

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

THE CHOICE IS YOURS

What do you want the Pleasant View Church of Christ to be like? Let your imagination run wild for a moment: friendliest church, most imposing worship services, best evangelistic emphasis, most benevolent, best-taught Bible school, strongest visitation program, most loving, best youth program, most generous...the choice is yours, you know!

Of course, I am not talking about what doctrine we will believe, practice, and teach; the Lord has already decided that for us. If we want to be the church of Christ, then obviously we must do what Christ said or we are not His church. What I am talking about is the way we apply that doctrine. That is what really determines what the Pleasant View congregation will be like, and that is one decision that is left up to the membership. Let me explain.

Who decides what the attendance at services will be on any given Sunday or Wednesday? The membership decides! Who decides how much the church will spend on evangelism or benevolence? Someone says, "The elders do," or "the men of the congregation do." Wrong! Oh, yes, the elders (or in congregations without elders, the men's business meetings) decide where the money will go, but the membership decides how much will be spent, because if we don't give it, the elders or those responsible can't spend it. What about the atmosphere of our assemblies, who decides that? Why, the membership, of course! You can't have a friendly church without friendly members. You can't have a loving church without loving members. You can't have enthusiastic, spirited worship without members who want to worship God in a spirited and zealous fashion.

One final question: who decides whether or not we are a growing church, a stagnant church, or a dying church? You've begun to catch on, and you're right—you do! Oh, yes, the leadership plays a major part. I have always believed, and I think the Bible clearly teaches, that the church cannot outgrow its leadership. Generally speaking, the members will not go where their leaders will not lead and that's why many churches are stagnant, dying, or dead—because their leaders offer little or no example of real leadership for the members to follow. As the Bible says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Proverbs 29:18).

But ultimately, it again falls on the members to decide whether the church grows, maintains the status quo (a nice way of saying it remains stagnant), or dies. Even if a church has dynamic, visionary, on-fire leadership, if it does not have zealous members who are willing to follow their lead and involves themselves in the work, then the battle is lost. It takes great leaders and great followers to build a great church.

To a degree the success or failure of the local congregation is in **YOUR** hands. **YOU** must decide how much visiting will be done, how many folks will be invited to attend our services, how much the Gospel will be shared in private conversations, and what kind of influence the church will have in the community by your own personal demeanor and example. Whether or not a local church grows will to a great degree, be determined by these factors. So, you see, **the choice is really yours!**

What do you want this congregation to be like and what would it be like if everyone else attended, participated, fellowshiped, worshipped, gave, and worked just as **YOU** do? It is a sobering thought, worthy of serious soul-searching consideration.

*-David McCain
adapted for use*

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

A LIVING SERMON

Text: _____

I. Preached From _____

Notes:

II. Preached From _____

Notes:

III. Preached From _____

Notes:

Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and excheweth evil?" (Job 1:8).

We live in a world that is under the curse of sin (Genesis 3), and illness is one of the consequences of Adam's choice, a choice we also make (Romans 3:23). Nothing indicates, however, that God punishes anyone with a particular disease today. Job wanted to know why he was suffering, but even when God spoke to him out of the whirlwind, He never told Job why he was suffering. God is a God of love Who will help us cope with the difficulties of disease and suffering if we will turn to Him. Illness is not an indication of God's punishment, and good fortune is not necessarily an indication of God's approval. Those who suffer and those who care for them deserve our prayers and support.

-Bob Prichard

ARE ILLNESSES SUCH AS ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE FROM GOD?

"And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?" (John 9:1-2). The disciples expressed a common belief of that day, that illness is often, if not always, punishment for sin. The disciples even considered that the man may have caused his own blindness by his sin in the womb! Jesus made it clear that the man's illness had nothing to do with sin, or punishment from God, as He said, "Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (John 9:3). Jesus then went on to give the man his sight, and he ultimately worshiped Jesus as the Son of God.

Where does illness come from? We all realize that many times our lifestyle has an effect on health. Smoking, promiscuous sex, poor dietary choices, a sedentary lifestyle—these and many other things have an effect on our health. As time goes by, and we learn more about how we can protect our health, many of us are making choices that we hope will help us avoid illness. We will never know how much a healthy lifestyle has already protected us from many of the diseases that plague mankind.

However, there are many illnesses that medical science has no good explanation as to what the causes are. Certainly smoking will increase one's chances of getting lung cancer, but non-smokers get lung cancer also. Other illnesses such as Alzheimer's disease are still being studied. Our doctors may at some point have some suggestions as to what may lower our risk of succumbing to this disease, but there does not seem to be any good scientific explanation yet of what we may do to avoid the disease.

When the patriarch Job lost his possessions, his family, and his health (Job 1-2), his three "friends" all assumed that God was punishing Job for his great sins. Eliphaz told Job, "Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? Or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same. By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed" (Job 4:7-9). His "friend" Zophar thought Job was such a sinner, that he even went so far as to say, "Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth" (Job 11:6). While it is true that there are consequences for sin, in actuality, Job was suffering precisely because He was a righteous man. "And the Lord said unto

COKE AND PEANUT CHRISTIANITY

I have long had an affinity for Coke and peanuts. I remember as a young child being at my parents' store and enjoying as my afternoon snack a twenty-five cent bottle of Coke and five cent bag of peanuts. The two mixed together produce a taste that is incomparable to any other. I have noticed over the years, though, that the key to maximizing the enjoyment of Coke and peanuts is balance. What I mean by that is that if one is not careful, he/she could eat all of the peanuts and still have a fair amount of Coke remaining; or one could drink all of the Coke and have peanuts still rattling in the bottom of an otherwise empty bottle. I often tell people, jokingly, that the key is proper peanut to Coke distribution. It is only in that balance that Coke and peanuts can be enjoyed to the fullest.

On a similar note, this same type of balance is necessary as it pertains to the joy found in Christianity. So many people's lives are given to extremes. Some eat far too much and become obese. Others fear that extreme and eat as little as possible and are undernourished. Neither are happy in their condition because happiness will only be found in a "healthy" (excuse the pun) balance. Some are too lazy to do a bit of work and find themselves in financial straits, ignorantly wondering "Why?" Others fear that extreme and become obsessed with work, allowing time for little else. Again, both are unhappy in their states because satisfaction is only going to be found when proper balance is found. Much of the same is found among Christians.

As with everything else in life, Christianity is comprised of things that are positive and negative. Positives of Christianity include such things as love, grace, mercy, longsuffering, redemption, salvation, and heaven. These are all essentials and thoughts to which we must give emphasis, recognizing them as drawing points of Christianity. However, an extreme exists. Some want to recognize nothing but these positive points that are uplifting, encouraging, and joy-filled. This presents a problem because such an extreme does not represent "all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Therefore to combat that extreme others comprise another extreme focused only on the negatives of Christianity such as sin, Satan, discipline, consequence, condemnation, and the reality of hell. However, this does not remedy the problem but rather escalates it because this extreme neglects "all the counsel of God" as well. The positive extreme ignores the protective measures of Christianity while the negative extreme ignores its attractiveness. Neither is truly effective and neither brings glory to God. What then is the answer?

True joy and satisfaction is found in balanced Christianity. The positive aspects will convert the soul while the negative will protect it. We must be both **for Christ** and **against sin**. I think Paul had that in mind when he encouraged Timothy to "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove (**negative**), reprove (**negative**), exhort (**positive**) with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2). It is only according to that Divinely instructed method that Christianity will truly be enjoyed. It is not found only in the "happy, happy, joy, joy" mind-sets characterized by many; nor in the "doom and gloom" that defines others. But just like with Coke and peanuts, the true joy of Christianity is found directly in the middle, where balance resides.

-Andy Brewer

PUT A SOCK IN IT

A young couple decided to marry. As the big day approached, they grew apprehensive. Each had a problem they had never shared with anyone, not even each other. The groom-to-be, overcoming his fear, decided to ask his father for advice. "Dad, I am deeply concerned about the success of my marriage." His father replied, "Don't you love this girl?" "Oh yes, very much," he said, "but you see, I have very smelly feet, and I'm afraid that my fiance will be put off by them." "No problem" said dad, "all you have to do I wash your feet as often as possible, and always wear socks, even to bed." This seemed a workable solution to him.

The bride-to-be, overcoming her fear, decided to talk with her mom. "Mom," she said, "when I wake up in the morning my breath is truly awful." "Honey," her mother consoled, "everyone has bad breath in the morning." No, you don't understand. Mine is so bad, I'm afraid my fiance will not want to sleep in the same room with me.' Her mother said, "Try this. Get straight out of bed, and head for the kitchen and make breakfast. While the family is busy eating, move on to the bathroom and brush your teeth. The key is not to say a word until you're brushed your teeth."

"I shouldn't say good morning or anything?" she asked. "Not a word," her mother affirmed. "Well, it's worth a try," she said.

The loving couple was finally married. He with his perpetual socks and she with her morning silence, they managed quite well. For about six months. Shortly before dawn one morning, the husband woke with a start to find that one of his socks had come off. Fearful of the consequences, he frantically searched the bed. This, of course, woke his bride and without thinking, she asks, "What one earth are you doing?"

"Oh, no," he replied, "you've swallowed my sock!"