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Keystone BAPTIST

Official Paper of the Pennsylvania Association of Regular Baptist Churches



Still Needing Work

by Paul Connor, State Rep

I sometimes become amazed at how Christians struggle in their relations with others. It is understandable when you hear of people in the world getting miffed at each other and withdrawing any contact because of “hurt feelings.” But why is that happening in our churches and circles of born again friends?

As I minister in our fellowship, and even in my fifty plus years serving our Lord, there is one demonstration after another that the words and verses in Matthew 18:15-17 are INVISIBLE! They might just as well be invisible because so many believers act as if that passage is not even in God’s inspired Book.

Almost without fail, the ignoring of Matthew 18 has contributed to the breakdown of communication and the destruction of relationship with folks at home, in the pew (church members with church members) and even pastors (YES, Pastors) who cut off others. The problems existing in some churches could well be totally resolved if there were a rediscovering of the principles and practices of Matthew 18:15-17. It is a manual for relationship.

Look closely at the instruction: “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear *the church*, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.” Matt. 18:15-17

Do you notice the burden is on the offended to go and try and work things out? You see, I don’t know (as the offender) when and if have done something to hurt or offend you. Unless the offended informs the offender of the wrong doing nothing is done to help and improve the situation. As a result communications

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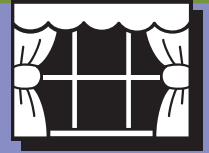
Still Needing Work...Continued

are broken and the offended withdraws from the offender. THAT IS WRONG! THAT IS UNBIBLICAL!!

I had this happen to me several times, but the situation that comes quickly to mind is with an elderly woman I had in our church. She was a member and her husband was a deacon. On a particular Sunday as we were greeting folks it was discovered that this dear, sweet saint was celebrating her 80th birthday. I was so excited and glad for her. Well, during the announcement time in the morning worship service I, in my jubilation for this dear person shared with the congregation that it was her birthday and how many years old she was. We all sang Happy Birthday to her. It was a long time later that one of my deacons heard that this dear saint was very upset with me for sharing how old she was in front of the congregation. I was dumbfounded, shocked to receive this news. She apparently had told others, but had never come to me. She allowed this issue to build up within her heart and bitterness had sprung-up. How sad I felt that I had hurt her so. And I was even sadder that she had withdrawn from me and the church congregation that loved her dearly.

You see, our Lord knew there was a great necessity for a manual to guide us through difficult times with brothers and sisters in Christ. That is why it is so essential that we practice and really work on verse 15. If we were more persuaded to go to that person who has wronged us and try to work things out to help him AND ourselves there would not be as many unresolved problems in our lives and churches today. In many cases Matthew 18:15-17 is still invisible and we are in need of still working on using that manual.

From the Parsonage Window



Oatmeal Days (Author unknown)

"It's not always the red-flag crisis days that are hardest to take. It's the "oatmeal days." the ordinary, "zero" days of little or no consequence. The ho-hum days filled with nothing of any particular interest. Colorless. Uninteresting. Unfascinating. Unspectacular. And unfun. The days everyone deals with.

We cope. We wend our way through the tangle of tedious activity and sandpaper people scattered through our days and get no applause, because coping is expected.

Not so during the red-flag crisis times. People tend to rally behind us with loving support. We're lifted above the crisis and enabled beyond human comprehension at times.

On oatmeal days, after a crisis has peaked, it may seem as if friends have forsaken us, as if God doesn't care. But the reality will be that life has merely pushed us and our friends one step further in the Christian growth-walk.

The God of the crisis times is the God of the oatmeal days, too. Because He said He is. Because He keeps His promises--always. Because we can't get along without Him. And because we wouldn't want to if we could."

I believe that if we are honest with ourselves, when we look back and remember the difficult times, the oatmeal days made the difference. The oatmeal days are the preparation times.

My heart goes out to young mothers who feel trapped at home with their children, a life that they see going no where. What they don't realize is that the oatmeal days pass quickly and what we invest in those little ones during the growing years filled with 100s of oatmeal days, prepare our children for what they will become. Oatmeal days require vision.

Oatmeal days are the days when retirees can push away the boredom and invest in others. How many widows or shut-ins would love a phone call? Some of my richest experiences has been getting to know the older generation. Volunteering gives purpose to life also.

Oatmeal days can be training days for us, if we assess areas lacking in our spiritual growth. Before complaining or being bored, deliberately praising the Lord for His blessings, big and small is an automatic attitude adjustment.

Oatmeal days are the days which make or break us. Focusing on what the Lord has for us in those days, really prepares us for whatever comes our way. We often don't see the crisis days coming, but if we handle the oatmeal days well, we'll find that the Lord has prepared us and given us everything He has for us that ultimately will bring Him glory and praise. And, isn't that what our Christian life is all about? I've learned to appreciate the oatmeal days. Have you?

By Anita L. Fordyce, Hope Baptist Church, Hanover, PA

Approving Things That Are Excellent: Discernment in Music

By Tim Fisher and John C. Vaughn



This article and appeal are rooted in Paul's heartfelt prayer in Philippians 1:9-10: "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ."

In Paul's prayer the word "judgment" means "discernment" and is so rendered in many good translations. Note that Paul differentiates "discernment" (the application of truth from "knowledge" (the presentation of truth), a distinction frequently found in Scripture. Accordingly, Paul explains that this knowledge and discernment would enable believers to "approve things that are excellent," a phrase that literally means "to the end that ye may put to proof the things that differ or the things that are more profitable" (Adam Clarke, Commentary, 1832). By the pure and abundant love which they received from God, they would be able to try whatever differed from the teaching they had received and from the experience they had in spiritual things. Further, Paul desired that the Philippians would be without offence: "Neither offending God nor your neighbor; neither being stumbled yourselves, nor the cause of stumbling to others" (Clarke). The great need is for abounding love that approves things that are excellent. Discernment is, indeed, the missing gift.

Some within Fundamentalism, sadly, are questioning or even rejecting this ideal for discipleship. While there seems to be in some a genuine thirst for knowledge of the Word, it is increasingly accompanied by a rejection of discerning applications of Scripture. Fundamental churches are finding themselves at a crossroads. In fact, all too frequently, the very mention of "discernment" or "application" is met with the charge of "legalism." After more than a decade of intense discussion the subject of applications seems almost to have been silenced. Although this issue of FrontLine attempts to offer some explanation for this phenomenon, this article is essentially an appeal for a biblical model for discipleship, a model based not just on the teaching of knowledge so much as on the careful and discerning application of that knowledge—discernment—particularly in music.

We know that all Scripture is profitable for all believers (2 Tim. 3:16), that the Bible contains all things that pertain to our salvation and spiritual walk in Christ (2 Pet. 1:3), and that we can be confident that biblical principles will guide all cultures in every generation. Furthermore we may not totally agree on exactly which principles are best applied in every situation, surely we understand that Scripture provides what we need if we strive to understand it and apply it as best we can in our lives. Of course, there is room for differences among discerning people who arrive at different applications of clear biblical principles. Nevertheless, one of the greatest sources of tension among believers for a generation has been, of course, music.

A History of Concerns

Though worldly, sensual music has always existed in every culture throughout human history, nonetheless, a recent worldliness has appeared with an intensity not been seen before. The church has opened its arms to embrace the popular sounds of the culture around it, making use of pop styles for Christian worship music and private devotional life. This phenomenon did not occur without dissent. First, within the major denominations, voices of concern were raised, primarily because they were the first to feel the waves of the culture splashing into their churches. Books were written by Presbyterians, Anglicans, and Southern Baptists warning of the advance of popular culture into the church. Even the Seventh-Day Adventists, Brethren congregations, and Roman Catholics were addressing the issue. By the mid-1980s, the independent Fundamental Baptist movement began to experience the same onslaught of popular culture. Men such as Frank Garlock and Danny Sweatt devoted much time and many resources to speak out about this danger. Others added our voices to the discussion. Books were written and seminars were held, and, no doubt, in our zeal we made mistakes. But the danger was real, and it is worse today. We cannot back down from stressing the urgent need to warn believers of this danger. Not to rehash a subject some would consider to be out dated and irrelevant, but to illustrate how consistent are the arguments against warnings regarding music, consider the personality of Steve Green. I (Fisher) say "personality" because of the way the teenagers of that era framed their questions and arguments. Anyone old enough can remember the "Big Three" of CCM in the early years: Steve Green, Amy Grant, and Sandi Patty. While many teenagers (and even adults) are still convinced that we started the fight and targeted these individuals, quite the opposite is true. The need for warnings was not imagined by us; it was evident in the arguments of the teens. In fact, throughout more than twenty-five years of preaching on music I never initiated a public discussion about Steve Green. But upon hearing the preaching of scriptural principles about music or worship, the audience would invariably bring him up.

PRAY FOR THESE 10 CHURCHES SEARCHING FOR PASTORS



Bible Baptist Church, Brownsville

First Baptist Church, Corry

Springside Baptist Church, Distant

First Baptist Church, Ebensburg

Chestnut Street Baptist Church, Port Allegany

Thompson Baptist Church, Thompson

Tidioute Baptist Church, Tidioute

Calvary Baptist Church, Union City

Waterford Baptist Church, Waterford

Worthington Baptist Church, Worthington

PARBC ACTIVITY CALENDAR

FALL CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 11,12,13,, 2017

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF ELIMSPORT, ALLENWOOD

HOSTS: PASTOR TODD BAKER AND CONGREGATION

THEME: THE RAPTURE:

SPEAKERS: PASTORS WITHIN OUR FELLOWSHIP

SPRING CONFERENCE

APRIL 9-10, 2018

DETAILS TBA

YOUTH RETREAT & TALENTS FOR CHRIST

APRIL 20-21, 2018

CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH, BLOOMSBURG

SPEAKER: EVANGELIST RANDY MERRILL

BIBLE QUIZZING: I II III JOHN

BIBLE KNOWLEDGE: I II III JOHN & PROVERBS

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: APRIL 4, 2018

FALL CONFERENCE

SEPTEMBER 17,18,19, 2018

MARSH CREEK FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH

WELLSBORO, PA

**HOSTS: PASTOR KEITH WILLIAMS &
CONGREGATION**

When I questioned individuals as to why his name was always mentioned first, the answers were both consistent and revealing. Whether in churches, Christian high schools, or Christian colleges, the comment was always the same: “We bring up Steve Green because we know that if you say he is OK, then we can listen to whatever we want.” In the early 1990s I wrote an article entitled “Why I Cannot Support Steve Green,” an article which, until recently, was the most requested item from those who have contacted me. That article was a way of putting into writing my thoughts on the ecumenical nature of Steve Green’s concert sponsorship as well as the blatant use of the rock idiom in his music. The problem has never been with the individual, Steve Green, but rather with the personality and what his identity represented—the danger of where his music and philosophy of ministry would eventually take young immature Christians. Now my participation in this article is a way of putting into writing my thoughts on a newer, similar movement and personality.

As it unfolded, the CCM/Steve Green controversy raised questions that are still asked today. For example, “Can we clean up any of his songs and use them in our conservative churches?” “Can we listen to recordings of his ‘good’ songs?” “Should we ever go to one of his concerts?” “Do we have the right to criticize a Christian brother just because we don’t agree with his music?” Clearly, these questions dealt with the broader principle of associations and offense, a discussion that is dismissed before it begins by a generation being taught that it smacks of legalism. As one person remarked to me, “We don’t go there anymore.” It is as if Romans 14 has become irrelevant unless you find yourself offered literal meat that has been offered to literal idols! The same is true of unwelcome discussions of what the Bible actually says about liberty. How far we have come from understanding that liberty refers to what you are free to give up for the cause of Christ to arrive at the present insistence that it refers to what you are free to indulge in unless it is specifically prohibited in a clear statement of Scripture. It is almost as if Bible principles cannot exist apart from specific Bible prohibitions. The new rule is “no rules.”

The Current Controversy

Currently, the same discussions are taking place over another personality and the movement it has spawned—Sovereign Grace (SG). SG is led by C. J. Mahaney and based in Gaithersburg, Maryland. It is rooted in both Reformed Theology and Charismatic/Pentecostal experience. If you doubt this, please visit the SG website and read the doctrinal statement. SG is clearly ecumenical in its roots, and it embraces pop music styles in its worship. The main musical figures promoted by or associated with the Sovereign Grace movement are Bob Kauflin and Steve and Vikki Cook. But also included in this discussion are musicians who, although not specifically associated with SG, are nonetheless closely identified with the movement because of their presence on SG recordings: Stuart Townend and Keith and Kristyn Getty, who are becoming favorites of some independent Fundamental Baptists. Including the names Townend and Getty in this discussion does not imply that they are in complete theological agreement with SG, but the similarity of their musical style as well as their collaborative efforts over the years with SG are reasons for concern. The history of the development of Sovereign Grace Ministries is a subject worthy of a separate article. However, it is probable that most pastors and churches that have embraced SG music are unaware of or unconcerned with its roots. A brief summary is in order, and it necessarily raises the much-despised argument of associations, but it is important to review.

Sovereign Grace Ministries grew out of the Charismatic renewal of the 1970s under the leadership of Catholic Charismatic Larry Tomczak and has its roots in the Gathering of Believers (now Covenant Life Church) in Maryland (Tomczak, *Clap Your Hands*, Word Publishing, 1989, pp. 179-96.) It was formally established in 1982. C. J. Mahaney, whom Larry Tomczak had been asked to “take under [his] wing and help . . . grow in the faith” in 1972, was the co-founder of both Covenant Life and People of Destiny (Tomczak, p. 164). Both Mahaney and Tomczak withdrew from the Charismatic Catholic scene shortly before the creation of Covenant Life Church. Sovereign Grace Ministries was known as “People of Destiny International” (PDI) until 1998 (Christianity Today, News Briefs, April 27, 1998). British New Church leader Terry Virgo in *No Well-Worn Paths*, p. 145, states that Larry Tomczak and Mahaney, leaders at the time, had become “increasingly uncomfortable” with the “People of Destiny International” name, and it was shortened to PDI Ministries. Tomczak left the leadership of PDI in 1998 and later suggested that the increasingly Calvinistic theology of PDI was a major factor in his departure. In 2002 the group adopted its current name, Sovereign Grace Ministries. Mahaney stepped down from the presidency of SGM in 2013, and in 2014 the new-appointed director announced that the group name would change to “Sovereign Grace Churches to reflect its newly changed structure. SGC still identifies with its original position of Reformed Theology and Continuationist Pneumatology and has consistently demonstrated an ecumenical eclecticism in its associations.

The popularity of SG music (as well as the music of Townend and the Gettys) has increased dramatically in recent years in large part because of the promotion it has received from Fundamental Christian colleges and evangelists. It has now become an issue that, in some cases, is beginning to define ministries and individuals, particularly those that this issue of *FrontLine* is calling “Convergent.” It continues to be the number-one topic of conversation among church musicians and has caused

considerable division in all arenas of ministry. Both authors of this article rarely see more than two or three days go by without a call, an e-mail, or a personal meeting about this subject, usually from someone who is unsettled about “the rapid changes that are taking place.” These discussions echo those that took place a few decades ago. Briefly stated, the two positions, now, as then, are “clean it up and use it” vs. “stay away from it entirely.” That is a debate that cannot occur in this space. But knowing it exists supports the basic premise of this article: believers need discernment. We have been known for nearly seventy years as Separatists because the New Evangelicals, as they sought to engage the culture, began to embrace the culture. We refused. Today, the spirit of New Evangelicalism animates some within a new generation of Fundamentalists. Seeking to engage the culture, they too, are embracing the culture. They seem to have lost interest in separation and to have become enamored of its opposite-Convergence. It is evident in their music.

An Appeal

It is never enjoyable to be part of a controversy. We take no pleasure in the unpopular position. Our remarks are offered mostly as an appeal to ministry leaders-leaders of churches and colleges--Our friends, whom we hold dear. We are deeply concerned for the upcoming generation they are influencing, failing to warn them of the danger Convergence certainly brings. The paradox we see in this is the probable source of this music's popularity. We understand the feeling among our peers, that “finally some music has come along that is both fresh in its sound and rich in its doctrine!” Our initial reaction was the same. We understand why folks are frustrated when something comes along that is, in so many ways, so good and someone else comes along and opposes it! We should never oppose anything just because it is popular or new. Neither should we reject a sincere appeal just because we are biased against what it would require of us.

In the final analysis, the paradox exists in the probable reason that the younger generation is embracing so much of the SG music. Dear reader, simply put, this is another fad. In the same way that giving permission to use Steve Green's music a generation ago opened the door for stumbling, a new stumbling block is being set before a new generation. This time it is embedded within Sovereign Grace and its related personalities. Of course, this is not a blanket indictment, nor does it describe all young Christians, but it is not the uninformed listener that we risk losing here. SG is not the root problem; it is just a catalyst of Convergence. If we fail to warn of the danger in SG music, it will become the justification for using something far worse. Moreover, if SG music is being used as part of a Convergent agenda, its use would demonstrate all the ethical problems of that direction.

We would urge the leaders of Christian colleges and schools to interact with their music and Bible faculties and to develop a clear position on music, as on any other contentious issue, for the well-being of the students. Even then, inconsistency in the application of institutionalized principles will eventually confuse and possibly destroy young believers. No one song or movement, including SG, will destroy. But a lack of discernment will not recognize destruction until it may be too late. We find it hard to fathom that Fundamental leaders are unaware of what they are doing, but we shudder to think that this direction could be strategic! Separation has its problems, but Convergence is not the answer. If there is a real thirst for doctrinally sound and fresh sacred music on the part of the students and the youth group, that need can be satisfied through sources other than SG. The claim that “nothing else will reach them and hold them” is indicative of a carnal craving, not a spiritual thirst.

A final thought: in today's deteriorating culture, with the availability of so much knowledge coupled with so little discernment, I would argue that only biblical discernment will lead us to genuine biblical liberty-the exclusion of even acceptable things because of questionable associations and even the things that are acceptable in themselves that foster an appetite for what is clearly unacceptable. Perhaps the need for discernment has never been greater. Without it, we will become weaker and weaker in ...approving things that are excellent.

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"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16).

Resolution on Revitalizing the Church

WHEREAS the Scriptures teach that the Lord is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9); and

WHEREAS the Scriptures teach “there is none righteous, no not one”; and that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; and that “the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 3:10; 3:23; 6:23); and

WHEREAS the Scriptures teach “for God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16); and

WHEREAS the Scriptures teach “he that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:18); and

WHEREAS the Scriptures teach “for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:13-14); and

WHEREAS the Lord Jesus taught that we are to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19-20); and

WHEREAS we are instructed to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Timothy 4:5);

BE IT RESOLVED that we the messengers of the churches in fellowship with the Pennsylvania Association of Regular Baptist Churches, meeting at Hope Baptist Church, Hanover, Pennsylvania, April 24-25, 2017 commit ourselves to prayer asking God to send a revival to ourselves and to our churches; and that we will call upon the Lord to show us great and mighty things (Jeremiah 33:3) by revitalizing us and our churches to win the lost to Christ; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we will cultivate opportunities and seek by the grace of God to build relationships with family, friends, coworkers, and neighbors to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the lost through personal evangelism, asking God to bring them under conviction of their sin, and to grant them repentance (2 Timothy 2:25; Acts 20:21) and faith to believe (Ephesians 2:8-9) the Gospel message of Jesus Christ, the only Savior (Acts 4:12) and mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5).

Resolution on the Gospel and Prejudice

WHEREAS Scripture affirms that there is only one human race, created male and female, with each person made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27), and

WHEREAS all persons (the exception being our Lord, who had no earthly father) are the direct offspring and descendants of the original parents, Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:20), as well as direct descendants of one of Noah's three sons, Shem, Japheth, or Ham (Gen. 9:1, 7; 10-11), and

WHEREAS humanity was divided by families according to language by the sovereign action of God in response to their willful rebellion against the mandate to fill the earth (Gen. 11:5-9), thus showing Omnipotent God as the source of all languages, and resulting in confusion, and

WHEREAS the confusion brought the scattering of families, resulting in isolation, distrust, and fear, as well as the establishment of customs, norms, expectations and development of homogeneous culture according to the language of the group (i.e. Chaldeans, Egyptians, Hittites, Canaanites, etc.). This emphasis explains the differences between people and nations as cultural, regional or national, and not biological or racial, and

WHEREAS because of sin's inherent idolatry expressed within each culture refuses to love God and love neighbor as fellow image bearers (Deut. 6:4; Lev. 19:18; Mt. 22:37-40) resulting in destructive damage to human relationships (Gal. 5:19-21) as seen in prejudice, slavery, abuse, strife, enmities, unloving behavior, brutality, war, pride, and cultural superiority (John 4:9; 2 Tim. 3:2-4), and

WHEREAS the majority people group often determine the prevailing customs, traditions and expectations within a culture, discriminating against minority people groups, and have at times throughout history, enforced their will violently upon minority people groups (examples being treatment of 1st Nations of North America, slavery around the world, the Turkish massacre of the Armenian people of early 1900's, and the civil war in Yugoslavia), and

WHEREAS the Gospel message is to be proclaimed worldwide to make disciples of all nations or ethnicities (Mt. 28:19-20), without prejudice against people, nor neglect of minority ethnicities (Acts 1:8, Rom. 1:14-16),

Be it therefore resolved that we, the messengers of the Pennsylvania Association of Regular Baptist Churches, meeting on April 24-25, 2017 at Hope Baptist Church, Hanover, PA, do recognize that the Gospel is for all people of every people group, and we rejoice in the reach and the power of the Gospel (Rev. 5:9-13; 7:9), and

Be it further resolved that we will work to see our churches reach people of all the people groups within our given locations across the state,

Be it further resolved that when new believers from ethnicities or cultures outside of our predominant culture become a part of our fellowship, we will not pridefully demand conformity of approach or tradition, but will strive to love one another (Rom.15:2), and

Be it further resolved to examine our own hearts and root out pride or superiority rooted in our ethnic or cultural background that may be a hindrance or offense to other brothers with whom we seek to minister in cross cultural settings, seeking to avoid and eliminate a prevailing sense of superiority in ministry.
