

# Spiritual Considerations...

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



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Dave Phillips, editor

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## **How Specific Must We Be?**

**Dave Phillips, Germantown**

*"Franklin Graham, son and heir of evangelist Billy Graham, looked out over the crowd of 70,000. Speaking at the climax of a Colorado memorial service on April 25 for those slain at Columbine High School, Graham offered mourners, government dignitaries, and the assembled media his own best advice for coping with the tragedy: "Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ? Have you trusted him as your savior? Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the light. No man comes to the Father but by me."*

*A century ago, in an America saturated by evangelical Protestantism, nothing would have seemed out of place about Franklin Graham's question. But with that classic, unabashed, evangelical Protestant plea to accept Jesus Christ as a personal savior, Graham tossed aside one of the unwritten laws of civility that has shaped America's public rituals of mourning since World War II. Generalized theism is good; Jesus talk is not."*

Andrew Walsh, editor of *Religion in the News* (summer, 99), expressed the frustration that at most of the funerals following the tragic shootings in Littleton, Colorado, the name of Jesus was not mentioned. Aside from the fact that I would want to add more information and definition to the statement by Graham (i.e. what he means by "trusting him as my savior"), I struggle with the fact that when talking about Biblical principles and instruction, it is so easy in the religious world to find generic inspiration rather than clear calls for submission to God. It's even true in the church.

I think I know part of the reason. We may have heard tiresome name-calling and reputation bashing to the point that we might think that any mention of a specific command is a return to a repugnant approach to soul-winning that we have seen in the past. Many of the debate books I have read turned quickly from an objective discussion of the issues to a personal attack against the opponent. When a person "ran out of soap" in his argument, he began to berate his opponent in order to gain an advantage. The fiery competition between the debaters fanned the flame of hostility and seemingly extinguished any prospect of gaining a convert. So perhaps, we have sought a kinder, gentler approach.

But what if religious leaders go to the other extreme in their approach and speak in such subtleties so as not to be understood by their listeners? The message will be too generic to be instructive. A listener will hear what he/she thinks she hears rather than what is intended.

Is there an answer? There must be an answer. It must be that we are to be just as general and just as specific as the Bible. When approaching specific obedience issues, there must be specificity. For example, the plan of salvation is not optional is it? Should we not hear the Word in order to believe? Once we believe the Word, should we not turn from those practices in our lives that are contradictory? Once we have a change in our lives, should we not confess (admit) that Jesus is the Son of God and be baptized in order to receive forgiveness of our sins? These specifics cannot be denied.

While we are growing in the Lord, there are general issues that call for me to encourage others to follow, but which call for me to use discretion in my judgments. For example, I am to be aware that I cannot judge the motives of another man. I cannot always tell when he/she is innocently involved in an activity that will harm his/her spiritual well-being, or when he/she is sinisterly attempting to pull another person away from the Lord. In these matters, the Lord has reserved the right to judge. With the Bible as a guide, we can, however, learn the appropriate action and behavior.

I do know this. We are to have the mind of Christ in our conduct. We are to be as loving as He was, as concerned with obedience to God as He was, and concerned for His church as He was.

I want to do what the Lord wants me to do. In reference to Walsh's article, we must be more determined to individually reflect the life of Jesus, not the world. Jesus talk is good. Generalized theism is not.

## Marriage

### From "Preaching"

A wife came in to see a lawyer about getting a divorce. He said, "Do you have grounds?" She said, "Well, we have about one acre." He said, "No, I mean does he have a grudge?" She said, "No, but he has a carport." He said, "What I mean is do you wake up grumpy?" She said, "No, I just let him sleep." Exasperated he said, "Does he beat you up?" She said, "No, I usually get up first." Finally he said, "O.K. why do you want a divorce?" She said, "We just can't seem to communicate."

## Corraling Charlie in Church

### Patricia Glenn

Sometimes the only worship experience I have on Sunday morning is the short prayer I utter as we enter the church building, "Please, Lord, let Charlie be decent today and the preachers sermon be short."

Charlie is my two-year old wiggle-worm who has known from birth that the excellent acoustics in the church building were created just for him. He automatically becomes all arms and legs as we enter the swinging doors and he delights in wrapping them around me at the worst possible times. Songbooks become a challenge to tame, pencils become weapons to duck, and the collection plate would make a great hat if he could just get his hands on it. We don't dare sit at the end of the aisle because the man serving the Lord's Supper might have his coat button snatched unceremoniously off his coat. But we can't sit in the middle because we always make a pilgrimage back to the lounge (after we collect his shoe, my purse and his books).

Do I ask myself if it's worth it? Sometimes. But I know that "training up a child in the way he should go" is a seven day a week job, not just a Monday through Saturday responsibility. Sleeping on Sunday morning might be bigger temptation if we didn't consider Charlie a very special gift from God...a gift that is a bundle of responsibilities. I am certain that what we do on Sunday now will affect what he does on Sunday twenty years from now.

So we keep going, knowing on some future Sunday Charlie is going to sit quietly through the whole service, and it won't be due to the ropes and gag I threaten to use each week. With patience and discipline, we prayerfully hope to see him grow to be a Christian man, strong and faithful to his Lord.

## Worry?

### Scott Tillman, Nashville

A lady named Linda went to Arkansas to visit her in-laws, and while there, went to a store. She parked next to a car with a woman sitting in it. The woman's eyes were closed and she had her hands behind her head and it looked like she was sleeping.

When Linda came out of the store a while later, she again saw the woman. Her hands were still behind her head, but her eyes were open. They looked very strange, so Linda tapped on the window and asked, "Are you okay?"

The woman answered, "I've been shot in the head, and I am holding my brains in." Linda didn't know what to do, so she ran into the store, and had someone call the paramedics. When they arrived they had to break into the car because the door was locked. When they got in, they found that the woman had bread dough on the back of her head and in her hands.

A Pillsbury refrigerated biscuit can had apparently exploded from the heat in the car. It made a loud explosion like a gunshot and hit her in the head. When she reached back to find what it was, she felt the dough and thought it was her brains. She passed out from fright at first, then had attempted to hold her "brains" in.

Too often we worry about situations and imagine the worst possible outcome, when we should trust God. One of my students gave this advice: "Why worry? God will be up all night anyway!"

*"It is often harder to be patient and submissive in obscurity under small annoyances than to be a martyr before a large crowd in a great cause."*