

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.

THE LENEXA EDIFIER

John 8:32

“And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free”

APRIL 3, 2016

DEFENDING THE TRUTH

Jim Stauffer

Before we conclude the relationship we have with fellow citizens, neighbors and friends is to have priority over teaching the truth, we should examine this very major incident in the life of Paul.

Be Ready Always To Give An Answer (1 Pet. 3:15)

Regularly those who are committed to the truth of God's word speak of defending it. If indeed they do so their actions must be free from self interest just as those of the Apostle Paul. When he was arrested in Jerusalem and falsely charged with defiling the temple (**acts 21:27,29**), he did not seek first and foremost his personal freedom. What he did was present his case for Christ by relating the story of Christ appearing to him on the road to Damascus.

Honoring The Emperor (1 Pet. 2:13-17)

When this failed to satisfy them he was brought before the council (**Acts 23**). He immediately made clear he had always followed his conviction regarding God in heaven (**Acts 23:1**). He further explains to them the things he taught since Christ had appointed him an apostle to the Gentiles, was the teaching of Christ regarding the same hope and resurrection the Pharisees held.

The Gospel is His Defense (Jude 3)

When this failed to appease them or quiet their anger, Paul was sent under heavy guard to Caesarea to appear before Felix the Governor. Paul challenges his accusers before Felix to prove the charges they have lodged. Their failure to respond leads him to say, *It is with respect to the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you this day* (**Acts 24:21**). Luke tells us in the account that Felix had an accurate knowledge of the Way. Felix deferred judgment on the matter until the tribune, Lysias, came to Caesarea from Jerusalem. Paul did not seek his freedom above all costs, he sought to explain the gospel he preached. This effort continued as Felix and his wife Drusilla came to visit Paul in prison to hear him speak about faith in Christ Jesus. Luke reports Paul's teaching of

Felix this way. **Acts 24:25** *And as he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me.*

Paul Continues This Path of Defense

We learn more of Paul's commitment to the defense of the truth as he continues to defend what he taught as the reason he should be set free. He never appealed for his personal freedom to the point of silence on the gospel. In **Acts 25** he makes his case for the gospel before Festus who had replaced Felix at this point. Festus could find no substantiation of the charges against him being worthy of death. He recognizes their displeasure with Paul is centered on religious issues.

Paul Next Faces King Agrippa

When King Agrippa comes to Caesarea, Felix explains the difficulty he is facing. It was always the desire of the Roman Procurators to prevent disturbances and riots among the Jews. Because of that justice was always tilted in their favor in this case. Knowing that, Paul continues his defense of the gospel. Now Agrippa was even better informed concerning the gospel than Felix. When Paul related the story of Christ appearing to him on the road to Damascus to persecute Christians, Felix accused him saying, *your great learning is driving you out of your mind*. But Paul responded, **Acts 26:25** *But Paul saith, I am not mad, most excellent Festus; but speak forth words of truth and soberness. 26 For the king knoweth of these things, unto whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things is hidden from him; for this hath not been done in a corner. 27 King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest. 28 And Agrippa said unto Paul, With but little persuasion thou wouldest fain make me a Christian.* The King concluded Paul had done nothing worthy of death and had he not appealed to Caesar he could

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have been set free.

Which Would You Prefer?

We know the rest of the story. Paul was sent to Rome to stand before Caesar. Was released once and then imprisoned again where he was executed just as the Lord had promised His followers (**Mat. 24:9; Rev. 2:10**) Paul was able to make this statement as a result of his faithful defense of the truth. **2 Tim. 4:7** *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: 8 henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing.*

Which would you prefer? To be remembered as a neighbor who never made anyone uncomfortable with his faith in God or someone who leaves a legacy of those translated from darkness to the kingdom of the Lord (**Col. 1:13; Phil. 4:21,22**).

Leading In Times of Crisis

Jim Deason

Crises are a part of the body life of every local church. They vary in form from critical doctrinal issues that need to be resolved to moral problems in prominent members. These are crucial moments, defining points, in which often hostile forces are in a tense state of disposition.

For men who lead crisis management is a necessary skill; and some are better at it than others. Every leader in the Bible faced crisis, most of them more than once, from Moses to Malachi and from Jesus to John. Literally, their crises were, and ours are, as varied as the colors on Joseph's coat (**cf. Jas 1:2**).

Critical moments are important to our spiritual development. James declared that the testing of our faith produces the endurance necessary to spiritual maturity (**Jas. 1:3-4**). In addition, it is in times of crisis that the righteousness of righteous people are brought to light (**1 Cor. 11:19; cf. Phil. 1:9-10; Matt. 5:10-12**). Nothing reveals one's character, either good or bad, like the crucible of controversy.

All of this brings us to the question: How does one who is in a position of leadership in a local church conduct himself in crisis? What does he do to effectively deal with whatever issue is at hand and lead people through these pivotal moments with faith intact and even strengthened?

The best of all crisis management begins before a crisis arises. Most problems are more effectively handled if the proper shepherd/flock environment exists before the crisis develops. For example, if the elders are known for good communication and have developed a trusting relationship and high confidence level among the members, problems are more easily resolved. Being accessible (**cf. Exo. 18:13-36**) and approachable (**cf. Jas. 3:17**) during critical times is important.

Preparation is another key issue. It is important that

elders be prepared, as much as possible, for problems when they arise. It is a good idea to spend a little time mentally going through the procedure you would follow if a particular problem occurred. For example: *"How would you react if Hymenaeus takes to the pulpit with venom in his words, teaching destructive, false doctrine?"* or, *"What am I going to do or say if someone comes forward confessing the sin that he/she has committed fornication with another member (naming the individual)?"* Talking through these situations with others will help you learn to respond properly.

So, what does a leader or group of leaders do when confronted with a crisis? Here are just a few ideas to help get you started.

1. Identify and define the problem. Identify the people who are involved. Ask the hard, specific, questions. Keep in mind that it is not uncommon for people to initially tell you only a small portion of what they know or how they feel. Be careful of believing the first edition of any story (**Prov. 18:17**). Remember, sometimes the problem is not the real problem.
2. Always ask the question: What does the Bible have to say about this problem? Take the time to study and reflect upon what the Bible teaches (**2 Tim 2:15**). Pray fervently for wisdom, a must for problem-solving (**Jas 1:2-5**). Do not be afraid to exercise the virtue of patience, a necessity in times of trial and difficulty.
3. Don't be afraid to deal with the problem (**2 Tim. 1:7**). The only responsibility we have in any crisis is to do God's will. Remember that God's word will produce God's purposes.
4. Recognize that different problems demand different solution methods. Some sins are private in nature and must be dealt with accordingly (**Matt. 18:15-20**). Some sins are public in nature and must be dealt with differently (**Gal 2:11-14; 1 Cor 5:3-5**). Further, some problem people have to be treated differently (**Jude 22-23; 1 Thess 5:14; Gal. 6:1**).
5. Talk to the right people (**Matt. 18:15**). It is always much easier to talk about people than it is to talk to them, but very few things are more destructive and counter-productive to your goals. Confronting problem people is hard to do but it is much like what my father-in-law, J. Wiley Adams, once said about the bridge crossing Lake Pontchartrain, *"Anticipating the bridge is much harder than actually crossing it."*
6. Resolve to solve the problem as quickly as possible. Problems allowed to "fester" only grow worse. Consider the apostles' prompt action in **Acts 5:1-4** and **Acts 15:1-4**.
7. Possess a soul-first mentality. Maintain a Christ-like attitude at all times (**Phil. 2:2-8**) asking, *"How would Jesus help this person?"* Keep in mind that your first responsibility is to save a soul (**Heb. 13:17**).

One final thought. After the crisis is over, don't be afraid to evaluate yourself and your crisis management process. Ask yourself, *"What can I do to keep this*

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problem from recurring?" There may not be anything you can do. It is quite possible, however, that in the process of equipping you might be able to fortify yourself against another problem.

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MOM'S BIBLE

It was a tough case, certainly worthy of the attention of the modern Court TV or FBI Files programs. Two women were living in the same house and gave birth to sons within three days of each other. One of the women rolled over on her son in her sleep and smothered him. Discovering what had happened, she switched the babies in the night, leaving her dead son with the other sleeping woman and taking the live child for her own. In the morning, the second woman realized that the dead child was not her own and the legal battle for the possession of the living child began.

Of course, investigators today would quickly do DNA tests and determine to which woman the living child actually belonged. When this case was heard, such tests were not available. The judge in the case, the famed wise king Solomon, would have to find another method of determining who was the mother of the living child (**1 Kgs. 3:16-28**).

Solomon decided to use the "maternal love" test. Noting to the women the difficulty of ascertaining the truth about the situation, he commanded that the living child be divided in two with a sword and each woman be given half. The real mother of the child loved him so much that she preferred to see him given to the imposter rather than be killed. The deceiver, however, demonstrated no such love for the child, agreeing to the "division" of the child. The real mother was identified through her love for the child and the case was solved!

Paul Harvey recently told the story of two siblings who were fighting over possession of a family Bible. Their mother had died and both the son and daughter wanted the Bible which had been hers for so many years. Unable to resolve the disagreement between themselves, the struggle had become a legal matter. The judge in the case suggested a resolution similar to that of Solomon -- sell the Bible and divide the proceeds between the two siblings. The brother and sister, realizing that the Bible would be lost to both of them with such a resolution, came to an agreement about the Bible.

The wisdom of the judge reminds one of Solomon (Harvey mentioned this!), but my attention was captured by the fact that two people were fighting over a Bible, a struggle so fierce that it eventually entered the legal system. They were selfishly fighting over a book which teaches the virtue of submission to one

another, the responsibility of putting others first. One gets the impression that perhaps neither the brother nor the sister was very familiar with the contents of the Bible. The Bible was a prize, an heirloom to be proudly displayed on the living room coffee table. *"Look! This is the Bible that Mom had."*

Hopefully, we will use our Bibles for more than decoration. Of what value is the veneration of a Bible for its age with no regard for its contents?

***By Allen Dvorak in News & Notes,
June 20, 2004***

Greener on the Other Side

The scene is a common one: a cow with her head stuck through a fence reaching as far as she can for lush mouthfuls of green grass. In fact, so common is the sight that a well-worn expression has resulted. We've all heard that *'the grass is greener on the other side of the fence'*. The saying is used metaphorically to describe someone who is not content where they are -- always looking for something different (better as they see it) just beyond the confines of their present situation.

Unfortunately, Christians in a local church are sometimes known to seek the *'greener pastures'*. They grow discontent with the situation in their own congregation and see other churches that they imagine are better. This frequently results in them leaving *'here'* and going *'there'* in hopes of finding something more to their liking.

These folks typically do not stop to recognize or appreciate the good things where they are. They seem oblivious to the work and effort of their faithful brethren, and discount the efforts being made. We would encourage them to *'stop and smell the roses'* where they are.

Furthermore, those who are inclined to *'fly the coop'* most often do so without making any serious effort to improve the perceived issues in the initial congregation. All churches have problems -- including the one where they might eventually *'land'*. Mature Christians know this and will not walk away from a local church without trying hard to help make the needed changes. Sometimes leaving a congregation is the right decision -- but it is a decision that should not be taken lightly. A sense of *'family'* loyalty ought to exist among spiritual brothers and sisters that will make this a last option rather than a first one.

'Greener on the other side'? Maybe. But if you look around, you might just realize that you are *'knee deep'* in a wonderful situation. Think!

- by Greg Gwin

John 13:34 *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*

Eph. 2:19 So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; 21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord;

1Pet. 2:9 But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

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Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10