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## Attributes of God: Omniscience

-by John Koessler

Does God know what kind of day you had yesterday? Does He know what kind of day you are having today? More importantly, does He know what kind of day you will have tomorrow? The answer to these questions relates to the divine attribute of omniscience.

To say that God is omniscient implies that He knows all that can be known: past, present, and future. In Isaiah 46:10 He declares, "I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please."

God knows our thoughts before we think them, our words before we speak them, and our actions before we implement them (Ps. 139:1-4). He discerns the secret motives of our hearts (Ps. 139:23; Prov. 16:33).

The Biblical truth that God is omniscient would have been especially comforting during Isaiah's day, as the northern

kingdom of Israel was carried into captivity by the Assyrians, and the people of Judah were warned that they would suffer a similar fate at the hands of the Babylonians. Divine omniscience meant that God's purpose for them, based upon His comprehensive knowledge of their future, would be fulfilled.

### Why Theology Matters

The fact that God knows all is amazing enough. But there is an even more amazing truth. The same God whose knowledge is so comprehensive that it encompasses past, present, and future, also knows you by name. Every minute detail of your life is clear to Him, even those things that are hidden from you. He hears when you pray, discerns the true motives behind the words, and knows just how to answer.

-Reprinted from *Today in the Word*

## Three Dangerous Ministry Implications of Open Theism

- by S. Lance Quinn

One of the most beloved aspects of the doctrine of God is his omniscience. When believers are struggling with how to understand God's will and care for them, the knowledge of his exhaustive knowledge (especially his foreknowledge) is of a tremendous, joyful significance. The omniscience – or the all-perfect knowledge of God – is precious to saints because it shows that he has total and complete awareness of all their needs and will perform whatever providential steps necessary to bring about their ultimate good and his glory. Several Scripture texts also clearly show God's omniscience. For example, the apostle John declares that "God is greater than our heart and *knows all things*." One of Job's counselors, Elihu, said that God is "perfect in knowledge" (Job 37:16). One of the more famous passages is Isaiah 46:9-10, which says, "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all my good pleasure.'"

Isaiah also speaks of God's exhaustive knowledge in Isaiah

42:9, when he says, "Now I declare new things; before they spring forth I proclaim them to you." Isaiah is establishing the fact that before things actually occur in the world, before they spring forth, God proclaims them to us. That is an explanation

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of the omniscience of God because it clearly teaches us that God proclaims what is to happen before it occurs in space and time! Surely this is what Jesus himself was teaching about God the Father when he said in Matthew 6:8, “Your Father knows what you need before you ask him.”

King David says essentially the same thing in Psalm 139, only there he speaks of God’s perfect knowledge of us before we are even born: “Your eyes have seen my unformed substance; and in your book were written all the days that were ordained for me, when as yet there was not one of them” (Psalm 139:16). Proverbs 15:3 nicely sums up the omniscience of God when it says, “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, watching the evil and the good.” God is everywhere-present, knows everything and everyone, and will perform whatever is necessary to bring about His own appointed ends. The Christian can take great comfort in the omniscience of God, because it is this – combined with his omnipotence – that solidifies our trust in his absolute control of our lives. We can, as Peter argues, cast “all our anxiety on him, because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

Stating the classical understanding of God’s omniscience and timelessness, Robert Reymond writes: Affirming this [classically understood definition of God’s perfect and timeless knowledge] allows the Christian to hold that the everlasting God, though he is at any and every given moment immanent in his world, is still the sovereign creator and Lord over it, that the world (including its future) is in no sense foreign or unknown to him, and that history – past, present, and future – is the product of his eternal plan, creative activity, providential preservation, and common and special grace.<sup>1</sup>

These aspects of the doctrine of God should be especially comforting to believers today because of the newly-packaged teaching commonly called “Open Theism” (I say “newly packaged” because this “new view” isn’t really that new at all, being previously called Socinianism of the Sixteenth century, after the teaching of Faustus Socinus – following the teaching of two of his uncles). Open Theists, like Socinus before them, reject both the biblical and classical definition of God’s omniscience, and instead believe that “God grows, discovers things he did not know, and changes his mind. God has taken the risk of creating humans, whose actions he cannot necessarily foreknow.”<sup>2</sup> Likewise, John Frame summarizes the Open Theist’s position this way: “Open Theists teach that God is not above time, that he does not control all of nature and history, that he does not know the future exhaustively, that he sometimes makes mistakes and changes his plans, and therefore that he is in some ways dependent on the world.”<sup>3</sup>

Among many ministry implications of Open Theism, there are three which I would like to address: (1) it provides no foundation from which to rightly understand God’s character and works; (2) it gives no ultimate sense to a world of sin and evil; (3) and it brings no lasting comfort to the believer.

The first dangerous ministry implication of Open Theism is that it provides no adequate foundation from which to rightly understand God’s character and works. According to the Scripture however, the believer in Jesus Christ can be assured that God has a plan for his life and that plan is being brought to

its completion by God’s sovereign foreknowledge and will (Ephesians 1:3-14; Philippians 1:6). The apostle Paul has even declared that the good works of believers have been prepared before time began and will be performed by them at God’s behest (Ephesians 2:10). Open Theists categorically deny this because these good works have not yet occurred before Christians do them, and since they have not yet occurred, they can’t be known by God.

Greg Boyd, a leading Open Theist, writes: “If we have been given freedom, we create the reality of our decisions by making them. And until we make them, they don’t exist. Thus, in my view, at least, there simply isn’t anything to know until we make it there to know. So God can’t foreknow the good or bad decisions of the people He creates until He creates these people, and they, in turn, create their decisions.”<sup>4</sup> Is this true and if so, on what basis? In an effort to protect the so-called libertarian free will of man, Open Theists will stop at nothing to deny the true biblical picture of the foreknowledge of God. Does one need look any further than Acts 2:22-23 to see the biblical balance and proper foundation of God’s foreknowledge in the human events of the death of Christ? “Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know – this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.” According to Boyd and other Open Theists, this passage would need to be reinterpreted to mean something other than what it plainly says. Open Theists have been building a foundation for the character of God which is tragically being constructed upon the shifting sands of their own misrepresentations of Him.

The second dangerous ministry implication of Open Theism is that it gives no ultimate sense to a world of sin and evil. As an example, Boyd believes that God did not know that Adolf Hitler was going to be as wicked as he was and was therefore unaware of the millions of Jews Hitler would later order exterminated. In a dialog with his own father who was at that time an agnostic, Boyd answered this question about the character of God: “A number of years ago, my agnostic father and I were conversing by letter about the problem of how an all-good, all-powerful God could allow nightmarish suffering to occur in His creation. In one correspondence, my father asked me why God would allow Adolf Hitler to be born if he foreknow that this man would massacre millions of Jews. It was a very good question. The only response I could offer then, and the only response I continue to offer now, is that this was not foreknown as a certainty at the time God created Hitler.”<sup>5</sup> Boyd of course will go on to say that God orchestrates everything rightly in the end, but what does that say for events in the middle? Is this supposed to be a comfort for all these surviving Jewish families? Would he be qualified to counsel them? Would they even want him to?

Open Theism flies in the face of all those biblical passages cited earlier about the absolute foreknowledge of God (see also Isaiah 14:24-27; 44:28; 45:7). In addition, Proverbs 16:4 declares: “The Lord has made everything for its purpose, even

the wicked for the day of trouble.” Adolf Hitler’s extermination of millions of Jews, as utterly sinful and heinous as it was, did not somehow catch God by surprise. His sovereign purposes, including His foreordination and foreknowledge of all foreseen events, will come to pass just as He wills. Contrary to Boyd’s claim, it is *certain* in God’s plan, and we, as His finite creatures, wait for the unfolding of His plans, trusting as Joseph said in Genesis 50:20, “As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.” The most appropriate counsel to anyone of course, is to point outside of ourselves to the True and Living God who never makes mistakes; who knows all things; who knows the end from the beginning; who understands our fallen, sinful condition; and who has provided One – the Lord Jesus Christ – who has suffered the most horrific death more unimaginable than any other, and who is the only Substitute for sin.

Open Theism also includes a third dangerous ministry implication: It brings no lasting comfort to the believer. In Boyd’s *God of the Possible*, he relates the now infamous account of Suzanne, a young woman in Boyd’s church whose husband abandoned her through adultery. Boyd spoke with her after a message he preached and gave her this pastoral advice:

Shortly after college, the newly married couple went away to a missionary school to prepare for their missionary career. Two years into this training, Suzanne learned to her horror that her husband was involved in an adulterous relationship with a fellow student. Her husband repented, but within several months returned to the affair. Despite intensive Christian counseling, this pattern repeated itself several times over the next three years.

During these three years, Suzanne’s husband’s spiritual convictions altogether disappeared, including his burden for Taiwan. He grew increasingly argumentative, hostile, and even verbally and physically abusive. In one argument toward the end of their marriage, he actually fractured Suzanne’s cheekbone in a fit of rage. Soon after this event, Suzanne’s husband filed for divorce and moved in with his lover. Two weeks later, Suzanne discovered she was pregnant.

The whole sad ordeal left Suzanne emotionally destroyed and spiritually bankrupt. All of her dreams had crashed down on her. She felt that her life was basically over. The worst part of it, however, was not the pain her husband had inflicted on her. The worst part of it was how profoundly the ordeal had damaged her previously vibrant relationship with the Lord.

Understandably, Suzanne could not fathom how the Lord could respond to her lifelong prayers by setting her up with a man he knew would do this to her and her child. Some Christian friends had suggested that perhaps she hadn’t heard God correctly. But if it wasn’t God’s voice that she and everyone else had heard regarding marriage, she concluded, then no one could ever be sure they heard God’s voice. This was as clear as it could ever get. She had a very good point.

Other friends, reminiscent of Job’s friends, suggested that her marriage had indeed been God’s will. Knowing

its outcome, the Lord had led her into it because he loves her so much and was trying to humble her, build her character, or perhaps punish her for previous sin. If a lesson was the point of it all, Suzanne remarked, then God was a very poor teacher. The ordeal didn’t teach her anything; it simply left her bitter.

Initially, I tried to help Suzanne understand that this was her ex-husband’s fault, not God’s, but her reply was more than adequate to invalidate my encouragement: If God *knew* exactly what her husband would do, then he bears all the responsibility for setting her up the way he did. I could not argue against her point, but I could offer an alternative way of understanding the situation.

I suggested to her that God felt as much regret over the confirmation he had given Suzanne as he did about his decision to make Saul king of Israel (1 Sam. 15:11, 35; see also Gen. 6:5-6). Not that it was a bad decision – at the time, her ex-husband was a good man with a godly character. The prospects that he and Suzanne would have a happy marriage and fruitful ministry were, at the time, very good. Indeed, I strongly suspect that he had influenced Suzanne and her ex-husband toward this college with their marriage in mind.

Because her ex-husband was a free agent, however, even the best decision can have sad results. Over time, and through a series of choices, Suzanne’s ex-husband opened himself up to the enemy’s influence and became involved in an immoral relationship. Initially, all was not lost, and God and others tried to restore him, but he chose to resist the prompting of the Spirit, and consequently his heart grew darker. Suzanne’s ex-husband had become a very different person from the man God had confirmed to Suzanne to be a good candidate for marriage. This, I assured Suzanne, grieved God’s heart at least as deeply as it grieved hers.

By framing the ordeal within the context of an open future, Suzanne was able to understand the tragedy of her life in a new way. She didn’t have to abandon all confidence in her ability to hear God and didn’t have to accept that somehow God intended this ordeal “for her own good.” Her faith in God’s character and her love toward God were eventually restored and she was finally able to move on with her life.

Understandably, Taiwan was no longer on her heart, but fortunately, the “God of the possible” always has a plan B and a plan C. He’s also wise enough to know how to weave our failed plan A’s into these alternative plans so beautifully that looking back, it may look like B or C was his original plan all along. This isn’t a testimony to his exhaustive definite foreknowledge; it’s a testimony to his unfathomable wisdom.

Without having the open view to offer, I don’t know how one could effectively minister to a person in Suzanne’s dilemma.<sup>6</sup>

This pastoral counsel is nothing short of frightening. It could not possibly have given anything but a short-term solution

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# The Pastor and His Family

-by Mel Shetler

Attempting to balance the role of husband and parent along with being a pastor is one of the most difficult responsibilities you will ever face. We all face the question daily in ministry, "How can I be a truly biblical husband and father and also do a good job in leading the church?" Here are some solid principles that have guided me over the years.

## **Make your wife a priority above the church.**

Always let the church staff know that your wife is to have free, unhindered access to you at all times. If she abuses the freedom, you can deal with it privately and agree together on boundaries that are helpful. Most pastors' wives are too sensitive in not wanting to be a bother so they get pushed into being the last person in line to be heard. Fellow church workers or staff often love to help provide time for pastor couples to nourish their relationship.

## **Love your children and place them ahead of the church.**

Special speakers can fill a pulpit, other persons can lead a committee meeting, but only a father can fill the seat of an important event in your son or daughter's life. One pastor told me he would pitch ball with his son at 1:00 in the afternoon out behind the barn so church people would not see them and be critical. Play with your children in the front yard for all the world to see. As in any area, there is need for balance. Families can get selfish and not have kingdom values. Parents hold the key in communicating these values. Many a time my wife took me to the airport to catch a plane for a week of revival meetings or preaching somewhere and as the plane took off

she would turn to the children and say, "Aren't you glad you have a daddy that is preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ to people?" They would sit up tall and agree with her that this was a worthy mission for their daddy to be on.

## **Let your daily parenting speak louder than your sermons.**

One Sunday morning a pastor's family was on edge trying to get to church in time. Finally, as they drove into the parking lot, the teenage daughter said, "Dad, it's time to put your preacher's face on." As important as pastoring a church is, parenting is more important. If your children love to hear you preach, you know you are passing this test.

## **Include your children in your ministry and help them understand both the blessings and the responsibility.**

If you haven't already done this, call your children together and explain the blessings that come with your ministry. Explain the personal call of God upon your family, the rich relationships you enjoy because of ministry, the faithful prayers of so many people in the church, the many thoughtful cards, gifts, and words of encouragement that come your way. Help them understand the truth about not just sharing the gospel from the pulpit but the entire family showing other families how to live. Explain to them how the principal's son or the mayor's daughter may feel about living in a glass house, and that a pastor's family can be equally visible but for a very noble cause. Thankfully, most children growing up in a pastor's home can understand this and rise to meet that challenge.

Taken from the *Brotherhood Beacon*.



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to "Suzanne" and her dilemma. Indeed, the cavalier way in which Romans 8:28 was tossed aside gives evidence that Scripture itself is not the driving force behind the "Open" view of God. Therefore, if the God of the Bible isn't being appealed to, it cannot and will not bring lasting comfort for the true believer. Rather, Suzanne could and should have been told that both Romans 8:28-29 and Romans 11:33-36 (also alluded to by Boyd) are wonderful passages of Scripture which teach believers that God has a definite plan which includes working out all things (including the unfaithfulness of a spouse) for His ultimate glory and our good. It includes His divine foreknowledge and inscrutable wisdom, not some whimsical idea that He was finding out with us when the events were unfolding before all of us. That gives no genuine believer lasting comfort.

Rightly should we say of Open Theism, as does D.A. Carson: "A sad mark of the theological ignorance of our times

is that socianism can dress itself up in new terminology and pass itself off as evangelical theology instead of a pernicious error frequently and roundly condemned."<sup>7</sup>

Reprinted with permission of *The Journal of Modern Ministry*, volume 1, issue 1, Spring 2004

- 1 Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), p. 177.
- 2 Millard Erickson, *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology*, revised edition, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2001), p. 143.
- 3 John Frame, *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company, 2001), p. 11.
- 4 Greg Boyd, *Letters from a Skeptic* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1992), p. 30.
- 5 Greg Boyd, *God of the Possible*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2000), p. 98.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 104-106
- 7 D.A. Carson, endorsement of John Frame's *No Other God: A Response to Open Theism*, p.1

# Missing God on Sunday Morning: Some Thoughts on Why We Don't Experience God in Worship

-by Paul R. Isensee

The research is alarming. More than three quarters of adults who attend church services report they do not experience the presence of God during worship.<sup>1</sup> Half of all regular churchgoers admit they have not experienced God's presence at all during the past year.<sup>2</sup> Is this true? If so, who's to blame? Those planning and leading the services? The (non-worshipping) worshippers in the services? And what can be done about it?

If worship is people responding to God's revelation of Himself, His Word, and His activity, then surely we will encounter God's presence in genuine worship. In the midst of cycles of revelation and response, people will always experience God in profound ways. Why, then, is this apparently the experience of so few on Sunday mornings?

In the present, ever-growing focus on worship, four misconceptions have crept into popular thinking and have created faulty expectations for congregational worship. When these expectations are not met, God is assumed to be absent, worship aborted, and the service suspect. By uncovering these misconceptions and correcting the expectations, we will discover God is present and wants to reveal Himself to us.

One such misconception is that our personal experience in worship should be similar, if not the same, in whatever context it occurs. In reality, we worship in a variety of settings ranging from private moments alone with God, to corporate events with an entire congregation. Each has unique potentials and limitations for worship. Recently, many have rediscovered meaningful worship in private or small group settings where their most comfortable forms of expression can predominate. Unfortunately, however, this awakening has also led many to the faulty expectation that corporate worship should mirror their personal preferences and yield the same newfound experiences. For them and others who see the worshiper's benefit and pleasure as primary, corporate worship seems unable to deliver what they desire. Still others simply find it too difficult to share their "worship space" with those of differing preferences. Failing to recognize the uniqueness of corporate worship, they dismiss it as irrelevant or dead.

A second misconception concerns how we experience God. For many, "experiencing God" in worship, or "entering into the presence of God," means having a certain set of spiritual, emotional, and aesthetic feelings. These often become the definition and goal of worship. Several unfortunate factors may foster this misconception: 1) Failing to understand that God reveals Himself in many ways – the foremost being through His Word – and that when we are exposed to biblical truth we have experienced God. 2) Confusing God's self-revelation with the "worship experience" being sought. As a result, what is often thought to be a worshiper's experience of God is actually the worshiper's response to God. 3) Seeing encounters with God as normally, if not always, pleasurable

experiences when, in fact, they often result in unsettling experiences such as conviction of sin or spiritual struggle. 4) Believing participation in pleasurable worship activities constitute worship.

There are significant dangers with experiential expectations. Seeking certain experiences in worship may exploit worship for our pleasure and rob God of His supreme place in it. Further, seeking predefined experiences (mistakenly thought to be worship) may hinder or actually replace involvement in true worship. It is surely possible to participate in pleasurable worship activities and never worship; worse, to encounter God and fail to worship. In each case, true worship is thwarted, and God is missed.

A third misconception involves personal readiness for worship. Current worship patterns seem to suggest that few worshippers are concerned with prerequisites for acceptable worship. While we come to Christ as we are, unable to merit salvation by any reform of our own, we cannot come, as one song says, "just as [we] are to worship." Saul tried it in 1 Samuel 22; Israel tried it in Isaiah 1; and the psalmist warned against it in Psalm 95. Obedience, not sacrifice; cleansing, not state-of-the-art worship; and softened, not hardened hearts are necessary for acceptable worship and for experiencing God. Failure to consider our need for spiritual readiness to worship leads to the faulty expectation that worship will happen whenever we desire it. But we cannot expect God to participate in such worship "on-demand." Rather, we can be sure God will close His eyes and ears to us and we will indeed miss Him.

A corollary misconception is the assumption that worship on Sunday will be meaningful regardless of our worship habits during the week. As one writer has expressed it: "God has put within us a need to worship Him. If we ignore this all week, then bring all our worship needs to our church Sunday morning, little will satisfy us."<sup>3</sup> It is likely that if we only worship on Sunday, we probably don't worship on Sunday!

A final misconception concerning worship is apparent in a newfound emphasis upon the worship leader. While effective, godly leadership is important in worship, worship can certainly happen without it. In contrast, the current reliance upon a remarkable worship leader who "leads worshipers into the presence of God" belies the belief that a certain ability, guaranteed to bring about worship in a congregation, is both possible and necessary. In this paradigm, the key to "successful" worship lies more in the ability of the leader than in the spiritual initiative of the congregation. Unfortunately, this perspective encourages congregations to see worship as something generated for them rather than something produced by them, and their primary experience in the service may be the worship leader rather than God!

In each case, then, due to basic misconceptions, God is

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# Safeguard Your Moorings

-by Bruce Scott

Moorings connect sea vessels to solid ground. If these moorings break, the vessel becomes subject to the wind and waves and is likely to go adrift.

Similarly, when Christian institutions break away from their biblical moorings, they become subject to worldly influences and theological liberalism; and ultimately, they drift toward apostasy.

Apostasy can often result from a slow and gradual erosion of certain fundamentals of the faith. The following is a sampling of these all-important “moorings.”

## 1. A Commitment to Biblical Inerrancy.

Harold Lindsell astutely observed, “Down the road, whether it takes five or fifty years, any institution that departs from belief in an inerrant Scripture will likewise depart from other fundamentals of the faith and at least cease to be evangelical in the historical meaning of that term.”<sup>1</sup>

## 2. A Commitment to Propositional, Revelatory Truth.

The use of other sources (i.e., tradition, culture, reason, the scientific method, or experience) for discovering ultimate, revealed truth effectively diminishes the Bible’s authority. Eventually there is no longer an objective standard by which to measure heresy. Man becomes the measure.<sup>2</sup>

## 3. A Commitment to Clarity of Theological and Doctrinal Terms.

Theologian Millard Erickson perceived that theological liberals “continued to use the same terminology, but invested it with different meaning.” Further, “In a day in which meaning is thought by some to reside, not objectively in the words and expressions themselves, but in the person who receives them so that its meaning is what it means to the recipient, this concern is especially appropriate.”<sup>3</sup>

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missed because worshipers seek something in His place: a predetermined manner of worship, a particular experience associated with worship, participation in worship without appropriate spiritual preparation, or a semi-passive event to be attended.

Not missing God on Sunday requires at least three responses. One is for worshipers to think carefully and biblically about worship, routing out the misconceptions that prevent it. Healthy corporate worship requires embracing the diversity and commonality of a congregation and its experience with God. A second is for worship leaders to design services to facilitate real dialogue between God and people. Thinking first of spiritual functions rather than experiential outcomes

## 4. A Commitment to Separation.

Entangling alliances with unbelievers can lead to compromise (2 Cor. 6:14-18). An example is the life of King Solomon.

## 5. A Commitment to Pleasing God.

A subtle but major shift towards apostasy occurs when a believer seeks man’s approval over God’s. This situation can lead to concessions in all the previously mentioned areas. The Bible and history are filled with examples.<sup>4</sup>

Contemporary departures from the faith portend a future apostasy that will come during the Tribulation (2 Th. 2:3). Today, theologically liberal “sirens” constantly call for those who would join them. Unfortunately, too many people have “put away” a good conscience and “have made shipwreck” their faith (1 Tim. 1:19).

How are *your* moorings?

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1 Harold Linsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 120-21.

2 Roger E. Olson, “Postconservative Evangelicals Greet the Postmodern Age,” *Christian Century* 112.15 (May 3, 1995), 480, cited in Millard J. Erickson, *The EvangelicalLeft* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997) 29, 42-44. Also see George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 49-50, 60, 62-63.

3 Erickson, 15-16.

4 See 1 Sam. 13:11; Jn 12:42-43; Gal. 2:11-12; George M. Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 144, 146, 181, 186; Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 24, 61, 270, 287.



keeps worship planning on track. The third is to continually focus attention in worship upon God, His person, work and Word. Everyone who comes face to face with Him and worship will be supremely satisfied.

-This article originally appeared in the Summer 2003 edition of PBU Today, the quarterly magazine of Philadelphia Biblical University. It is reprinted with permission.

1 George Barna. “Stirring the Pot,” *Leadership Journal*. Vol XXII, No.2: p. 89.

2 Ibid.

3 Patrick Kavanaugh. “That Song’s Too Fast! That One’s Too Slow!” *Integrity Today*. Vol. 5, No. 2: p.3.

# “Let Us Go Into the House of the Lord”

-by Floyd Gehman

Traveling toward the church house on Sunday morning is an excellent opportunity to teach reverence to our family. We ask the children, as we come over the hill and see the church house in the valley, “Now whose house is this?” “God’s house” is their reply. Often reminders follow as we drive into the church parking lot. These reminders are not only for the small children but also for the older ones, and even for Father and Mother. We all need reminders sometimes to help us continue to be reverent in the house of God. Here are a few that we hear sometimes in our vehicle as we drive to church:

**We must get around a little earlier next Sunday.**

Getting to church on time – early enough to sit in and have time for quiet meditation before the service begins is one way to be reverent in God’s house. Occasionally, there may be trouble in the barn, a flat tire, or a detour that delays us; but walking in during the first song too often shows a lack of reverence.

**Remember how to behave during the service.**

Sit quietly – even before the service starts, even if the service gets long, even if you get thirsty, and even if others do not.

Help to sing. Open your Bible and follow along as it is read. Look at the minister while he preaches. We do not turn around to look back in church. Keep your eyes shut during prayer.

Remember, if there are visitors, we do not stare at them or make fun of them. We should be friendly and glad to have them worship with us.

**Do you remember how to act in Sunday School?**

What is your Sunday school verse? Can you still say it after the practice you had at home? Walk quietly to and from class. There should be no running or talking.

Listen carefully to the teacher. Raise your hand to answer questions. Say your verse when the teacher asks. Do not talk to those beside you or tell stories to your friends in Sunday School; that should wait until later.

**Remember what to do when church is over.**

Stay with Father or Mother. Talk quietly to your friends. Shake hands with and talk clearly to the adults who come to

talk to you.

Do not beg to hold Sister Sarah’s new baby; that can wait until we go to visit them. Also, if Sister Becky lets you hold little Jacob, you should sit down and not walk away with him.

Big brother or sister, are you remembering you are to be within sight of Father and Mother after church? I noticed last Sunday that it was getting too noisy back there where you and your friends were talking. If you are not old enough to be reverent on your own, you will need to stay beside us for awhile.

**Father, do try to stay awake in church today.**

Remember, you got up early this morning to study. Isaac, if you see him dozing, nudge him a little.

When we are invited away for a meal, we would not have trouble with dozing at the table. Why should we have trouble when we go to God’s house for a spiritual meal?

**Father and Mother, remember to keep an eye on the younger children.**

Last Sunday they were running after church and making faces at other people.

We enjoy worship and fellowship when we give it our full attention, but let us not forget that we do have a responsibility to see that our children are being reverent and not hindering others’ worship.

Let us determine anew to remind each other, with the wisest man that ever lived, to “Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God” (Ecclesiastes 5:1).

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# Musings on Marriage

-by J. Mark Horst

A lot of media hype surrounded last month's US Senate vote on the Federal Marriage Amendment (FMA). While there may be legitimate discussion about the issues raised by the FMA, that's not the purpose of this article.

The bigger question is, how have we arrived at the point where we need a federal marriage amendment? Why is an institution that dates to creation, and has served humanity well through the millennia, now in danger of extinction, if indeed that is the case?

History proves that every civilization that scorns God's design for sexuality, marriage, and parenting ultimately fades into oblivion. But in our "self" crazed culture, history doesn't matter and neither do consequences. All that matters is that I can have what I want when I want it.

What is the role of the church in society, and how should the church address the issues relating to marriage? The church is to lift up God's moral standard by demonstrating its effects in daily living.

Sadly, many mainline denominations have openly embraced what God hates. Many Evangelicals verbally endorse God's standard but practice the moral looseness of our time. The current church growth "marketing strategy" of being "seeker sensitive" discourages teaching about sin, repentance and the demands of discipleship. The culture is impacting the church when it should be the other way around!

God's Word commands us to be salt and light, but research tells us that divorce rates among professing Christians are identical or higher than those who make no profession! How can we preserve and enlighten the culture if we don't follow His commands? We are back to Satan's question in the Garden of Eden, "Yea, hath God said?" Do we really believe and obey what the Bible teaches, or only what's convenient? As Christians, the authority of Scripture must be our "bottom line."

Now, a bit more personal. Based on what non-Christians observe of your marriage, would they be interested in having a relationship like yours? Do you treat your spouse with respect? Is your spouse your best friend? Would your marriage give them a glimpse of the relationship between Christ and His Bride?

What about your children? Will your marriage be a model for them to follow; or one to run away from? Many couples are "emotionally" divorced, yet stay together because of the damage to their reputation if they separate. God's grace can enable your children to overcome that negative influence, but they will have some struggles that could be avoided if they had a better model.

Men, the **primary** responsibility for a great marriage rests with us! We are commanded to love our wives "as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it..." If you want to know how to be a good husband, study the life of Jesus. His life was all about giving. He was completely surrendered to the will of His Father. The more we are like Him, the better husbands we will be. Few, and far between, are the wives who would desire to be separated from such a man.

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I know this is a big command. It is impossible in our own strength. Our selfishness is deeply rooted and will not die without a struggle. But by God's grace and our obedience we can fulfill our responsibility. We need to stop making excuses for our carnality and be like Jesus.

Wives, you have a responsibility for the success of your marriage too. Your cheerfulness, your sweet, submissive spirit, your kindness and gentleness will go a long way in building your relationship. Many a man will spend time with his friends who accept him rather than come home to a wife who nags and criticizes continually. Your disposition should be such that your husband wants to share your company more than that of any other person!

In our culture, this kind of marriage will attract attention because it is so unusual. A marriage rooted in Biblical principle and practice is a tremendous testimony of God's power to an unbelieving world.

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