

Spiritual Considerations...



Selected articles designed to assist in our Bible study and Christian walk.

Dave Phillips, editor

number 34

Passionate Balance is Not an Oxymoron!

Dave Phillips, Germantown

Our theme for 2004 was *Spiritual Passion*, enhancing commitment and service for God. Every part of that theme is attractive to me. It was a great attempt to follow up our 2003 of *Spiritual Growth*. I remain convinced that the Lord purposefully blesses us, intending for us to use our blessings in serving others. As a congregation, we are reaching out into new areas of work, challenging and being challenged to become passionate in our service. I am also convinced that passion without direction is dangerous. Paul called it "zeal without knowledge" (Rom. 10:2). But, a passion for God, a love for the truth, and a deep commitment to share the good news of Jesus Christ is priceless in the growth of the church.

Last year, I was privileged to go to California for the first time. One of our elders had frequent flyer miles and "hinted" that if I ever wanted to attend a lectureship, we could attend together. I mentioned that I had never been to California and would like to attend the Pepperdine Lectures. This would serve a dual purpose of seeing this campus for the first time, and going out west. The night before we were to leave, his work schedule called for him to be in Atlanta, so he said I could cancel the trip or go alone. I chose to go – and I am glad I went.

I attended every lecture possible - from the earliest morning session to "Pie and Coffee" (a regular informal evening gathering) at night in the cafeteria. I heard speakers from around the world and across the state. Having never visited California, I absolutely felt immersed in a new culture. I introduced myself to people of all ages at the "Pie and Coffee" sessions and learned about congregations across the country. I found people of all types – many were conservative, many others were progressive. Some were intense, while others were laid-back. Some were easily excitable and intense, while others were deeply reflective. I met some amazing people and heard intriguing stories of people coming to know the Lord. I heard lessons I heartily agreed with and others that were very disappointing. I was challenged by some classes and disturbed by others.

I wanted to meet Jerry Rushford, the director of the Lectureship, but he was busy each evening and the time did not present itself. He is a native of Michigan and an earnest student of Christian hymnody. He has organized and hosted several trips to Europe and even produced a video entitled, "Hymns From the English Countryside," a fascinating history of the life of songwriter Isaac Watts. I wanted to visit with him concerning his work with the history of Christian music. I'm very interested in knowing the evolution of our singing.

At the closing session of the lectureship, however, he announced to the assembly of 5000 that he would invite people to send letters, e-mails, and faxes regarding the lectureship. He said that he read every one and would like to know what each guest thought.

I returned home and e-mailed a note that was complimentary of the Pepperdine campus and everyone I met. It is a beautiful campus and the people could not have been more congenial. I also mentioned some of the messages that I thought were very inspiring and helpful. There were many. The people with whom I visited at "Pie and Coffee" were some of the most 'down-home folks' you could imagine. They are working diligently in congregations of various sizes across the country. I mentioned that I enjoyed the lectureship and thought one observation was that it seemed those who were "progressive" in their approach were given more of a 'platform,' while those who were conservative in their views did not have as much exposure. In the interest of a more 'balanced' lectureship perhaps there could be more diversity. I mentioned that these were admittedly the thoughts of a "first-timer."

I sent the message thinking that nothing more would come of it. He would probably use that suggestion in consideration for next year's program. That wasn't the case. I received a very prompt and courteous letter from Jerry thanking me for my comments and asking if I would be interested in coming to the Lectureship next year to teach a class on any topic I chose. He said that he would like for me to send him three choices from which he might choose to include in the 2005 lectureship.

Needless to say, I was surprised. I am not aggressively soliciting speaking engagements and fully understand that some can misconstrue motives. Some misunderstand events while others misrepresent people.

So I thought about it. I prayed about it. It seemed to me that I had made a suggestion for improvement and the person receiving the suggestion responded with, "OK, put up or shut up." Now, he is too kind to ever say those words, but I think that could be an interpretation.

So, I talked with our elders. I also stated what I would say if given the opportunity to go to another state to discuss the work of the church. They listened – and discussed – and encouraged me to go.

I sent my suggestions to Jerry Rushford and received another kind letter of appreciation. At any rate, Ann and I are planning to attend this year's lectureship where I'm scheduled to speak on Wednesday, May 4 on the topic of "Passionate Balance is Not an Oxymoron!" We ask for your prayers. I'm aware that it is only a class offered for one day – and seventeen other choices are offered at the same time - all of which I would like to attend. But, I applaud Jerry Rushford for listening and responding to one person who would like to encourage the church not to get lost in extremism, but seek for the common ground that leads us to Christ.

Briefly stated, I believe we can be passionate about Jesus Christ and build up the body of Christ (the church) without falling into the snare of radical extremism - either the right or the left. I have been to meetings where thoughtless and unmerciful statements were made about those on the other extreme of their views. It's not limited to one extreme. I've heard some chastised for being "liberal" with the same distasteful vigilance, as I've heard others condemned for being "legalists." I suppose malice has no directional preference.

Passionate balance is not an oxymoron. Staying dead center in the middle of the road of God's plan keeps us out of the ditches along the side. In this case, 'middle of the road' is not mediocrity, nor is it lukewarmness. It is a deliberate, focused attempt to study God's Word for ourselves, then preach, teach, and share it with everyone we meet.

If our passion for God supersedes our intolerance for human frailties, we will be drawn more closely to God and have a greater respect for the Word of God as our guide. I plan to take seriously the themes of the congregation of the Lord's church at Germantown. In 2003, we sought to *Enhance our Spiritual Growth*. In 2004, we endeavored to *Develop Spiritual Passion*. In 2005, our goal is to live by *God's Values*. If God is leading our way, our path will be straight and balanced. Let's walk *together*.

Just a Little

Addie Nobles, Germantown

A few years ago, I wrote this poem, which was later published. At Jimmie Waggoner's invitation to attend his football banquet, Grandma accepted! The football coach delivered such a convincing message while stressing the importance of making good and wise decisions concerning drinking, smoking and using pleasure drugs.

He also stressed the importance of remaining virgins until each could accept and be responsible for the results of these decisions.

I congratulated the coach, who was from Germantown High School, on making a much needed and timely address. Although, my message may not have carried the weight nor have the impact that the coach produced with his, I decided to "run my poem" again.

Why dear friends, is it so amiss, if I take just a *little* heroin or just a little crack?

"Just a *little* bit," says the novice, won't throw me off track!"

"Oh, no," you say, and rightfully so, "to take of pleasure drugs could mean a deadly blow!"

Yet if it's not OK for a *little* crack, or a *little* cocaine to take,

Why is permission given for just a *little* alcoholic drink?

Consider this, alcohol is the most abused of all pleasure drugs they say,

We see the horrible results of this abuse day after day!

Yet, just a *little* won't hurt, so reasons the skeptic,

'Till it's too late, they're hooked, they're labeled an addict!

When can we win the drug war, we are asked?

Not 'till the inconsistencies of use have all been passed!

The facts are convincing and so, please make your answer to all pleasure drugs a definite "NO!"