

What would you say Jesus sees as the main evil of the Pharisees? How can Christians keep from falling into the same sin?

Where do you need to be cleansed on the inside, not just the outside?

*Ask God to help us as a church and as individuals to stay far from hypocrisy. Ask Him to help us be cleansed inside, not just outside.*

## Friday

The book of Galatians is one of Paul's first letters, and yet already he is warning the church against leaders who are taking them astray. Read Gal. 1:6-9 and Gal. 5:7-10.

In your opinion, what "distorted gospel" is getting popular in America right now? How does this lead people astray? How could it keep the church from its task of making disciples and loving others in word and deed?

*Ask God to prevent you and the church from believing a distorted gospel. Ask Him to help us stay focused on Jesus.*

## Saturday

*Please finish devotions you may have missed, and please pray for the services this weekend. Thanks!*

# Prayer Updates

## JOY & BLESSINGS

Tara Jirschevske (former TLC bookkeeper) and her husband, John, welcome their second son, Luke Charles, born March 24. Sharon Christa is the happy grandma!

## HOSPITALIZED & SURGERIES this past week...

Barbara Miller – ICU, bowel surgery  
Betty Dodson – fluid in the lungs with shortness of breath  
Connie Breuninger – pancreatic cancer, Cancer Treatment Center in Oklahoma  
Don Syres – liver surgery at Stanford, 4/23  
Elva Jacobsen – RCU  
Irvin Smith – recovering from pedestrian/auto accident  
Karla Bogard – long term recovery from major, experimental cancer surgery  
Leslie Nelson – knee surgery, 5/1  
MariAnn Wilson, a single mom (Jane Braun's daughter) – medical procedure 5/1  
Paul Bacon – surgery 4/25, bladder tumor  
Ritchie Smith – bone infection in his arm, rehabilitating from a fracture  
Rod Mowbray – fell off his bike, punctured lung and fractured ribs  
**Recent hospitalizations / surgeries:** Dorrell Smith, Freeman Gingerich, Ian Tupper, Sally Guzman  
**Hospice Care:** Adrienne Gomes

## We want to provide pastoral support...

Please call 465-3395 when someone is hospitalized, scheduled for surgery, becomes a shut-in, or in special need. Prayer support is available through our pastors and numerous prayer groups – call 689-9400. Please pick up a Prayer Update at the Information Desk or Welcome Center.



# WHY BELIEVE

## “Why Believe in the Church?”

April 28 & 29, 2007 • René Schlaepfer

How do you respond to a friend who says: “If Christianity is true, what about all the atrocities of the church?”

### 1. Recognize

“Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to **pervert the gospel of Christ.**” Galatians 1:7

“But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your **sincere and pure devotion to Christ.**” 2 Corinthians 11:3

Once focus on \_\_\_\_\_ is diluted, anything can be rationalized.

### 2. Recall

“**Watch out** for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.” Matthew 7:15-17

“**Keep watch** over yourselves and all the flock. . . I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you. . . Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth. . . So **be on your guard!** Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.” Acts 20:28-32

“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive. . . unholily, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal. . . conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. **Have nothing to do with them.**” 2 Timothy 3:1-5

A distinction must be made between the \_\_\_\_\_ of Jesus and the \_\_\_\_\_ of some who claimed to be Christians.

Opposition to these atrocities came from \_\_\_\_\_.

### 3. Reveal

“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even **greater things** than these, because I am going to the Father.” John 14:12

(See next page)

### 4. Risk \_\_\_\_\_: Christians are \_\_\_\_\_!

“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 (See Acts 2:44-45)

“By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:35

God's plan:  
Church as a community of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_!

### Human Rights

Christians headed the movements to combat human rights abuses such as infanticide; gladiatorial combat in the Roman Empire; slavery; child labor, etc. (see Luis Palau, *God Is Relevant*, New York: Doubleday, p. 177-178)

### Relief Work

Christians established the first charitable medical hospitals; the first emergency shelters for the homeless; the first homes for orphans; the first humanitarian institutions for the insane; the first ministries to victims of crime; the first outreaches to prisoners, hospital patients, and soldiers; and the first societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals (see Luis Palau, *God Is Relevant*, New York: Doubleday, p. 177-178)

### Women

Christians discontinued practice of veiling; patria potestas (father's right to kill family members); infanticide of female babies; assembly partitions; etc. wage (Alvin Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World*, p. 120)

### Labor

Unlike Greco-Roman culture, Christians saw labor as honorable, dignified, a calling, and deserving of a fair wage (Alvin Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World*, p. 214)

### Education

Most of the great colleges and universities in the world began as Christian colleges: Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Dartmouth, etc. At least 1,210 languages were never written until Christian Bible translators learned the languages and devised writing for them. (Beisner, *Answers for Atheists, Agnostics, and Other Thoughtful Skeptics*, Wheaton: Crossway, 137)

### Literature

Christian faith motivated and inspired classic works by Augustine, John Bunyan, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Pascal, Solzhenitsyn, Dickens, Milton, Defoe, Tennyson, Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and many more.

### Art and Music

Christian faith inspired musical works by Bach, Handel, Mendelssohn, Beethoven, Mozart, and many others, and great works of art by da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Rembrandt, etc.

## Resources

*God: The Evidence*, Patrick Glynn

*Questions of Life*, Nicky Gumbel

*The Faith Factor*, Dale Matthews

*God Is Relevant*, Luis Palau

*How Christianity Changed the World*, Alvin J. Schmidt

*The Rise of Christianity; The Victory of Reason; For the Glory of God*, Rodney Stark

*Can Man Live Without God?*, Ravi Zacharias

### Monday

Which points from the message were helpful to you? Why?

Read Hebrews 10:23-25. In what specific way can you spur another Christian on to love and good deeds? How have others spurred you on?

Why do Christians "give up meeting together"? Who do you know that needs an invitation back to church?

*Thank God for His encouragement today. Think of a Christian you know who has fallen into the habit of skipping church. Ask God to help you invite them back!*

### Tuesday

Read Acts 2:41-47. Too often we think of ways the Church has fallen short of Christ's purpose for her, but here is one example of the Church doing very well. What do you devote yourself to daily? According to this passage, what do these three thousand converts end up doing? How does this reflect Jesus' prayer in John 13:34-35? What could you do to help our church be more like this?

*Pray today that TLC will grow in its reflection of the joy, faith, and generosity of the early church.*

### Wednesday

Read Acts 20:28-31. In this passage, what does the Apostle Paul warn about?

What does he want the church to do?

Read 2 Timothy 3:1-8. In this passage, what does Paul warn about? Given this list of vices, what "form of godliness" could these people possibly exhibit? Jannes and Jambres were Pharaoh's magicians. How do they help explain what Paul means by "a form of godliness"? Why is this so dangerous? Why do you think corrupt leaders have infected churches in spite of repeated warnings like this in Scripture?

*Ask God to help you and to help the church to be on guard against those who want to distract us from a focus on Jesus and His gospel.*

### Thursday

Jesus also warned many times against the corrupting influence of bad leaders in the church. Read Matt. 7:15-23 and Matt. 23:23-28. Does anything surprise you about Jesus' tone in these verses? How are false prophets like "wolves"?

over 



*"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."  
John 13:35*

