

The Calvary Connection

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Praise In The Park!



Pastor's Pen

Time To Get Involved

In November, this country will hold an election to determine who will be president for the next four years. The people of God have to be right at the center of this election. Unfortunately, many Christians divorce themselves from the political process in this country. There is a sense that we take care of "churchy" and spiritual matters while the world handles issues of politics and economics. The consequence has been that a number of Christians do not cast votes in general elections.

This is unfortunate because too many of our fore parents sacrificed time and lives in order for us to be able to vote. African-Americans were disenfranchised for years. In many southern states especially, laws were created out of

nowhere to prevent black people from voting. Where there were no laws, intimidation and terror were tactics used to discourage us from voting. A number of African-Americans rebelled against this unfair treatment. Grass roots "soldiers" like Fannie Lou Hamer and generals like Martin King fought, marched and spoke in order to transform such systematic evil. This type of action led to lynchings, bombings and mysterious murders. This price was too high for us to be disconnected from the process.

And then on a broader level, the mind of God, as revealed in Scripture, challenges the people of God to be involved in the political process. The prophetic voice heard throughout the Old Testament is a voice which deals with issues of justice and fairness. It is

quite apparent that Jehovah is not only concerned about eternity, but also with systems and structures of oppression which keep people from wholeness, down here on earth. Jesus went about making people whole. With him there is a real concern about the physical. Food now! Freedom now! Sight now! Healing now! The kingdom which Jesus brought was a present reality.

Our times are critical. Urban areas are yet deteriorating, while many suburban areas are flourishing. The war in Iraq has turned out to be scandalous in many respects. Our men and women are dying for some very strange reasons. The people of God must voice displeasure about these things by voting. We are a couple of months away from the election.



Between now and then, one of our tasks is to educate ourselves as thoroughly as possible. Find out who the candidates are. And find out what the issues are and where the candidates stand on the issues. Another task for us as a church is to motivate as many people as possible to actually vote. And then the last task is to go out and vote on election day. The people of God are the leaven which leavens the whole loaf. And right now the loaf could use some "leaven".

— Rev. Jerry M. Carter, Jr.

• Christian Counsel •

Need Christian advice? We can help. Place your anonymous question in the Calvary Connection mailbox.

Q: Am I unchristian or unsaved if I participate in leisurely activities like: watching R-rated movies; listening to secular music; reading the Horoscopes or books with supernatural/alternate lifestyle content?

A: Ephesians 2:8-9 says "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-not by works, so that no one can boast." In other words, we are saved because of God's grace

which is a gift given to us through His son Jesus Christ. Even though salvation is a gift we accept this gift through faith by the belief in our hearts and confession made with our mouths that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins. Because salvation is a gift from God we (Baptists) believe that one cannot lose their salvation. It has already been said that salvation is a gift from God not through works (i.e. ministry service). It is not that we work (serve) to be saved, but we work because we are saved. When I speak of works, I am referring to our practices that show evidence of

our salvation, represent the one who saved us (Christ), and reveals who and what we have in Christ. Therefore, as Christians we must consider how the things we do, and the choices and decisions we make in terms of how we choose to spend our leisure time will affect and/or impact our walk with Christ. James puts it best, "You see a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone." (2:24)

We have been made in the image and likeness of God. Based upon this fact, the believer has to ask themselves whether: watching certain movies and television shows; reading

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various books such as Harry Potter and others written by authors like Jackie Collins, Donald Goines and E. Lynn Harris; listening to certain types of secular music; and seeking counsel through horoscopes, tarot cards, palm reading and the like, reflect the righteousness of God. If a particular practice encourages behaviors or attitudes that do not fall in line with the image of God (Holy & Righteous) then you must ask yourself "Is my behavior or practice detestable in the sight of God?" The whole Bible is filled with commands and instructions that

teach us about what God requires in terms of how we are to live and act. Therefore, every believer is encouraged to consult God through His word and by prayer in order to assess whether what you choose to view, read, or practice edifies or defiles your temple. I am convinced that the Holy Spirit through conviction will reveal to each one of us individually whether we are participating in practices that should be shunned.

Finally, *"neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither present nor the future, nor any powers,*

neither height nor depth, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord..." (Romans 8: 33-39) Because God's word is true, we must use the promise of this word to influence, encourage, and motivate some to get connected and ourselves to stay connected. TO GOD BE THE GLORY!!!

[Additional Biblical References: Deut. 18:9-22, I Sam. 28:7-25, Gal. 5:16-25, I Peter 1:13-16, II Peter 1:3-9]

Grace and Peace,

— Minister Torina Armstrong

• Calvary Grapevine •

Have a question? We'll get the answer.

Place your anonymous question in the Calvary Connection mailbox.

Q: Why did we have "Praise in the Park"? Do we plan to do it again?

A: Praise God in His sanctuary. Praise Him in the firmament of His power. Praise Him in the Park? Although Psalm 150 does not include those exact words, the premise is quite present. Praise can exist wherever there is the Spirit of the Lord and the assembly of His people. On Sunday, July 4, 2004 at 10:00 a.m., Calvary extended the church into the community as we carpoled, drove, rode, wheeled and walked our way to Caldwell Playground (just two blocks from the church).

The day was perfectly clear as the sun seemed to set a spotlight for Jesus to show up on center stage through the word of God. Burgundy T-shirts, bearing the inscription, "Praise in the Park" were worn by many participants, but that same notion was evidently inscribed upon over 700 hearts that were in attendance. The atmosphere was set for God's presence amidst the waves of praise and worship. As banners and balloons gently swayed to the cool breeze, so did the hands of the congregation gathered

beneath the tent. The area quickly became standing room only. And even though chairs were aligned perfectly for comfort, many could not sit due to an authentic appreciation of God and a need to stand and sing songs to His glory.

Pastor Carter's vision was to have this worship experience in the Park to reach out to those who needed to see and sense the true meaning of liberation and independence. Going beyond the church walls would also give regular members a chance to enhance and enrich our praise as we experienced the freedom of glorifying God amongst His creations. How awesome it was to see how spectacularly God showed up and showed out for those who showed up! Pastor preached "Totally Free" based on Luke 13:10-13 and many answered the Lord's beckoning when the doors of the church were opened.

It is not certain if we shall worship this exact way next year, but if the Lord says so, we shall praise Him in the park yet again.

— Ministers Monica Hooks
and Anthony L. Riley
Praise in the Park team members

When I say... "I am a Christian"

I'm not shouting, "I am saved"

I'm whispering "I was lost!"

That is why I chose this way.

When I say... "I am a Christian"

I don't speak, of this with pride.

I'm confessing that I stumbled

And need someone to be my guide.

When I say... "I am a Christian"

I'm not trying to be strong,

I'm professing that I'm weak

And pray for strength to carry on.

When I say... "I am a Christian"

I'm not bragging of success.

I'm admitting I have failed

And cannot ever pay the debt.

When I say... "I am a Christian"

I'm not claiming to be perfect,

My flaws are too visible but

God believes I'm worth it.

When I say... "I am a Christian"

I still feel the sting of pain

I have my share of heartaches

Which is why I seek his name.

When I say... "I am a Christian"

I do not wish to judge.

I have no authority.

I only know... I'm loved.

— Author Unknown

Ministry Spotlight

Teens Loving Christ

By Samantha Kennedy

Timothy 4:12 says *"Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity."*

Teens Loving Christ (TLC) is designed for teenage girls of Calvary Baptist Church and the surrounding community. As a leadership development ministry for teenage girls in the 8th through 12th grade, **our mission is to help teenage girls develop: positive self-esteem; a strong sense of identity; a sense of achieve-**



A balloon ceremony where the girls were able to say goodbye to Sherry Allison, our Youth Choir Music Director, and other loved ones who passed away. Each person said a prayer and let their balloon go towards the heavenly gates.

ment; responsibility; and leadership abilities. TLC hopes to prepare teenage girls for the transition into womanhood by having mentors who will provide guidance, support, responsible behavior, and share their life experiences. TLC offers fun and exciting learning experiences through a variety of workshops, community projects, retreats, college visits, leadership training, culture trips, and fellowship with other churches.

TLC had its kickoff meeting, on April 21, 2004, with a great response from many of our teenage girls here in the church and has now reached the community. Thus far, our activities include:

- a workshop with Dr. Judy Banks, OB-GYN and Calvary member
- participation in Relay for Life 2004 walk-a-thon whereby we partnered with our own Cancer Ministry for the American Cancer Society and raised over \$9,000

• a cook-out at Samantha Kennedy's (ministry leader) house

• and a mini retreat/slumber party at Embassy Suites where we shared many laughs in a more relaxed atmosphere

TLC has many more workshops scheduled relating to the issues and challenges our teenage girls face everyday. We are planning another retreat, college visits, and preparing to start our mentoring program with workshops for our leaders and mentors. TLC is asking all parents, leaders, and members for their continued prayers, and words of encouragement.

Here are a few words from our leaders and teens:

"Many times our youth lose confidence in themselves because of our failure to encourage their intellectual as well as creative growth. It's our belief that we can speak to our youth/teens and share faith journeys that will help them see their potential and understand their lives in the context of larger cultural forces. **It is our prayer that this ministry will begin to erase the traditional patterns of low self-confidence and self-image, self-doubt and self-censorship that will eventually interfere with our teens abilities to achieve their dreams.**"

Rachelle H. Herbert, Leader

"This new ministry means so much to me. Let me start by saying **we have three colors to symbolize our sisterhood: pink for femininity; fuchsia for royalty; and brown because we're grounded in Christ.** TLC helps and inspires us to change some of our ways, and our leaders teach us how to set goals and follow them. We also have do's and don'ts that keep us in line. Our leaders are all wonderful and like big sisters to us. I am very excited about this ministry and grateful as well. Special thanks to all the leaders who donate their time to work with us. I hope that TLC continues to grow more and more."

Erin Allred

"To me TLC is an **informal way for teenage girls to interact with older influences on a personal level.** At TLC we can share our feelings about anything. Those are just two reasons why I love TLC."

Danielle Dumas

"As being a leader in this ministry it is a pleasure and a blessing to be apart of the lives of our youth. As our journey continues with



Here are some of the TLC young ladies and the ministry leaders at their kick-off meeting.

God's plan, **please lift this ministry up in your prayers.**"

Vanessa Davis, Leader

"TLC is a group where I feel **I can be completely honest and not worry about being judged.** Although it just started I feel like I can trust all the girls and leaders like sisters."

Erikka Dumas

"I love TLC because it's a group where I can talk about anything, and know that whatever I say won't be told to anyone outside of TLC. It's where a group of girls can talk about different things, and can connect through good discussions. Also, I can just relax when I'm at the meetings and let out stuff that I couldn't let out at home, because the **leaders give good advice and really help me out.**"

Cyndall King

"The first reason why I like TLC is because it's a group of **girls who can relate to each other.** It's just fun to have open conversations and go on trips. I can be open and learn things about other people and myself. I like the people that are in it, and I like the leaders/mentors and the important things that they teach us. I know it will be useful in the future."

Ashley Glover

"TLC is a place where teen girls of our church and community can get together and discuss real life issues. We can also **grow and learn to love ourselves and God.**"

Bretanee Washington

"TLC means many things to me. I enjoy TLC because I can learn more about Christ and other important things that young females need to learn about."

Andriana Starnes

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“TLC to me is a time when young females can come together in unity to relate, share feelings, emotions, fellowship, and **talk about the realities and difficulties females struggle with today.**”

Erika Bankhead

“TLC is a place where **I feel comfortable about discussing situations** that are going on in my life that I don’t want to tell my mom. It is a safe haven and I’m able to trust other adults.”

Carleen Allison

“TLC is a time for me to let go of some feelings I have held back for a long time. If it ever gets taken away **I wouldn’t have anywhere to let those feelings out.** This is a very important influence on my life, and I love the open conversations.”

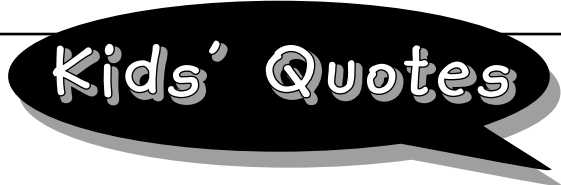
Dwane Finley

“I think TLC is a place of fellowship and a place to express my feelings. I like the **open conversations and the feed back the leaders give us.** I hope this ministry continues to grow.”

Paula Jones

“As a teen I shed tears of confusion, heartache, pain and despair. I was faced with new challenges every day. I knew the church was a place of refuge, however, I didn’t know where to turn. TLC is here to give OUR teens another direction within the church. TLC is a place to help OUR teen’s gain the knowledge of themselves to become the Christian women God desires them to be. **We are TLC — talking, listening, caring. We are TLC, Teens Loving Christ.**”

Candice Mims, Leader



We asked the Sunday School 17 and 18 year-old students, why they believe or don’t believe that voting is worthwhile.

“Voting is a part of our Democratic form of government. Based on our laws and constitution, we have a voice as to who should represent us. If we don’t vote, then the officials can do whatever they want.”

“It is important we vote because it is important to make sure that the person best qualified to run the country is elected.”

“If someone doesn’t like how the country is being run, yet they did not vote, they have no right to complain about what is happening in the U.S.”

“By voting you can influence the way your country is run.”

“It is important to vote because our president and other people in power determine the decisions the United States makes as a whole.”

“Our responsibility when voting is to pick our country’s international representative and to make sure we choose the person we feel will do the best job.”

“Americans who vote think they are making a difference.”

• Youth Council • By Courtney Tatum

Strengthening Parent/Child Relationships

Since I directed an article to the youth in the last edition of the *Calvary Connection*, I thought it only fair that I intend this one for the parents. After careful thought and consideration, I have come to the factual conclusion that being a parent is the most demanding, testing and nerve-wracking experience a person can have. I have yet to experience parenting and I am not looking forward to it. As a matter of fact, I feel sorry for those who have children and those who plan on it (because I sure don’t). The sympathy that I have for parents has caused me to want to help out. I took the liberty of borrowing my mother’s notes from her Summer Bible Institute class so that I could share some useful tips for parenting.

The following are the Six Sins of Parenting: comparison; overstatement; dehumanization; devastation; lack of availability; and assaulting intellectual capacity. You

should never compare your child to any one else whether it be a brother, sister, or the little boy down the street. You should also never accuse your child of ‘always’ or ‘never’ doing something. Telling your child to ‘shut up’ or that ‘they should be seen and not heard’ is also a no-no. Expressing a lack of concern and blowing off your child is also wrong. A very common and frequently overlooked mistake that parents make is telling their children that they are stupid or that they can not do anything correctly.

Although you may not think it, some of the most negligible things that you say or do to your children have an effect on them in indescribable ways. A simple ‘shut up’ or a ‘you’re so dumb’ may perhaps cause serious hurt to your child. Albeit difficult, be sure to show a superfluity love, patience and respect when raising your children. In return, they will notice and show the same to you and your relationship will be so much better.

On a different note, we would like to say goodbye and Godspeed to our Youth President, Chris Alexander. Good luck at Morehouse College.

ATTENTION YOUTH: SHARE YOUR WRITINGS AND DRAWINGS WITH US!
SEND TO CBCNEWSLETTER@AOL.COM OR PUT ON DISC IN THE C² MAILBOX.

Biblical Perspective

Breaking the Cycle of Compromising Christian Beliefs

By Minister David A. Hollowell

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” John 14:6

In our multicultural and pluralistic world, we as Christians daily experience a serious challenge to our faith when we claim that Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation. Even among some clergy, we hear occasionally the proclamation that Christianity is “one way,” and that there are many paths leading to God. This would be a fine and noble sentiment if we were starting from scratch, and attempting to construct from our own intellect a process for directing humanity to spiritual consciousness and reconciliation with the Creator.

But this journey into fantasia is destined to conclude in a dead end because God has already clearly laid out the road map for humankind’s odyssey to redemption. In Romans, Paul states in verse 3:23, *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* Because sin was introduced into man’s relationship with God in the Garden of Eden, all human posterity inherited this spiritual blight, and the only way to pay the penalty for this sin was through blood sacrifice. Since man sinned, man in God’s economy had to pay the penalty for this sin. All throughout the Old Testament, we see the animal sacrifice as a picture of the atonement for sin. These sacrifices ultimately point to the coming of Jesus, whose very name indicated that He would “save his people from their sins” by laying down his own life, and pouring out his blood to satisfy God’s judgment against us. This could only happen because Jesus was both man and God – the only one capable of presenting himself as a perfect unblemished sacrifice as the Lamb of God, and the only one capable of bearing the brunt of God’s wrath for the punishment of our sins. **Romans 5:19** tells us,

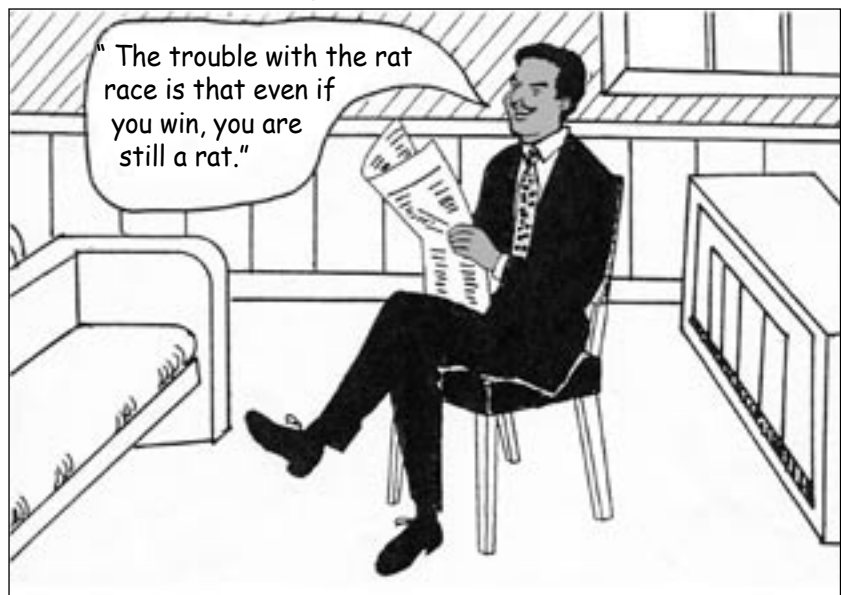
“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” In a supreme act of grace towards fallen humanity, Christ gave his all in order that we might have the opportunity to receive eternal life: Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. *“For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” Hebrews 9:12-14.*

If God has made this provision of salvation through Christ, then how does one acquire it? In a way that runs counter to man’s nature and intuition, we do not deserve it, we cannot work for it, and we cannot earn it through our own efforts. Salvation is authored by God and it is totally a gift

of God. This is made abundantly clear in **Romans 5:8**, *“Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life.”* The Bible goes on to say, *“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” Ephesians 2:8-9.* Because God is no respecter of persons, He extends the offer of salvation to the whole universe of humankind – to every nation, every, tribe, every kindred, and every tongue. To those who claim exclusive rights to God’s gift, the Bible declares to the contrary, and there should be no compromise. To those who put their faith in a system of discipline, the Bible declares to the contrary, and we should brook no compromise. And to those who reject Jesus as the door to enter the everlasting Kingdom, the Bible declares otherwise, and we should accept no compromise! Christ is the way, the truth, and the life. On this, there can be no compromise.

• The Amen Corner •

By David A. Hollowell



Christian Culture

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN CHRISTIAN SOCIETY?

The research gathered for the past 20 years indicate **several sweeping and important trends or "mega trends" for churches.** The secular media frequently stereotypes today's churches as congregations huddled in secluded church buildings and insulated from the hurting communities around them. **Increasingly, these churches experiencing rapid growth are churches that have a passion for reaching the unchurched.**

MEGA TREND NO. 1: RAPID GROWTH

One of the most important and visible changes in church growth over the last 20 years is the size and rate at which churches have expanded and will continue to grow. From indications received from Catholic sources and major media leaders, the largest U.S. churches today are no longer Catholic churches. They are evangelical, Pentecostal, denominational and independent churches. Sixty of the churches on the mega church list are denominational churches while 40 are independent. Twenty-three are Baptist, 20 are non-charismatic independent churches, and 20 are charismatic independent churches. Since 1970, we've seen the number of mega churches grow from 10 to now 835. And congregations are reaching mega-church status in less time. Since the late 1950s, the time it has taken for a church to grow large has been cut in half almost every decade. Ten of the churches started in 1990 reached attendances of 5,000 to 18,000 in one

decade. What's driving this growth? The factors are many, including the migration of people to urban centers, word-of-mouth, sharpened leadership skills, churches becoming multi generational and most recently, Web site access, TV exposure and mega churches teaching other churches through seminars, books and curriculum.

MEGA TREND NO. 2: SMALL GROUPS

The most significant church growth event in the U.S. Church today and for decades to come is the explosion of small groups— meeting both in Sunday school classes and during the week, both in and outside the church. Research shows that one-tenth of the U.S. adult population is involved in a Sunday school class and/or home group. **This represents a real opportunity for Kingdom growth—plus a large amount of responsibility, specifically in the area of equipping leaders to handle this influx.** Right now, we don't have enough small group leaders who know what they're doing, and not enough pastors equipped to train and mentor their small group leadership. As a result, any "viruses" in these groups are multiplying when churches continue to add more small groups. To continue to grow safely and prevent people from drifting away, a church must be intentional about equipping group leaders before they begin; monitoring the size of individual groups (not more than 16); and structuring its existing groups to birth new ones.

MEGA TREND NO. 3: DIVERSITY

Our churches are not the anemic church profiles portrayed in much of today's media projection of America's churches and their leaders. **Approximately 30 of the nation's 100 largest churches are heavily ethnically mixed.** Twenty-eight are African-American, and about 42 are mostly white congregations. **However, to keep up with the exploding number of Hispanics (now the largest minority group in the U.S.), the U.S. Church will need to be intentional about the evangelization of new Latino generations.** That means birthing thousands of new congregations to encourage Kingdom growth. This is one of the greatest challenges facing the Church today. U.S. churches will need to help Latino churches grow larger and multiply congregations. In the next decade, 1,000 Latino churches would not be too many. The future belongs to the church that's alert to these trends and is open to change; honors God's Word; is concerned for souls; and organizes for assimilation and growth. The big challenge for all of our churches is to be sure that we keep our focus on the Great Commission mandate Christ gave to His churches. Let's encourage and learn from each other. Our compass is still the Word of God, and the source of our best ideas is still the Holy Spirit as He works among His churches.

Excerpt from *Outreach Magazine*,
July/August 2004

Webwatch

www.christianitytoday.com/kids

For Christian Kids games, stories, puzzles, and arts and crafts