

Pembroke Bible Chapel

... from darkness to light ...



Welcome to our Labor Day Newsletter

September 2007

This newsletter is focused on Labor Day. Our feature article discusses the origin of this holiday and what the Bible has to say about labor. You will find a devotional, an article on the harlequin duck under Science and Creation, a commentary on the need for fathers, a missionary teen article, a book review, and a movie review.

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FEATURED ARTICLE

Labor Day by Don

History

Labor Day is a federal holiday in the United States and Canada that takes place on the first Monday in September. The holiday began in New York City in 1882, originating from a desire by the Central Labor Union to create a day off for the "working man". By early in the 20th century, Labor Day had become an officially recognized holiday. It is still celebrated mainly as a day of rest and marks the symbolic end of summer for many.

In Australia, Labor Day is called Eight Hour Day, and it commemorates the successful struggle for a shorter working day. In Europe, Labor Day is observed on May 1, also known as May Day.

Biblical

As far back as the time of Moses the Old Testament gives certain instructions on labor relations. The people were instructed to promptly pay the wages of a hired man (Leviticus 19:13; Deuteronomy 24:15). They were not to oppress the hired laborer or show favoritism in his treatment (Deuteronomy 24:14). The prophet Jeremiah pronounced judgment upon those who did not pay their laborers (Jeremiah 22:13).

The basic principle was stated as follows "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing" (Deuteronomy 25:4; 1 Corinthians 9:9; 1 Timothy 5:18). In other words, the person laboring for either the material or spiritual benefit of another should receive wages for doing so. Several examples of this principle are given. A soldier does not serve at his own expense (1 Corinthians 9:7). A farmer expects to harvest the goods from his labors (1 Corinthians 9:7; 2 Timothy 2:6). Those who preach and teach spiritual truth are expected to be compensated materially (1 Corinthians 9:11-14; 1 Timothy 5:17).

Another basic principle is that a lazy person who refuses to work should suffer the consequences of his actions. Paul instructed the believers at Thessalonica "if anyone will not work, neither let him eat." He commanded and exhorted them to work in quiet fashion and receive the fruit of their labors (2 Thessalonians 3:10, 11).

Paradox

The great distinction between Biblical Christianity and all other religions relates to this question of labor. Essentially, the world and its religions work on the principle of reward or benefit based on the value of the work accomplished. Not so with Christianity when it comes to the eternal spiritual standing of a person.

The fact is that the great work of redemption of the soul of man has been accomplished by Jesus Christ when He died on the cross and paid our sin debt. The benefit of this greatest of all historical events is that God grants freely, to the believing sinner, eternal life and assurance of Heaven. The Bible makes this crystal clear: "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it (salvation) is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one should boast" (Ephesians 2:8, 9). "Being justified (made right with God) as a gift by His grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ" (Romans 3:24). "But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness" (Romans 4:5).

Jesus stated it this way "You must be born again" (John 3:7). By this new birth God gives the believer a new creation nature where God the Spirit permanently dwells. In reality any effectual work accomplished by the believer is only that done through the power and enabling of the Holy Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:5; 4:7; 5:17).

This year as you have labor day off and don't have to go to work, think about how you can rest in the fact that the Lord has done the work of the cross for you.

HIGHLIGHTED DEVOTIONAL

Legal Conflict by Stanford, None But the Hungry Heart

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:1)

If we are weak in understanding the principle of complete justification by faith, we will be strong in seeking to produce our own sanctification.



"In Romans Seven Paul is describing the inevitable conflict that every believer knows when he undertakes to lead a holy life on the principle of legality. He feels instinctively that the law is spiritual, but that he himself, for some unexplained reason, is fleshly, carnal, and in bondage to sin. This discovery is one of the most heart-breaking a Christian ever made. Yet each one must and does make it for himself at some time in his pilgrimage.

"The believer finds himself doing things he knows to be wrong, and which his inmost desires are opposed to while what he yearns to do he fails to accomplish, and does, instead, what he hates. But this is the first part of a great lesson which all must learn who would matriculate (enroll) in God's school. It is the lesson of no confidence in 'the flesh' and until it is learned there can be no true progress in growth. The incorrigibility of the flesh must be realized before one is ready to turn altogether from self to Christ for sanctification, as he has already done for justification." -H.A.I.

"As conviction of guilt goes before known justification, so the experiential knowledge of self goes before sanctification. No effort clears the guilt no effort effects the growth."

"That they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith" (Acts 26: 18).

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

SCIENCE & CREATION

The Hardy Harlequin Duck by Chris

This January, while bird watching along the Ottawa River, I was surprised to see a beautiful male Harlequin Duck, swimming with about 80 Common Goldeneyes in the frigid rapids. I had been told that some ducks are usually seen in the winter near powerful rapids, because the water doesn't freeze there. That is an extreme environment for any animal.



The Harlequin usually lives by seacoasts, but it sometimes ventures into the St Lawrence River and Lake Ontario, and is widespread in fast waters in the Rockies. What a neat, beautiful bird, with handsome colours and white streaks on its face. Last fall, I observed a Harlequin Duck swimming above some rapids for a few minutes, and then it decided to fly to the top of the rapids. It landed on the water, and dove right into tumultuous rapids. It surprised me that it would go right into the strongest of currents, and that it was not the only duck in there.

Amazed, I eventually shared this sighting with an expert birdwatcher. He told me of some of his sightings of Harlequin Ducks at seashores. In Nova Scotia, he observed some in rough waters, where the waves break on big rocks. He was astonished to see big waves rolling just above the ducks, about to smash them into the rocks. As the waves were about to pound the ducks, they dove, unalarmed, and reappeared a while later, probably after having fed a little bit, right where the merciless waves bash the rocks. They feed on small crustaceans, snails, insect larvae and other small underwater animal life that are found on rocks and under stones in rough waters.

Why forage in unwelcoming, cold rough waters? Maybe because there is a lot of available food, that only a few other competitors can reach. Cold water contains more oxygen than warm water, and the wave action oxygenates the river and the ocean, thus making animal life more abundant in cold waters. Anyone who has crossed a fast-flowing stream or small rapids on foot, or experienced undertow from big waves, quickly gains an appreciation for the power of water. How do these stocky ducks manage to forage in the rocks, and remain underwater for over 2 minutes at a time? How can they see as well above water as below the surface, and find enough to feed?

Harlequins have a marvelous feather arrangement: a protective layer of strong feathers allows for diving and flight, and a dense downy layer efficiently insulates it from the cold. A gland located at the base of the tail produces a waterproofing oil, that the duck spreads daily on its feathers as it preens, and is produced fresh daily in just the right amount. How does the duck know that it has to preen with this oil, and fix its feathers? It is most amazing that this behaviour is programmed in it, that feathers repair themselves so easily, and that the oil is a perfect, flexible water repellent, allowing for 2 molts a year. I cannot fathom how this excellent feather protection just comes from random processes. To me, it has to come from the design of God, the only One who claims to be the creator of all living beings.

COMMENTARY

The Need for a Father by Dave Quist, Institute of Marriage and Family Canada

The recent shooting death of 11-year-old Ephraim Brown in Toronto, allegedly as a result of a conflict between rival gangs, was a needless tragedy.[1] Our thoughts, prayers and hearts go out to his family as they mourn and grieve their loss. Without a doubt, this event will forever change their lives.

Unfortunately, we have all heard of other grievous acts of unwarranted, violent behaviour by youth and teens in all parts of Canada. No one incident is any less important than another. Each has many victims, some bearing physical scars or worse, many carrying emotional and psychological scars for the rest of their lives.

As has been the case in most of these instances, the immediate reaction has been to attempt to address the act itself. In the case of gun-related violence, this usually results in banning or further restricting handgun access. It is highly unlikely that these actions will resolve the occurrence of these problems.

To attempt to reduce or eliminate these unacceptable behaviours, we must look at some of the possible root causes and put our

resources there. From one perspective, a root cause is the need for fathers to be actively involved in the raising of their children. As Kate Fraher wrote, mothers and fathers do things differently with their children. Both roles are important and necessary in the nourishing and upbringing of our children.

The evidence has been growing that fathers have a vital role to play in the upbringing of their children. If, as the courts are fond of saying, we are truly concerned about what is in the best interest of the child then we need to sort fact from fiction and account for our actions. In her research "What do Fathers Contribute to Children's Well-Being?" Suzanne Le Menestrel, a researcher with Child Trends, a non-profit, non-partisan research organization, states: "Warmth, closeness, and nurturance are important aspects of a healthy parent-child relationship regardless of whether the parent is a mother or father. But research also suggests that fathers contribute to their children's healthy development in ways that are unique from mothers. For example, in one study of young children's cognitive development, fathers promoted their child's intellectual development and social competence through physical play, whereas mothers promoted these skills through verbal expressions and teaching activities." [2]

Other research shows that when fathers are actively involved in the daily lives of their children there are very positive outcomes. Consider that "research has shown that fathers, no matter what their income or cultural background, can play a critical role in their children's education. When fathers are involved, their children learn more, perform better in school, and exhibit healthier behaviour." [3]

The research goes further in answering the question, "As a divorced dad, can I make a difference?" The answer is YES, "even when fathers do not share a home with their children, their active involvement can have a lasting and positive impact." [4]

And it doesn't end there. "Higher levels of father involvement in activities with their children, such as eating meals together, going on outings, and helping with homework, are associated with fewer behaviour problems, higher levels of sociability, and a high level of school performance among children and adolescents." [5]

Is Canada unique in this problem? Hardly. Steven Malanga, Senior Fellow at the Manhattan Institute, writes about the problems that the city of Newark, New Jersey is experiencing [6]. According to his article, "60 per cent of the city's children are growing up without fathers" and the vast majority of these are "born directly into poverty." In the United States, the information available from the National Institutes of Health, shows "that teenagers without a dad around are almost twice as likely to be depressed as teenagers from an intact married family. They are more than four times as likely to be expelled from school and three times as likely to repeat a grade. Drug and alcohol abuse is much more common. On top of that, they are also more likely to have sex before they are married "setting the stage for yet another fatherless generation." [7]

It is apparent that the 'greater the fathers' involvement was, the lower the level of adolescents' behavioural problems, both in terms of aggression and antisocial behaviour and negative feelings such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem... Those all sound like attributes that should not only be endorsed, but actively pursued." [8]

Still following the trend lines? How about early pregnancies with teenage girls? Yes, education is a factor, but having dad around makes for a strong positive effect in reducing teenage pregnancies. "Even when controlling for differences in family background, father absence was associated with the likelihood that adolescent girls will be sexually active and become pregnant as teenagers. This association was strongest for daughters whose fathers were absent when they were younger. Compared with the pregnancy rates of girls whose fathers were present, rates of teenage pregnancy were seven to eight times higher among girls whose fathers were absent early in their childhoods and two to three times higher among those who suffered father-absence later in their childhood." [9]

And what are the Canadian statistics telling us? Statistics Canada states, "For most of the past 30 years, divorce has been on the rise, common-law unions have been increasingly frequent and marriage seems to be gradually losing ground." [10] Furthermore, there is a "growing instability in the unions of today's Canadian women", with the same trend observed for men. [11]

Unfortunately, from 1995 to 2001, lone parent families made up almost 14 per cent of all families in Canada. [12] This is no small number, but what is even more startling is that "41 per cent of all children living below the official [Low Income Cut Off] were in this type of family." [13]

Will the active daily involvement and participation of fathers solve all the woes of today's youth - unfortunately not. Young adults will make their own decisions, their own mistakes and bear the consequences of their choices - good and bad. However, the social science research is clear, when fathers are actively and regularly involved in their children's lives, kids are less likely to participate in the negative aspects of life around them.

What can we learn from this? We can acknowledge the significant role that fathers play in the raising of their children. We can actively discuss the importance of fathers and mothers in pre-marital counselling. We can remember this when marriage and family counsellors are actively involved in pre-family and family situations. We can take this into account in the unfortunate cases when divorce breaks up a family. Family courts can take into account the importance of the role that fathers and mothers play in the raising of their children " and truly consider this when determining what is in the best interest of the children.

If we really want to address many of the challenges of youth involved in early pregnancy, violence, substance abuse and success in education, we need to look beyond the plethora of proposed band-aid solutions and nurture our children from their earliest moments - by both their mother and father. Politicians, social bureaucracies, non-governmental agencies and churches alike need to take note.

[1] CTV Toronto. (2007, August 7). Men charged in Toronto boy's death appear in court. Retrieved from http://toronto.ctv.ca/servlet/an/local/CTVNews/20070807/Brown_appear_court_080807/20070807?hub=TorontoHome

[2] Le Menestrel, S. (1999, May 1). What do fathers contribute to children's well-being? Child Trends Research Brief, p. 1. Retrieved from <http://www.childtrends.org/Files/dadchild.pdf>

[3] The National Centre for Fathering, U.S. The National Center for Fathering, U.S. Department of Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2000, June 1). A call to commitment: Fathers' involvement in their children's learning. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/parents/calltocommit/fathers.pdf>

[4] Ibid.

[5] Le Menestrel, p. 2.

[6] Malanga, S. (2007, August 9). City without fathers: Behind Newark's epidemic violence are its thousands of fatherless children. City Journal. Retrieved from <http://www.city-journal.org/html/eon2007-08-09sm2.html>

[7] Rebecca Hagelin quoting Pat Fagan. (2006, June 13). Life with -- and without -- father. Heritage Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.heritage.org/Press/Commentary/ed061206c.cfm>

[8] Carlson, M.J. (2006, February). Family structure, father involvement, and adolescent behavioral outcomes. Journal of Marriage and Family, 68(1): 137-154.

[9] Ellis et al. (2003). Does father absence place daughters at special risk for early sexual activity and teenage pregnancy? Child Development 74(3): 801-821.

[10] Statistics Canada. (2002, July). Changing Conjugal Life in Canada, General Social Survey- Cycle 15, Catalogue no. 89-576-XIE. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/89-576-XIE/89-576-XIE2001001.pdf>

[11] Ibid.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Kerr, D. & Beaujot, R. (2001, May) Child poverty and family structure in Canada. Population Studies Centre, University of Western Ontario, p. 10.

Life as a Missionary

Thursday, August 23, 2007 by Chloe

It is a beautiful sunny day today! The trees are waving in the breeze and everything is fresh and green. Our laundry is hung out on the clotheslines to dry in the sunshine. Even in rainy season, there are dry days.

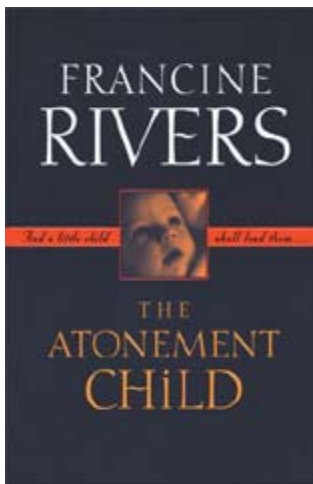
I am not wearing an NFA (No Fixed Address) shirt today. In fact, I put those shirts away a while ago, and they are patiently waiting to be packed into my suitcase. In just two weeks from now, my family and I will be on the plane and heading away from home. We are going on a short furlough, and on our way back to Canada we'll be stopping in Great Britain for about three weeks. I'm really excited about seeing England, Wales and Scotland!



I guess going on furlough naturally makes me start thinking of my No Fixed Address issue! But what has made me think about it most lately, is that we are most likely going to be moving from our village within the next couple of years. To make a long story short, a big mining company has chosen the surrounding area for the site of an aluminum refinery. It is necessary for no people to live within a five kilometer radius of the factory. The village that I live in is presently within the radius, so the company is planning to relocate it. This will mean big changes of course! At first I found the prospect of leaving my lovely home very sad, but as I get more used to the idea, I begin to be excited about what the future will hold. Moving opens new doors for me and my family. Where will our new home be? Will we live in a native hut, or in a cement brick house? What new opportunities for ministry will we have? I don't really want to leave my home, but, then again, it doesn't look like it's my choice! I prayed that God's will would be done in the situation, and this is what is happening, so I just have to trust Him with His plans. I believe that He is going to use it all for good and for the spread of the Gospel in Guinea.

This year 2007 has been an interesting, unique year for me. What with the strike and that whole situation of uncertainty, and now with this aluminum company deal, the whole NFA theme has really meant a lot to me. I'm convinced God gave me those two shirts for Christmas on purpose. He knew all that I'd be going through this year, and those NFA shirts have been an encouragement.

BOOK REVIEW

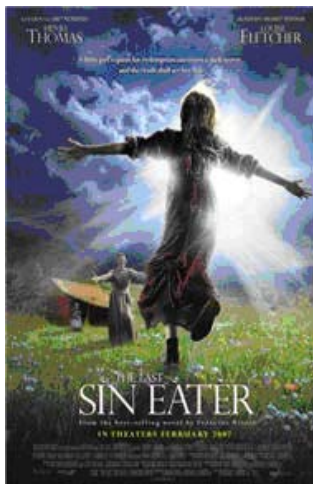


The Atonement Child by Brenda

"The Atonement Child" by Francine Rivers is a fiction book with a deeper thought-provoking issue behind it. Most Christians would agree with the view that abortion is not right in most cases, but I have heard many Christians express fuzzier views when there are complicating factors involved. This book is the story of a sweet, pure, sheltered college girl engaged to the man of her dreams, who is studying to be a pastor. She ends up being raped by an unknown man and finds herself pregnant and facing extreme pressure on all sides to have an abortion. Even her fiancé, an avid anti-abortionist, when faced with the real-life situation he is in, pressures her to have the abortion. The girl comes to the conclusion that God will provide the strength to deal with any life situation that you are faced with if you trust him and do what you know is right.

This book is the kind of book that challenges you to think about what you would do if faced with a situation like this. Would I be strong enough in my faith to do what I know is right in spite of terrible circumstances and extreme pressure from others who feel differently? It brings home the verse "God's grace is sufficient for me".

MOVIE REVIEW



The Last Sin Eater by Mark

This movie was released by Fox Faith Films in 2007 February, directed by Michael Landon Jr. and filmed entirely on location in Utah. The story setting is the Appalachian Mountains circa 1850, where a Welsh-American community practises a pagan ritual of removing the sins of deceased persons through an intermediary known as a "Sin Eater". When a ten-year-old girl witnesses this ritual following the deaths of her sister and grandmother, she develops a great desire to be absolved of her sins as soon as possible. When a Christian preacher arrives in her community, she learns that only Jesus Christ can take away sin's guilt.

This film is rated "PG-13" and contains some scenes that may be disturbing to young children. There is no nudity and no bad language in the film.

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