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WATCH THE CLOCK

By Dan Anders

The Science and Nature category of the table game Trivial Pursuit has the question: "What is a nanominute?" The answer, in case you're not a scientist, is "A billionth of a minute." My Ph.D. physicist brother-in-law tells me that a "nanominute" is not very important to scientists. What really counts in scientific research is a "nanosecond" - one billionth of one second. That boggles my mind!

The ancients were not as nervous about time as we are. They could miss one section of a revolving door without having a breakdown. Still they knew that time was important. Psalm 90 is one major Scripture that tells us to "watch the clock." It can even tell us moderns something about the significance of time.

TIME IS SHORT

"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations . . . from everlasting to everlasting thou art God . . . For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or a watch in the night" (Psalm 90:1, 2, 4 RSV).

Now from one angle, time seem interminable. I have two fossils among my bric-a-brac. One is two tiny fish frozen in sandstone. Geologists date it at six million years old. The other is a Trilobite, a sea animal that is supposed to have lived more than 400 million years ago! Measured geologically, time is incredibly long.

But for us humans, time always seems too short. For years it seems that your birthday will never come. Then, inexplicably, it seems to come every six months! At its longest, our time is very, very short "The years of our life are threescore and ten, or even by reason of strength four score" (90:10).

The Bible uses many figures of speech to drive home the point that our time is indeed short. It is like a dream (90:5), "like grass which is renewed in the morning" (90:5). Job said that our days "are swifter than a weaver's shuttle" (Job 7:6), that our life is no longer than "a breath" (7:7). "What is your life? It is a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes" (James 4:14).

Any way you look at it, time is short.

TIME IS LIMITED

Time ends. Suddenly. Unexpectedly. Definitely. Our life, the psalmist said, is like a wild flower. "In the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers" (90:6).

Visiting a desert after a winter rain is an unforgettable experience. The brown sand dunes, seemingly so lifeless in the summer sun, are a crazy quilt of color - gold, crimson, violet - as if an artist had spilled his paintpot across the hills.

But it doesn't last! The blazing sun quickly returns the sands to a sullen brown, with no trace of beauty. Like the desert bloom, our years are limited.

TIME IS UNREPEATABLE

The majority of people living today don't believe that. Uncounted millions of people in Asia and the Third World see life as one vast squirrel cage. We are doomed to relive our lives countless times and the only real "hope" is Nirvana, to escape to oblivion of nothingness. Otherwise we are trapped like brutes in an unending wheel of time.

The Biblical view of time is linear, not cyclical. Time moves forward inexorably. We need "to number our days" (90:12), because we only get one set! Because we do only get one go-around, we should make the most of the time (Eph. 5:16).

TIME IS PRECIOUS

Since our time is short, limited, and unrepeatable, it is also valuable. One translation says that we should "redeem

the time" (Ephesians 5:16 KJV). The word that's used is the Greek term for buying and liberating a slave. In using time, we're dealing with something valuable.

ABC had the telecast rights to Super Bowl XIX. They charged \$1 million for each commercial minute - an all-time high for advertisements on TV. Valuable as that sounds, your time is just as precious. Give me a minute of time and you've given me an irreplaceable 60 seconds of your life!

Something so valuable should never, never be frittered away.

TIME IS GOD'S

The only way to make time last is to spend it for God. "Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish thou the work of our hands upon us, yea, the work of our hands establish thou it" (90:17).

It sounds terribly simple, but actually, it's frighteningly hard. We must begin each day, and live each day, and end each day with God.

Such faithful clock watching is the only way to make the most of our time. A bit of doggerel is right.

Only one life
'Twill soon be past.
Only what's done
For Christ will last.

Problems In The Early Church

By Harold Jackson

We live in a world where we are beset on every side by problems. Indeed, throughout the history of mankind, differences and difficulties have always arisen in the area of human relations. That being true, it is easy to see why

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problems would occur in the early church and why problems do arise in the church today. However, the problems themselves should not be of as much concern to us as the manner in which those problems can be solved.

The first problem that arose in the church in Jerusalem, as recorded in Acts 2, came about because of the vast number of people from all parts of the then known world who were in Jerusalem on the first pentecost after the resurrection of Christ and upon hearing the gospel preached, were obedient, and became Christians. Some three thousand on the day the gospel was first preached became Christians and thousands more a short time thereafter. Many of these new converts didn't want to return to their native homelands, and we can readily understand why. The New Testament had not been written yet, and they desperately needed the guidance and support of the inspired Apostles. But, how could they live in a foreign city, among strangers, and without any means of support? The saints who lived in Jerusalem and the surrounding area sold whatever they had and shared the proceeds with those who had no means of support. The problem was solved by a demonstration of LOVE and COMPASSION. (Acts 2:44, 45).

Another problem which recorded in Acts 6, came about because of the human element with which we must all content. Some, who evidently were natives of Greece, complained that some of their nationality were not being treated fairly when the necessities of life were distributed. The record does not tell us the extent of this mistreatment, or whether it was accidental or intentional, however, there was a problem. When the matter

was brought to the attention of the Apostles, they didn't ignore it hoping the problem would go away. Neither did they themselves, choose men to take care of it, even though it was well within their discretion to do so. Instead, they told those involved with the matter to choose from among themselves men for that purpose. By calling on those connected with the problem to help with the solution, they avoided even the possibility of anyone thinking they were showing any partiality in the matter. Also, those who point out a problem, most of the time have some idea of how they think that problem should be solved. Also, people who believe a problem exists cannot complain if they are called upon to help find the answer. So the problem was solved by the application of COMMON SENSE and the acceptance of RESPONSIBILITY.

Another problem recorded in Acts 15 arose because some in the congregation were teaching that Gentile converts must not only obey the gospel of Christ, but also must be obedient to the Law of Moses. When this was brought to the attention of the Apostles and Elders, they used the phrase "as it is written" to teach the truth of the gospel to the congregation. The problem was solved by simply being guided by God's Word and nothing more.

It would seem that most of the problems faced by the Lord's Church today could be solved by the same means and in the same manner as were these in the early church. By LOVE and COMPASSION, by COMMON SENSE and acceptance of RESPONSIBILITY, and by letting GOD'S WORD or "AS IT IS WRITTEN" be our ONLY guide in our belief and practice of Christianity.

WHICH IS IT?

"The Church Is Not Helping"

or

"The People Are Not Listening?"

By Bill Graddy

The number of young people who have drug problems, drinking problems, and problems because of divorced parents are many and increasing at an alarming rate. The common cry of these parents is "The church is not helping." It seems to be human nature to blame someone.

At the onset of this moral decay, the church began to teach and preach on the home and problems of morality. It appears that some preachers and churches almost majored in this area as special meetings, marriage seminars, and lectureships on this theme were the "in" thing. During a gospel meeting, all the classes from fifth grade through adults would meet in the auditorium for a class conducted by the visiting evangelist on the home and related subjects. Films, cassettes and tracts have been available and are ample. It cannot be said of the preachers and the churches that they have not been trying to help!

As the case of the Scribes and Pharisees when God talked, they thought it was thunder. (John 12:29). The case is that in too many instances, the message fell on deaf ears. In the main, the parents are not paying attention to what the church has been saying, nor are they teaching their children the Bible, and they have not had them in Bible classes. If the parents have eaten sour grapes and the childrens teeth are set on edge, (Ezekiel 18:2), they have allowed the "child to become the father of the man."

It is difficult to revise a crop failure. After the twig is bent, the tree is hard to bend. Now that these "left alone" children are older and bringing shame and reproach on their parents, (Proverbs 29:15) they are crying even louder, "The church is not helping."

In some cases, fuel has been added to the fire by some trying to erect family life centers which is an evident token of the failure of parents. But, alas, this too will not take the place of parenting . . . the love and affection that needs to be shown to children by their parents.

It is not the role of the church to provide recreation for the members. It is not the function of the church to salvage children from a bad home life. It is the business of the church to provide them with a home only when the parents fail to do so. In this benevolent work, as with all the work of the church, a program of prevention is available, but many parents do not take advantage of the Bible classes or worship services. Simply, these messages fall as thunder on delinquent parents. The gospel must be heard, believed and obeyed. The self-discipline to receive the gospel and follow the Lord in all his ways is the key to the problems of the home as well as the church. This instruction must be taught in the home by loving and

The Vision of my Victory

By T. V. Samson Raj

When I really had visioned
That my dreams of this world be set aside,
When I ceased from selfish longings of my vision,
When I triumph over pride.
When I'm willing, truly giving myself
To be nothing as we sing,
"But a broken, empty vessel,"
Which can cling in the service of my King!
That is the vision! That is my victory!

When I quietly take unfavours, unkindness,
As I meekly bear a sneer.
When I am willing to relinquish,
All that earth is holding dear
(even my selfish doubts and inner ego)

When the falseness of some dear one
Fails to waken in my heart,
Or to wing an angry dart --
That is the vision! That is the victory!

When in the powerful cross and in patient loving silence
Can bear my good made ill;
If I could suffer any discord or annoyance,
But be happy still.
And am content with any climate,
Any raiment, any type of food;
Bear with any interruption,
Company or solitude.
Only to preach the gospel to all!
That is the vision! And that is my victory!

If I learn to cease to long for earthly love,
'Am content to be unknown;
When I learn to smile if friends neglect me,
But -- leaning on His promises, Happy in his love alone.

When I lose myself in the Dear Lord,
And surroundings cease to be,
With the little foxes of my heart
And discords, able to discourage me --
To denote His divine charter.
That's the vision. That is my victory!

When I could pray my dear Lord, E'vn in my vision,
And confess the weakness of my sin --
When I could say, Lord I cannot vision to triumph over every
form of sin, and to live, but for thy Glory and Honour.
While my own will reigns within me.

So, Oh Lord of my heart, the Lord of my victory,
Will bring my will humbly to thy feet,
Please, my Lord, rule thou me in all my ways,
And the glory all be thine.

Words alone cannot fill, visions alone do not fulfill,
So I determined to turn every soul into thy kingdom.
Till I exist and sing praises of Heaven,
With all my adoration,
As souls are saved and my vision is completed.
So, I rest in thee, to gain the reward of my victory,
In the Lord!

caring parents in order to prevent as well as to rescue wayward children.

Schools and society are feeling the crunch of this negligence. Private schools, private tutoring, crime rate, and the drop-out rate are all the results of the deterioration of homes. America the beautiful is rapidly becoming America the ugly.

The church must preach and teach the truth on all subjects; the home and parents included. Parents must hear and follow these instructions and teach their children morning, noon and night what saith the scriptures (Deuteronomy 6:7). No institution can do for a child at six or sixteen what the parents failed to do during this time. The "wish has become the father of the thought" in too many cases. Children will not raise themselves!

The church cannot be blamed for the sad condition of homes today. Generally speaking, the very parents who need help the most are the ones who refuse to take advantage of the services of the church. Is it going to take the "four sore judgments" (Ezekiel 14:21) to bring America and

these parents to their knees before we see any real improvement?

The Necessity of Pain

By Owen D. Olbricht

In a setting where only good exists, pain and suffering would be unjust and valueless. If everyone was doing right and suffering still existed, then everyone would become frustrated with pain being inflicted in the face of constant goodness by everyone. This would be as frustrating as a typist hitting the right keys but still mistakes appearing.

But in a setting where evil exists, pain and suffering must be present as a guideline to what is right and wrong. If there were no pain in a setting where evil exists, then evil would seem as right as good. Nothing would be present to indicate the wrongness of evil. If a typist then makes no mistakes regardless what keys were hit, then right and wrong keys would

never be learned or needed to be learned.

Seemingly no suffering was present in the garden of Eden. This would have been right, for no evil was present. With the introduction of evil also came the introduction of pain and suffering (Gen. 3:14-19).

In order to understand why the possibility of sin exists, one would have to see into the mind of God. But with an entry of sin into the world, pain and suffering are necessary so that the rightness and wrongness of human rights may be indicated.

Although the direct relationship may not always seem so apparent, suffering is to be compared with the pain inflicted into the physical world because of violations of natural laws. Consider the pain that comes to the body when the hand is placed into the fire which can damage the tissue of the hand. Not all pain is bad and not all pleasure in the physical realm is good, but properly understood these can be helpful in understanding the right and wrong use of the body.

The wrongness of evil becomes apparent in the same way, not because all evil

causes pain, but because of the pattern of problems that are created by evil acts. If evil either directly or indirectly causes problems, then the wrongness of evil is made apparent by the pain and suffering created by evil.

This does not argue that the place where good and evil exist must of necessity bring suffering to the evil doer and pleasure to the one who does what is right, for both good and evil people experience the consequences of the same environment (Matt. 5:45). What becomes apparent is that, if good were practiced and evil were not practiced, then all would be benefited in the same way all could suffer because of the evil acts of one person in that environment. Evil and good can affect the lives of all who are present to experience the results. What is evident is that good brings benefits to the environment and evil brings pain and suffering.

The person who believes in God is in a better position to explain pain and suffering than is the person who does not believe in God. To the atheist pain and suffering are meaningless and valueless since there are no such principles as moral evil and good. All acts should for him bring only pleasurable results. If this does not happen, then there must be a right and wrong manner of behavior.

Instead of refusing to accept the existence of God because of pain and suffering, one should be motivated to accept God's existence. Pain and suffering have meaning if there is a Designer of the universe, but if there is no such Designer, then these are meaningless heartaches of an aborted existence.

In our present state pain and suffering are necessary. But in heaven where only good will exist, pain and suffering are out of place and for this reason will be no more (Rev. 21:1-4). Pain and suffering in heaven would be meaningless, but here it is of great value as a testimony of the rightness of good and the wrongness of evil.

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How To Become A Christian

The most important question ever asked is: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). Then the HOW becomes equally as important. Notice the step by step process. First, we must have faith in the Author and Finisher of our faith, Jesus Christ. (Heb. 12:2). This faith comes by the hearing of the Word of God. (Rom. 10:17). "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Heb. 11:6). With the belief and trust that Jesus is the Redeemer, we must repent of sins. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." (Acts 17:30). In repentance, we turn from sin, **STOP** serving Satan and **START** serving the Lord. (Matthew 3:8;

Luke 13:3). With this new attitude we are ready to confess our faith, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." (Romans 10:9-10). Read Matthew 10:32-33. Acknowledge our faith, repentance and confession, the last step into Christ is baptism. "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. 3:27). Read Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38. Now that our past sins have been forgiven, the Lord has added us to His church and we are Christians. (Acts 2:47 and Acts 11:26).

BECOME A CHRISTIAN

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