

Daily View

“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’” Hebrews 3:13

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Religion, Faith & Mental Health

“It’s against my religion.”

Those of you who are younger may find this hard to believe, but when I was in high school, when I was asked why I couldn’t engage in some activity, I would say, “that’s against my religion” and my friends would say, “Oh! OK...” That got me out of a lot of jams. A friend would ask, “are you going to the dance on Friday..” “No... it’s against my religion.” Usually, they would nod, “OK.”

Some teachers and preachers didn’t bother to distinguish between different types of dancing; a few actually put tap dancing in the same category with the various forms of sensual dancing that were likely to provoke lust in normal red-blooded American kids. “Dancing” — no matter what kind — was “against our religion.”

On rare occasions, though, a friend would ask why it was against our religion. I would just repeat, “it’s just against my religion,” arms spread out, palms up with an “I dunno” look on my face. That’s because I really didn’t know *why*.

When we asked the adults why we couldn’t dance, many of them would just say something like, “*it just is*.” Apparently, they decided that young people couldn’t handle the “E” word (“lust”) even though we could read that word in the Bible. In fact, it appears no less than 22 times. Notably, and especially applicable, was Matthew 5:28, “*But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*”

At the time, I knew what happened at after-football dances and I knew what goes through the mind of a young man and what we struggled with. It would have been helpful if some teacher or preacher spoke “the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15) and let the chips fall where they may. “*It just is*” isn’t an answer. Of course, if they told us it was about lust and such, then they would have to admit that tap dancing or doing an Irish Jig is not actually “against our religion.”

When I think of the many kids my age that didn’t stay faithful, I chalk some of it up to that kind of “teaching.” Of course, there were exceptions, but too many adults took the shortcut and didn’t respect young people enough to take the time to tell them the truth. And that’s a shame.

Faith can hurt

Every morning when I get up, the first thing I do is go into our walk-in closet and sit down on the chair to put my socks on. Last week, I woke up, bleary-eyed as usual, grabbed my socks and sat down. But there was a problem; *there was no chair there*. That hurt. Fortunately, that room is carpeted. I put faith in the fact that a chair would be there. That faith was not rewarded.

The basic meaning of faith is “belief.” If you believe in something or someone, you *trust* it or them. Using that generic definition of faith, not a day goes by when we don’t exercise faith (trust). It might be as simple as believing that a chair that has been in the same place for almost 26 years will be there when you sit down. It may be something more profound like believing your doctor when she informs you that you have a serious illness and need surgery.

Faith in God requires a much larger dose of trust. We are relying on words in an old book, believing that it is noting less than God’s word to us. That word from God tells us to live in a certain way and believe certain things, many of which do not make our lives any easier. It tells us that sometimes, faith hurts; sometimes, faith kills. Ask Jesus and the martyrs.

Jesus told his followers to “take up their cross” — and those followers knew he was not talking about putting a little trinket around their necks. They knew full well what a cross was. And note this shocking statement, from Jesus:

“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.” Matthew 10:34-35

I think you’ll agree, if we put Jesus ahead of family because of our faith in God, and our family turns from us because of it, that would really hurt. But, sometimes, faith hurts.

Attendance & Mental Health

We all know we’re *supposed* to attend services and the majority of us *want* to attend as often as we can. But, did you know it was also *good* for you?

Each year since 2001, Gallup has asked Americans as part of its November Health and Healthcare survey to say whether their own mental or emotional wellbeing is excellent, good, or only fair or poor... the latest “excellent” ratings average about 10 points lower than Gallup has measured in any prior year. But, there was one exception: *those who attended church services every week polled at 4 points higher*. That was the only demographic that was in the plus category. Every other category, including those who attend church weekly “sometimes” were in the negative. Whether inside or outside, weekly worship with others is good for your mental health. You could probably enumerate many reasons why that’s the case.

*Unless otherwise indicated the opinions expressed in this publication and images used are solely those of David Posey.
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