

Virtual Christian Magazine

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For The Real World

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When A Half Million Bullets Aren't Enough

By Gary Petty

Are you living by the rules but still missing something? What is the proper balance between process and progress? In the battle of Isandlwana the British were technically correct but ended up being dead wrong.



THE AFRICAN PLATEAU was spotted with clumps of tents and red coated British soldiers. Armed with fine breech loading rifles, and half a million rounds of ammunition, there seemed little to fear from the spear toting Zulus.

But sometimes a half million bullets just aren't enough.

The 1870's British Empire stretched from Canada to the Orient. Even the most remote outpost was run with textbook military code and discipline. They seemed invincible to almost everyone... including themselves.

In 1879 violence erupted between the British protectorate in South Africa and the Zulu Kingdom. England sent an army to invade Zululand.

The invading force split into two columns. The main column marching a few miles ahead of a smaller force. The smaller column camped at the foot of a ragged mountain named Isandlwana. As the men were eating breakfast the alarm sounded. Within a few minutes the soldiers formed a horseshoe defensive line around the camp.

The danger of the situation dawned when there appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, twenty thousand Zulu warriors! The British line didn't waiver. Each man was an expert marksman. And, they possessed five hundred thousand rounds of ammunition.

When the Zulus came within range the soldiers opened fire. The warriors went down by the

dozens. The attack wavered. For nearly an hour there was a standoff with British soldiers holding their ground against the fierce Zulus.

If you stood atop Isandlwana you would have witnessed an awesome sight. The mile long horseshoe line facing a mass of struggling warriors. A thousand yards behind the soldiers lay the ammunition wagons where runners carried cartridges to the firing line.

If you stood atop Isandlwana that day, you would also notice, as the morning wore on the sound of gunfire weakened.

At the ammunition wagons activities continued with textbook rigidity. An accounting was to be made of every cartridge. Each ammunition box had numerous screws and only the quartermaster had a screwdriver. Each box was opened only when another was empty.

Runners from the battle stood in line for their cartridges. No hurrying. No pushing. No panic. If a soldier showed up at a wagon that didn't belong to his company he was ordered to run hundreds of yards to the next wagon.

All along the line the British infantry was getting nervous. They continued to push cartridges into their breech-loaders, mark the targets, squeeze off the rounds. NCO's calmly barked orders telling the men to stay under control. But more and more men were asking, "Where's the ammo?"

The amount of cartridges reaching the line had slowed to a trickle. Hundreds of ammunition boxes were still unopened. But, rules are rules, and cartridges were distributed under strict accounting procedures.

The volume of fire slackened. A native company ran out of bullets and ran towards the rear. The Zulus rushed into the gap. The slaughter of the British troops began. Of the nine-hundred-and-fifty European troops who took the field that day only fifty-five survived. Of the eight-hundred-and-fifty native troops only three hundred made it back to safety.

What happened at Isandlwana is the only time an army, possessing a half a million bullets, neatly stacked in unopened boxes, was destroyed because its troops ran out of ammunition. The British quartermasters were so concerned with control of details they missed the bigger picture.

The Bigger Picture

Sometimes in the hustle and bustle of the job, children's school activities, rushing to the next meeting, fixing the car and trying to make ends meet we lose sight of the purpose of life. Many times, we don't wake up from our preoccupation with details until the crisis is upon us in the form of ruined health, devastated relationships and depression.

It's not that we can afford to ignore all details. But we must be aware of the importance of details in relationship with the bigger picture. Stephen Covey, in his book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, calls this the difference between the urgent and the important.

"Urgent matters are usually visible. They press on us; they insist on action. They're often

popular with others. They're usually right in front of us. And often they are pleasant, easy, fun to do. But so often they are unimportant.

"Importance, on the other hand, has to do with results. If something is important, it contributes to your mission, your values, your high priority goals." (*Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen R. Covey, 1989, p. 151).

Jesus visited the house of two sisters. Mary sat and listened to Jesus teach the principles of life. Martha was distraught with details of preparations for her guests. Martha complained that Mary wasn't doing her part.

Jesus answered, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41-42). Mary saw a bigger picture. The details would still be there. But now there was something more important to do.

What Is Important?

Where do we start in determining what is important? A list of priorities is determined by the end goal. Christianity isn't simply a set of beliefs. It is a way of life with a definite goal. Jesus Christ reminds us, "...seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

What would happen in your life if you faced each day with the goal of being like Christ? How many urgent details would you set aside to fulfill really important matters? Would you answer the telephone or finish your family dinner? Would you turn off the television to take a walk with your spouse? Would you take time to clear your mind of troubles and meditate on God's plan for humanity? Would you give up watching one basketball game a month to visit the elderly and sick?

God has a bigger picture for your life. Don't lose sight of that bigger picture as the British army at Isandlwana did. You have all the ammunition you need. But you must use it. Spend time everyday in contact with Him through prayer and Bible study. Live by the words in His instruction book. Take care of the essentials and the details will take care of themselves.

There have been numerous attempts to explain the defeat at Isandlwana. Obviously, the sheer weight of numbers was a factor as well as the disposition of the British troops (they were spread out too thin). Donald Morris, in *The Washing of the Spears*, states that as long as the soldiers kept firing, the Zulus were held at bay. He speculates that with 500,000 rounds of ammunition and the right troop formation on the mountain side, using the wagons as a fort, the British could have held back the warriors. It all became moot when they ran out of ammunition.

Source: *The Washing of the Spears*, Donald R. Morris, 1965, Simon and Schuster.

How to Say No (Without Losing Your Friends)

By Graemme Marshall

Sometimes if you don't say no you can end up hurting yourself. The challenge is in learning to say no without offending others and losing friends.



HOW OFTEN ARE YOU faced with situations where you know you should say no, and you may even want to say no, but you don't? For many of us, it happens often, maybe even virtually every day. So how do we deal with such situations?

Our difficulty often lies in our not wanting others to think badly of us, so we find it hard to say no. Yet, if we refuse to say no, we can end up getting in trouble or hurting ourselves or others. We can get taken advantage of by failing to say a polite but firm no.

Consider some of the pained rationalizations and excuses you've probably heard:

- "I knew he was driving too fast, but I didn't know what to do about it."
- "I knew it was illegal to drink, but the others wanted to."
- "I didn't want to buy it, but the salesclerk pressured me."
- "I didn't agree with the group, but I didn't want to stand out as different."
- "I shouldn't have given in, but everyone else was doing it."

Situations like these often place us in compromising positions with our beliefs and standards, family rules or personal desires. But there are reasonable and friendly ways of saying no. The next time you're faced with the dilemma of knowing you should say no, consider some of the following advice and responses.

Go by the rules

Put your refusal on an impersonal basis. This helps counter the problem of being pressured into something, whether at school or with friends. When faced with invitations to smoke, try drugs or alcohol, cheat or engage in immoral or illegal activity, explain that your family set

specific rules that you choose to follow. So, the answer has to be no. It may be hard at first, but often you'll find that your friends will respect you more when you take a stand against such things.

Going by the rules can also help when faced with people who drive dangerously, drink illegally or otherwise exert an unwanted influence over you.

An excellent example, expressed lyrically, is found in Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical production "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat." It takes us back to the biblical story of Joseph, a talented, good-looking young man who, though a slave, managed the estate of Potiphar, an Egyptian nobleman. Things were going well for the young man until the nobleman's wife tried to seduce him.

The scene with the woman goes this way: "Joseph's looks and handsome figure, Had attracted her attention, Every morning she would beckon, 'Come and lie with me love.' Joseph wanted to resist her, Till one day she proved too eager, Joseph cried in vain, 'Please stop, I don't believe in free love.'"



The biblical account describes how she repeatedly tried to seduce Joseph. But he resisted, telling her: "There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he [her husband] kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9).

But she persisted. "So it was, as she spoke to Joseph day by day, that he did not heed her, to lie with her or to be with her. But it happened about this time, when Joseph went into the house to do his work, and none of the men of the house was inside, that she caught him by his garment, saying, 'Lie with me.' But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside" (verses 10-12).

After his repeated refusals to engage in adultery, to betray not only his master but his God, Joseph has only one option: to literally run from that evil!

This incident is echoed millennia later in the apostle Paul's words: "Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body" (1 Corinthians 6:18).

Joseph politely refused when pressured by the boss's wife to do wrong. He didn't weaken about what he knew was right. Her proposal would have been against the rules of Joseph's spiritual Father--God.

Joseph simply didn't allow that sort of thing in his values and lifestyle. When she continued her adulterous attention toward him, he avoided the source of temptation as much as possible--he kept away from her. When she finally trapped him alone in a compromising situation, Joseph simply had to flee the scene.

The Bible records how Joseph paid a steep price for his refusal to compromise. Potiphar's wife turned around and accused Joseph of attempted rape, and he was jailed. But in the end God richly rewarded Joseph for his sterling character and refusal to give in to sin. The rest of the story tells us how Joseph eventually became the second most powerful and influential

man in the kingdom of Egypt, a superpower of its day.

Say no by showing what needs to be done for a yes

What do you do when a salesperson pressures you to buy something you do not want? You might explain that if you are shown the exact thing you want, in the color and style you want, and for the right price, then you might buy.

Don't give in to doing things against your will. We can learn from the tragic love story of strongman Samson. He became romantically involved with a woman named Delilah (Judges 16:4). Caught up in steamy, heady emotions, he became entrapped through a behind-the-scenes plot. The local Philistine rulers set him up by paying Delilah to snare him (verses 5-6).

On three occasions Delilah asked Samson to reveal the secret of his great strength. For a while he successfully put her off until finally, under the pressure of constant questioning and being asked to prove his love for her, he relented.

He suffered much for it. The story's heartrending end tells the sorry consequences of giving in when he should have stayed firm to his convictions (verses 15-17, 21). God's way--the way of a good and upright life--should be a much higher priority than the pressures that try to make us give in.

Be firm when right is right and don't yield to wrong

When others suggest something that you can't do, or don't want to do, offer some alternatives. Tell them, "I'm sorry, but I just can't do that. However, I'd be glad to join you if you'd like to try this other idea instead." You may just end up saving the entire group a lot of trouble.

Say no by asking others to walk in your shoes

One way you can courteously refuse is by helping other people appreciate your problem in having to say no. After all, what would they do if they had your homework to complete? What would they do if they had an exam coming up and were being asked to neglect preparing for it? What would their answer be if they had to face your priorities?

Explain to others that your refusal is the proper and sensible thing to do at the time. This helps reasonable people understand why you have to say no to their request.

Along with asking others to walk in your shoes, it also helps to try and walk in theirs. It's also wise to avoid coming across as if you are better than they are.

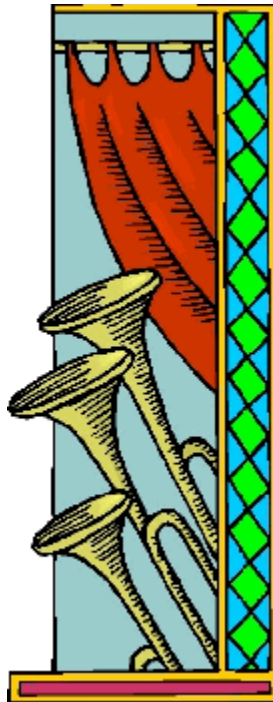
When faced with the need for a delicate refusal without hurting others' feelings, be firm but kind. If being enticed to go against your principles, be strong in character to choose right and say no to wrong. Remember that a refusal is more readily accepted when given in a warm and friendly manner.

So, when faced with having to say no, do it gracefully--and add a smile!

The Resurrection: The Astounding Biblical Truth

By John Miller

The hope of the resurrection comes alive in the midst of a tragic death. This moving account underscores the reality of the moment when we will be reunited with our loved ones.



MY WIFE AND I LOST OUR YOUNG SON under tragic circumstances After the accident, as I held his broken body in my arms for the last time, a deep realization dawned on me--this was not the end!

In a flash an amazing biblical truth became clear: My son would live again! The words of Jesus Christ-"for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth" (John 5:28-29)--suddenly took on new meaning.

The concept of a resurrection to life-a biblical teaching few understand-was no longer an intangible promise from the pages of the Bible. The resurrection suddenly became a very real event for me. I saw it for the first time for what it really is: a commitment from Jesus Christ Himself.

Jesus Christ is committed to "the hour" when we can meet again our little son whom I was bidding farewell. This would be a real family reunion--one that I knew we could not afford to miss no matter what the cost!

Hope amid tragedy

Jonathan's funeral was held the next day. The funeral director gave us a little white casket in his showroom--his expression of sympathy for our tragedy. We rented his small funeral

parlor where we could pay Jonathan our last respects among family and friends.

The words of our minister, spoken as I sat there in the front row with my wife and two remaining children, still ring in my ears today: "We are assembled here today on a very sobering occasion. The life of young Jonathan was snuffed out ever so quickly, but God's Word shows us that he will live again!"

Then he proceeded to expound God's message of hope through the resurrection made possible by Jesus Christ.

As I looked at the little white casket, I wanted to weep but couldn't--that would come later. What God had revealed through His Word was too profound. Scriptures I had read many times suddenly came alive and took on deep meaning. The vision of hope that had inspired me there in the driveway began to take on new dimensions.

The promise of a resurrection to life was not just for me, not just for my family, not just for Jonathan. I began to realize that this promise was about a family reunion on an unparalleled scale--for the entire family of man!

Death knows no socioeconomic boundaries, but neither does the resurrection by which victory is promised: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ *all shall be made alive*," declared the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Death seems so final. Death leaves gaping voids with numb and bewildered survivors in its wake. We know; we've been there. We laid little Jonathan to rest in a tiny gravesite and returned home on that fateful day with an indescribable void in our hearts.

But death is not final. It is simply a respite prior to the life to come. The pain of death for those left behind is real, but so is the promise of the coming resurrection that will reunite us with our loved ones.

We need to believe that promise

The promise of the resurrection has affected me and my family in such a powerful way. It has brought so much comfort and inspired so much hope.

There is much confusion on this subject, much needless fear of the unknown. The Bible gives answers, concrete answers that provide hope and comfort.

The truth of the resurrection is profound, and you can discover it for yourself in the pages of your own Bible.

We begin our journey in the Book of Revelation. This prophetic book provides a chronological framework of end time events including the resurrections.

The 19th chapter of Revelation sets the stage by describing the glorious return of Jesus Christ to earth. The heavens open and Christ rides out on a white horse followed by the armies of God. It is at this moment that the people of God from all ages are reunited in one dramatic action described by the apostle Paul in his letter to the Corinthians: "Behold, I tell you a

mystery: We shall not all sleep [die], but we shall all be changed--in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet shall sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed (1 Corinthians 15:51-52).

At this momentous event God's chosen people from all ages receive God's promise--eternal life in the family of God! As "heirs of God" and "joint heirs" with Jesus Christ they are glorified together with Him to become like Jesus Christ in the truest sense of the word (Romans 8:17; 1 John 3:2). It is a dramatic reunion as the patriarchs of old together with their brethren in Christ attain what they waited on for so long--a "better resurrection" (Hebrews 11:35; Daniel 12:13)

The story continues in Revelation. Jesus Christ and His heavenly forces crush the rebellious armies on earth in one final battle. An angel binds Satan so he cannot influence humankind (Revelation 19:14-21; 20:1-3). Finally, the world can be "at one" with God as Christ and the resurrected saints usher in the long awaited Kingdom of God (Revelation 20:4).

However, the resurrected saints are immediately given responsibilities. There is work to do, and Christ engages the active participation of all his brethren. The resurrected saints are given "thrones" and judgment is given to them. They reign with Christ for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4).

A new and glorious age of peace and prosperity has begun! Surely, this is an event no Christian would want to miss. Surely there can be no greater victory over death than to participate in this "better resurrection"!

What will the resurrected saints do?

Traditional Christian art has the blessed saints floating on clouds strumming on harps and basking in eternal bliss in the presence of God. The Bible paints a very different picture of what God's resurrected saints will do!

Jesus Christ makes "them kings and priests... and they shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:10). They have a part in a plan designed by God to engage and benefit all--righteous leadership and spiritual education for all.

The Bible is very specific about the responsibilities of certain resurrected personalities. Jesus Christ takes the role of King of kings and Lord of lords (Revelation 19:16). King David is resurrected to be king over Israel (Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 37:24) and the 12 apostles will each rule over one of the tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). In this resurrection, all will be given responsibility according to their ability and faithfulness--some ruling over ten cities others over five, still others over one (Luke 19:11-27).

The resurrected saints are not destined to tune harps. They are destined to change the world for good! Indeed, the Bible reveals that there will be unparalleled prosperity as Christ and those resurrected to immortality at His return work together to build a new and wonderful world--a kingdom governed by the laws of the living God. (For more information about this wonderful time, please request [The Gospel of the Kingdom](#) and [God's Holy Day Plan: The Promise of Hope for All Mankind.](#))

Another resurrection follows

But what about all the other people-- those that did not attain this "better resurrection"? Will they miss out simply because they did not know, or worse yet, will they suffer eternal damnation for not serving a God they did not know?



God says unequivocally that He loves the whole world (John 3:16). Can a God that declares such love for all humanity condemn them for not having believed in a name they never knew?

What about those who died premature or tragic deaths? What about our son Jonathan, whose life was snuffed out in his innocence with no chance to ever know Christ?

The answer is simply this: God fulfills His purpose one step at a time. No one is left out. No one is forgotten. The first and so called "better" resurrection, far from being a case of divine preferential treatment, simply sets the stage in preparation for the capstone of God's great plan to save mankind.

We pick up the story in Revelation, where we find that "the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished" (Revelation 20:5). If the first resurrection was grandiose because of its glory, then this second resurrection is grandiose because of its numbers. Imagine how many billions of people are included in the resurrection of "the rest of the dead" when we consider all the people who have lived and died over the centuries.

The apostle John describes the second resurrection in this way: "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it . . . And I sat the dead, small and great, standing before God and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to the things written in the books" (Revelation 20:11-12).

A lot of information condensed into two verses! We shall allow the Bible to explain each element in detail.

Small and great before the throne of God

The apostle John sees the dead small and great standing alive before the throne of God. What is the manner of their resurrection?

The prophet Ezekiel provides us with specific details. Let's listen in to the dialogue between God and Ezekiel as God shows him a valley filled with dry bones. "And He said to me, 'Son of man, can these bones live?' " (Ezekiel 37:3).

Notice how God engages Ezekiel in the powerful message he is communicating. He wanted it to be vivid and believable beyond doubt. He said to Ezekiel: "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: 'Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you and you shall live...' " (verses 4-6).

What a dramatic challenge for the prophet Ezekiel! He was supposed to prophesy to a hopeless pile of bones and bring them back to life.

When Ezekiel prophesied as commanded, notice what ensued: "...There was a noise, and suddenly a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to bone. Indeed, as I looked, the sinews and the flesh came upon them, and the skin covered them over" (verses 7-8). Then "breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great army" (verse 10).

So here we have, in much greater detail, what is described in Revelation's framework as "the dead, small and great, standing before God" (Revelation 20:12). God brings them up out of their graves and restores them to physical life.

Imagine what a grand reunion this will be. How many families will be reunited? How many children will come up looking for their parents? How many grandparents and great grandparents will see their offspring for the first time?

Who do you know who will be a beneficiary of this grand restoration to life? Will you be there to meet him or her?

Books are opened...

God does not do anything capriciously. He brings these people back to life for a special purpose described in his dialogue with Ezekiel: "Then you shall know that I am the Lord" (Ezekiel 37:6). God is bringing them back to life not to condemn, but rather to give them the opportunity to really know Him for the first time.

How do we get to know God? Through His Word! This harmonizes perfectly with the statement "and books were opened" in Revelation 20:12). The Greek word for "books" in this passage is *biblia* and refers to the books of the Bible. For the first time these people have the opportunity to get know God and His Word.

Billions of people have lived and died without ever having heard about God and his Word. Untold millions of children have died in innocence before they had a chance to know God and commit their lives to Him.

These people will live again in the flesh in the resurrection described by Ezekiel. But they have more than physical life to look forward to as "another book is opened, which is the Book of Life" (same verse).

God does not want to just get to know these people by making his Word available to them. He wants to give them the opportunity of eternal life through His Spirit.

God describes it this way as He concludes his dialogue with Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones: "I will put My Spirit in you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken it and performed it," says the Lord" (Ezekiel 37:14).

Clearly the Bible paints a drastically different picture about the resurrection and judgment

than the "hellfire and brimstone" concept held by many people. God is, according to the Bible, a merciful and loving God who brings these people up out of their graves not to condemn them, but to offer them the opportunity they never had: eternal life through Jesus Christ.

Certainly God holds them accountable for what they do--they are "judged according to their works"--but only after they know what God would have them do. Isn't it comforting and encouraging to know that God is truly not a respecter of persons; that He offers equal opportunity salvation to all people who ever lived?

There is much more to say about the resurrections to life but one thing is sure: they provide hope and comfort to those that are facing the reality of their own mortality or the death of a loved one. The promise of a resurrection gives a concrete explanation of the fate of the deceased--and more important the promise of reunification in a grand family reunion.

For our family, this family reunion is an event which we await with eager anticipation. This promise of hope has profoundly affected each member of my family. It has been and remains a catalyst; a flame burning deep within us that prods us toward the finish line when we will once again see and hold our son Jonathan.

May this vision also comfort, inspire and motivate you!

Thoughts From Dad

By Don Hooser

Three letters of wisdom from a pastor to his three children about using your talents, honoring your parents and overlooking the mistakes of others.



Use your Talents

Dear Amy, Randy, and Danny,

Well, I'm finally starting what I've been thinking of doing for months! I asked you all if you would like for me to do this, and you said yes, so here I go. By the way, I'm in the habit of naming your names in order of age, but I could change the order up every week.

I'm calling it "Thoughts from Dad" since I'm writing it, but much of what I think is the same as what Mommy thinks. She is part of my inspiration and has many of the ideas for what I write. I hope what I write will be words of wisdom, but I don't claim to have any original wisdom. I give the credit for any wisdom I have to God and the countless people who have helped to mold and enlighten me. I am so deeply thankful that those of us called and transformed by God have the most important wisdom by far -- "the wisdom that is from above." (James 3:17)

I want to start by saying how pleased and proud Mommy and I are of you three. We feel so immensely blessed to have had 3 *outstanding* children who are

unusually healthy, smart, good-looking, talented, and athletic! We are so pleased that you have grown and developed with such balanced, outgoing, and pleasant personalities! And we're the most pleased that you have learned and held on to excellent character and standards of behavior! (That's especially remarkable in this society where standards are going down, and we see so many people making terrible and tragic mistakes with their lives.) You three have so much going for you!

The first thing to remember is to give God the credit and continually thank Him. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights..." (James 1:17). God has indeed been very merciful and generous with us!

The other point to remember is that God expects us to be good stewards with what He has given us -- to use our gifts and abilities to the utmost for His service and glory. "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48).

In a way, the greatest gift God has given us is spiritual understanding. "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear" (Matt. 13:16). Many scriptures show that God holds us accountable for what we know, such as James 4:17 "To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin." God wants us to use that knowledge to avoid the sins of commission and the sins of omission, and to do much good.

Think of yourselves as instruments in God's hands, and pray that God will use you and your knowledge and talents to be successful in several ways -- success in serving those around you, your present and future families, mankind in general, the Church, and God. You're off to a good start! "A wise son (or daughter) makes a glad father (or mother)" (Proverbs 10:1). Mommy and I are *very* glad parents!

Honor your parents

Dear Amy, Randy, and Danny,

I just want to say amen to what Mommy has been saying about not neglecting to regularly communicate with Grandma. I count as one of my greatest blessings in life not only that my parents lived a long time but also that all four of my grandparents lived to old age. I had a close relationship with my parents and was very close to BoBo and Daddy Jim and fairly close to Granddaddy and Grandmother Hooser. I'm also thankful that we had a large extended family. I had close relationships with quite a few uncles, aunts, and cousins on both sides.

However, as time goes along I regret more and more not having spent more time and not having communicated more with my extended family, especially my grandparents. I could easily have spent more time with BoBo and Daddy Jim all the time I was going to Southern Methodist University (SMU). They lived only about one mile from the SMU campus, at 3333 Greenbriar Dr., and I always did enjoy visiting them. It also gave me a nice, warm, secure feeling knowing they were so close. When my parents came to visit, we could all meet at BoBo and Daddy Jim's house.



In spite of this close proximity, I probably only averaged going to see them once every other month. Sure, I was busy with my studies, but I was also very busy with my social life from which I could have easily sacrificed a little more time. Half the time I was co-oping at Lone Star, but I went to Dallas a lot on weekends for dates and social activities. Rarely on those weekends would I go by to see my grandparents.

Now I regret not visiting them more for two reasons. As time goes along, I see more and more how important it is to know your roots and your family history. It gives one a sense of identity and connectedness. It helps me to know who I am and why I am the way I am. So often I wish I could ask my grandparents and other relatives questions about their lives. The other reason is that I see more clearly now how lonely elderly people are and how bored they get. I dearly wish I had not been so selfish and self-centered and had made more of an effort to brighten the lives of my grandparents.

What I have said certainly applies to parents as well as grandparents. There were also many times when I went too long before calling, writing, or going to see my parents. I certainly regret that. We grow up expecting parents to be deeply concerned for the welfare of their children. Sometimes the maturity to be deeply concerned about one's parents comes rather late in life.

Each of the 10 Commandments is a brief summary of a whole set of God's laws and principles. The fifth teaches us more than just honoring parents. By extension, it teaches us to honor our extended family, all authority figures in our lives, and all people (1 Peter 2:17; 1 Tim. 5:3, 17; 6:1; Rom. 12:10).

Overlook the mistakes of others

Dear Amy, Randy, and Danny,

A fault that all of us in our family have had is calling attention to the mistakes and faults of other family members. I am terribly sorry for having set a wrong

example in this many times and for being a bad influence. We've often played up others' mistakes rather than playing them down. None of us like it when someone does this to us. It is unmerciful, unkind, self righteous, and judgmental. Instead of being fault-finding, let's be fault-forgetting. Instead of being critical, let's be complimentary and encouraging. Instead of being picky, let's be peacemakers. Instead of being hard-to-please, let's be easy to please. Instead of being negative, let's be positive, shining the spotlight on virtues instead of vices. Instead of making mountains out of molehills, let's make molehills of mountains. Instead of exaggerating someone's fault, let's minimize his or her fault. Let's forgive and forget.

The Bible makes the point many times. (The following are from the NKJV, unless otherwise noted.) "The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and it is to his glory to overlook a transgression" (Pro. 19:11). "A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult" (Pro. 12:16, NIV).

The Bible occasionally speaks of "covering" sins and mistakes, and it is clear that there are two ways to do that. One is by forgiving the offense, and the other is by pretending not to notice, especially by not calling the attention of others to it. The mistake is forgiven, buried, out of sight, and forgotten. "Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins" (Pro. 10:12). The *Living Bible* puts it this way, "Hatred stirs old quarrels, but love overlooks insults."

"He who covers over an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends" (Pro. 17:9, NIV). The *Living Bible* puts a little different slant on that verse, "Love forgets mistakes; nagging about them parts the best of friends."

The opposite extreme of being an accuser and a gossip or talebearer is horrible and condemned in many places in the Bible.

The quality of pretending not to notice the mistake of another is a mark of a true gentleman or lady. Sometimes it is OK to speak of another's mistake or fault in a positive, light-hearted way where you are laughing *with* each other rather than *at* the other. Just make sure that what you say is not hurting the other person. If you feel there is a need to correct the other person, do it in a loving, kind, tactful, constructive, and private way.

It is so tempting to lift ourselves up by putting someone else down. It is human nature to be intolerant, critical, and resentful. To do the opposite demonstrates Godly love. "Love is patient, love is kind... it is not rude... it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs... It always protects..." (1 Cor. 13:4-7). The *Living Bible* words verse 5 thus: "Love... is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong."

Virtual Christian Magazine Editorial

What Freedom Means

By Jeff Osborn

ALSO KNOWN AS INDEPENDENCE DAY, July 4th is a celebration of the founding of the United States. It is a celebration of freedom.

Our bid for freedom has been costly. Thousands upon thousands of lives have been lost defending it. Countless families have, at least in this lifetime, forfeited some of the joy that goes with fireworks, family outings, cook outs and trips to the beach.

But the sacrifices that have been made for you and me to enjoy the basic freedoms should not go unrecognized. Americans enjoy freedoms that most of the world can only dream of--in fact, sometimes the possibility is so far removed that they can't even bring themselves to dream of such freedoms that Americans take for granted in their daily routine.

We should enjoy the freedom that we have, and we should be thankful for it. We should also realize that with freedom comes enormous responsibility. The more freedom we have, the more responsibility we must shoulder.

I asked several of my friends what freedom meant to them. I would like to share with you some of their responses:

- "I UNDERSTAND FREEDOM to be the basic right of mankind, which God has legislated through His laws. We see freedom the essence of the Sabbath law, and the fundamental reason for all civil law which God created.

God did not make us good or bad, but made us FREE. It is this gift that enables creativity to become like God. Free to follow Christ's example, free not to. Free to love one another, and free not to.

"It is in the choosing to follow righteousness, choosing to ask God for help, that a person can truly become like God, Who is also free. It is this freedom that makes His love so genuine."

- "IF I HAD TO CHOOSE ONE WORD that best describes freedom, it would be the word choices. No person is truly free until they have the ability to make choices of their own and to be free to receive the consequences of those choices, good, bad or indifferent."
- "FREEDOM MEANS MANY THINGS TO ME, but among them is the freedom to get hurt. Under this broad banner is included the freedom to be poor. I know how strange this sounds, but think about it. One of the driving forces in a society is fear--fear of going hungry, fear of being cold and without shelter, fear of having no money in your old age, fear of not being able to pay the rent.

"For many people, this is all that drives them to work in the morning. And when the government in its wisdom removes all fear, it has also taken away your freedom. And by

removing the freedom to get hurt, they remove all excitement from life. When you no longer are free to get hurt, you are no longer free to climb trees."

- "FREEDOM, IN ITS MOST CRITICAL APPLICATION, has everything to do with personal integrity. Historically, we have so many examples of lack of personal freedom with regard to physical constraints, and that is not to mankind's credit. But the most unacceptable form of virtual imprisonment is mind control.

"We are what we believe, what we feel, and what we do. If we hand over the reins to another human, we lose the essence of our very being. No one can take away from us what we are unwilling to hand over but, like Esau, we are vulnerable (or oblivious) at times and may find that we've sacrificed our spiritual inheritance (or personal integrity) for any number of fleeting rewards. Freedom, to me, is to retain responsibility for my thoughts and actions."

- "I HAVE ADOPTED THE WORDS of a Nazi concentration camp survivor Viktor Frankl to help me define freedom. We are all free no matter what Situation we are in. The choice is ours. People can do horrible things to our physical bodies, even down to taking everything away from us (as Frankl describes it stripped down naked and even the hair taken from your body). But we are all free to choose how we respond to what is done to us. Frankl observed among those prisoners who failed that it was '...only the men who allowed their inner hold on their moral and spiritual selves to subside eventually fell victim to the camp's degenerating influences.'

"Too many times we blame other people, events and circumstances for our failings and our actions and our lack of freedom. True freedom is realizing we have the choice as to how we respond to events and circumstances and what we do with our lives. 'That which does not kill me, makes me stronger'. And as we turn our life over to God we are doubly blessed in that we have the Holy Spirit to protect and guide our minds. With that kind of help, we are able to bear anything.

"The two things that Frankl explained robbed us of our freedom were -- bitterness and disillusionment. Frankl explained from his observations that these two attitudes damage the character of the free man. And of course, God warns us strongly about the root of bitterness."

Yes, my friends, the more freedom we have, the more responsibility we shoulder. On this 4th of July and on every other day, let's be thankful for the freedoms that we enjoy and, please, let's be responsible in exercising our freedoms.

Letters to the Editor

Going Down for the Third Time



I truly appreciate this article by Elaine Jacobs. I am happily married, have two children, live on a farm, help take care of two parents (who are having health trials), serve in church in whatever capacity that I can, help with Girl Scouts, and home school. The article was much needed.

Our son had a serious bout with mono last year. God is merciful and things are much better at this point. Thankfully.

I want to pass along this quote:

A mother is only a woman, but she needs the love of Jacob, the patience of Job, the wisdom of Moses, the foresight of Joseph, and the firmness of Daniel.

But, something that I have learned the hard way is that so often the demands that we feel are expected are demands that we simply are putting on ourselves for no apparent reason.

Thank you once again.

-- Tina

...And Children Are From Pluto



VERY GOOD ARTICLE!! I would like to see some more child-parent articles...

The Kosovo Conflict



I wholeheartedly agree with your VCM editorial. The most disastrous part of this whole tragedy is that NATO has become the unwitting accomplice of the Fourth Reich in the current (and last) revival of the Holy Roman Empire.

If anything should be a rallying cry leading to repentance of this country (and our British brethren), this is TRUTH which we should all be aware of before it's too late!

-- Ray Rousseau, E. Freetown, MA