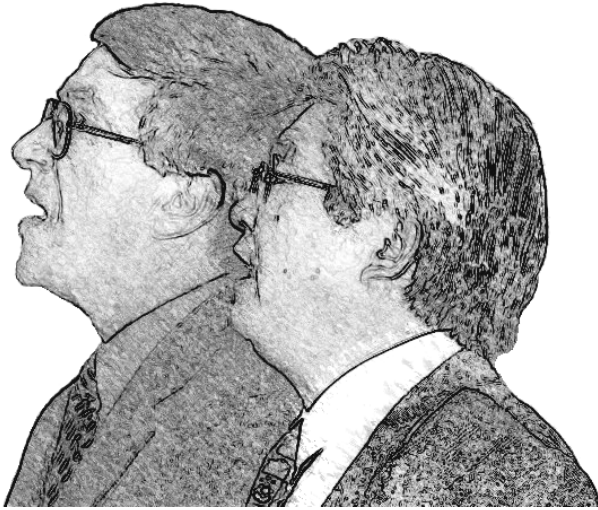


Rochester Chinese Christian Church

ECHO

December 2006 Volume 24 No. 2



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Rochester Chinese Christian Church Three-Year Plan (2005 - 2007) Main Emphasis: Outreach And Evangelism

2005

Motivation - Focus on equipping our people

Theme: You Will Be My Witnesses (Acts 1:8)

1. Equip every person for short-term missions
2. Every church member serves in at least one capacity
3. Identify outreach ministry groups

2006

Mobilization - Focus on reaching out to the unsaved

Theme: We Must Preach the Gospel (Mark 13:10)

1. Support and send out at least 30 short-term missionaries
2. Every person brings at least one friend to church
3. Mobilize outreach ministries

2007

Multiplication - Focus on assimilating newcomers

Theme: Lord, Send Out Workers! (Matthew 9:38)

1. Every person has a short term missionary experience
2. Send out at least one full-time worker from RCCC
3. Multiply outreach ministry members



Rochester Chinese Christian Church
羅城華人基督教會




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Penfield, NY 14526
(585) 872-6708
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<p>鄧灼文牧師 Pastor Herman Tang hermanctang@aol.com (585) 388-5713</p> <p>English Sunday Worship 9:30 am</p> <p>English Sunday School 11:15 am</p> <p><i>Call the church for other fellowship, bible study & youth group meetings</i></p>	<p>韓澤民牧師 Pastor Mitchell Herring mherring@rochesterccc.org (585) 872-6708</p> <p>中文主日學 上午九時三十分</p> <p>中文主日崇拜 上午十一時十五分</p> <p>欲知其他團契聚會 查經班，請電教會</p>
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Rochester Chinese Christian Church West
羅城西區華人基督教會

Located at
Henrietta Wesleyan Church
70 Thompson Road
Rochester, NY 14623





主日崇拜
Sunday Worship
下午 4:00 - 5:15 pm

主日學
Sunday School
下午 5:20 - 6:15 pm

<p>鄧灼文牧師 Pastor Herman Tang hermanctang@aol.com (585) 388-5713</p>	<p>韓澤民牧師 Pastor Mitchell Herring mherring@rochesterccc.org (585) 872-6708</p>
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Bad News? Sad News? Glad News!

Pastor Herman Tang

By now you probably are aware that Eleanor and I are planning to move back to California by next June. We have sensed the Lord's calling to go. If you have not heard my announcement yet, you can read it from our church web site or on the bulletin board outside my church office. Some people congratulated us for the "good news" while some people shed tears over what they called "bad news". I think what they really meant was "it is sad to see you go". No matter how you feel, I just like to thank you for your prayer, support and understanding. My wife and I have been deeply touched by your loving responses to us. Allow me to share some of the email messages which we received right after I had made the announcement:

One young lady from our Youth Group said, "---I didn't expect that at all. But, if that's where God has called you to lead then I fully support you."

Another brother said, "---Again, my heart is filled with much thanksgiving for the many opportunities I had working with you in Rochester. They are wonderful memories, and I surely am very appreciative of the discipleship training you've helped to give me."

One family said, "---we will forever miss your warm smiles & your encouragements, your hospitality and your good food, all the New Year Eve count down parties, etc. Again, thank you for ministering to us for the past 9 years. Thank you for being so approachable and supportive. I especially thank you for bringing my parents to Christ and for all your prayers for them."

My wife and I will be forever grateful for the honor and privilege to serve such a loving congregation. We have learned so much from you and from all the wonderful experiences the Lord has provided for us in Rochester. We have absolutely no regret for moving to Rochester to serve among you in 1997. In fact, I have only fond memories about Rochester to take with me when I

move. The Lord is good. He knows exactly what things I need to learn, where and how I can learn them. If I had not obeyed Him in answering the call to come to RCCC, I might never have learned those precious lessons.

One of these lessons I have learned is this: Surrender to God's will bring the greatest fulfillment in life. If you ask me to name the greatest blessing I have received while serving in RCCC, I will tell you without any hesitation that it is the blessing of leading the Tuesday Morning Bible Study class. I confess that I was not a diligent student back when I was going through seminary. There were so many important truths in the Bible that I was unable to grasp. As the pastor-teacher, I have to study the Bible all over again. This time around, not only have I come to know more of the facts of the Bible, I am able to know the God of the Bible more intimately. It seems like my spiritual life is being transformed week after week. I have so much joy in serving the Lord even when facing the most difficult and saddest times in the ministry. Now I am able to say it confidently like the Apostle Paul, "—I know whom I have believed!" (2 Timothy 1:12) I urge you to surrender your life to the Lord so that you might live your life in the most fulfilled and productive way.

A few weeks ago a pastor, who is a good friend of RCCC, wrote an email to me after hearing the news of my departure. He said some kind words, "*---It is too bad to lose such a wonderful pastor. However, I believe the Lord has a greater plan for the church. HE will bless His church, RCCC, even greater in the coming years!---*" I really appreciate him saying that because that is really what I desire as well.

In conclusion, I want to remind you of something that comes from the bottom of my heart. It is the "glad news" of the amazing love of our Lord Jesus. His love will never disappoint us. He always loves us. He loved you yesterday, He loves you the same way today, and His love for you will not change in the days to come. The Lord is faithful! He has done some great things since I came to RCCC, and He will continue to do greater things long after I am gone. His church will triumph always!





A Double Call

Pastor Mitchell Herring

First of all I would like to thank our congregation for inviting us back to Rochester to serve Christ and His people together. That the Lord should have called us back here is something that as recently as last year we could never have imagined.

Something else we did not imagine is the transition that will occur as we move into the new year, which I am sure we are all aware of by now. I first met Pastor & Mrs. Tang in October 1986 at First Chinese Baptist Church in Los Angeles. Their heart for the Lord, dedication to ministry, and consideration for their co-workers have been a great encouragement to me. The gifts the Lord has granted to Pastor Tang and the energy and vigor with which he serves have been a blessing to so many of us. When he first shared his decision and the circumstances that led to it with me back in early September, I confess to you that my reaction was something akin to panic. Not only have I felt very comfortable in my role as his co-worker, but his presence has also provided a sense of security for me. I suspect that the anxiety we all share may be due at least in part to losing this sense of security his ministry role has provided for us all, not to mention the personal affection and esteem in which we hold them.

Now as God calls Pastor and Mrs. Tang to their new ministry in California, He is also extending a call to us---a call to exercise faith and look anew to Him and His good Word for our security and ministry needs. ²⁰But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, ²¹keep yourselves in the love of God, eagerly waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life" (Jude 20-21). Everything in the world is transitory. "...Change and decay in all around I see; O Thou Who changest not, abide with me." Amidst all the uncertainty, the love of God as revealed in the gospel of Christ, this most holy faith, will never change. The main imperative of this passage, in verse 21, is to not be distracted, but to firmly look to and keep ourselves in this love of God, and the

expectation of the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to be realized at His coming. “Fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pt.1:13). This is His call to us now.

How do we keep ourselves in the love of God and hope of His mercy? Verse 20 tells us that it is by building ourselves up in our most holy faith, and by Spirit-led prayer. To build ourselves up in our most holy faith means to keep seeking our most holy Lord Jesus Christ, who is the center of our faith, by studying the great truths of His Word, obeying His voice, and committing the outcome to Him. “...Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love...” (John 15:9-10). Then we must also “pray in the Holy Spirit.” Prayer focuses our faith, points it to God, gives it expression, and builds it up. But it must be “in the Holy Spirit,” that is, according to the will of God (Rom. 8:26-27) in both content and motive, as His Spirit teaches us His will through His Word. It should be systematic, ongoing and habitual. But there is also the daily devotional seeking of faith for the presence of Christ. With any new change and challenge, with anything that will cause you to be unsettled, before you do anything, just seek His face. “When Thou didst say, ‘Seek my face,’ my heart said to Thee, ‘Thy face, O Lord, I shall seek’” (Ps. 27:8). Praise the Lord that in any circumstance, He is always there for us to seek out.

God is calling Pastor and Mrs. Tang to the challenge of a new ministry, but He is also calling us through the words of Jude 20-21. This call is to each and every one of us. So please let us encourage and exhort each other toward this. Even as we remember the Tangs and uphold them often in prayer, may we all stand up and be faithful to this call. This is how we keep ourselves in the love of God and expectation of His mercy. He is calling us to this. If we do not do this, we will not be able to keep ourselves in His love. But if we do, He will build us up in our most holy faith, so that according to 1 Corinthians 15:58, we can be “steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.”



What A Missionary Team

Wunan Chang

This is my very first time going abroad for a mission trip. I need to express my gratitude to our Lord for each member of the Asian short-term mission team. From my observations, they all are great mentors of how to become a soldier in God's army. They showed their godly love to anyone who had reached out asking for their help.

Pastor Tang is our leader of the team in many ways. He was the spiritual leader and taught us about the attributes of the spiritual fruit, one every morning; love, joy, peace, patient, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. He was the coordinator of all the details between Singapore, Indonesia, and Rochester, and he has a gift of allocating people for the right responsibilities. He cares deeply about people's salvation and would passionately ask people to receive Jesus Christ as their personal savior whenever God gave him the opportunity. He had also shown his tender side by caring for Mrs. Tang whenever she had trouble walking due to the edema on her ankles.

Mrs. Eleanor Tang is a courageous missionary. She knows her own body the best; she knew her ankle would swell up in the afternoon after standing up for the entire day, but she would keep working hard to serve the people even until it swelled. After she got some rest in the evening, she was ready to get right back to work again the next day.

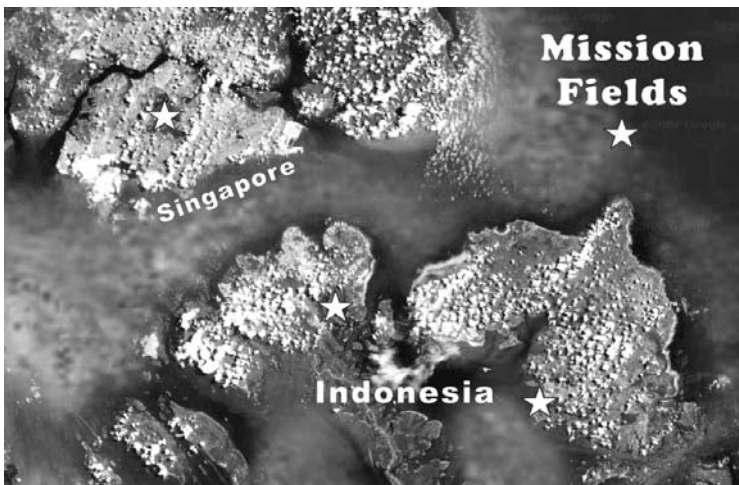
Brother Patrick Ho was the leader of the eyeglass ministry. To see the joyful smile on his face whenever he saw people's face light up after they regained their vision with eyeglasses gives me a warm feeling even now. His passion for the eyeglass ministry is obvious. It is wonderful to learn that he and Georgina are keeping the eyeglass ministry alive, even after we have left the areas in Indonesia. They had trained the local Christians to correct people's vision in order to continue the eyeglass ministry as an outreach ministry.

I witnessed the faithfulness of Brother Maddy Szeto who was the leader of the worship ministry during the entire Asia mission trip. He planned and compiled all the songs and hymns in English,

Mandarin, Cantonese, and Indonesian for every meeting during the mission trip. He initiated all the singing practices almost a year ago. He was the producer for the moon festival evangelical meeting at Tanjung Pinang. I had also learned that he spent long hours, sometimes until 2:00 AM, to get all the slides ready for the evangelical meeting next day.

Sister Flora Szeto and Georgina Ho teamed up so well to help parents in need who had problems raising either a red (hyperactive) or a blue (hypoactive) child by spending hours counseling the parents. I am still touched by their extra efforts after a long day of work to help a sister who had trouble communicating due to her illness by making up a custom-made communication board. They also had similar efforts when packaging many gift bags for the children who came to the moon festival evangelical meeting. They really showed me how to love God and how to love others through their actions.

I give thanks to our Lord that I had the honor of working along side all these God-loving Christians. I am blessed because I was surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses. I pray that through our willing hearts and faithful efforts to spread the gospel in Asia, Christians around the continent will continue to grow in the future for the kingdom of God. Amen!



Me, Playing By The Rules?

David Ying

When I left home in China and came to the US at the age of 18, I thought it was great to be free at last from my parents' many rules! You see, my parents were very strict. Most Chinese parents are, and have many rules at home, but mine more. For example, I couldn't spend over night outside of home, I had to be home by 9 pm everyday; I couldn't play basketball as much as I wanted to.....But since then I have learned a thing or two or three about rules in life.

First thing I learned is that I instinctively dislike rules.

Yes, I know that I must play by the rules if I want to win any basketball games. “..if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules.” (2 Tim. 2:5)

But then why do I dislike rules? Why am I not able to follow many good rules in my life? Rules like: do not lie, hate, cheat, covet, steal....

In a word, sin in our lives. God's word says that we are all by nature and by birth sinners. (Rom. 5:12) We can not help but to sin! We are slaves to sin! (Rom. 6:16) Not being able to follow many rules is a symptom of the sinful nature within us.

What is sin? Sin is when we revolt against God and fail to acknowledge Him as the creator and sustainer of all things and His sovereignty over our lives. What is the number one priority in our lives? Our foremost desire in life is to place ourselves first in our lives for self gratification. We want to control our own lives and do not like to have others make rules to tell us what to do! We do not even want God's rules to control our lives either. Our basic nature of self-centeredness has caused us to place ourselves even above God, our creator. We see this not only in ourselves but also in our society, which is just a collective expression of individuals. In the 1960's, the rebellious young generation was called the “Me Generation”. But we all belong to the “Me Generation” and subscribe to the philosophy of life called “Humanism”, meaning human-centered life. But God as the creator of all things desires for us to know our proper place before Him as the created beings for our own good. His design

is for us to lead a God-centered life, not a me-centered or man-centered life! His first commandment is that we shall have no other gods before Him (Ex. 20:3). But we have, in our sin, placed ourselves even before Him. Ephesians 2:3 says: “All of us (the Christian believers) also lived among them (the non-believers) at one time, gratifying the cravings of our *sinful nature* and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest we were by *nature* objects of wrath.” (italics mine). We simply want to do everything our own way because we want to be the lord of our own lives! And we find it difficult to follow the rules even if we want to! (Rom. 7:14-20) Because of our sinful nature, we break every one of the Ten Commandments, in thoughts and motives if not always in action. Put another way, sin is placing ourselves first above God in our motive and disobedience to Him in our action.

Second thing I learned is that there are rules everywhere!

No matter how I tried, I couldn't get away from them! From my parents to schools to my marriage (yes, there are rules in marriage too!) to my post graduate training programs to my work in the hospitals to my professional partners and even to my retirement, I find myself facing all kinds of rules!

So what kind of rules are we talking about?

Rules are “*principles or regulations that govern our conduct, procedures, etc.*” There are basically three categories of rules:

1. Self imposed rules: both internal and external, both good and bad. e.g. new year resolutions etc.
2. Society imposed rules: external only, both good and bad. From parents, schools, government, world.
3. God imposed rules: internal and external, always good. Value, morality, meaning, conscience...These are universal, eternal and absolute. e.g. Ten Commandments.

But why do we need rules anyway?

In general, rules are for our good so that we can live in peace and harmony with ourselves and others. But, some rules are “bad” because they are made by people with selfish interest and/or insufficient or inaccurate information, leading to very

“unfair” rules. Some other rules are confusing or ambiguous because of difference in language, understanding, personal perspective, circumstances, etc.

In particular, rules demonstrate the nature of God because God is not a God of randomness but of order, precision and harmony in all things. God’s rules are absolute and eternal as He is absolute and eternal. He is the ultimate rule maker! We may choose to disobey the man-made rules sometimes, or “civil disobedience”, with the risks of punishments and even physical death; but disobedience of the absolute rules made by God carries dire, eternal consequences!

The third thing I learned is that I must live in total obedience to God’s absolute eternal rules of truth or I will die!

The sin of disobedience to God results in death. This is what happened to Adam and Eve, the first human beings, when they disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden, desiring to please themselves and be like God in His wisdom. They as the created beings wanted to be equal to God the creator. The clay wanted to be the potter. (Gen.2:16-17, 3:1-11, 21-24) Their “death” was not an immediate physical death, which of course also happened, but later. But they died “spiritually” immediately as they became aware of the shame and guilt in their lives and were banished from the presence of God with whom they were first created to have close communion and to bring Him glory. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom.3:23) “For the wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Rom.6:23) “If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” (Rev. 20:15)

God also promised blessings for obedience and curses for disobedience, life for obedience and death for disobedience. (Deut. 28:1-68; 30:11-20) When asked by the Pharisees, Jesus’ summary of God’s laws (rules) is to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself. (Matt. 22:37-40; Mk.12:29-31; Lk.10:27-28) To be sure that His disciples understood how to love God, Jesus repeated 5 times in different forms in a single encounter that to love God is to obey Him. (Jn.14:15, 21, 23, 24, 31) So we must play by the “rules” that God has given if we are to love Him. There is no other way if we want to live eternally with God’s

blessings. But who can honestly say that he is able to play or live by God's rules?

In order to be able to play or live by God's rules, we must:

First, be freed from the bondage of sin, which is the nature of disobedience. We are born enslaved by sin. Disobedience of any of God's rules happens naturally with us. To be freed from this bondage to sin is only possible when we acknowledge our sin and trust in Jesus, the Son of God, who alone can free us from the bondage of sin and redeem us from the consequences of sin. (Rom. 6:17-18, 22-23; Eph. 2:4-8) The Spirit of God who lives in the believers of Jesus can and will free all, who choose to be led by Him, from living in slavery to sin. (Gal. 5:16-18) Therefore a continuing life of persistent, even if frequently interrupted, obedience to God is the evidence of one's genuine faith in Christ.

Second, know God and His rules. How can we obey unless we know the Ruler and His rules of life? The better we know Him and His love for us, the more we will love Him. (1 Jn.4:19) For God is love. (1 Jn.4:16) The better we know His laws, rules, and precepts, the more we are able to obey and to love God properly and to be sure of experiencing God's blessings for life. The knowledge of the living God and His laws is contained in the written Word of God, the Bible. (2 Tim. 3:16) If we want to be truly obedient to God, how can we not first be diligent students of the Bible? We need to know the nature of God and His rules of life in the Bible in order to obey them. Our faith in Jesus is evidenced by our love for Him and His people and obedience to Him. To the disciples who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teachings, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (Jn. 8:31-32)

*When we walk with the Lord,
in the light of His Word,
What a glory He sheds on our way!
While we do His good will,
He abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.
Trust and obey,
For there is no other way to be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey.*

"Trust and Obey" by James H. Sammis

Coming Home

Jessica Kuo

In the beginning of the school year the college fellowship had a potluck at Auntie Shirley's house. A few of us were playing a game called taboo, where a person has a card with a word on it. The person who holds the card must try to get his teammates to say what the word is without using the word itself, part of the word, or the list of words that are written below it.

It was Daniel Hu's turn and he had a card with the word teacher on it. Knowing that I wanted to be a violin teacher after I graduated, he said, "This is what Jessica wants to be..." Immediately Carolyn blurted out the answer "A housewife!" Needless to say everyone burst into laughter and the fact that the game was timed was completely forgotten for the next few minutes. Now, this answer would be humorous if applied to anyone. However, my closest friends know how much truth there is in Carolyn's answer which made them laugh all the harder.

I've always been a romantic at heart. Ever since I was a little girl I would dream of "Mr. Right." I would dream about him to the point that I idolized him and put him on a pedestal. I think my mom noticed that about me. I remember my mom gently telling me that in the end, people would always let you down. After all they're just human. God on the other hand would never let me down and would always be there.

Nevertheless, because I'm an only child, I would always feel lonely and would look to friends and romantic relationships to fill the void. I craved for love and acceptance from friends and family. Although I already believed in God at this point and committed my life to Him, I struggled greatly with putting Him first.

It wasn't until last school year when an incident hurt me greatly that I felt completely lost. I lost my confidence as a human being and I would wonder whether anyone could ever love me just the way I am.

Throughout this whole ordeal my parents always supported and comforted me. They're amazing like that. Even in freshmen

year when the guy I was dating dumped me and began dating the girl I was jealous of throughout our relationship, my parents were there for me. I remember even calling them at 3 am in the morning to cry my heart out. Not once did they utter a complaint about how I woke them up. All they said was to call them anytime I needed to, no matter when. They even said that if I wanted, they could drive up and visit.

As I struggled through this situation, God was faithful. Over the summer, a seminary intern came to our church and would preach every other Sunday. On the last day he was there, he gave a message about how this world is not our home. He told us a story about the time when he just graduated from college. He prayed to God that he didn't mind where God sent him as long as God gave him plenty of friends, because the one thing he couldn't deal with was to be alone.

However, God had other plans, and he ended up in a pretty deserted area with mostly retired people and hardly any Asians. Though it was hard, he felt that he could deal with it because at the time God had blessed him with a fiancée. Unfortunately, three weeks before the wedding, he got a letter and a ring saying "Sorry, I can't do this." His world came tumbling down and he felt completely alone. He would look into the mirror and say to himself, "You're worthless." He craved for someone to talk to so much that he enjoyed talking to telemarketers when they called, and felt sad when the conversation ended.

One night when he couldn't fall asleep, he decided to open his Bible and landed in the book of Job. Through the passages he found his source of comfort in the Lord and he was able to stand up once more. As I listened to this sermon, tears fell down my cheeks and I also prayed to God for help. The summer intern reminded us that our home is not here in this world, but with the Lord God in Heaven.

Just like the prodigal son I realized that I had left home looking for something to fill my heart, for some kind of love and acceptance. After experiencing the world and losing more than I had before I came crawling back to my Father who was standing there all along with his arms open wide. There I found the love I had been looking for. Despite my sins, despite the fact that I had looked elsewhere, He accepted me for who I am and loves me. Now that is truly "Amazing Grace."

As I think about all this the praise song by Chris Tomlin called “Come home running” comes to mind. The chorus goes like this:

So come home running
His arms are open wide
His name is Jesus, and He understands
He is the answer that you are looking for
So come home running
.....just as you are.



Staying Strong

Aileen Chow

I stood alone in my backyard. It was late afternoon and it was almost time for me to start making dinner. Soon my husband, Barry, will be home after a long day's work. It has also been a long day's work for me. My back and shoulders ached from bending and lifting too much. My hands were dry from wearing work gloves. My feet hurt from walking back and forth to the compost pile near the end of our yard. Without Barry's help, I somehow finished raking the leaves leftover from the previous fall. My eyes looked across our shady and long backyard. I made sure that all the leaves, pinecones and branches have all been picked up. Satisfied, I returned the garden cart and rake to

the barn garage. Back at the house, I removed my blue coveralls and started preparing a hot meal.

An hour later, Barry arrived home. I smiled at him. He looked admirably handsome in his blue Navy pea coat jacket and sailor hat. Up since 5:00 in the morning, he looked exhausted and hungry. It has been a hard day's work for a sailor. He changed out of his uniform and sat by the table waiting for his dinner. I placed a plate of hot meal in front of him. He said, "Thank you." After we said our prayers, I told him I finished raking the leaves in the backyard. He looked at me and said, "Thank you for taking care of the home while I am gone."

For over three years, Barry has traveled to the Operation Support Center in Buffalo to train every one weekend per month. He spends nearly ten hours of training and two hours roundtrip driving back and forth from Batavia to Buffalo. He comes home at the end of the day, but returns to Buffalo the next day for more training. It is a pretty exhausting weekend for someone who also has to work on weekdays, too. Nevertheless, he enjoys his commitment and duty in the Navy as a Petty Officer.

When Barry decided to join the Navy Reserve in 2003, I wasn't really happy that he chose to do this. I remember being upset about it. I wasn't happy with his decision. But over the years when he went to training during the weekends, I've made my peace with it. When Barry was away, I pursued my various interests, working alone and seeking God in solitude.

Soon, my husband was gone more than the weekends. He first left for Boot Camp for three weeks. I remember braving the winter by myself. I relied on Barry so much to shovel the driveway with a snow blower. But in his absence, I just shoveled the driveway by myself, or my neighbors helped me, or my parents would help me when they came to see me. When Barry returned after the three weeks from Boot Camp, it was interesting to see the changes and growth in both of us. I was all bubbly and laughing inside when I saw him. He looked tanned and he sported a "jarhead" haircut. He also told me he had a good time at the Boot Camp which I thought was pretty funny.

Besides the Boot Camp, Barry has also been gone for two weeks for Navy training once or twice a year. During those times when he was away, I learned to hold up the fort. Yes, on some

days I missed him greatly, but other times I enjoyed being alone. I liked treating myself to McDonald's down the street. Or I would be creative and try a new recipe and hopefully when Barry is back, he would try my new creation.

Barry said to me once that he would one day leave for deployment possibly to Iraq. If it came to that it would possibly be over a year's deployment. This concerned me greatly. He was always warning me of the possibility. I myself am not quite sure if I have prepared myself for this role – as a Navy wife. I know I have done well in the past, but a year of his absence can be a real challenge. I know I need to stay strong. There is a Bible verse which I hope will encourage me to stay strong. "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9) Our pastor at City Church had a sermon on this verse. He asked, "Who would you rely on for strength?" I would need to rely on God to give me strength, courage and faith. This will be my prayer when Barry goes away.

A few of my friends and Barry's coworkers expressed concern over me whenever Barry leaves for training. They worry that his military duty would put a burden on our relationship and they wondered how I could put up with all this. I worry when he goes away, but I can only say that this has made us closer. Barry told me this is what he wanted to do. He said, "Someone's got to do it." It's a sacrifice he has made in our relationship and it is my duty to support him in his decision. Not only do I need to stay strong, but to share my love, to share in his interest because it is the only way that we can grow in our relationship.

We may face the uncertainty of our future, but it is comforting to know that God would never leave or forsake those who love Him. We don't know what will happen to our loved ones when they go away. Although there may be anxiety or fear we must face the future with confidence. Whenever Barry and I were separated I would pray for his protection and safety. I would look after our home as he goes away to serve our country. And on the day when he comes home, there were always stories to tell. Each of us has grown stronger independently. Besides us missing one another, we'll never forget to thank God who has kept us safe in this passage of life.

Creationism vs. Evolution Is The Belief Of Evolution An Obstacle To Accepting Christ And The Bible?

James Brancato

For millions of people the answer is "Yes", evolution is an obstacle to accepting Christ and accepting that the Bible is literally true. In fact many once professing Christians leave the church because they no longer believe the Bible is true or that it is the Word of God. The theory of evolution is being taught as "fact" in all our institutes of education from elementary school to university. And this teaching, left unchallenged, presents the basis for many objections to accepting the Bible as true and many from coming to Christ. Cannot the teaching of evolution and the Bible both be accepted we might ask? The answer is no; we cannot accept both as truth, as each presents a view in opposition to the other. Both cannot be true. How does teaching evolution present an obstacle to accepting Christ and the Bible? To sum it up simply, once someone accepts that man evolved through an evolutionary process spanning millions of years then it is not difficult for them to declare mankind was not designed by a creator but is the chance result of amino acids stirred up in a primordial earth. They deny that God is our creator. Genesis chapters 1 and 2 describing the six days of creation are nothing more than stories, an attempt by philosophical man to explain his origins. There was no Garden of Eden. Death existed millions of years prior to the rise of man as a species. As man did not fall from sin, there is no need for a redeemer, Christ. How then can we equip ourselves to show the truth of the Bible and remove any obstacles to accepting Christ? The answer is in the teaching of creationism, teaching the Bible is literally true, is God's holy word and pointing out the flaws in the theory of evolution. Creationism must be an essential part of our biblical teachings.

When it comes to a choice of believing that we are descendants of some type of amoebic form of life that somehow formed as a chance result of amino acids stirred up in a primordial earth; which evolved crawling forth from the ocean onto earth; and this form of life later evolved into some type of apelike species that later evolved into man. And the choice of believing that we are descendants from Adam and Eve created by God; I will choose

the latter. For those who say that we have nearly 150 years of scientific proof since Darwin first wrote his theory of evolution, we can boldly proclaim the Word of God, that reaches back to the first man Adam. What are 150 years compared to thousands of years? What answer have we to God who asks, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" (Job 38:4)

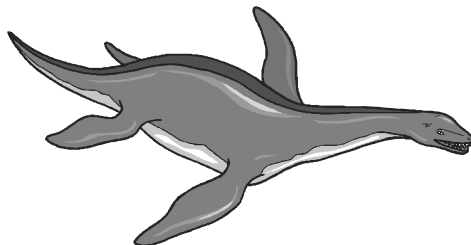
There is no scientific evidence that proves any species on earth as ever given birth to a new form of life, a new species, different than its own, though this is the very theory of evolution. In contrast the Bible teaches us that God created all life during the six days of creation. What about dinosaurs? Evolutionists will claim that they existed millions of years ago and never walked with man. Yet we know that man and dinosaurs did live together. The word "dinosaur", a Greek word meaning "terrible lizard" itself did not exist until 1841 when the word was coined by Sir Richard Owen from Britain. What we would call dinosaurs today were given different names in the Bible. "Look now at the behemoth, which I made along with you. He eats grass like an ox. See now his strength is in his hips, and his power is in his stomach muscles. He moves his tail like a cedar. The sinews of his thighs are tightly knit. His bones are like beams of bronze. His ribs like bars of iron." (Job 40:15-18) "Can you draw out Leviathan with a hook or snare his tongue with a line which you lower?" "I will not conceal his limbs, his mighty power or his graceful proportions. Who can remove his outer coat? Who can approach him with a double bridle? Who can open the doors of his face, with his terrible teeth all around? His rows of scales are his pride." (Job 41:1, 12-15)

Job 40:15 reminds us that the behemoth was made along with man on the sixth day of creation. "Then God said, 'Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind' and it was so." "Then God said 'Let us make man in our image, according to Our likeness: let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created them male and female He created them." "So the evening and the morning were the sixth day." (Genesis 1:24, 26 & 31)

Before Nicholas Copernicus put forth what is known as the Copernican Theory that the planets of our solar system revolve around the sun and that the turning of the earth on its axis accounts for the rising and setting of the sun; most of the world accepted the theory of Aristotle (384-322 BC) that the earth was the center of the universe and the sun and planets revolved around the earth. Yet God revealed to us on the fourth day of creation "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night, and let them be for signs and seasons and for day and years." (Genesis 1:14) "Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, or loose the Belt of Orion? Can you bring out the constellations in their season? Or can you guide the Great Bear and its cubs? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you set their dominion over the earth? (Job 38:31-33) God set the planets and stars in their courses for signs and seasons and all this was revealed in the Bible long before the time of Aristotle or Copernicus.

God has given us the answer for every question. We must study scripture for every obstacle to accepting the Bible as God's Holy Word, including the very teaching of evolution. I pray that every brother and sister in faith be prepared at home and at church to teach our children and every seeker to Christ about Biblical creation so that they have a sure foundation. So when they hear of evolution they can know a lie when it is presented before them. For anyone seeking additional information I would like to recommend in addition to Biblical study to read 'The Case for a Creator' by Lee Strobel; 'Creation Evangelism for the New Millennium' by Ken Ham; 'The Answers Book' by Ken Ham, Jonathan Sarfati and Carl Wieland or visiting

www.AnswersInGenesis.org



The Older Son

A. De Votion

Of all the parables in the New Testament, the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) is perhaps the most quoted. Many of us are familiar with the parable's underlying theme and the two main characters. The theme is God's love and salvation and the two main characters are the father who signifies God, and the younger son who represents lost sinners. The third character, however, is rarely mentioned. The general consensus is that the older son represents the Pharisees because of the background and the context in which the parable was told. "Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, this man welcomes sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:1-2) Then Jesus began to tell the parables of "the lost sheep", "the piece of silver", and "the prodigal son".

The Pharisees privileged themselves as God's children by heritage. They had no idea or didn't want to believe that God's love was for all, and that anyone, including sinners, could inherit God's kingdom by repenting and believing Jesus as the Son of God and accepting Him as Lord and Savior.

As true believers, we don't identify ourselves with the older brother, and we shouldn't. After all, we have the benefit of knowing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and Savior, and that the Pharisees' religious hypocrisy is detestable. However, there is no religious tone in the older son's attitude, words or behavior. When he was told of his younger brother's returning home, the older brother became angry and refused to go in. To the father's pleading, he retorted that through the years he had been slaving for him and never disobeyed his orders. Yet he received no reward; not even a young goat to celebrate with his friends. He then went on to complain about his younger brother's squandering the father's property.

Let's start with his reaction when he learned of the younger brother's homecoming. If there's any just anger, it should come from the father, not the older brother. The prodigal son asked for his portion of the estate. Although the act was premature, inappropriate and showed no respect for his father's authority, it was no skin off the older son's back. Was the older son angry

on the father's behalf? Not really. He was not only blaming the younger brother, but also his father. Deep down, his anger was more directed at his father, blaming him first for giving in to the demand of the younger son, and then for allowing him to come home with no punishment but great joy and celebration. Obviously the older son didn't have a close relationship with the father despite the latter's love for him. He didn't seem to comprehend the blessings of being the first-born with double the portion of inheritance. Instead of seeing and feeling love from his father, he focused on the duty and chores. Although he might be dependable and competent in carrying out the assignments, he did them reluctantly. With so many hired hands in the father's house, the first-born's job can hardly be regarded as that of a slave, and yet that's exactly how he saw his work. If he really loved his father, he wouldn't utter the words "never disobeyed". If he appreciated his father's love and knew that he was practically surrounded with blessings, he would joyfully help his father run the household and willingly did what his father asked him to do. The older son was not brought up in a dysfunctional family. There was no abuse and no lack of genuine love. The problem was not his father, not even his younger brother. He himself was the problem. He didn't understand love; didn't appreciate love; and certainly was incapable of loving others, including his father and brother.

We don't associate ourselves with the Pharisees because we are not into their doctrines and rituals. We also don't have their religious and cultural baggage. As a result, we tend to look at the older son as someone to whom we can easily point an accusing finger, and may even use him as a negative example in some religious illustrations. We seldom think that the older son can be a reflection of us in some ways. After all, he represents the Pharisees, right? True, but what were the Pharisees' problems? Are their problems religious, doctrinal, cultural, or attitudinal? You can say it's all of the above, but that still doesn't touch the core issue. The root of the problem is the lack of love. If love is the problem, then the older son is a lot closer to us than we think in many situations.

As believers, do we fully comprehend and appreciate our heavenly father's love? Do we know that we practically live in God's blessings and that our eternal inheritance is assured no matter what? Do we gladly do God's bidding and enjoy playing a

part in His ministry? When a member in the family falters, like the prodigal son, do we have compassion and focus on how we can get him back on track instead of accusation and condemnation? If our tendency is to accuse and condemn when someone does something wrong, especially when the act doesn't impact us personally, we are no different from the older son and, for that matter, the Pharisees.

God looks at our hearts more than our acts. Love originates from the heart and the act is something that follows naturally. The greatest act of all is Jesus' dying for us on the cross, but the origin of this act is God's greatest love for us. God has compassion for us. Do we have compassion for others? Yes, many of us are familiar with the parable of the prodigal son. May the parable remind us of not just the father's love for his lost son, but also the lack of love of the older brother, so that we can appreciate love more and be a more loving person toward others.

