

# THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

(As a preacher who has preached on marriage before I was married and on child-rearing before I had any children of my own, I immediately identified with everything this brother had to say. Some have a big problem with such preachers speaking on topics in which they have no personal experience, but I think what he has to say is right on the mark—Andy).

## PARENTAL INSTRUCTIONS FROM A NON-PARENT?

Well, I finish a series of lessons on the family today. It is a major understatement to say that in some ways I have felt woefully ill-equipped to address issues related to the family (and especially raising children) when I don't yet have children of my own. It is very similar to when I would be asked to bring lessons on marriage as a young preacher, though I myself had never yet been married.

Understandably, some people automatically will "tune out" when listening to a sermon about parenting that comes from someone who is not a parent. Likewise, why should I listen to a sermon on marriage from someone who has never been married himself? As a preacher, I once really struggled with this. I determined that there were only two options. I could either never address issues related to marriage and the family until I had the personal experience (and thus not preach the "whole counsel of God" as I have been charged to do in Acts 20:27), or I could simply speak what God has spoken on these issues, and let him use me to communicate his message and attempt to avoid adding my personal opinions. I have chosen the latter.

Think about it for a moment. Jesus often taught on marriage (cf. Matthew 19:1-12), yet he never married. The Apostle Paul gave instructions on child-rearing (cf. Ephesians 6:1-4), but he never had any children of his own. One does not have to have experiential knowledge to be able to communicate what God's instructions direct concerning marriage and the home (although admittedly it can really help the audience if you do!).

Perhaps one of the reasons that the state of the family is in such disarray today is because we have listened to the counsel of men for far too long. Too many parents have built their families on the advice of child-psychologists, popular parenting books, or upon the misguided advice of others whose techniques of parenting do not stand the test of time. It is time that we return to the advice of the First Parent and listen to what our Heavenly Father instructs about the home.

Much of God's advice about parenting is extremely controversial in our current day, it is counter-cultural, and politically-incorrect. Yet God's directives for the home have proved effective for generations; and rightfully so, since He is the architect of the home.

If a single preacher gives lots of *personal advice* for marriage, you likely are justified to roll your eyes. If a preacher without kids gives *his personal steps* for raising a successful family, you are likely justified in turning a deaf ear. However, if a man of God simply points to instructions from God about the family we should carefully give attention to those passages on parenting, marriage, and the home. Yet, we must each be responsible ourselves to make sure that what anyone proclaims on any topic is biblically accurate by a personal study of the Scripture (Acts 17:11).

If I am ever guilty of "preaching my opinion" on any matter (including parenting), you would do well to dismiss, or even ignore it. But as I strive to simply speak and expound only "the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11) I would say with the Apostle Paul, "let him recognize the things I write [or speak] to you are the Lord's commandment" (1 Corinthians 14:37).

-Jonathan Jones

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## HE REFUSED JUST ONE BEER

Several years ago I read an article written by Dan Jenkins that impressed me greatly. It had to do with what some who call themselves Christians will do when put to the text, and also what one Christian refused to do, and it cost him his life. Please read the following and ask yourself, "Which of these would I be?"

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

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**WHAT DOES IT TRULY  
MEAN TO BE A CHRISTIAN?  
GREATER THAN JOHN**

Text: \_\_\_\_\_

I. We're Greater Because We're \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

II. We're Greater Because We're \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

III. We're Greater Because We're \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

**CHRISTIANS AND THE ORACLES OF GOD**

Text: \_\_\_\_\_

I. They Are to Influence the Christian's \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

II. They Are to Influence the Christian's \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

III. They Are to Influence the Christian's \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

- Following a recent Friday night football game many high school students were having a “victory party.” The air was full of laughter; the victory had been sweet! Some Christians were present, and when offered a beer they did not refuse.
- A bill was before the state legislature. It would allow wine to be sold at a much cheaper price, by the removal of certain taxes upon it. Another bill was also presented that would allow billboard advertising of liquor. Christians, who were members of the legislature, were asked for their support. They did not refuse. In fact, they led the fight to get both passed.
- A Christian helped his neighbor with some yard work in the hot afternoon sun. They had known each other for a long time and had often fished and golfed together. When they went into the neighbor’s house to cool off, the neighbor offered the Christian a cold beer. He did not refuse.
- A Christian businessman sat across the table from an important client. All was going well. The client offered him a drink and he knew that if he took it, the sale he had longed for would be clinched. He did not refuse.

A report from Jim Petty, a preacher in South Africa arrived recently. It said, “One of the former graduates from Umtali Bible School, Douglas Dabangana, was killed by terrorists where he was preaching in Southwest Rhodesia, the last part of June. A group of terrorists tried to force him to drink a beer, but he refused, saying he was a Christian and couldn’t. So they shot him right then, killing him.”

One day, the Christian high school students, the Christian legislators, the Christian businessman, the Christian neighbor, and Douglas Dabangana will stand before Christ to give account for the deeds done in the body. Which of these would you want to be?

After reading the above, please give consideration to the following. If you were placed in the same or a similar situation, what would you do? Are there not times when we are prone to compromise rather than “offend” someone? Are we always willing to stand up for truth and right and let there be no doubt in anyone’s mind where we stand on every issue? Are we willing to speak out, or do we just remain silent for fear that we will be embarrassed if our associates learn what we really believe? Please listen and heed these words of our Lord: “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38). Yes, we live in an “adulterous and sinful generation,” but can we afford to be ashamed of our Lord? Remember, we must be willing to confess Him before men if we expect Him to confess us before the Father (Matthew 10:32-33). Let’s sin and mean, “I’m not ashamed to own my Lord nor to defend His cause,” but do we really mean it, or are we just saying words?

-Virgil Hale

**PRAYER WILL KEEP US BUSY**

Christianity is a religion that revolves around the work and participation of its members. Jesus stressed this need as He taught such parables as the “talents” (Matthew 25:14-30) and the “sower” (Mark 4:3-9). Paul reaffirmed this teaching by referring to God’s people as those who are “zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). James warned that trying to live a life of faith without works was emptiness and void (James 2:17,26). Despite God’s continual reminder, He still addressed those who would try to follow Him and refuse to work (Proverbs 21:25; 26:14). Solomon describes the field of a lazy man as being overgrown with thorns and the wall around it as broken (Proverbs 24:30-31). What’s the point? We ought to be people who are busy!

Someone might respond, “Well, I have that covered!” We are all busy people, are we not? Little League, soccer practice, band concerts, football games, school projects, overtime, and many other things keep us busy from sun up to sun down, almost every day. Let us remember that in our schedule of things to do, God must capture first place and retain such a position. Sadly, some who claim to be people of God are described in Psalm 39:6. Here David penned, “Surely every man walks about like a shadow; surely they busy themselves in vain; he heaps up riches and does not know who will gather them” (Psalm 39:6).

How then do I keep from being busy in vain? How do I go about reorganizing my priorities so that I am busy with things that will matter on the Day of Judgment? One of the many answers to this question is to pray. Not that all of our time each day will be consumed with prayer, but that faithful prayer (which will be accompanied with action by the petitioner) will keep us busy.

As we continue this study, let us consider some areas of our lives and some roles in the church that would be spurred to greater service if those who occupied those roles were diligent in their prayer life.

**Prayer Will Keep Parents Busy**

If it is our prayer that our children be faithful to the Lord and that they remain faithful to Him, even after they have left home, will we not forgo activities of a secular nature that conflict with the service and activities of the Lord’s church? If our prayer for our children is that their future mate be a New Testament Christian, will we not closely monitor whom they date? Sometimes this might even include forbidding them from dating certain people. Do we view prayer as a miracle cure in these situations, or do we realize that prayers of this fashion will keep us on our toes as parents, to be watchful and careful with our children?

It is true that our children should hear us pray for them by name every single day of their lives. They should know that mom and dad are far more concerned about their spiritual future than their physical future. However, if this is expressed in words of prayer, but then refuted in actions, our children are smart enough to see that. If it is our prayer that God be first in our lives, we should be busy carrying that out in our daily lives. Any other scenario would result in hypocrisy and spiritual peril.

**Prayer Will Keep Preachers Busy**

Prayer should play a valuable role in the life of any gospel preacher. The twelve who were commissioned to go preach the gospel were afraid of being swayed from that task with serving tables. So special servants were chosen to care for the neglected widows so that the apostles could give themselves “continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). Preachers of the Bible such as Peter, Paul, and Christ spent a portion (and sometimes a large portion) of each day in prayer. Sometimes they prayed before making an important decision (Mark 1:35). Sometimes they prayed at the end of a long day of work (Luke 5:18). Sometimes they prayed in the face of tremendous adversity (Luke 26:39). Sometimes they prayed with fellow workers (Acts 20:36). Sometimes they prayed in the midst of physical danger (Acts 27:29). Sometimes they prayed earnestly and intently that others might obey the gospel (Romans 10:1). Sometimes they prayed at the grace of a dear friend for their fellow workers in the Lord (Philippians 1:4). Sometimes they prayed that those concerted would be strengthened and encouraged (Colossians 1:9-11). Truly prayer has played a vital role in the lives of gospel preachers in the past, and it should be a vital plan of life for current preachers as well.

What work would be done if every preacher prayed in the same situations and for the same reasons that men like Christ and Paul prayed! May we ever beg in prayer that we may boldly speak the things of God and that doors of opportunity may be opened (Ephesians 6:18-20)!

-Wayne Jones  
to be continued