

Central Gwinnett News

THE CENTRAL GWINNETT CONGREGATION

Good Questions

By Russ McGarr

Elders

Steve Galbreath
Alan Rouse

Evangelist

Richard Alawaye

Women's Ministry & Welfare

Sarah Alawaye
Roxanne Galbreath
Sherry Rouse

Teens

Todd and Tracy
Reynolds

Deacons

Birt Anglin
Peter Berry
Steve Collier
Danny Emmett
Bill Francis
Patrick Freeman
Joe Hartline
Glenn Hayes
Kendall Knight
Karl Lynn
Russ McGarr
Jeff Mueller
Todd Reynolds
Todd Shultz
Dan Stehr
Ken Watson

Whether we like it or not, we are all examples to others. At our jobs, we are looked at for guidance and direction as supervisors, or evaluated and under-appreciated as employees. The same is true in our homes. Our children are looking for guidance and direction. Also we can feel like we are being evaluated and under-appreciated by our spouses.

The first question we should ask ourselves is, "What kind of example am I setting on the job?" ...And most importantly, "What kind of example am I setting in my home?" Do the "fruits of the spirit" describe you or are the "acts of the sinful nature" more befitting?

Our children are paying attention to the things we do and the things we do not do - even when it doesn't appear that they are paying attention to anything. Now the choice we have to make is whether we will try to be a good example or a bad one. Even if you do not have children, the moment you became a Christian, people - from friends to family members - were looking for things in your character to prove that you are just another "religious hypocrite". There may be some people who work with you that do not even know that you are a Christian.

This brings me to an example in the Bible where Abraham (then Abram) went to Egypt. This event happens years before his son, Isaac, is born. But Abraham's decision here shows a serious flaw in his character that, I believe, was eventually passed to Isaac.

Abram in Egypt

Genesis 12:10-20 Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe. As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live. Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you."

When Abram came to Egypt, the Egyptians saw that she was a very beautiful woman. And when Pharaoh's officials saw her, they praised her to Pharaoh, and she was taken into his palace. He treated Abram well for her sake, and Abram acquired sheep and cattle, male and female donkeys, menservants and maidservants, and camels.

But the LORD inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his household because of Abram's wife Sarai. So Pharaoh summoned Abram. "What have you done to me?" he said. "Why didn't you tell me she was your wife? Why did you say, 'She is my sister,' so that I took her to be my wife? Now then, here is your wife. Take her and go!" Then Pharaoh gave orders about Abram to his men, and they sent him on his way, with his wife and everything he had.

(Continued on page 4)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friday, June 29th 10pm-5pm
All Night Prayer (Harvest Community Church)

Friday, July 13th - Sunday, July 15th
Teen Parents Workshop Weekend
w/Phil Arceneaux of the Boston Church of Christ

Sunday, June 24th 10am
Outdoor Worship Service w/Stone Mtn Ministry
(Pickneyville Park, Peachtree Ind. Blvd.)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Aliens and Strangers 2
Women's Corner 3
Family Groups 4
Deacons Directory 4
Special Missions Contribution 4

Aliens and Strangers: Reflections on the Book Set Apart

By Jeff Mueller

He who gets wisdom loves his own soul; he who cherishes understanding prospers. (Proverbs 19:8)

The opportunity to read R. Kent Hughes' Set Apart: Calling a Worldly Church to a Godly Life is an opportunity to get wisdom and to cherish understanding. Hughes issues a call to be "set apart" from the world. This call is a true challenge for any follower of God, especially Americans. Life here in the United States of America can be so comfortable and pleasurable that our nature will fight the call to be set apart from the culture and values of this seemingly successful society. In spite of this seeming prosperity, wisdom and understanding are not the property of this world and its values, but the property of God. The wisdom imparted through Hughes' book is the fact that God has a counter standard to the standard of this society, and that counter standard is a better standard.

Fortunately for us, Hughes does not shy away from getting practical and specific with the reader on areas of life where the Christian movement is weak in being set apart from the world. No doubt there will be some areas where the Christian reader will say "Amen! Preach on, brother." It is those areas Hughes lays out where the response will be "Hmmm, I'm going to have to pray about that one," that we will indeed need to "pray about that one." The value of reading this book is realized in expanding my understanding of practical and specific ways I can be set apart.

The power to be set apart starts with cherishing understanding. Understanding is an awareness of the "reality" of a situation. The Apostle Peter followed up the first gospel sermon with his understanding of the situation of his audience:

"With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, 'Save yourselves from this corrupt generation.'" (Acts 2:40)

Peter understood that all men needed to be saved from a "corrupt generation." Do you believe with all your heart that you live in a "corrupt generation?" If not, then of course you will not understand the need to be set apart, much less desire to be set apart. It is in this understanding of our "situation" that our motivation and desire to be set apart from the world will begin.

Peter states this "reality" in another way by describing the Christian as a traveler through this world.

Since you call on a Father who judges each man's work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear. (1 Peter 1:17)

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. (1 Peter 2:11)

My last experience as a traveler helps me understand the wisdom of this viewpoint. I was traveling with the kids to Washington, D.C. via interstate highway. We needed to arrive for an important appointment by Noon the next day. Leaving Atlanta the evening before, we stopped at a motel to rest for the night. While I was grateful for the rest I received in the room we rented that night, it was not a place that I would want to stay or could afford to stay at beyond just temporarily.

As a traveler in this world and not a citizen of it, I realized that this world is really nothing more than a temporary lodging on my journey to my real home, heaven. How silly it is when my priorities, my investments of time and money, are directed toward making my temporary stay disproportionately comfortable and pleasurable. Why would I want to put a lot of heart and energy into a "situation" that is only temporary? With this understanding, if I do not live a set apart life, it would be foolish on the order of buying a fancy mattress for the bed and a big screen TV for that rented room I stayed in just one night, as if I was going to be there for a long time!

It bears repeating from recent sermons we have heard: "Show me a man's calendar and his checkbook, and I will tell you where his heart is."

Is your calendar set apart? Since we are only travelers here, how are you spending and prioritizing your time? Is the amount of time that you spend oriented toward reaching the ultimate destination of your journey, heaven, or are you investing your time in ventures and pursuits that ultimately are merely temporary? One way to evaluate your investment is to consider the amount of time you spend with the body of Christ, His church. For too many who say they are merely travelers and not citizens of this world, their only interaction with the body of Christ is on Sunday morning for an hour and a half or so. They have a habit of not meeting together at other times, whether it's the midweek service, family group activities, or meeting together in their homes. If your investment of time with the body of Christ is limited to an hour and a half a week at a worship service, what are the other waking hours of the week oriented toward? Are you spending your heart and time toward furnishing the economy room you are only staying in temporarily?

Aliens and Strangers

(Continued)

Who are you spending your time with? Who are the relationships that are having the greatest influence on you at this time? Are they people who are encouraging you to be set apart from this world, or are they people whose priorities and focus are on this temporary lodging? Are you spending time in the relationships you do have encouraging them to live set apart lives?

You can rest assured that it is not easy to be set apart if you do not spend time with company who is also striving to be set apart. As the word of God says:

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. (Hebrews 3:13) and

Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:25) and finally,

Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." (1 Corinthians 15:33)

Is your check book set apart? In this culture which worships wealth and consumerism, are you living beyond your means and offering yourself to the slavery of debt? As a traveler through this richest country in the world, are you taking God's antidote to the perilous spiritual condition of being rich? That antidote is generosity, which is outlined in the follow commands:

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.

Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share.

In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life. (1 Timothy 6:17-19)

Would the entries in your checkbook convict you of generosity to brothers and sisters in Christ, to benevolent works, and to God?

It takes faith to live a set apart life, because the "corrupt generation" we too live in does not appreciate the temporary nature of our stay here. The heroes of faith described in the book of Hebrews lived set apart lives and as evidenced by God's word, lives of faith:

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. (Hebrews 11:13)

A life lived set apart from the world as Hughes' describes is an admission that we are aliens and strangers on earth. Wisdom is the byproduct of understanding. God's wisdom comes from the understanding of and faith in the fact that our lives here are temporary and that we are not citizens here. God's wisdom also provides a wonderful promise to us who believe that we are not citizens of this world, but citizens of heaven:

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (Philippians 3:20-21)

As superior as our own homes are than an economy room we may stay in for a night, so will heaven be superior to our best times here on earth. Living set apart lives is a better way!

Again, as the proverb says:

He who gets wisdom loves his own soul;

May we love our own souls by living lives set apart from the values of the world.



Women's Corner

*Some words of encouragement by Russell Kelfer
Submitted by Charlotte Robinson*

*You are who you are for a reason.
You're part of an intricate plan.
You're a precious and perfect unique design.
Called God's special woman.*

*You look like you look for a reason.
Our God made no mistake.
He knit you together within the womb,
You're just what he wanted to make.*

*The parents you had were the ones he chose,
And no matter how you may feel,
They were custom-designed with God's plan in mind,
And they bear the Master's seal.*

*No, that trauma you faced was not easy.
And God wept that it hurt you so;
But it was allowed to shape your heart
So that into his likeness you'd grow.*

*You are who you are for a reason,
You've been formed by the master's rod.
You are who you are, beloved,
Because there is a God!*

May God's Grace and Peace be with you!

Family Group Leaders

Peter & Nancy Berry	Suwanee	678-376-1878
Steve & Barbara Collier	Lilburn	770-717-5784
Jim & Chandra Dew	Lilburn	770-330-3479
Danny & Cynthia Doble	Lilburn	770-931-0601
Audie & Jackie Flowers	Snellville	770-277-5749
Karl & Donna Lynn	Snellville	770-978-4747
Russ & Sue McGarr	Lilburn	770-381-5045
Alvin & Beatrice Modest	Snellville	678-344-0061
Jeff & Jessica Mueller	Tucker	770-492-0544
Joseph & Lisa Washington	L'ville	678-407-0306
Ken & Kat Watson	Suwanee	678-376-2677

Deacons Directory

Karl Lynn	Single Parents	770-978-4747
Ken Watson	Benevolence	678-376-2677
Peter Berry	Benevolence	678-376-1878
Patrick Freeman	Kingdom Kids	770-921-1811
Glenn Hayes	Kingdom Kids	770-985-6921
Dan Stehr	Visitation	770-925-2943
Bill Francis	Visitation	770-806-8645
Todd Reynolds	Middle School	770-682-0027
Russ McGarr	Middle School	770-381-5045
Steve Collier	Teens-Parents	770-717-5784
Joe Hartline	Teens-Parents	770-277-4765
Danny Emmett	Hope, Events	770-985-4542
Todd Shultz	Communications	770-277-4276
Birt Anglin	Ushering	678-849-0180
Jeff Mueller	Order of Worship	770-492-0544
Kendall Knight	Music Service	770-972-6887

**Special Missions Contribution
Collected on May 20, 2007**

\$70,157



Good Questions

(continued)

Men, can you imagine traveling in a foreign country and telling the men there that your wife is available for their advances. Now we can see years later that Isaac does the same thing....

Isaac and Abimelech

Genesis 26:1-11 Now there was a famine in the land—besides the earlier famine of Abraham's time—and Isaac went to Abimelech king of the Philistines in Gerar. The LORD appeared to Isaac and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live. Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws." So Isaac stayed in Gerar.

When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, "She is my sister," because he was afraid to say, "She is my wife." He thought, "The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful."

When Isaac had been there a long time, Abimelech king of the Philistines looked down from a window and saw Isaac caressing his wife Rebekah. So Abimelech summoned Isaac and said, "She is really your wife! Why did you say, 'She is my sister'?"

Isaac answered him, "Because I thought I might lose my life on account of her."

Then Abimelech said, "What is this you have done to us? One of the men might well have slept with your wife, and you would have brought guilt upon us."

So Abimelech gave orders to all the people: "Anyone who molests this man or his wife shall surely be put to death."

Isaac did the same cowardly thing to his wife that Abraham did. I can't imagine that any of us today would compromise on this issue. But are there other things in our lives that we are willing to compromise?

Here is a way to get a true reflection of the example we are setting. This second question should be asked to people who really know you - "What words describe me?" If they answer with words like angry, lazy, greedy, selfish, un-relatable, unreliable, harsh, or other words like these, you know you need help. But if you get answers like; faithful, honest, hard working, loving, compassionate, kind, joyful, gentle, or other words like these, you are doing well. Next, ask the same question to your kids and/or spouse.

Obviously the second group of character traits describes Jesus. Jesus is our ultimate example. These are the character traits we must apply daily to our lives. It is very easy to deceive ourselves about how we are doing spiritually. The last question to ask ourselves is, "Who am I getting together with to help me in these areas?" I have been truly blessed to have many people in my life over the last twelve years to help me grow spiritually. Jesus continually addressed the religious people of his day with strong words about their hypocrisy. We need to have the same indignation concerning hypocrisy in our lives, because if we do not, it could affect our very salvation and the salvation of others.

Therefore these three questions should be asked periodically to ensure that our faith is growing and not waning:

- 1) What kind of example have I been setting?
- 2) What words can be used to describe my character?
- 3) Who is helping me in areas that I am having trouble correcting?

Make the most of every opportunity we have in our lives. This is the charge I leave you. Think about the things you do, the things you say, and the decisions you are making, because they really affect more people than just yourself.

There are many other examples throughout the Bible related to this topic; for instance: David's sexual sin and the conduct of his son Amnon (2 Samuel 13), and Jacob's disregard for his brother Esau (birthright) and the way his sons treated their brother Joseph.