

Pembroke Bible Chapel

... from darkness to light ...



Welcome to the Pembroke Bible Chapel Newsletter February 2007

We have designed this newsletter to bring you information on a variety of topics related to Valentine's Day. Because Valentine's Day is focused on love, this newsletter is also focused on love. One aspect of God's essential nature is that God is love. Our feature article speaks to the subject of what love really is and how we are enabled to show true love. Our commentary article on tolerance is especially important when we are showing love to one another; true tolerance involves showing respect and courtesy to a person, while still being able to hold divergent views. You will find a devotional on love, an article on how we see God in the wonders of nature, an article from a missionary teen about life with no fixed address, an article on a teenager's observations on love, an interesting recipe for a Valentine's hot punch, and a book review of a Christian love story.



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FEATURED ARTICLE

True Love by Mark

Although the popular 60's rock band, the Beatles, might not be the best source of spiritual advice, they did have a least two things correct concerning love: we all have a great need for it; yet, true love cannot be purchased. In fact, the Bible tells us that true love, in its purest form, is absolutely free.



The Great Commandment & The Natural Way

Each of us is created in the image of God, and one of the characteristics that we are to reflect is love. However, in our natural state, we are unable to achieve this. The greatest of all of the commandments contained in Old Testament Law is to love God with all our being and love our fellow man unselfishly (Matthew 22: 36-40). Sadly, this "Greatest Commandment" is one that no one can fulfill. We may claim to, but in doing so, we only deceive ourselves. By nature, we do not devote our adoration and service to God; instead, we naturally want to be the god of our own life. Similarly, we don't put others' needs on the same plane as ours - we don't desire to meet others' needs as if they were our own. We are selfish by nature, thinking we know what is best for ourselves and pursuing it to the exclusion of God and those around us.

Our love is often self-serving - I'll scratch your back, provided you're scratching mine where it itches. Our love is conditional, and usually comes with strings attached - we withhold our affection and service from those who offend us or displease us. But God is not like this; His love is unconditional and unbounded. Our sins are offensive to God, yet he was willing to come into this world to die for them. When He came, He was rejected mercilessly by His own countrymen; yet, in love, He died to pay the price for their sins as well as yours and mine. God has demonstrated His unique, unparalleled love for us in this - while the offence of our sins was a stench in His nostrils, He became a man and died a brutal death in order to purchase our forgiveness (Romans 5:9). There is no love greater than this (John 15: 13).

The New Commandment & The Supernatural Way

When we receive God's love-gift to us - forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ - we are brought out from under the condemnation of law. In our union with Christ, we died to law, and have been raised up with Him to serve God in the newness of His Spirit, Who indwells each believer (Romans 7:6). Fittingly, as part of His New Testament, Christ has given a "New Commandment" to His followers - that we should love one another as He has loved us (John 13:34). Note that this commandment is new (unprecedented) - it differs from the old, Greatest Commandment. The latter demands human love (providing no assistance with regard to its fulfillment). The New Commandment demands that we love the way God does (and His indwelling Spirit empowers us to do so - praise God!) The Christian life is not about our flawed, human love - it's about Christ's love working through us. Our old ways belong on the cross - crucified - so that they don't get in the way of Christ's new and greater way.

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God." (1 John 4:7)

HIGHLIGHTED DEVOTIONAL

Loved to Love by Miles Stanford, None But The Hungry Heart

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

"His love is mine when I know what He did for me; my love is His when I know who He is to me - He who is Love, is my Life. He loved and died that I might live, and love. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" (Song of Solomon 6:3).



"My Father, in His grace, has come in and ended my history in the flesh, by the Cross, and now by the Spirit I am brought into association with His Son at His own right hand in heaven."

"The Lord Jesus wins my heart in His humiliation: He satisfies it in His glory. A won heart is not necessarily a satisfied heart. But if a heart is truly won by the Lord Jesus it never will be satisfied without Him. No heart that is won is ever satisfied but in the company of the One who won it. Absence does not 'make the heart grow fonder'! You only discover in absence what you have gained in presence."

"We talk of difficulties and perplexities. How little the heart is really in concert, in simple concert with the Lord Jesus! He has gone up to the right hand of the Father in greater power than ever, and He is using the elevation that He has gone to, to effect deliverance for me from all things that would break fellowship between Him and me. And He uses His Word to keep me from all that would interfere with that blessed communion."

"Thy Word have I hidden in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Psalm 119:11).

A daily devotional like this one can be found on our website at www.pembrokebiblechapel.com

SCIENCE & CREATION

The Fascinating Creation by Chris

In this column, we will feature and describe some animals that are quite extraordinary, with the purpose of making the reader appreciate how life is intricate and marvelous. Our God is the only one claiming He is the Creator, and though some believe life could by chance have appeared out of non-living matter, I do not share this belief.

Since it is now winter, it is appropriate that we talk about winter birds. While most birds have migrated away to more comfortable latitudes, we have here in Eastern Canada some hardy species that find very cold conditions work for them just fine. They take advantage of the food left out everywhere, foraging most of the day to gain enough energy to survive until spring, when food becomes abundant again.

One of the most fascinating winter birds is the Great Grey Owl. At 130 cm (52") wingspan, and about 67 cm (27") long, it is the largest owl in North America, though not the heaviest. It has a fascinating way to hunt its prey. One time, I found one in a tree in a field, far away from the road. I walked slowly on the knee-deep snow to attempt taking photos at close range. I was surprised to see how it was not as skittish as most birds of prey I had encountered. As I took pictures, I noticed a hole in the snow surrounded by feather marks, obviously coming from this owl's wing tips. There was no trail: neither from the owl nor a possible rodent prey. It just looked as if the owl had dived with its talons first and taken off immediately, for the hole looked deeper than the length of a hand. It did not look as if the owl took a bath in the snow. That hole with the print of the wings was just a mystery to me. What had happened?

Before I went back to the car, I observed this fascinating bird, which was looking at me once in a while with its yellow eyes. It was sometimes effortlessly turning its head almost 180°. It could fluff its feathers to protect itself from extreme cold, even at a wind-chill of -50°C (-56°F) and colder. Incredible bird. But I found out much later how its ability to sit in a tree without any apparent shiver in windy and very cold temperatures was surpassed by another incredible feat.



Years after this first encounter, I was watching a TV documentary about birds of prey. One segment was explaining the Great Grey Owl's amazing hunting technique. It has such a sensitive sense of hearing that it can hear its potential rodent prey run in tunnels under the snow. With its facial feathers organized in such a way as to focus the sound to its ears, and its ears being mere holes on the sides of its skull, it is able to locate its prey with such precision that it can pounce on it from its perch, grabbing it through the covering snow blanket. Finally! I had the answer to my mystery print on the snow: the owl had captured a prey with deadly accuracy. There was no sign of battle, nor second try, with that single hole in the snow. That is just plain amazing.

COMMENTARY

The Intolerance of Tolerance Excerpted from an article by Greg Koukl, December 2006

Probably no concept has more currency in our politically-correct culture than the idea of tolerance. Unfortunately, one of America's noblest virtues has been so distorted it's become a vice.

The tolerant person allegedly occupies neutral ground, a place of complete impartiality where each person is permitted to decide for himself. No judgments allowed. No "forcing" personal views. That all views are equally valid is one of the most entrenched assumptions of a society committed to relativism. And it's a myth.

For all their confident bluster, the relativists' appeal actually asserts two truths, one rational and one moral. The first is the rational "truth" that there is no truth, a clear conflict. The second is the moral truth that one ought to tolerate others' viewpoints. Their stand, contradictory on at least two counts, serves as a warning that the modern notion of tolerance is seriously misguided.

For example, most people in our culture today would accept that "All views have equal merit and none should be considered better than another." A statement such as "Jesus is the Messiah and Judaism is wrong for rejecting Him", is rejected as intolerant by most

people. But is it?

If all views have equal merit, then the view that Christians have a better view on Jesus than the Jews have is just as true as the idea that Jews have a better view on Jesus than the Christians do. But this is hopelessly contradictory. If the first statement is what tolerance amounts to, then no one can be tolerant because "tolerance" turns out to be gibberish. As it turns out, by the modern definition of tolerance no one is tolerant, or ever can be.

The way out of this dilemma is to reject this modern distortion of tolerance and return to the classic view. In this view, a distinction is made between persons and ideas. We need to be tolerant of the person allowing him to express his views, but we must have the freedom to reject the views they hold should we believe they are incorrect. Treat others as having equal standing in value or worth. But you must be free to acknowledge that some ideas are better than others. And they are. We don't treat all ideas as if they have the same merit, lest we run into contradiction. Some ideas are good, some are bad. Some are true, some are false. Some are brilliant, others are just plain foolish.

The first principle, what might be called "civility," is at the heart of the classical view of tolerance. It can be loosely equated with the word "respect." Tolerance applies to how we treat people we disagree with, not how we treat ideas we think false.

We respect those who hold different beliefs than our own by treating them courteously and allowing their views a place in the public discourse. We may strongly disagree with their ideas and vigorously contend against them in the public square, but we still show respect for the persons in spite of our differences.

Classic tolerance requires that every person be treated courteously with the freedom to express his ideas without fear of reprisal no matter what the view, not that all views have equal worth, merit, or truth. The view that one person's ideas are no better or truer than another's is simply absurd and contradictory. To argue that some views are false, immoral, or just plain silly does not violate any meaningful definition or standard of tolerance.

Note that respect is accorded to the person, here. Whether his behavior should be tolerated is an entirely different issue. Our laws demonstrate that a man may believe what he likes - and he usually has the liberty to express those beliefs - but he may not behave as he likes. Some behavior is a threat to the common good. Rather than being tolerated (allowed), it is restricted by law. Historically, our culture has emphasized tolerance (respect) of all persons, but never tolerance of all behavior.

Notice that we can't truly tolerate someone unless we disagree with him. This is critical. We don't "tolerate" people who share our views. They're on our side. There's nothing to put up with. Tolerance is reserved for those we think are wrong, yet we still choose to treat decently and with respect.

Most of what passes for tolerance today is nothing more than intellectual cowardice, a fear of intelligent engagement. Those who brandish the word "intolerant" are unwilling to be challenged by other views or grapple with contrary opinions, or even to consider them. It's easier to hurl an insult "you intolerant bigot" than to confront an idea and either refute it or be changed by it. In the modern era, "tolerance" has become intolerance.

Whenever you're charged with intolerance, always ask for a definition. When tolerance means neutrality, that all views are equally valid and true, then no one is ever tolerant because no one is ever neutral about his own views. Point out the contradiction built into the new definition. Point out that this kind of tolerance is a myth.

Life as a Missionary

No Fixed Address by Chloe, an MK from Guinea, West Africa

I got a couple of T-shirts for Christmas with the brand name NFA - No Fixed Address. I don't know why they called them that, but there are several neat things that No Fixed Address can mean for a Christian. This is one of them: my "fixed address" is in heaven. The addresses that I have on earth can easily change. They are not fixed in place. But no matter where I go on earth and what my address is changed to, I'll always have a home in heaven.



These shirts with NFA printed on them describe me pretty well in other ways too! As a daughter of missionaries in Guinea, West Africa, my address changes often, depending on whether I'm on furlough or over here in Guinea. Sometimes I get confused about what is "home" for me. When people in North America ask me where my home is, I often give them two or three destinations. I could call Texas, Ontario or Guinea home! Right now Guinea is my home.

Just a couple of weeks ago, my family moved from our house in a village to the mission base an hour away because there was a nationwide strike in Guinea and the possibility of political trouble and unrest. As I packed to leave my home, I wasn't sure when we would be back. Would I ever see home again? This is my home that I love. I was scared and also a little excited. My NFA shirts were coming in handy - they really described my circumstances!

In the end, we only spent ten days away from home and are now back in our village. The strike is over and life is back to normal. But I still want to remember that my real address is in heaven, and here on earth I'm free to go wherever God calls. In John 14:2 Jesus tells his disciples, "In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you."

... to be continued ...

TEEN SECTION

Crackers or Cake? A Teenager's Observations on Love by Megan

We've all heard it said, maybe to us or maybe in a movie. These special words are not long, but they hold special meaning. *I love you*. In our society, love means many things to many people. Some people associate love with the backseat of a car. Other people associate love with that mushy feeling and a box of chocolates. But what is love really?

1 Corinthians 14:4-7 gives us a beautiful description of love: "Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude.

It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance."

As teenagers, we hear many definitions of love. Many artists have written songs about it, and we all want that feeling. We want to be loved. There have been many times when I have sat in my room and wondered what it would be like to be in love. I once had a camp counsellor tell me that before we can love someone else, we have to love ourselves. And before we can love ourselves, we need to let God love us.

Love is also described as not being boastful, or jealous or rude. I've seen my friends get into relationships where their boyfriends get very upset if they don't get to spend every minute of every day with my friends. When I ask my friends why they don't ask him to give them space, they simply respond "Because he loves me." But real love is not jealous or rude. Yet again, I see my friends settling for the crackers.

As I work my way through the Love Chapter on those lonely days, I come upon conviction after conviction that I too have fallen prey to settling for crackers. I became sick of it, and I started reading a very comforting book "I Kissed Dating Goodbye" by Joshua Harris. I know that sounds pretty drastic. After all, isn't dating half the fun of being a teenager? Well, as I am working my way through this book, I've discovered that so much heartbreak and drama could be avoided by simply avoiding these situations. Now, I'm not saying that not dating is the only way to go, but as I read the Love Chapter, I wonder if dating really emphasizes any of the beautiful characteristics of love. I'm not sure, but from my observations, it sure doesn't seem like it!

So this Valentines Day, instead of feeling lonely and depressed, let's try taking a different approach: let's stop trying to fill up on crackers (or breadsticks) and let's fill up on the Word of God. And in the wise words of Christian girl group BarlowGirl "If you get tired waiting till he comes, God's arms are the perfect place to run."

RECIPE of the MONTH

Valentine's Hot Cranberry Punch by Claire

Looking to pair up winter comfort food with a gorgeous rosy-red beverage for your whole family? Here is a Valentine's Hot Punch, straight from the near north of Canada in the Ottawa Valley. As this recipe is being written, a biting wind and blue skies are telling us to be ready for a cold night, as temperatures will drop to minus 26 C. or around minus 18 F. Enjoy!

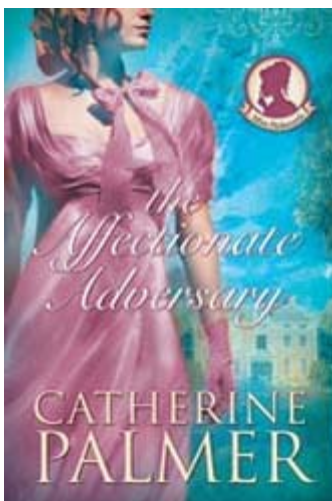
Come home from skating, sledding or a winter hike to this hot punch! Use a 30 cup percolator if serving a crowd or combine the ingredients and heat using your crock pot. The house will smell wonderfully of spices when you walk in with your family.

1 bottle genuine cranberry juice (64 oz./1.8 L)
 1 can or bottle genuine apple juice (48 oz./1.4 L)
 1/2 cup fresh lemon juice
 1/3 cup brown sugar
 1 teaspoon whole cloves
 1/2 teaspoon ground allspice
 1/4 teaspoon salt
 4 cinnamon sticks



Mix juices. If using a percolator, wash well to eliminate coffee residue. Place sugar, salt and spices in basket, then perk well before serving to allow flavors to mellow. If using a crock pot, start well in advance, using high heat to bring up to serving temperature before serving to guests. For the crock pot or stovetop, use a tea ball for the cloves or wrap the spices in clean cheesecloth, removing the spices when desired strength is attained. Leftovers microwave well. Serves 10-12.

BOOK REVIEW



The Affectionate Adversary by Bev

A Christian love story by Catherine Palmer, Tyndale House Publishers, 2006

The setting is England, 1814. Charles is on his way to India, with a box of gold, to start a tea company and make his fortune. The ship he is on is attacked by pirates and he loses his gold and almost his life. He is rescued by another ship on its way back to England. On this ship is Sarah, who has been visiting missionaries in China. She nurses Charles back to health and Charles falls in love with her, but because she is a wealthy woman, she thinks he is only interested in her money. Charles has to convince her that he loves her, not her money, and also that she is the wife God has for him. God works in both their lives to bring them together and eventually they get married.

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