

**AND THE PEOPLE CAME...**

- Week of April 23, 2023 -

Sunday Morning Service -----	29
Sunday Evening Service -----	25
Wednesday Eve., 04/26/23 Service -----	21

**AND THE PEOPLE GAVE...**

- Week of April 23, 2023 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 1,059.05
Foundation Piering Fund -----	\$ 275.00
<b>TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 04/23/23:</b>	<b>\$ 1,334.05</b>

- Week of April 16, 2023 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 1,494.60
<b>TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 04/16/23:</b>	<b>\$ 1,494.06</b>

- Week of April 9, 2023 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 1,650.00
Foundation Piering Fund -----	\$ 255.00
<b>TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 04/09/23:</b>	<b>\$ 1,905.00</b>

- Week of April 2, 2023 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 1,986.05
Foundation Piering Fund -----	\$ 50.00
<b>TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 04/02/23:</b>	<b>\$ 2,036.05</b>

- Week of March 26, 2023 -

<u>Undesignated</u> Tithes & Offerings -----	\$ 775.36
Foundation Piering Fund -----	\$ 5,150.00
<b>TOTAL RECEIVED FOR WEEK OF 03/26/23:</b>	<b>\$ 5,925.36</b>

Average amount of Undesignated Offerings needed for church operating expenses EACH WEEK, as a minimum = \$ 1,600.00



**FOUNDATION PIERING FUND -**

Amount Received, Week of 04/16/23: \$ 0.00

Amount For Entire Project ----- \$13,600.00

Amount Received So Far ----- \$13,528.00

Total Still Needed To Pay Off Entire Repair: \$ 72.00

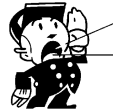
**LISTEN TO -**



ABIDINGRADIO.COM

**WHAT IT MEANS TO BE SAVED**

1. Admit that you are a sinner.
2. Admit that God says all sins must be paid for.
3. Accept the fact that Christ took upon Himself the suffering necessary to pay for all your sins.
4. You must change your mind about sin and sinning (God calls this repentance).
5. By an act of your will, accept by faith the Lord Jesus Christ, Who can save you from the penalty of sin. Then, tell God about this in a simple prayer. Believe that God keeps His promise to save you, and thank Him for His salvation.



**THANK YOU For Your Continued Faithfulness In Giving!**

During the early part this pandemic, we were unable to meet in the church-house. But - that did not mean that the expenses of having a church-house were suspended. We still had bills to pay - electricity, gas, water, trash pickup, phone, internet, facility insurance, copier lease, office supplies, etc., and, praise the Lord, His people kept praying, watching online, & supporting their church with their giving.

Sadly, some people only give when they are in attendance at church - sort of like paying for "services rendered" - but the truth is that they are robbing **THEMSELVES** of God's blessings when they withhold their tithes and offerings and only give when they are here (see Malachi 3:10). Thankfully, most of our people have remained faithful, in so many ways, during this crisis, including financially.

**WE HAVE 3 WAYS YOU CAN GIVE:**

1. **By mail** - 23 East Wells Blvd., Sapulpa, OK 74066
2. **Drop it off** - call the Church Office to arrange it. 224-1924
3. **Online** - Go to the link below and give electronically:

<https://tithe.ly/give?c=433047>

**WE ARE GLAD WE CAN NOW GATHER TOGETHER TO PRAISE GOD & STUDY HIS WORD TOGETHER IN THE CHURCH-HOUSE!  
YOUR FAITHFUL AND GENEROUS GIFTS WILL HELP US KEEP UP WITH THE BILLS AND CONTINUE OUR RENEWED OUTREACH EFFORTS!**

**Church Directory**

Todd W. White -----	Pastor
Debra Carlton, Mickie Shatwell, Lois Mae Floyd -----	Pianists
Derek Quinnelly -----	Greeter
Larry & Mary Byars -----	Outreach
LeAnna White -----	Custodian
GinaMarie Shufelt -----	Flowers
Seth White -----	Sound/Video
Larry Byars, David Smith, Derek Quinnelly -----	Trustees

SOUTH HEIGHTS BAPTIST'S WEEKLY  
**REMINDER**

Volume XXIX

April 30, 2023

Number 17



**Cliff Palmer**  
1925 - 2020

**Principles Of Revival**

by the late Cliff Palmer  
Pastor - First Baptist Church of Springdale, Arkansas  
1970 - 1986  
(Preached 11/29/1998)

The typical Christian today has **no idea** what **biblical** revival really is. Most confuse **evangelism** and revival, equating the two.

For example, if a large number of people get saved at a meeting, or series of meetings, in a church, most Christians would say, "Man! We had a GREAT REVIVAL!" But the TRUTH is that you could have any number of souls saved in a meeting somewhere, and not experience real, biblical revival at all!

This is because **evangelism** is for the **Unsaved**, and **REVIVAL** is for the **SAVED**.

Someone has put it this way - "**You cannot get somebody REVived until he has been VIVED!**"

Let me give you a good definition of real, biblical revival:

**>>> REVIVAL IS A TIME OF RENEWAL AND REFRESHING OF THE CHILDREN OF GOD <<<**

Dr. R. A. Torrey said, "A revival is a time of quickening or impartation of life. As God alone can give life, a revival is a time when God visits His people and by the power of His Spirit imparts new life to them, and through them imparts life to sinners dead in trespasses and sins. We have religious excitements gotten up by the cunning methods and hypnotic influence of the mere professional evangelist. But these are not revivals and are not needed. They are the devil's imitations of a revival."

When God really moves in your heart, He will not, the Apostle Paul says, cause you to behave like a nut. The word is "unseemly" in I Corinthians 13:5. It means to act in a way that is the opposite of what the Holy Spirit will cause you to act. Do you remember the "Toronto Revival" - where people fell on the floor and barked like dogs? What about the famous "Laughing Revival"? These meetings, and countless others like them, are touted as "great revivals", but have **absolutely nothing** to do with real, biblical revival!

The predominant meaning of "REVIVAL", in the Old Testament, is simply "**TO RESTORE**" or "**TO RECOVER**". In other words, BIBLICAL revival results in God restoring His people to what He originally designed them to be. To this statement, someone may ask, "Well, then what did God design us to be?" Are you ready for the answer?

**It's To Be Like Jesus Christ.**

SO - real, **biblical** revival will ALWAYS result in God's people becoming MORE LIKE JESUS CHRIST.

In the New Testament, the word translated into the English word, "revival" means "**TO STIR UP**" or "**TO RE-KINDLE A FIRE THAT IS SLOWLY DYING**". The word, "revival", is used metaphorically in II Timothy 1:6 where Paul says, "**Stir up - fan the flame of - the gift of God, which is in thee.**"

What I am trying to say is that God's people need, more than anything else, to **CATCH ON FIRE FOR THE LORD!** Now, for that to happen, it means that we need to get up out of our lethargy and apathy, and become once more concerned about the things of God! Most of God's people are not "ice cold", spiritually, nor are they "on fire" for the Lord - most of the professing Christians in the world today are somewhere in between. **They are "lukewarm"**. But, Jesus says, in Rev. 3:16, that He would rather us be **ON FIRE** for Him, rather than indifferent (lukewarm) or ice cold.

Now - there are at least 7 revivals recorded in the Bible, and in each of the 7 passages where they are recorded, we are given  
*(continued inside)*

God's definition of Real/True/Biblical Revival. Let's look at one of them, as found in First Samuel Chapter 7.

*First, let me give us some background -*

At this point in their history, the children of Israel have already been led out of 430 years of bondage in Egypt. They have also finished 40 years of wandering in the wilderness after leaving Egypt (because they disobeyed God by taking heed to the "majority report" of 10 of the 12 spies sent in to scope out Canaan). Moses is now dead, and Joshua has taken over, led them into The Promised Land, allocated to each of the 12 Tribes of Jacob their portion of it, and the people are settled in.

Now - this *should* have been a time of rejoicing and gratefulness to God for all that He has done for them. But, instead, it was one of the most dangerous times for them. This is because it is **not** during times of trouble, tribulation, and persecution that God's people are in peril. Instead, it is during times of ***peace and prosperity*** that are the most dangerous for them, as well as us. I learned a long time ago that it is far easier to stray from God when everything is going well, than when we are suffering!

***America is a good illustration of this.***

No other nation has been more blessed by God than the United States of America! Yet, in light of all of those blessings, America continued to turn AWAY from God, rather than *TO* Him! *Our nation is far and away MORE -*

☛ **IMMORAL**   ☛ **CARNAL**   ☛ **GODLESS**  
and ☛ **EVIL**

*- than it has EVER been!*

***- We have taken the blessings of God, and used them as a license to sin!***

Now, this is not new - it is the SAME cycle that we see God's people in all through the Bible and history.

So, at this point, the children of Israel are finally in The Promised Land, each is living in his portion of it, and, instead of rejoicing, praising God, giving thanks to Him, and serving Him, they have become idolatrous - *following pagan gods, and becoming more and more like their heathen neighbors, instead of becoming like the people of God.*

As a result, God raises up in their midst a total of **13 JUDGES**, each functioning much like a modern-day governor.

This has been called the "Dark Ages of Hebrew History", because the people of God spiraled farther and farther down, spiritually. It was a terrible, terrible time, and was characterized by the following statement:

***"...every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25b).***

*Their minds and their lives were governed by:*

☛ **RELATIVISM**   ☛ **SUBJECTIVISM**  
☛ **HUMANISM** and ☛ **SITUATION ETHICS**

***- Just Like AMERICA IS TODAY!***

The typical American, today, is **JUST LIKE THAT** - he's going to do his own thing, no matter **WHAT** the Word of God

says!

*Now - the outcome of all of that is this:*

God will only allow HIS people to go so far before He disciplines His children. ***Remember that God doesn't spank the devil's children, but He does spank His!*** He loves us *too much* to let us go on and on in sin and disobedience, so He disciplines us, His children.

Therefore, at this point in their history, God raised up an enemy known as the Philistines, and He will use these godless, idolatrous Philistines to discipline His people. He draws them into battle with the children of Israel, and they routed the Hebrew army, killing thousands of them.

Whereupon, the Jews asked, ***"HOW could this happen? WE are God's children, and THEY are all PAGANS! How could this happen?"***

And the answer is simple: God allowed the Philistines to discipline His own children.

NOW - you would **THINK** that, as a result, they would turn back to the Lord....***but they didn't.***

They **SHOULD** have said:

● *"We've sinned against God, and He has let this happen as a result."*

● *"We've taken our eyes off of HIM, and we're paying the penalty!"*

● *"We need to REPENT and turn back to God!"*

You would **THINK** that they'd do that! ....***but they DIDN'T!*** > ***Instead, They Did Something Unthinkable and Foolish!*** <

They decided to take the Ark of the Covenant (which was the only piece of furniture in the Tabernacle and later the Temple) out of the Holy of Holies. This was the place where God would meet with His people at the Mercy Seat (which was the top of the Ark of the Covenant), ***and it represented the presence of God Himself.***

So, they said,

*"Well, rather than changing OURSELVES - rather than confess and repent, what we'll do is to take this box, which represents the presence of God, and we will take it with us into battle, and THIS time, we will WIN, because we took that box, which represents God's presence, into battle with us."*

Of course, YOU know what happened, don't you?

They've not changed - they are -

☛ **STILL IDOLATROUS**

☛ **STILL SUPERSTITIOUS**

☛ **STILL BACKSLIDDEN**

BUT - they had the "good luck charm" (the Ark), so everything was going to be "OK"....***they thought.***

Well, not only did the Philistines just "clean their plow", killing thousands more, they **CAPTURED** the Ark of the Covenant, which symbolized the presence of God, and took it home with them!

NOW - these pagan Philistines worshiped a multitude of

gods - so many, in fact, that they built a special facility to house them all. And, knowing that the box they'd captured was holy and sacred to the Jews, they took it to their "god house", and placed it next to their #1 god - Dagon, the fish god.

So - here's the Ark of the Covenant, which signifies the presence of the one TRUE God, sitting in the Philistine "god house" next to Dagon, their fish god. And they went home, and when they came back the next morning, there was Dagon - toppled over and laying flat on his face. So, they set Dagon's image back upright and in it's place.

And, the next morning, when they went out to check on Dagon, *not only* was he flat on his face, he was busted up into pieces, so that, the Bible says, only the "stump" of Dagon was left standing.

At this point, these heathens took the box that represented the presence of God, built a brand new cart for it, and SENT IT BACK to the Jews.

Once the Ark of the Covenant arrived, ***instead of*** rejoicing, ***instead of*** praising God for the return of the Ark, ***instead of*** saying, *"Praise God! HE has returned the precious Ark of the Covenant - a symbol of His presence - back to us!",* guess what they did?

They put it in the back room of a house owned by a man by the name of Abinidab, and hired his son to watch over it. And for **20 years**, that box, which symbolized the presence of God, sat in that back room, gathering dust!

So, for twenty long years, the people of God lived as though God didn't exist!

And, friend, that right there is where many, many professing Christians are - **RIGHT NOW.**

**They -**

☐ **ABSENT THEMSELVES FROM THE HOUSE OF GOD,**

☐ **DON'T READ THEIR BIBLE DAILY,**

☐ **DON'T PRAY DAILY,**

☐ **DON'T GET INVOLVED IN ANYTHING, SPIRITUALLY,**

**- THEY LIVE AS THOUGH GOD DOESN'T EXIST! -**

Are they saved? Are they born again?

We don't know - but probably not.

**BUT** - if they a saved, God will NOT allow them to continue to live like that!

You see, the true child of God **can** sin, but he won't get by with it! God loves His erring child **TOO MUCH** to let him live like that, so He allows some tragic event to happen in his life, in an attempt to get his attention.

And let me remind you, Christian friend, you can live your life as though God doesn't exist, *but you will be* - if you're truly saved - **absolutely miserable.** And, one day, God is going to reach down and discipline you, because He loves you **too much** to let you continue living like that!

***Isn't it sad that so many of God's children have no heart for Him?***

Listen, friend - if that is **YOU**, then you might as well brace yourself, because God is "a-fixinto" discipline you, and bring you back into a right relationship with Him, and the **means** by which He is going to have to do so probably won't be pretty.

Aren't you glad that you have a Heavenly Father - one that loves you **SO MUCH** that He won't allow you to continue to live as though He doesn't exist?

Now - that brings us to First Samuel Chapter 7:

***"And the men of Kirjathjearim came, and fetched up the ark of the Lord, and brought it into the house of Abinadab in the hill, and sanctified Eleazar his son to keep the ark of the Lord. And it came to pass, while the ark abode in Kirjathjearim, that the time was long; for it was twenty years: and all the house of Israel lamented after the Lord" (1 Samuel 7:1-2).***

***STEPS TO HAVING A REAL, BIBLICAL REVIVAL:***

**1. God's People Must Develop A Hunger For Him.**

Is there a deep, real, genuine hunger in your heart for God, one that is not satisfied with the things of this world? Have you learned that the things of this world will not satisfy your soul?

Listen, friend - they are **EMPTY!** They are **counterfeits!**

You will **NEVER** be happy, even if you have everything this world has to offer - ***for only Jesus Christ can satisfy your soul!***

**Do you hunger in your heart for God?**

It was King David, a "man after God's own heart", who wrote, ***"Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness" (Psalm 107:8-9).***

The child of God that truly hungers for God and the things of God will be filled with God Himself!

SO - after 20 long years, God's people, who had been living as though He didn't exist, began to lament/hunger for Him again.

***"And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him only: and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines" (1 Sam. 7:3).***

Not only was there a deep hunger for God, there is a second ingredient necessary to have real, biblical revival:

**2. God's People Must Give Him Their Whole Heart.**

Do you know what the Number One problem is in churches in America, right now?

**APATHY - half-heartedness!**

Somehow, God's people **MUST** get **ON FIRE** for Jesus Christ, or our nation is **DOOMED!**



So - Real revival will NOT come, until God's people, (1) Develop A Hunger In Their Heart For God; (2) Give God Their Whole Heart. Notice that verse again:

***“And Samuel spake unto all the house of Israel, saying, If ye do return unto the Lord with all your hearts, then put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you... (I Sam. 7:3a).***

You say, ***“Well, THAT doesn't have anything to do with US - WE'RE not pagans! We don't have any 'other gods!'”***

Really?

What is a “god”?

***A god is that thing in your life that you think about MOST.***

Let me repeat that:

***A god is that thing in your life that you think about MOST.***

- and it can be ANYTHING!

***\* Money \* Power \* Material Things \* Prestige***

***\* It can even be your family***

How many professing Christians in this country could honestly say, ***“The #1 thing that I think about is God!”***?

The Bible says, ***“...put away the strange gods ...from among you...”***!

Whatever it is that is taking away from God and the things of God in your life, ***GET RID OF THEM!***

If you're truly saved, God loves you too much, as one of His children, to let you go on with that in your life, and at some point, He will allow something to come into your life for the purpose of drawing you back to Him. *It's sad that it has to come to that, but most of us are too stubborn and self-willed that we won't listen any other way!*

And, when that day comes, and it will, if you're truly a child of God, you'd better respond *properly*, because if you don't, the Bible says that God will take His hand off of you, and deal with you directly when you get to your Heavenly home, and, as J. Harold Smith used to warn people - at that point, you will have crossed one of God's “deadlines”, and God will call you Home prematurely, because He will have put you “on the shelf”. And, friend, that was the Apostle Paul's greatest fear: to be put on the shelf because he had become *useless to God*, and I submit to you that if that scared PAUL, it ought to frighten US to no end!

Now - this is not only true for individuals, it is also true for families, and nations.

There is a third principle for true revival found here:

***“...put away the strange gods and Ashtaroth from among you, and prepare your hearts unto the Lord, and serve him ONLY...” (I Samuel 7:3b).***

We like to emphasize how God has saved us by His grace, but we tragically fail to acknowledge, much less mention, that God saved us to serve Him! And, we're not only saved to serve Him when we get to Heaven, we're to service Him ***IN THIS LIFE ALSO!*** And - we're to serve Him **only** because **HE** first loved us, and sent His only begotten Son to die for us!

So, if we're to have real, biblical revival -

**3. Make God Your God.**

That's Number 3.

Real, biblical revival will also result in -

**4. Confession Of, and Repentance From, ALL KNOWN SIN.**

If real, biblical revival is to occur, God's people are going to have to “get real”, and admit to God that they've sinned, repent of it, and vow, ***“With God's help, I ain't gonna do that any more!”***

Remember that there are two types of sin: Sins of **OMISSION**, and sins of **COMMISSION**. Somehow, we're going to have to allow the Holy Spirit to put His finger on those things we're committing or omitting that displease Him, and confess and repent of them. And, until we do **THAT**, real revival ***WILL NOT COME.***

Lastly, notice -

After having:

***1. Developed a Hunger For God and The Things of God;***

Then ***2. Giving God All Of Our Heart;***

And ***3. Making THE GOD Our God;***

Which will result in -

***4. The Confession & Repentance From All Known Sin;***

We must:

***5. Begin Serving The Lord.***

***“...and serve him only...”***

Now - HOW do we do that?

Well, it starts with -

- Reading your Bible daily.**
- Having a daily time of prayer.**
- Getting active in a local, New Testament church.**
- Discovering your spiritual gift, and learning how to use it.**
- Sharing the message of the Gospel of Christ with the lost.**

Well, these people did these things, and notice what happened:

***“And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord. And Samuel judged the children of Israel in Mizpeh” (I Samuel 7:6).***

They took a bucket of water and poured it out on the sand, and when the water hit the sand - it was **GONE**.

Symbolizing -

***“Just as we have poured out this water and the earth has received it, so that it is no more, we are making a commitment to You, God, and that commitment is so complete, that it includes all that we are, have, and hope to be.***

***“God - we are coming back to You, and, like this water that is gone, everything hat hindered our walk with You is GONE, and we will serve You ONLY.”*** ■



## ***Why Do Evangelical Churches Look So Much Like the Secular Culture Around Them?***

As the eschatological clock continues to tick, and as we rapidly approach Christ's return, it seems like every self-promoting, virtue-signaling Evangelical has jumped on the bandwagon of ever-shifting cultural movements. These trends, ranging from the use of preferred pronouns to a misguided “compassion” for mothers willing to take their unborn children to be killed on the altar of convenience, have been creeping into our churches and our homes watering down the truth of God in His word and robbing Him of His glory in creation.

Now, I don't know about you, but last time I checked, the Bible told us that our Lord created us male and female. Especially for Christians, you'd think that would settle the matter, but no—today's society wants us to tiptoe around people's feelings, asking them what they'd like to be called rather than acknowledging the divine design and our Evangelical leaders are increasingly caving. By giving in to this ludicrous demand, we're not only thumbing our noses at God's plan for His trophy creation, but we're also opening the floodgates to a tidal wave of moral relativism where truth is as fickle as the weather and God's Word loses its teeth.

Sure, Jesus told us to love and forgive, but let's not get all wishy-washy here, folks. Abortion is a grave sin that takes an innocent life, and last time I checked, the Creator of the universe wasn't too keen on that. Psalm 139:13-16 paints a beautiful picture of God's hand at work in the womb, so why are we so quick to extend a sympathetic pat on the back to those who have chosen to snuff out that divine spark? Since when has the church ever had compassion on unrepentant sin? By doing so, we risk diluting God's hatred of sin, making a mockery of the urgency of repentance, and undermining the power of redemption through Christ—not to mention, we rob sinners of the divine guilt placed within their conscience by God Himself which is meant to convict them of their sin.

And, as for the growing acceptance of worldly values and lifestyles among Evangelicals, it seems like we've become a bunch of spiritual chameleons, adapting our beliefs and practices to blend in with the ever-changing landscape of secular society. From twerking in the church parking lot to sporting tattoos of Bible verses alongside skulls and crossbones (I'm not saying tattoos are inherently sinful), we're drifting farther and farther away from the clear teachings of Scripture. Romans 12:2 warns us not to conform to the world, but it seems we've traded our spiritual compasses for a roadmap to cultural compromise.

These are just a few examples of the tidal wave of cultural movements threatening to wash away the distinctiveness of our faith. From embracing same-sex marriage to entertaining the idea of multiple pathways to God, it's no wonder our churches are

starting to look more like social clubs than houses of worship. And all the while, the devil is rubbing his hands with glee as we dance to the tune of his deception.

So, what's a faithful believer to do in the face of all this madness? Simple: cling to the unchanging truth of Scripture, refuse to be swayed by the siren song of popular opinion, and proclaim God's glory and truth with boldness and conviction. After all, we're called to be salt and light in a dark and decaying world, not a bunch of spiritual chameleons blending in with the godless crowd.

At the end of the day, it's high time for us to rise up, dust off our Bibles, and stand firm on the solid rock of God's Word. We must reject the temptation to bow down to the idols of modern culture and instead be unwavering ambassadors for Christ. Our mission is to spread the Gospel, call sinners to repentance, and uphold the truth that there is no salvation apart from Jesus.

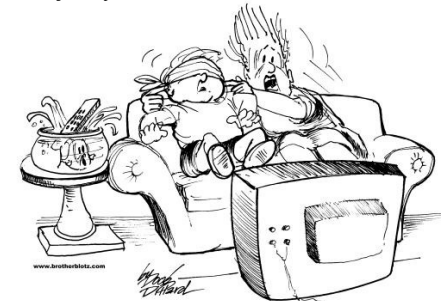
To do this, we must first examine our own hearts and ensure we are living in obedience to God's commands. We can't expect others to follow the narrow path if we ourselves are traipsing down the broad road that leads to destruction (Matthew 7:13-14). It's time to cast off the shackles of compromise, put on the armor of God (Ephesians 6:11), and engage in the spiritual battle that is raging all around us.

We must lovingly, but firmly, confront the false teachings that have crept into our churches. This isn't about being judgmental or self-righteous; it's about contending for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints (Jude 1:3). We must be like the Bereans, who searched the Scriptures daily to see if what they were being taught was true (Acts 17:11). By doing so, we will be equipped to discern truth from error and guard against the subtle deceptions of the enemy.

Finally, we must remember that our ultimate goal is not to win arguments or appear more righteous than others. Our purpose is to glorify God, share the Good News of Jesus Christ, and demonstrate His love and grace to a lost and dying world. This may mean standing against the tide of popular opinion, enduring mockery and ridicule, or even facing persecution for our faith.

When that happens, remember what Jesus promised in Matthew 5:11-12, ***“Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”***

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## NEWS OF INTEREST TO CHRISTIANS

☛ **HAMAS OFFICIAL CALLS ON ALLAH TO ANNIHILATE JEWS** - The following is excerpted from “Hamas Official,” Israel National News, Apr. 12, 2023:

“Hamas official Sheikh Dr. Hamad Al-Regeb in a sermon in Gaza this past Friday prayed for Allah to bring annihilation and paralysis upon the Jews ... Al-Regeb also said that the Jews are ‘filthy animals’ ... who spread corruption, injustice, and evil at the Al-Aqsa Mosque. His remarks were translated by the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI). ... ‘We see the hordes of foreigners, the brothers of apes and pigs, spread corruption, injustice, and evil [at the Al-Aqsa Mosque]. According to the tradition, [the Jews] killed 70 of the Israelite prophets in one hour during the daytime, and they did not even close their markets,’ claimed Al-Regeb. ... ‘All the Palestinians and Muslims should make preparations. They should prepare for a day when they will heed a call to arms,’ declared the Hamas official. ... ‘We will pay no attention to the price, no matter how high. Are they trying to intimidate us with killing? What can possibly taste better than martyrdom? What can be more beautiful than ending your life by dying for the sake of Allah? ... Oh Allah, enable us to get to the necks of the Jews. Oh Allah, enable us to get to the necks of the Jews,’ concluded Al-Regeb.”

☛ **IN OREGON, CHRISTIANS MUST CELEBRATE TRANSGENDER OR THEY CANNOT ADOPT** - The following is excerpted from “Christians Must Take Children,” The Washington Stand, Apr. 6, 2023:

“The state of Oregon refused to allow a Christian mother of five to adopt two children after she said her religion would not let her take a young minor to receive cross-hormone injections--a policy that could prevent up to 78% of Americans from adopting children. Requiring adoptive parents to facilitate transgender procedures acts as a form of religious discrimination against many world religions, her attorneys say. Jessica Bates has sued five Oregon state employees for adoption guidelines that effectively say, ‘Conservative Christians need not apply,’ according to her legal brief. Oregon state law requires all would-be adoptive parents to ‘respect, accept and support’ the adoptee’s professed ‘sexual orientation, gender identity, [and] gender expression.’ Bates said mandatory classes in the state’s adoption application process said this included using a child’s preferred pronouns, presenting same-sex relationships in a positive light, and taking children who identify as LGBT to transgender procedures. ... Bates, whose late husband perished in a car accident in 2017, is a mom of five children between the ages of 10 and 17. She feels inspired to adopt children based on the Bible’s commandment ‘to visit orphans and widows in their affliction’ (James 1:27); she also volunteers twice a week at a pro-life pregnancy resource center. She would like to adopt two siblings, who are younger than nine years old.

... When Bates enrolled in the Resource and Adoptive Family (RAFT) program, she says a RAFT instructor told her good

parenting required ‘allowing a child to dress however they want and taking them to a Pride parade.’ ... Parents should avoid ‘forcing youth to attend activities [including religious activities] that are ... unsupportive of people with diverse SOGIE [sexual orientation, gender identity and expression],’ it said. ... ‘Oregon’s policy amounts to an ideological litmus test,’ said Jonathan Scruggs of ADF, which represents Bates in the court case, *Bates v. Pakseresht*.”

☛ **ARIZONA DEM LEGISLATOR APOLOGIZES FOR HIDING STATE HOUSE BIBLES** - Democrat Arizona State Rep. Stephanie Stahl Hamilton apologized Wednesday after being caught on video hiding Bibles in the State House member lounge.

“I hold Scripture very dear to my heart,” azcentral.com reported Stahl Hamilton, D-Tucson, saying Wednesday, following the moment of prayer that begins every House floor session. “It is what guides me. It is what shapes and informs the decisions I make. I have the utmost respect for people of all faiths, and for people who choose not to have a faith. And because of that respect, I recognize my actions could have been seen something as less than playful — and offensive.”

Rep. Stahl Hamilton is an ordained pastor who graduated with a Christian Education degree from the Eastern Nazarene College in Quincy, Massachusetts, and has served as a director of Christian education and youth ministry at a Presbyterian church. She was captured on video hiding Bibles in the lounge under seat cushions and in a refrigerator, according to the report.

“It makes me a little uncomfortable, and I think it’s kind of offensive to people who believe in and cherish the Bible,” Speaker Pro Tempore Travis Grantham, R-Gilbert, told the publication. “I feel like a disappointed dad.”

The report said the “missing” Bibles mystery “went on for weeks” until House Speaker Ben Toma, R-Glendale, ordered a video camera be put in the exclusive members lounge on the advice of state security personnel.

Stahl Hamilton said she pulled the “prank” to highlight the division of church and state in the chamber.

“The intent was never to be destructive, to never desecrate or to offend,” she said in the report.

The report said it is not yet clear if she will face disciplinary action for hiding the Bibles, but fellow Democrats expressed concerns about the camera being placed in the lounge without their knowledge.

“We have members wondering what is public record and what is not,” House Democratic Leader Rep. Andrés Cano, D-Tucson, said in the report.

Grantham told the news outlet that personnel removed the camera after capturing Stahl Hamilton on video hiding the Bibles.

Stahl Hamilton said that after noticing a Bible in the “government building” several weeks ago, she moved it under a seat cushion as a “simple little prank,” but then hid it again after it was discovered and placed back out into the open.

“To my brain, it just felt like it’s a game ... a peaceful, playful

protest,” she said in the report. “I have long been frustrated by the blurred lines between separation of church and state.”

☛ **FEDERAL JUDGE RULES MISSISSIPPI MUST ALLOW RELIGIOUS EXEMPTIONS FOR SCHOOL VACCINES** - Mississippi officials must allow students to obtain religious exemptions from vaccine mandates, a federal judge ruled recently.

The southern state had remained one of only two red states that did not offer religious exemptions from school shot mandates. The other is West Virginia.

District Judge Halil “Sul” Ozerden ruled on April 18 that the state’s health officer and a handful of local school district officials were “enjoined from enforcing Mississippi’s school compulsory vaccination law...unless they provide an option for requesting a religious exemption from the law’s requirements.” Plaintiffs were represented by the Informed Consent Action Network (ICAN), a medical freedom advocacy group.

State Health Officer Daniel Edney has until July 15, according to the ruling, to develop a statewide exemption process for the school shot mandates. “Thereafter, while the injunction remains in effect, a person may seek a religious exemption from the compulsory vaccine law by requesting such exemption pursuant to the process developed by the Mississippi State Department of Health.”

While the plaintiffs were parents, state officials themselves even argued there were exemptions from the mandates, even if those were not explicitly in the state code.

The state argued that another law, the Mississippi Religious Freedom Restoration Act, effectively provided an avenue for requesting an exemption based on religious grounds from vaccine mandates. “The Attorney General takes the position that the MRFRA requires the [state health department] and local school authorities to afford Plaintiffs’ minor children the option of requesting a religious exemption from the vaccination statute,” the judge wrote, summarizing the defendant’s position.

Judge Ozerden did not buy this argument, writing that “the plain text of the statute says nothing about automatically creating religious exemptions to any state law that runs afoul of the MRFRA.”

ICAN heralded the judge’s decision and hinted at future challenges to the five remaining states that still refuse to protect the medical freedom rights of parents and students.

“This puts an end to 44 years of discrimination and harm to Mississippi families and is a crucial win that lays the groundwork for future challenges in the five other states that similarly allow medical but not religious exemptions to school mandated vaccines,” ICAN wrote in its statement.

Attorney General Lynn Fitch said through her media team that she will implement the judge’s ruling.

“We appreciate the judge’s thoughtful ruling from the bench and will give full consideration to his written order when provided,” Debbie Hancock, communications director for the Attorney General’s office, said in a statement provided to the

Mississippi Today. “General Fitch has always been of the belief that there is a religious liberty exemption, as stated in our filings in this case, and we look forward to working with the Department of Health to ensure faithful execution of the judge’s order.”

The remaining states that refuse religious exemptions are West Virginia, Connecticut, New York, Maine, and California, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

☛ **STORE CLOSURES CONTINUE IN LAWLESS CITIES RUN BY LEFTISTS** - The following is excerpted from “Walmart to Close Four Chicago Stores,” Disntr, Apr. 12, 2023:

“I am writing about this because I believe that it affects Christians and is demonstrative of the judgment of God on a nation that has abandoned a Christian worldview and instead embraced progressive Democrat politics. This is only the beginning of the decline of this nation due to moral decay and depravity. Under the harrowing reign of Mayor Lori Lightfoot and the malevolent rogue prosecutor Kim Foxx, Chicago has been thrust into a nightmarish inferno of gun violence and lawlessness in the midst of the pandemic. The city, suffocated by a horrifying 33% surge in serious crime since Lightfoot seized power in 2019, has been brought to its knees with over 800 fatalities in 2021 alone and nearly 700 more the following year.

... The bloodcurdling specter of gang violence continues to terrorize the city, as brazen criminal syndicates audaciously pillage retail stores across a multitude of neighborhoods, including the once-proud primary shopping district. Carjackings, muggings, and shootings have become chillingly routine, with predominantly Black communities shouldering the heaviest burden of this chaos. In an eye-opening press release on April 11, Walmart unveiled plans to shutter four of its beleaguered Chicago stores in the wake of relentless financial hemorrhaging due to the constant crime and theft.

... The beleaguered stores, collectively hemorrhaging tens of millions of dollars annually, have witnessed their yearly losses nearly double within the past five years. ... the bottom line is that Democrat policies have caused decent people with a good work ethic to leave this city. Chicago has some of the strictest anti-gun laws in the nation, stripping innocent law-abiding citizens of their right to defend themselves in public. Nobody wants to risk their lives to step foot into a Walmart store where they may become the next victim of gun violence in one of the Democrats’ gun-free zones.”

