

Feature One: Editorial

And You Study The Bible, How Much?

Allow me, if you will, to begin with an illustration. We live in a world where money is a concern. People spend hundreds of millions of dollars on lottery tickets knowing that their chance of winning the millions of dollars is less than being struck by lightning. Still the allure is there. The hope of winning is there. Because of that they spend their hard earned money on what they really know is an impossible chance.

Suppose you found a thick book of nearly 1000 pages that promised it contained clues to finding a hidden chest of gold worth tens of millions of dollars. You are told the clues are difficult to find, but they are there. When you find all of the clues you will be able to go straight to the hidden treasure. How would you study this book? Would you spend an hour each week studying it? Two? Three? Just how much time would you give to its study? Remember, it is a treasure you know is there, and all you need to do is find those clues. Would you not pour over that book as much as you possible could? Would you put it on a shelf and ignore it?

But wait a minute! We have such a book. But this book promises us much more than tens of millions of dollars. It promises more than all the money in the world. It promises a home in heaven for all eternity. It promises that we will be with our creator. It promises we will never become sick, or face death. So—how much do you study this book? Have you put the book on a shelf?

Maybe I need to ask the question, “Do you really believe it?”

Feature Two: *an article by R. C. Oliver*

EDITOR’S NOTE: *This is taken from one of my dad’s most memorable lessons. I believe it was delivered as a chapel speech at Freed-Hardeman.*

The Bed Is Too Short and the Covers Too Narrow!

Isaiah 28:20

This is an interesting passage – interesting figures. What does it actually mean here? What does it suggest for us today? A bed is where we hope to find rest and sleep and rejuvenation. We look to a bed with the promise of rest.

What is more disappointing than to go to bed to find that it offers just the opposite to that for which we had hoped? Illustration: I took three young people to Ohio with me one Saturday, after I had worked all day, perhaps getting up about 6:30 that morning, and I was to begin a meeting where their grandparents attended services the next day.

They were afraid I might go to sleep driving that night so they knowing that I like to stop along the way and get a cup of coffee, they kept insisting that we stop and get a cup of coffee and when we did they dropped some no-doze in my coffee, of which I knew not.

We finally arrived, and though it was said the preacher usually gets the best bed, my bed reminded me of a valley down between two high mountains as I lay there in sleeplessness distress with my head resting on one mountain peak while my feet rested on the other. I simply could not go to sleep—what misery this was. I even tried to jackknife myself in the bed, but the covers would not properly cover me, for my neck and knees stuck out in the front and my feet and other parts stuck out in the back and only a little strip of my body was covered. There I lay until the morning. It was miserable! It is what I really thought I wanted—where I anticipated joy—until I arrived!!! But this is the way it is going to be with a lot of people some day, for the bed is too short and the covers are too narrow. Let me explain.

Denominational doctrines, that promise us rest, but cannot give peace, will be such a bed.

Marrying, thinking that this is a bed of roses, might well be a bed that is too short the covers of which are too narrow, If you are marrying thinking that you can then be your own boss, you better change your mind, for the bed won't be that comfortable! If you get married to leave home and get away from problems there, you really will have troubles. Now in addition to your own family you have now your wife and all her family to tell you what to do.

Going into debt is another, People may promise you the world but all you will get are bills. Forget the bed, for you won't be able to sleep worrying about how you are going to pay your bills!

Feature Three: Sandy's Women's Corner

BE CAREFUL, THE CHILDREN ARE WATCHING

When our children were pre-school age, we were in a mission area in Indiana. Our congregation was small, but we had just completed a new building and were delighted to have enough children to have several Sunday morning classes.

I was teaching a class of babies to 3-year olds, not an ideal situation; but I felt blessed just the same. One of my students was my daughter.

Because we were so small, we had little money to spend on Bible school material; and that began a life-long effort on my part to write and make my own material.

We were studying creation, and I was making visuals from construction paper. I wanted to impress on the children that God made everything. I cut lots of tulips in a variety of colors, attached stems and leaves, and wrote, "God made me" on the stems. These would not only be my visuals, but they would also be something the children could take home with them.

On Sunday morning I presented my typical review. “Who made the sun?” The reply was, “God did”. “Who made the stars?” The reply was, “God did”. I went through an entire list of created things; and then I pulled out my new visual, my tulips. “And who made the flowers?” I asked. “God did” came the reply from Paula, one of the 3-year olds. “He did not”, replied my daughter. “My mommy made those flowers ‘cause I saw her.” Needless to say, I tried not to make my visuals in her presence again.

Children are watching! They see, hear, and absorb far more than we realize. We can tell our children all day that they shouldn’t lie. Then when we tell that “little white lie” they think there are times when it is ok.

We can tell them that drugs are bad for you, but they see us popping pain pills to keep us going and taking pills to help us sleep.

We tell them we shouldn’t miss worship, but we allow them to miss on Wednesday evening or an occasional Sunday to play in a ball tournament.

We caution them about a variety of activities, but we allow them to do things that lead them right into the paths of sin.

In August, I was privileged to attend Polishing the Pulpit in Sevierville, Tennessee. One of the speakers talked at length about this very subject. She said that we need to make decisions before our children reach the age of asking to do certain things. She said that parents need to decide when they sign up their child for the first ball team whether or not they will miss services for any ball practice, ballgame, tournament, or activity. What a great idea! Do it before the problem arises. Tell the coach, and tell the child. That way there will never be a question.

That same commitment will work for any decision you need to make about either attending worship, what they will be allowed to wear, or what activities in which they will participate.

As parents, it is our responsibility to make the decisions. Make the choice before the fact, and don’t back down.

Feature Four: Our Communication:

Social conflicts often involve some misunderstanding. Conflict parties communicate by what they say (or do not say) and how they behave toward one another. Even normal interaction may involve faulty communication, but conflict seems to worsen the problem. The higher the level of conflict, the more costly misunderstandings may be. During the Cold War, miscommunication between U.S. and Soviet leaders could have been catastrophic in its consequences. At every stage and level of conflict, clear communication among parties usually works to reduce unwise decisions by and costs for the participants.

All communication has two parts: a sender and a receiver. The sender has a message he or she intends to transmit, and she puts it in words which, to her, best reflect what she is thinking. But many things can intervene to prevent the intended message from being received.

If the communication is verbal, tone of voice can influence interpretation. The boss's words "Hey, I noticed you were taking an especially long break this morning," could be interpreted as an attack if he said that in a disapproving tone; while the comment might be seen as a minor reminder about office rules, if it was said in a friendly way. If the employee had a problem requiring the long break, the comment might have even been a friendly inquiry about what has happened and whether the employee needed any help. Here, tone of voice as well as situational and relationship factors would influence the interpretation of the message.

Nonverbal cues also are important. Is the sender's posture open and friendly, or closed and cold? Is her facial expression friendly or accusatory? All of these factors influence how the same words will be received.

In addition to how the message is sent, many additional factors determine how the message is interpreted by the receiver. All new information we learn is compared with the knowledge we already have. If it confirms what we already know, we will likely receive the new information accurately, though we may pay little attention to it. If it disputes our previous assumptions or interpretation of the situation, we may distort it in our mind so that it is made to fit our world view, or we may dismiss the information as deceptive, misguided, or simply wrong.

If the message is ambiguous, the receiver is especially likely to clarify it for herself in a way which corresponds with her expectations. For example, if two people are involved in an escalated conflict, and they each assume that the other is going to be aggressive and hostile, then any ambiguous message will be interpreted as aggressive and hostile, even if it was not intended to be that way at all. Our expectations work as blinders or filters that distort what we see so that it fits our preconceived images of the world.

An analogy can be made to the science experiment done to test people's interpretation of visual cues. When people were given eye-glasses which turned the world upside down, they had to suffer through with upside down images for a week or two. But after that, their brains learned to turn the images back over again, so they were seeing things right side up. The same thing happens when we hear something we "know" is wrong. Our brain "fixes" it.

Given our tendency to hear what we expect to hear, it is very easy for people in conflict to misunderstand each other. Communication is already likely to be strained, and people will, most likely, want to hide the truth to some extent. Thus the potential for misperceptions and misunderstandings is high, which can make conflict management or resolution more difficult.

<http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/problem/misinter.htm>

Feature Five: Bible Question

“Someone told me that Saul wasn’t the first king in Israel. I thought he was. Can you clarify this for me?” – A reader

You are correct that Saul was the first King over all of Israel. What the individual must have been referring to was the story about Abimelech, the son of Gideon (Jerubbaal). He was an evil man that killed all but one of Gideon’s sons, his half-brothers. One escaped to later challenge him. Judges 9:6 tells us, “*And all the men of Shechem gathered together, and all the house of Millo, and went, and made Abimelech king, by the plain of the pillar that was in Shechem.*”

In that sense Abimelech was a king in Israel. He was not selected by God, and he was an evil man. Saul was the first king appointed with God’s approval.

Humor:

A little girl became restless as the preacher’s sermon dragged on and on. Finally, she leaned over to her mother and whispered, “Mommy, if we give him the money now, will he let us go?”

In Closing:

I mentioned in my last posting of this paper that past issues can now be found on Brother Brad Price’s Web page. I am also placing some of my dad’s radio sermons on this page. If you would like to read any back issues they are on his blog, which can be found at:

abiblecommentary.com/lightforourage

Bob Oliver