

February 20, 2022

The View

“Sirs, we wish to see Jesus.” — John 12:21

Welcome Visitors

Our goal at the Folsom church of Christ is to do everything according to God’s word, including respecting its silence.

We are not a denomination, not part of anything larger than this local church; we have no earthly “headquarters.

“The six elders oversee this church and, ultimately, we answer only to Christ. The comments you hear today are primarily for the benefit of our own members, as we examine Scripture and seek to be built up in our faith in Christ. If you don’t understand something, please do not hesitate to ask the preacher or one of the elders. We welcome and appreciate your comments and questions on any issue and especially if you see or hear anything that you feel does not correspond to God’s word. We are here to serve; please help us do that.

**Please fill out a visitor’s card and put it in the collection plate located near the entrance.
We do not solicit donations from visitors. See page 4 for more information.**

Schedule

The Lord’s Day

9:30 AM Bible Classes

Auditorium: A Study of Paul’s Second & Third Journeys

Room 15/16: Raising Faithful Kids

Room 12: Young Adults Class

10:30 AM: Assembly

Preaching Today: David Posey

Jesus on... Sin

Livestream at 10:30 <https://tinyurl.com/5f2cbm3y>

Bible Class @ 2:00 PM in room 12 on Judges

Bible Class @ 5 PM — A Study of Prayer in the Psalms (Auditorium)

Young Peoples’ Class, 5 PM @ David & Christie Posey’s home

Middle school class: monthly (contact Dan Stegall at 818-209-9810)

There are several on-going Bible classes in the homes of members. Check with David Posey or one of the other elders if you would like to join one of those classes.

Wednesday 7 PM @ Building

Bible classes for all ages

Auditorium: A Study of Paul’s Second & Third Journeys

Room 15/16: Raising Faithful Kids

Room 12: Young Adults Class

Things to Think About During the Assembly

Imagine that Jesus is sitting next to you and knows what you are thinking.

“You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”

Psalm 16:11

Breaking the bread, one-child elders and more

By David Posey

As a young man in the 50s and 60s, I overheard many debates on a variety of topics. Looking back, some of the disagreements seem trivial, even a waste of time. But, at the same time, we know men were trying hard to do the right thing, so we give them credit for that.

Still, there were debates aplenty, not a few about the Lord's Supper. For example, some men felt strongly that those who prepared the elements should not break it up; they must leave it whole so the man heading the table could break it — but only *after* the prayer (per Matthew 26:26, they would argue). That's probably taking the "example" too far.

Then there was a man or two who insisted that you drink *every last drop of grape juice* because Jesus said (in the KJV), "drink ye all of it." Of course, what Jesus said is that all of his apostles who were with him were to drink, leaving no one out. The newer translations make that clear. But even back then, those arguing for drinking every last drop did not consider, apparently, that there was one cup — if each man was supposed to drink "all of it" then the cup would need to be refilled each time.

But debates were not limited to the Lord's Supper. There were men who taught the both the baptizer and the baptized were to go down into the water. They took this from Acts 8:38 where both the eunuch and Philip went down into the water. If this is a binding example, then any baptism where both could not go into the water would be invalidated. But who is going to argue that the person who is being baptized is not really saved because the one doing the baptizing didn't do his part? That doesn't make any sense.

The qualifications of elders also was an oft-debated topic. It was minefield, especially when it came to the number of "believing" children one must have to qualify. There were many who believed you must have two or more to qualify. Here's what the texts say on the issue:

"...if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, **having faithful children** not accused of dissipation or insubordination." *Titus 1:6*
"...one who rules his own house well, **having his children in submission** with all reverence..." *1 Timothy 3:4*

In both places, the Greek word for "children" is *teknon*. Greek scholar Bill Mounce, and others, translate this as "a child." If Paul had said "having a faithful child" instead of "having faithful children," that would cause more confusion than saying it the way he did. The argument against a man with one child being an elder is based simply on the use of "children" but that's a weak argument. If someone asks a man, "do you have children?" and the man said "yes," even if he had only one child, no one would accuse him of lying.

Requiring more than one child seems to suggest that the more kids a man has the more qualified he is. If that's what Paul meant he could have made that clear by saying something like "several children" or "all of his children." Paul didn't say that. But I feel the argument for more than one child is flawed anyway. The role of an elder isn't to run a household, it's to lead the church. The requirement to have faithful children — or a faithful child — is simply one indicator of the man's ability to manage and take responsibility. Many good men have been excluded from becoming elders simply be-

cause they had only one child and churches have suffered because of it.

I could be wrong, but for awhile, I've been persuaded that the I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 lists should be interpreted by the first words found in both lists: the man must be "*above reproach*" (some translations say "*blameless*"). I like this treatment of the Greek word in the Discovery Bible:

anepilēptos ("above reproach") describes someone *deserving the benefit of the doubt*, i.e. because having a character assumed to be ethical until *all* the facts show *differently*.

(*anepilēptos*) is a very strong term. "It implies not only that the man is of good report, but that he is *deservedly* so" (*Abbott-Smith*).

Reflection: Proven character (good reputation) places someone above petty (unfounded) suspicions, or being superficially misunderstood by accusers...

"Above reproach," helps us interpret the qualifications that follow. For example, there is much discussion about whether a man could ever serve as an elder if he remarries after his wife dies or if he is divorced, even if his divorce was lawful due to the unfaithfulness of his wife. There is no doubt about a man's right to remarry after the death of his wife or after he puts his wife away for unfaithfulness. Besides dealing with the question of whether, in either situation, he is still "*of one wife a husband*" (the literal translation of I Timothy 3:2) the question for the church is whether the man is "above reproach." If there are members of the church who have reasonable doubts, then the man should not pursue the office.

The same is true when applied to all of the qualifications, including how he manages his household. His children are not to be "*open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination*" (Titus 1:6). In this case, the children must be "beyond reproach" as well. If this is true, I don't see how having only one child affects whether a man is "beyond reproach."

Perhaps because we live in a time when divorces are common and a high percentage of kids leave Christ, churches tend to put most of the emphasis on the "husband of one wife" and "believing children" requirements. In some cases, however, those seem to be the only qualifications considered.

Meanwhile, there are elders in churches who are not beyond reproach in some of the other areas. There are arrogant and quick-tempered men and elders who are quarrelsome and seem to love stirring up controversy. Prospective elders who are dealing with those character traits should immediately be removed from consideration.

One final note: doesn't it make sense that any man who is being considered to lead the flock should be a wise man? James 3:13-18 provides a blueprint to help us pinpoint men who are wise (and those who are not). He says,

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom...the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

James 3:13, 17-18

CULTURE CORNER

God, Grades and Graduation

Sociologists have discovered a strong link between religiosity and academic performance. A new book called *God, Grades, and Graduation* points to a devout faith as the source of habits that can lead to higher GPAs and better academic outcomes. The book's author argues in Religion News Service that traits like conscientiousness, cooperation, and respect for authority can be bred in religious settings and translate well to academic ones. The same research suggests that teens who feel they can please God with their grades and good behavior may do well in school, but are actually less likely to choose highly selective colleges, citing parenthood and family life as their ultimate goals.

The Distracted Culture

Are we living in the most distracted time in human history? The lightning-speed "attention economy" may be robbing us of the ability to reach some of our individual goals. This problem isn't limited to the technology we use, but to everything we do; deep, focused attention seems to be getting more and more impossible to attain. For older folks who grew up without spending a lot of time online, it might simply feel like the natural effects of aging. But younger folks are losing their abilities to focus and think deeply, too. What could it mean for the future, and how do we reverse it?

Conversation starters:

- When was the last time something really sustained your attention for three hours or more? Are there specific things that are interesting enough to really captivate you?
- Do you feel like your family is one where deep, loving attention is given to each member? How can you better practice loving one another with quality time and attention?
- How does this lack of attentiveness challenge our spiritual life and connection with God? What are some spiritual practices that can help build our attention endurance?

Quotes

A bit of irony on Twitter, from game show host Pat Sajak: "There's an alarming trend developing in which people are paying less attention to celebrities who are telling them how to live. Please, folks, we have been chosen to be celebrities for a reason. Ignore our experience and our wisdom at your own peril." [You would be surprised at the number of people who responded to this seriously because they didn't get that it was sarcasm.]

"Man is irrepressibly religious. We are all worshippers. As man turns from God, man will not stop being religious & worshipful. Man will form new religion(s), and worship the creature rather than the Creator. Our world is thus not "secular" at all; it SEETHES with false worship."

— Owen Strachan

Something else about Barbara

Last week, when I wrote a short article about Barbara Griffin, Christie's mother, I left something out. Actually, I left out a lot of things, but one thing struck me this week as "vintage Barb" — those who knew her well will know what I'm talking about.

Barbara didn't hold her tongue when she felt someone needed correction. If she thought a girl's dress was too short or a young man's mouth was less than "clean," she would let them know it, in no uncertain terms. It was motivated purely by concern for their souls, not any selfish preference or personal offense.

She was not afraid to confront what she viewed as behavior that was unbecoming for a Christian. She spoke the truth in love (Ephesians 3:15) but *she spoke the truth*. Sometimes it stung.

It was not only young people who heard from her. Ask those who preached at Oakdale — or ask her only son-in-law. She was not one to mince words.

I was reminded of this because, among the many sympathy cards we received, one was from a man who, when he was younger, got into some serious trouble — more than once. In the card, he voiced his respect for Barb for "setting him straight" — more than once.

Barbara's forthrightness made us uncomfortable but, not surprisingly, it helped the church. It got to the point where we could count on her to practice Galatians 6:1, "*Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness...*" That word "restore" means to "adjust." It refers to the painful process of taking something that is out of joint and restoring it.

We need people in churches who are willing to speak up. Our reluctance to do that puts our fear of being rejected above our love for souls. Barb was not concerned about being rejected. She said what she thought needed to be said and those who were on the receiving end, if they were serious about serving Christ, respected it — maybe not right away, when they were embarrassed, but eventually they realized that there was a person who loved them enough to try to restore them, regardless of the consequences.

Did it always work? Of course not. Not everyone is serious about serving Christ.

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