

Benefit of the Doubt

By Gary Henry consideration?

"For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you" (Matthew 7:2).

IT WOULD BE A BETTER WORLD IF EACH OF US WOULD BE AS PATIENT WITH OTHER PEOPLE AS WE ARE WITH OURSELVES. When it comes to mistakes that we have made, we tend to be very "understanding," but we aren't always so lenient toward the mistakes made by those around us. But Jesus Christ calls upon us to grow in this area of our thinking, and there are several ways we can do this:

WHEN OTHERS HAVE ERRED, WE CAN PLACE THE BEST POSSIBLE INTERPRETATION ON THE EVIDENCE. Very few things happen in this world that aren't capable of more than one explanation. Rather than jump to the worst possible interpretation, we need to do for others what we always hope they'll do for us: believe the best until the facts force a more negative conclusion, which is then accepted reluctantly.

WE CAN GIVE OTHERS TIME TO IMPROVE. Every single one of us is a work in progress. At present, we continue to make mistakes that we hope we'll not make quite so often in the future. Consequently, we hope that others will extend grace to us and allow us the time we need to make the adjustments we're trying to make. Wouldn't it be wise to give them the same

VIEWPOINT OF THEIR POTENTIAL AND LESS FROM THAT OF THEIR PRESENT PERFORMANCE. When Jesus spoke to the adulterous woman who had been brought to Him, He did not condone her sin. In fact, He commanded her to repent: "Go and sin no more" (John 8:11). In saying that, however, He showed more compassion than her accusers had shown. In His view, she was more than a person who had sinned — she was a person with potential, one who could OVERCOME the bad choices she had made!

It ought to be sobering for us to remember that a day of accounting awaits us all, a day when we'll be judged by God. At that time, we'll want God to show every possible leniency to us. But Jesus warned, "With what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you." And James said, "Judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy" (James 2:13). So we need to ask: what kind of accounting by God are we setting ourselves up for?

"If you put up with yourself, why not put up with everyone else" (Guigo I).



Classes This Week

| | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|---|--|--|--|
| Sun 5:15 PM Kids Class at Building | Monday 12 Noon Campus Study - Foy Cafeteria | Monday 7 PM Ladies' Class at Laura West's - "Fruit of the Spirit" | Tuesday 7 PM Bible Reading at Hannah Alexander's | Wednesday 10 AM Ladies Class at Anna Miller's - "Parenting" | Thursday 12:30 PM Campus Study - Foy Cafeteria | Thursday 7 PM Revelation Study at Caleb George's | Friday 6-8 1st-12th Grade Combined class at Jeremiah Johnson's |
|--|---|---|--|---|--|--|--|

Sick

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| Richard Wood (Melanie Smith's Uncle) | Lori Holloway | Mike Reed (Friend of Long's) | Sandlyn Fultz (Davis Fultz's Sister) |
| Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters) | Carrie Chavers (Friend of Sharon Bailey) | Bill Rhodes (Toni Herd's Uncle) | Philip Locke (Jeremiah Johnson's Uncle) |
| Josie Keith (Friend of Heath Fowler) | Grandparents of Mary Ann Roberts | Easton Alexander (Phillip Box's cousin's baby) | Jerry Sandlin (Megan Lee's Grandfather) |
| Richard Call Seth Humphrey's Uncle | Quinton Addison (April Jerkins Grandfather) | Erlene Davis (Walker Davis' mother) | Mary Smith (Nathan Smith's Grandmother) |
| Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father) | Dave Brown (Friend of the Lanier's) | Dale Herd (William Herd's brother) | Larry Alexander (Friend of Phillip Box) |
| Marty and Aubrey Meeks, Russell Dickerson (Toni Herd's Nephews) | Stacey Harrell (Marcus Harrell's Dad) | Ann Robinson (Sharon Bailey's Mom) | |

October Birthdays

- 2 - Suzanne Nichols
- 6 - Jessica Anderson
- 8 - Heath Fowler
- 9 - William Edwards
- 11 - Mason Chandler
- 12 - Stacy Norman
- 14 - Grant Smith
- 20 - Evan Pender
- 20 - Olivia Hillard
- 20 - Keith Bailey
- 21 - Scott Shields
- 22 - Chris Davis
- 22 - Hunter Crawford
- 22 - Meredith Bragwell
- 22 - Christopher White
- 24 - Sarabeth + Suzanna Roberts
- 25 - Josh Sutton
- 26 - Sara Sutton
- 26 - Palmer Daniels
- 26 - Mel Ambrose
- 28 - Anne Morton
- 29 - Matt Hall
- 29 - Belle Johnson
- 31 - Kitty Tam

News and Notes

- Let us remember Matthew Johnson, David Golden and Tim Morton in our prayers as they are deployed overseas.
- Here is the Dembowski's Address and Phone numbers: 2029 Mohican Drive, Waverly, 36879 (404) 232-5768
- Our sympathy is extended to Elizabeth Wiggs at the loss of her great uncle and Bryce Daniels at the loss of his grandmother.
- The Perry Hill church in Montgomery will have a meeting with Tom Holley this week, Oct 2-7 on both mornings and evenings.

The Auburn Beacon



Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Volume 2, Issue 48

October 2, 2011



Thoughts to Ponder

How desperately difficult it is to be honest with oneself. It is much easier to be honest with other people.

Do You Have a Bible Question?
Call (334) 734-2133 or E-mail: LarryRouse@aubeacon.com



SCHEDULE OF SERVICES Sunday

Bible Class9:30 AM
Worship10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Classes.....7:00 PM

Ask about our home Bible Study Groups!

Larry Rouse
Evangelist and Editor

Confusion and Transgression

By Sewell Hall

Have you ever heard anyone say, as an explanation for some sinful action, "I have become so confused I don't know what is right anymore"? As a rule, the person who says such a thing is one who has had clear convictions but has acted, or is about to act, contrary to them.

This must be what the Holy Spirit was saying about Eve in **1 Timothy 2:14**. "Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. "

To say that she was deceived is not to say that she was ignorant. She quoted perfectly what God had said: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, "You shall not eat of it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die" (**Genesis 3:2-3**). She was deceived when she thought there could be any valid reason for disobeying God.

We cannot know how long Adam and Eve avoided the forbidden tree. With so many other trees

But all too often, in the name of open-mindedness and objectivity, we feel we are obligated to look at the other side, to consider the "arguments in favor of" sin. We may even be so foolish as to parrot the existential line: "I must get away to myself and sort things out."

from which to eat, there was no need to eat of it. There is no evidence of confusion regarding the right and wrong of eating or the wisdom of abstaining. They were happy ignoring it.

But along came Satan to draw Eve's attention to the tree she had been avoiding. He drew her attention to the beauty of the fruit and somehow convinced her, perhaps by eating of it himself, that it was good for food. If he did eat of it, the fact that he did not die surely gave support to his contention that

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she would not die. One can see the confusion mounting. The arguments she had considered conclusive against eating were rapidly being matched by arguments for doing so. Which arguments were valid? Both seemed to be.

Had Adam been nearby, or had God spoken again, she might have been reminded once more of the strong reasons for rejecting the fruit. But as it was, the voice of God grew weaker in her memory as the desirability of the fruit was magnified by Satan's glib lies. All that was needed to tip the balance was the final suggestion of an apparent virtue in eating—the thought that she would become like God. Never mind the legalistic prohibition; surely one could not be blamed for wanting to be like God.

"She took of the fruit and ate" (**Genesis 3:6**). Tragic words! Tragic consequences! Consequences reaching down through countless generations even to us!

The great mistake of Eve was in allowing herself even to begin thinking about disobedience. This was the mistake of Achan when he first saw the Babylonian garment (**Judges 7:21**), of David when he first saw his beautiful neighbor bathing (**2 Samuel 11:2**) and of Judas when he first thought of betraying Jesus. It is the same mistake each of us makes—men and women alike—whenever we sin.

The Bible says as much: "Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (**James 1:14-15**).

There is ample defense available. If we are wise enough to meditate on God's laws in such circumstances (**Psalms 119:11**), and to

ask Him for deliverance (**Matthew 6:13**), He will, with the temptation, "also make the way of escape" (**1 Corinthians 10:13**).

But all too often, in the name of open-mindedness and objectivity, we feel we are obligated to look at the other side, to consider the "arguments in favor of" sin. We may even be so foolish as to parrot the existential line: "I must get away to myself and sort things out." If this means getting away for Bible study, meditation and prayer, fine! But this is seldom what it means. As a rule, what it means is: "I want to be left alone to rationalize my way through the sin that entices me without having to reason with those who would logically or scripturally expose my folly."

Such conflict between conscience and passion, between logic and emotion, between authority and anarchy, between flesh and spirit will indeed produce confusion—confusion bordering on insanity. But it is a confusion for which we are responsible. It is the peculiar malady of "those who perish because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved" and who "did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (**2 Thessalonians 2:10,12**). It is never surprising when such a person, "being deceived," falls into transgression.

In Jesus' day, "there was a division among the people because of Him" (**John 7:43**). They were confused by the contradictions between His claims and the accusations of their rulers. Jesus stated clearly who would not be confused: "If anyone wants to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak of My own authority" (**John 7:17**).

Wanting to do God's will will save us from the confusion, deception and transgression into which our mother fell.



Build, Keeping Emotion in Balance

By Ferrell Jenkins

How large is your church?" "What is one of the more common questions that I am asked by outsiders who learn that I am a preacher. We hear of phenomenal growth among certain denominational churches, especially those which put undue emphasis on emotionalism. Examples of unusual and rapid growth are also cited among churches of Christ from time to time.

Don't misunderstand! This writer is opposed to neither growth among the Lord's people nor the proper use of emotions. Growth based on the truth of God is an ideal for which we should long (**Eph 4:14-16**). We are concerned, however, about growth which is accomplished by maintaining a high peak of excitement or through techniques which are more appropriate to sales promotions than to the gospel of Christ.

Keeping churches small is certainly not our goal. Every person in attendance represents a soul destined for eternity. Churches need to grow, and they will as souls are saved by the gospel of Christ (**Rom 1:16-17**). The method by which the desired growth is achieved is extremely important. Simply preaching and teaching the word of God often seems to yield slim results. In an effort to grow, we are sometimes tempted to use methods which, if not unscriptural, are at best questionable. Here we wish to look at a few of these questionable methods which involve the improper use of emotion.

1. Super Salesmanship Techniques. The church which uses such methods must be highly organized into groups with leaders who are responsible for keeping each group motivated. The group must make so many "sales." Everyone must remain excited about the work. Excitement, or enthusiasm, becomes addictive... the group must constantly be "high." The assembly can become a "pep rally" with the elders, the preacher, the announcer, and perhaps even the song leader taking part.

Brethren need to be active in the work of the Lord, but these "super salesmanship techniques" keep one enthused but do nothing to provide a foundation on which to build.

Without this foundation we are sure to fall (**1 Cor 3:10-15**). Christians are to edify (build up) one another. Notice Paul's instruction along this line even during the days of miraculous gifts (**1 Cor 14:12,26**). The religion of excitement won't do this.

If we want to learn how to motivate Christians we should spend our time studying the methods of Jesus and the apostles rather than the line of books, tapes, videos, and seminars used to motivate sales people. When our assem-

blies or group meetings sound more like a pep rally for a ball game, or for a sales promotion, than an opportunity to praise God and study His word, we need to become concerned. The narcotic of activism may be lulling us to sleep.

2. Humor. Humor is an interesting and worthwhile human activity. It often occurs naturally or spontaneously when we least expect it. It might be during the Lord's Supper, like when the child standing in the pew beside his mother exclaims aloud, "Wow, I could have had a V-8!" That's one thing! But intentionally to try to make things funny in order to keep a group excited is improper. A friend told me of visiting a congregation where nearly everyone who took part in the public service began with something "cute" - This, I think, is inappropriate.

3. Physical Contact. Some churches fall into the habit of stressing physical contact. Leaders sometime teach this by their example. Saints greet one another with a hug because we are the "family" of God and are supposed to love one another.

In New Testament times, the kiss was a typical form of greeting, even as it still is in the Middle East today. Christians were exhorted to salute one another with a "holy" kiss (**Rom 16:16**). There is nothing wrong with a warm, fervent greeting, per se. We must not make the mistake of assuming that this proves that we "love" one another. Love (Greek: agape) is best expressed by deeds of kindness done for those in need. Christian men and women need to be careful how they embrace one another. Emotions are stirred easily, especially in young men. The attitude can be developed which thinks that others who do not show their love in the same way are not spiritually-minded Christians.

Conclusion: When the seventy disciples returned from their first mission, they rejoiced because of the miraculous power they had seen demonstrated even at their own hands. Jesus said, "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven" (Luke 10:20). Their emotions led them in the wrong direction. Our past criticism of the denominational emphasis on emotion has been proper. Now we should examine ourselves to see whether our emotions are balanced with fact and reason. My observation has been that churches which go wild over excitement are just waiting for the fall. Another writer has somewhere pointed out that mushrooms grow overnight, but it takes longer to grow an oak.

