to teach their young the difference between the holy and the profane. [Ezekiel 44:23] How about you and me? How about the local church? How are we doing on this?

The church is under attack. And, why wouldn't that be the case? Satan and his evil minions seek to malign and undermine Christians because they hate God and His church.

Consider just these few things, though many more could be named.

What does God say about a believer marrying an unbeliever? Many of us see what happens when this godly principle is trampled on. Now the grandkids are opened up to godlessness because the unbelieving mate often has no sense of what is right and what is wrong.

Now you get to see the degradation of godless choices and its impact in living color in the lives of your young loved ones.

Here are just a few other important points: Teaching how to worship, to pray, to share with others, to honor your parents, to love your wife as Christ loves the church, to be submissive to your husband's leadership, to cast all your cares upon Him, to deny yourself and take up your cross and follow Him, to seek first the Kingdom of God, to not think more highly of yourself than you ought to think, to not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind in Christ Jesus.

I'm burdened for the church because so many run from authority today wanting to be their own gods. They want to make the Bible say what they want it to say. They go to church on their terms, when they want to, where they are most pleased. Obedience? Honoring God?

However, as Christians join with a solid Bible preaching church and stay faithful despite the ups and downs of every church family, God blesses and Christians grow, mature, learn to fight sin, to love one another, and become more like Jesus to His glory and honor! God, help us to do just that.

The State of Theology: What's Our Theological Temperature?

by Stephen Nichols, Ligonier Ministries

What is our theological temperature? To answer this question, we recently partnered with Lifeway Research to conduct a poll of 43 questions relating to the doctrines of God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, sin, salvation, the Bible, the church, and ethics. You can read all about the survey and see all the results at TheStateOfTheology.com. So, what's our temperature?

Let me offer some broad stroke reporting of the findings. I'll report. You decide.

The Survey Says

* The survey revealed significant confusion regarding the doctrine of God. In fact, the survey revealed significant numbers affirming such heresies as denying that the Holy Spirit is a person, and denying the deity of Christ.

* The survey revealed heretical views regarding human nature and sin.

* The survey revealed that less than half of Americans think the Bible is the Word of God and that it is true. These same numbers of the population reject what the Bible has to say on ethical issues, such as sex outside of marriage.

* The survey revealed that while 6 out of 10 believe in a literal heaven, less than half polled think you need to believe in Jesus to get there. And the survey revealed that while 6 out of 10 also believe in a literal hell, two-thirds think people are by nature good. In other words, we believe in hell, but there won't be many people there.

* The survey also revealed that worshipping alone is just as valid as attending corporate worship in the church.

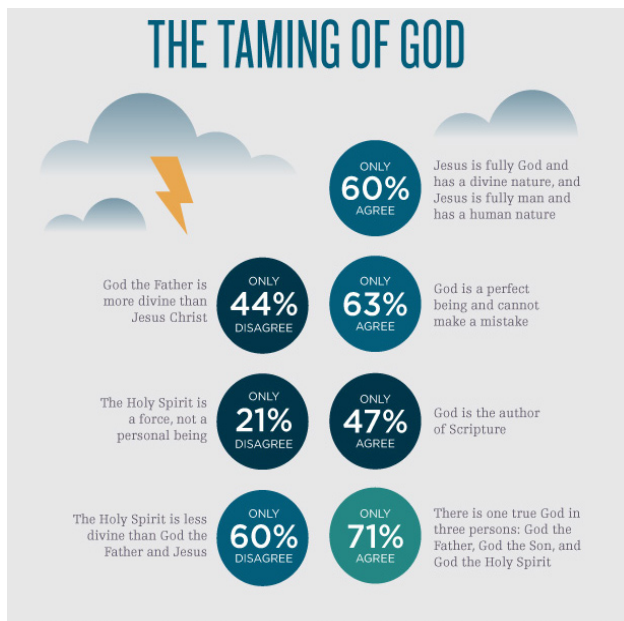
How Should We Then Respond?

So we have the answer to the question of our theological health. But this raises another question. How should we then respond?

It's likely all too easy to be discouraged by the dismal results of this survey. This survey reveals theological confusion, as a blatant attitude of rejecting what God has revealed of Himself and His will. It also

reveals a significant amount of theological ignorance. It might be legitimate to be disappointed, but we should steer clear of declaring that the sky is falling.

We see here what we have all suspected to be the case. Americans like God, and they like Jesus, too. Many even like the Bible.



But they like all of this on their own terms. We prefer God our way, not His. But, let's not be discouraged.

EPs

Perhaps one of the saddest aspects of this survey is how those in the pew stacked up against those in American culture in general. We surveyed 3,000 Americans. Most national polls we hear about tend to have a sampling pool around 1,000. We went over and above both to ensure accuracy and to give us data on specific groups.

We were keen to see how those in the pew stacked up against those in culture. We broke down churchgoers by affiliation, evangelicals. This is the category of Evangelical Protestants, the "EPs." How did they do?

When asked if even the smallest sin deserves condemnation, only 51% of EPs could agree. Yes, that means 49% disagreed. 44% of EPs also agree that most people are by nature good.

But, let's not be discouraged.

Marching Orders

In his short epistle Jude attests to his work of contending for "the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." We too need to contend for this once for all faith twenty centuries later. This survey reveals the necessity and the urgency for it.

While we don't absolutely need the survey to remind us of our task, it does help to know exactly what we are up against—both in the culture and in the church. We aren't governed by polls. We are governed by God's Word. It helps to know our audience, and it helps to be reminded of the work we still need to do. We have our marching orders.

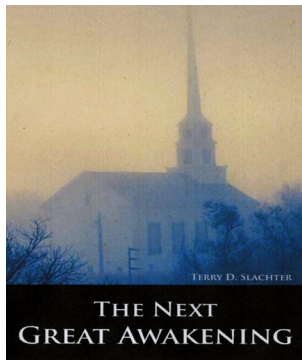
Since the release of this survey many have explored the reason or reasons behind the results, especially the reasons behind the poor health of those in the pews of our evangelical churches.

There is likely no single reason, but there are some significant reasons that we should consider. One is the American church's fascination with programs, techniques, and methods. These should not consume us. Instead, we should be relying on the God-ordained ministry of the Word. God promises to bless His Word. We should believe Him.

One other reason might be the way we have relegated theology, and theological instruction, to the academy and to the experts.

C.S. Lewis once said, "If you do not listen to theology, that will not mean that you have no ideas about God. It will mean that you have a lot of wrong ones." May we be encouraged. Encouraged to preach the word, to teach—and to listen to—sound theology, and may we join with Jude in contending for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

A Great Awakening in the 21st Century?



The excerpt below is from a powerful devotional by Terry D. Slachter, *“The Next Great Awakening,”* which speaks to the theme of the first section of this newsletter – “as the church goes.” I personally have been greatly moved by this 41-day devotional calling on Christians to fervently pray for another spiritual awakening within our increasingly godless nation.

As we look ahead to a new year, I strongly urge you to order this small devotional and use it to pray like never before for America. Consider ordering one not only for yourself, but also for friends, family members, and church groups who would use it and commit to pray. This devotional would also be a wonderful resource for churches to distribute to their congregations.

Please see the enclosed response card to order “The Next Great Awakening.”

“Children are the most vulnerable during times of famine. Their bloated stomachs and emaciated bodies crying for food pierce the hearts of their parents who are helpless to do anything to relieve their hunger. These sights ought to pierce the hearts of all humanity. But ... there is a far more deadly type of famine that strikes both young and old – a famine of the word. Amos warned God’s people in Amos 8:11 that a time was a coming when there would be a famine of hearing the word of God, when people would suffer from God’s righteous judgment, when God’s word would either not be available to them or they would not be able to hear it and comprehend it. As a result, they would search from sea to sea to find comfort and hope. ... This spiritual hunger is God’s judgment on a proud and rebellious people who refuse to repent and seek the Lord with all of their hearts.”

“... [T]here is a famine of the word even in the Church today. A growing attention deficit with God’s word is a sign of God’s judgment, beginning with the household of faith. God’s people need to look at their own hearts and priorities. But what about the greater culture? Is there a famine of God’s word extending beyond the household of faith? ...”

“I live near Grand Rapids, Michigan, and our ministry is located in this Midwestern city. People know Grand Rapids for its many churches, seemingly one on every corner, and as of late, they also know it as the home of the Grand Rapids Art Prize. This international venue for art and artists has drawn thousands of people into the city, either to compete for a cash prize with their latest masterpiece or to view all of the art exhibits staged throughout the city. Three years ago, the top prize went to an artist who depicted Jesus on the cross. When a third-grade class of students from one of the local public schools took in some of the art pieces, their teacher, a Christian woman, asked her students to interpret that year’s top prize winner - the crucifix. To this teacher’s surprise, none of the students in her class had any idea what the picture was about. One little boy attempted a guess: *He looks like some guy laid out from a motorcycle accident.*”

“These children had no idea who Jesus was or what he was doing on a cross. While these children did not have bloated bellies or emaciated bodies, they showed signs of a different kind of famine in the land. Their ignorance of Jesus should pierce the hearts of every Christian.”

Reflect upon these thoughts:

“If, in the United States, there are thousands of children who know nothing about Jesus and why He suffered on the cross, what does this say about the priorities of the 21st century Church? What are you and your church doing in your neighborhood or city to introduce Jesus to every household?”

Lord, give the churches of the United States a passion to sow the seed of your word in every household in this country. Give every girl and boy an opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus. Amen.

Match Grant Update!



What a great time of year to focus on the blessings that God has given us - our physical blessings with the Thanksgiving holiday and the breathtaking grace God has shown us at Christmas.

One thing we are so thankful for is the generosity of one of God’s faithful servants who blessed and encouraged us with a year-end match challenge. And now we have been blessed and encouraged by those who stood with us in helping us meet this match challenge! A special thanks once again to our anonymous donor and those of you who contribute to keep this ministry going!

While this match grant has been met, we remain in need of ongoing support as we face the challenges of speaking truth into a culture that doesn’t want to hear it. As God leads, will you continue to stand with us this month and into the new year?

As we look to the future, we can only speculate on what’s to come, but we know that your gift will be a great blessing and we will seek to use it to bring glory to our God and to shine His light in our dark culture.

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A Valiant Victory for Marriage

by Lisa Van Houten



“Marriage has long been a social institution defined by relationships between men and women. So long defined, the tradition is measured in millennia, not centuries or decades. So widely shared, the tradition until recently had been adopted by all governments and major religions of the world. . . .”

Thus stated Sixth Circuit Court Judge Jeffrey Sutton in the recent extraordinary federal court decision upholding the ban on gay marriage in Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee - leaving in place marriage amendments in these four states.

In a 2-1 ruling lauded by conservative and religious leaders, the Sixth Circuit Court bucked other federal court decisions where rogue judges have imposed gay marriage in dozens of states against the will and vote of the American people.

In state after state – where large majorities of citizens had voted to affirm the definition of marriage as the union of one man and one woman - we have seen judges unilaterally usurp the power of the people and strike down these voter-approved marriage amendments.

That is until this ruling of the Sixth Circuit Court.

Not only is this Sixth Circuit Court decision a stunning victory as it upholds the people’s vote to affirm the definition of marriage in the four states mentioned above, the majority opinion written by Justice Jeffrey Sutton lays out a reasoned, common-sense and eloquent statement establishing that such a monumental decision as redefining the institution of marriage, which has spanned all of human history, is not something that

should be taken lightly or be decided upon by three judges – but rather by the people of the states these judges serve.

As Judge Sutton forcefully asserts:

“What remains is a debate about whether to allow the democratic processes begun in the States to continue in the four States of the Sixth Circuit or to end them now by requiring all States in the Circuit to extend the definition of marriage to encompass gay couples. Process and structure matter greatly in American government. Indeed, they may be the most reliable, liberty assuring guarantees of our system of government, requiring us to take seriously the route the United States Constitution contemplates for making such a fundamental change to such a fundamental social institution.”

Judge Sutton continues with this astute reasoning:

“Of all the ways to resolve this question, one option is not available: a poll of the three judges on this panel, or for that matter all federal judges, about whether gay marriage is a good idea. Our judicial commissions did not come with such a sweeping grant of authority, one that would allow just three of us — just two of us in truth — to make such a vital policy call for the thirty-two million citizens who live within the four States of the Sixth Circuit: Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee. What we have authority to decide instead is a legal question: Does the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibit a State from defining marriage as a relationship between one man and one woman?”

“... Surely the people should receive some deference in deciding when the time is ripe to move from one picture of marriage to another.”

While some liberal judges have concluded that traditional marriage laws are “irrational,” Sutton declared: ***“A dose of humility makes us hesitant to condemn as unconstitutionally irrational a view of marriage shared not long ago by every***

society in the world, shared by most, if not all, of our ancestors, and shared still today by a significant number of the States. . . . It is not society’s laws or for that matter any one religion’s laws, but nature’s laws (that men and women complement each other biologically), that created the policy imperative [of marriage law].”

Sutton affirmed the unique role of marriage and the need for government to affirm marriage as the union of one man and one woman to “create and maintain stable relationships within which children may flourish.”

As Sutton wrote in the majority opinion:

“Imagine a society without marriage. It does not take long to envision problems that might result from an absence of rules about how to handle the natural effects of male-female intercourse: children. May men and women follow their procreative urges wherever they take them? Who is responsible for the children that result?”

“That does not convict the States of irrationality, only of awareness of the biological reality that couples of the same sex do not have children in the same way as couples of opposite sexes and that couples of the same sex do not run the risk of unintended offspring.”

Sutton also made the point that we at American Decency and many others have argued: legalizing homosexual marriage doesn’t just “redefine” marriage, it renders the institution meaningless – opening the door to polygamy and any such non-monogamous grouping of individuals who want the title “marriage.”

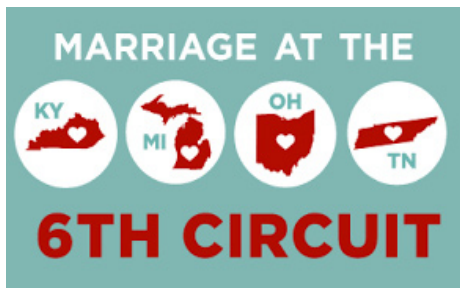
Sutton contends:

“If it is constitutionally irrational to stand by the man-woman definition of marriage, it must be constitutionally irrational to stand by the monogamous definition of marriage.”

[Continued on page 6]

A Valiant Victory for Marriage

by Lisa Van Houten



[Continued from page 5]

Sutton's ruling statement in this case lays out such a reasoned defense of natural marriage, Gary Bauer suggests, "Judge Jeffrey Sutton's opinion should be required reading in the Oval Office and every law school across the country. He comes down squarely on the side of the people and, most notably, against the notion of judicial activism. Sutton's opinion exposes how the left has perverted our justice system."

What is also noteworthy as we look at this momentous ruling is the fact that elections matter. Of the three judge panel making this decision, the two ruling in favor of natural marriage were George W. Bush appointees. The one dissenting judge was a Clinton appointee.

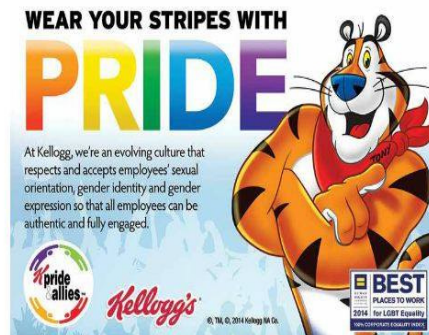
Voting – or not voting – has an impact. Elections have consequences. We have already seen the havoc wreaked by federal and Supreme Court appointees of President Obama.

This battle for marriage is not over. This decision will be appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court which will be compelled to rule definitively - will judges or the people be the ones to decide whether or not the institution of marriage, as ordained at creation, stands or is replaced with a twisted imitation.

In any case, no matter how any man-made court rules or a vote of the people decides regarding this issue - true followers of Christ cannot and will not bend to the redefinition of the union God created and called "very good."

Not so Grrreat

by Lisa Van Houten



From Corn Flakes to Frosted Flakes, Kellogg's cereal has filled the bowls of millions of American families. As families have depended on Kellogg's for quality, wholesome food, so is Kellogg's dependent upon those same families in order to continue to make a profit.

And so it's troublesome when such a trusted, family-oriented company would actively promote that which undermines marriage and family. Recently Kellogg's used its beloved children's character, Tony the Tiger, to sell - not cereal - but the homosexual agenda to American children and families.

As a corporate sponsor of the Atlanta Gay Pride event, Kellogg's displayed the iconic Tony the Tiger in a pro-LGBT ad in materials for the gay pride march. Using rainbow colors, (the hijacked symbol of the homosexual movement), the Tony the Tiger ad tells those who identify as lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, or transgender to, "***Wear your stripes with pride.***"

The ad also boasts that Kellogg's has been recognized by the homosexual advocacy group Human Rights Campaign as "***one of the best places to work for LGBT equality***" and also states: "***At Kellogg's, we're an evolving culture that respects and accepts employees' sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression so that all employees can be authentic and fully engaged.***"

Kellogg's may be "evolving," however the true definition of marriage and family is changeless.

Millions of Americans hold views which differ from the opinions pushed by the homosexual agenda. This is made clearly obvious by the millions of voters in dozens of states who have overwhelmingly upheld traditional marriage.

While American Decency and other pro-family groups do not expect a public corporation to fully embrace Biblical morality, we do ask that Kellogg's remain neutral on this divisive issue, rather than promote a lifestyle which goes against the values held by millions of their customers.

And potential Kellogg's customers agree. Comments posted online include:

- "***I guess they just lost our business.***"
- "***Goodbye Kellogg's, you're not so greaaattt!!! Anymore.***"
- "***Tony the Tiger needs to be worrying about kid's nutrition, not adult sex lives.***"
- "***What I cannot understand is why can't they all just be neutral. They can still hire people who are gay, no one said that they could not, but they also could just stay out of promotions and stuff and just say we are neutral.***"

Why would a company risk offending millions of its customers who do not support gay marriage and the homosexual agenda? Is it because they believe we will just continue to stock our pantries with their products?

Contact Kellogg's today and urge the company to take a neutral position, rather than promote a lifestyle that offends millions of customers.

[Kellogg's products include: Kellogg's cereals, Cheez-It crackers, Pringles, Keebler cookies and crackers, Pop-Tarts, Eggo waffles, Famous Amos, Carr's, and Morning Star Farms.]

Mail the enclosed postcard and/or call Kellogg's at: 1-800-962-1413.

Aligning Treasure with Truth

by Lisa Van Houten



Christian stewardship is a topic far larger than can truly be tackled in this limited space. Investing our time and talents for the glory of God and the furtherance of His kingdom is certainly a matter of good stewardship. How we use our resources is another form of stewardship.

We at American Decency have long attested that supporting companies which honor biblical principles and, the reverse side of that coin, boycotting companies which undermine those values – is a matter of Christian stewardship.

In theory that is exactly what we should do; in practice it's not always so easy. In our culture today, where corporation after corporation has jumped on the homosexual-agenda bandwagon, finding companies deserving of being boycotted is not difficult at all. The problem lies in finding a place where we can, in good conscience, shop.

However, there are certain companies which are so blatant in their calling "good evil, and evil good" (Isaiah 5:20) that it is a clear choice not to use the resources God has given us to empower them.

Starbucks, we believe, is one of those companies.

In a memorandum issued in January 2012, Starbucks went on record to state that homosexual marriage "*is core to who we are and what we value as a company.*" This position was personally reiterated by Starbucks CEO Howard Schulz at a 2012 annual shareholder meeting. This policy was put into practice as Starbucks pushed for the legalization of homosexual marriage in the company's home state of Washington.

These actions resulted in many customers

choosing to find another coffee shop and a national boycott of the company was organized.

At the 2013 shareholders meeting, things got testy when one shareholder questioned Starbucks' position on homosexual marriage.

Shareholder Tom Stobhar, who is also founder of Corporate Morality Action Center, expressed concern that Starbucks' push for same-sex marriage was hurting the corporation's bottom line. Stobhar reportedly stated in this shareholder's meeting: *"In the first full quarter after this boycott was announced, our sales and earnings — shall we say politely — were a bit disappointing."*

Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz in essence told Stobhar the company's advocacy for homosexual marriage was more important than profit, stating: *"Not every decision is an economic decision."* Schultz went on to imply that if Stobhar didn't like the policy, he was welcome to sell his stock.

Not only did Starbucks actively support efforts to legalize same-sex marriage in the state of Washington, Starbucks also pushed that philosophy nationwide. In 2013 Starbucks filed a brief seeking to have the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court, putting in jeopardy voter-enacted marriage amendments in dozens of states. In June 2013 the U.S. Supreme Court did just that - overturned the Defense of Marriage Act.

As the National Organization for Marriage has stated, *"In taking these actions, Starbucks has declared a culture war on all people of faith (and millions of others) who believe that the institution of marriage as one man and one woman is worth preserving."*

For those of us concerned about biblical stewardship, it seems clear that Starbucks is a company not worth supporting. Instead of buying a Starbucks gift card for a coffee-loving friend or family member, we urge you to instead support the ministry of Thomas Street coffee.

When you purchase Thomas Street Coffee, you're supporting efforts to proclaim the gospel of Christ in countries where 40% of unreached people groups live, including Ethiopia, Uganda, Honduras, Indonesia, and other coffee growing regions. You're also contributing to efforts to build schools, libraries, medical facilities, and clean water wells; as well as underwriting women's literacy, agricultural education, and micro-finance programs.



To place an order or for more information call 1-877-927-4917 or go to <http://thomastreetcoffee.com/>

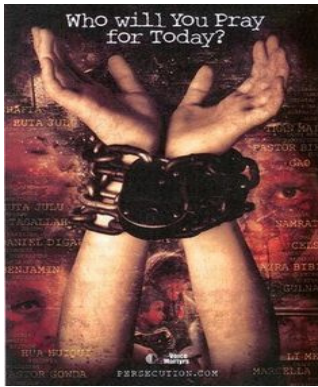
When it comes to investing - for those with stock, mutual funds, an IRA, or 401(k) - contact the Timothy Plan, the leader in Biblically responsible investing. The Timothy Plan takes great care in screening out companies that undermine Christian values. For more information on the Timothy Plan go to <http://www.timothyplan.com/home.html> or call 1-800-846-7526.



We send out e-mail updates on a daily basis on various topics - with articles that challenge, edify, and educate on current events and trends, giving opportunity for salt and light activism. If you would like to sign up, please contact info@americandecency.org.

Who Will You Pray for Today?

by Chris Johnson



Recently, between the end of October and the beginning of November, North Korea released the three American citizens which its government had indicted and imprisoned for imagined crimes against its authority.

In the case of Jeffrey Fowle, who was in a North Korean prison for five months, the supposed crimes were spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Fowle was imprisoned for leaving a Bible in a bathroom in a nation where any religious materials are seen as a threat to its cultish dynasty of “supreme leaders.”

The good news for Mr. Fowle is that he had the force of the United States behind him, and was thus treated well and relatively quickly released. The same cannot be said, however, of North Korea’s citizens. If you want to find out what life is like for the regime’s perceived enemies in prison - or if you need fodder for nightmares - read the story of Shin Dong-hyuk.

One horrific anecdote from an escapee tells of an inmate mother being forced by guards to drown her newborn baby.

Does that sound incredible? That is reality for some 30,000 Christians in North Korea, according to The Voice of the Martyrs.

A few thousand miles away, in a better publicized case, Pastor Saeed Abedini suffers in an Iranian prison - Evin Prison - known for its torturous treatment of political criminals. His crime also is simply sharing the Good News.

A former inmate - Marina Nemat - described her experience to FOX News.

“The bare feet of troublesome prisoners are lashed with cable to loosen their tongues. They’re made to walk on swollen feet before the lashings resume, said Nemat, who added that many prisoners have died during this phase of interrogation.”

Nemat survived and then endured six months of solitary confinement in Evin’s 209 section, where cells typically had a toilet, a sink and no bed.

‘The cells were just large enough to lie down,’ she said. ‘When you lay down at night if you stretched out your arms, you could touch the walls. Every day felt like 3,000 years.’”

Pastor Abedini has also spent time in solitary confinement.

That makes for an awful story, but it’s more than that to Pastor Abedini and others like him - it’s their day to day experience.

These are only a few examples of the brutality reserved for Christians in the world. For every Christian Iraqi refugee there is another sickening story: children beheaded, husbands executed in the streets, wives raped, daughters sold in slavery to some sick extremist, and more.

For so many in North Korea, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, the Sudan, Eritrea, etc., Christianity is both the cause for their suffering and their strength to get through it, and there is so much that we as comfortable Western Christians can learn from them.

But our brothers and sisters also need our prayers and, if you’re like me, you need constant reminders to tear yourself away from your comparably petty troubles and remember your Christian family in prayer.

Let this writing be that to you. It’s easy to resist the realization that people are suffering, experiencing *excruciating* pain and horrendous anguish, just for believing the same thing that you and I believe, but I encourage you to let it sink in. Empathize with our family around the world and use these suggestions to pray for the persecuted church.

10 WAYS TO PRAY FOR OUR PERSECUTED FAMILY

1. Pray that persecuted believers will sense God’s presence (Heb. 13:5).
2. Pray that they will feel connected to the greater Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:20, 26).
3. Pray that they will be comforted by God when their family members are killed, injured or imprisoned for their witness (2 Cor. 1: 3-5).
4. Pray that they will have more opportunities to share the gospel (Col. 4:3).
5. Pray for their boldness to make Christ known (Phil. 1:14).
6. Pray that they will forgive and love their persecutors (Matt. 5:44).
7. Pray that their ministry activities will remain undetected by authorities or others who wish to silence them (Acts 9:25).
8. Pray that they will rejoice in suffering (Acts 5:41).
9. Pray that they will be refreshed through God’s Word and grow in their faith (Eph. 6:17).
10. Pray that they will be strengthened through the prayers of fellow believers (Jude 20-25).

