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 Since 1963, the White Elephant Sale has given our club an opportunity to help children in a very positive way. Because we all are volunteers, monies raised from the White Elephant Sale go directly to the YMCA and Camp Pentalouan. The bulk of the money is used to finance camp scholarships for a significant number of children in the area.

~ CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ~

Why should God bless America?

By Reverend William Randall

The question often is asked, should we sing *God Bless America*? It is an inspiring song and many held on to hope as Americans sang the song during the Second World War.

We are at war today. The war against Muslim terrorism is a reality. The Muslim nations since the middle Ages have sought to capture western civilization through the sword. Islam made inroads into Spain but was turned back at the Battle of Tours. Attempts were made in Eastern Europe in the 16th Century. America has been invaded by infiltrators. It is time for America to awaken and to call on God for mercy.

Should God bless a nation that legalizes the murder of the unborn? Knowledge pertaining to the fetus has mushroomed since 1973 when the Supreme Court legalized abortion. We know that life begins at conception. We can only ask for God's mercy.

America is being pressured by the media, liberals, and homosexual activists to forsake marriage as one man and one woman as instituted by God. Arguments in favor of homosexual marriage are accompanied with accusations and charges of harassment, discrimination and hatred toward those who speak or write in favor of marriage as it has been defined in western civilization since biblical times. Those who are concerned about the issue cannot wait for things to get worse. We must cry out for God's mercy.

The alteration of public education threatens the basis of morals and belief in God as creator. History is being rewritten with an anti-Christian bias as each new curriculum is published. The majority of people ignore what is happening and are satisfied with a second class education and they wonder why jobs are outsourced. For the sake of children and youth we must cry out for the mercy of God.

The list of problems facing America could go on ad infinitum, but I will conclude with questioning how God can bless a nation saturated with exaggerated, perverted sexuality. Entertainment, media and computer choices by multitudes of people are degrading, disgusting and destructive. There is not just affinity toward indecency, but also captivation with violence beyond any normal sensibility. The corruption of the mind leads to corrupt violent behavior.

Billy Graham said, "If God doesn't deal with America He will have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah."

Pray that America can escape the judgment of God by turning to Christ and the Bible, which is the inspired Word of God. Now is the time to cry out for the mercy of God. •

Losing our religion?

By Pastor John Koedyker

(Pastor, Word of Hope Church)

Recent statistics indicate that the number of people who do not consider themselves a part of organized religion is on the rise. I have noticed this, not only in my own ministry as a chaplain, but also throughout my denomination, the Reformed Church in America. In fact, we have been losing members steadily for over 35 years!

Certainly the attitude toward religion has changed in our society. People do not see it as something "required" of them anymore. Whereas, when I was growing up, there would be no discussion about whether we would go to church on a Sunday morning. Nowadays, there are many other options for people — sporting activities, community events, or even bed.

Our society also seems to think more of an "open" view regarding our eternal destiny. We "hope" that everyone will go to heaven, but in our hearts, we have doubts and questions. In addition, the truth of the Bible has been brought into question and basically we are left with "just do your best to be a nice, decent person without prejudices and you will be all right."

Of course, the Christian message is quite different. It speaks of faith and believing, and the focus of that belief is Jesus Christ. Maybe that is the problem with "religion." It can only take us so far. But faith involves a relationship with a person — Jesus, the Savior who died on the cross to cleanse us from our sins. Only through an active, ongoing relationship with Jesus can we become the loving, caring people God intended us to be. •

Oh my God

By Reverend R.A. Shackles

One would think we are an even more godly nation than thought from the outbursts on prize shows on TV or of pleased couples whose homes have been done over on channels like HGTV. Again and again reactions are a shout of "Oh my God," usually repeated constantly.

Sadly, these outbursts largely have nothing to do with faith. Indeed, they represent, in our minds, one more example of the way in which we thoughtlessly take God's name in vain. Every time we have to listen to these cries of "devotion," we want to demand, "Why do you think God has something to do with it?" For they really don't mean He did! It's all very annoying. •

The Christian fortress

By Al Wezeman

When we think about Martin Luther we think about a return to the true meaning for Christianity. We were straying from a complete trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and His sacrifice as the only way to have sins washed away in the sight of God. Martin Luther was inspired by God and given the courage to stand up for the "Truth" in God's Word against the powers of the church in his society and culture.

Today we again have those who would tell us we can live good lives and God can accept our "goodness." Satan is not more pleased to hear that and promote that thinking because it is a sure way to destruction and hell. If there is anything Satan hates more, it's God's true Word, the Holy Bible.

Jesus, our blessed Savior and Lord, the perfect sinless lamb of God, and God's only begotten Son, was tempted by Satan, no less. Jesus used scripture to turn Satan away. As we said before, Satan hates the true Word of God, the Holy Bible, so scripture is the perfect weapon against Satan and our sinful nature. (Read Matthew 4:1-11.)

The Apostle Paul was inspired to write Ephesians 6:10-20 so we would do the same as Jesus. We must "put on the full armor of God and take up the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God."

But we must remember Jesus was the perfect Son of God and knew His scripture. We are finite creatures and must read, study and meditate on God's Word. To be ready at a moment's notice, we must memorize verses and passages so we are ready!

The Apostle Peter writes in I Peter 5:6-11 that Satan "prowls around like a roaring lion seeking to devour." That sounds like we must be ready! It is also written that we must "humble ourselves before almighty God and cast all our anxieties on Him for He cares for us and will lift us up in due time."

A good preparation for the day is to memorize Proverbs 3:5 - 6. Each new day, ask God to lead and guide you to "trust in Him with all your heart, to acknowledge Him in all your ways." The verse comes with a wonderful promise that "He will make your way straight."

If you fall into sin, Satan wants you to despair, so memorize II Chronicles 7:14 and I John 1:9.

To constantly remind ourselves of who we are, memorize Philippians 3:20 & 21 and Revelation 21:1-5. We are children of God!

Martin Luther reminds us in "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," that "his (Satan's) doom is sure: One little Word (verse) shall fell him."

May God richly bless and keep you as you continue in your spiritual journey! •

The heart has its reasons

By Reverend R.A. Shackles

So often we hear the phrase cited when people try to understand all that the heart means in the things of faith. In Scripture, the heart was taken as the seat of human emotions, of the things that make human beings human. This popular phrase is often used when we reach the reality of the mystery of the heart, especially those times when we come to a position that, "it just seems to be, even if we cannot fully explain."

The reality is, most of us accept the mystery. We know our heart is "just" a muscle, one that can beat in the human body unceasingly at 60 to 70 beats a minute for a hundred years. Still, we have a whole wondering conversation of how "heart" is far, far more than that. Indeed, it is a matter of the quality of our life and this in a way that opens our lives to incredible truth between God and men.

It is a mystery we all must study, for it is the study of how the Image of God in making our creation as His children constantly provides a calling, of God reaching into, calling out to our hearts to listen, know the sweet music of His heart calling to ours. When we take time to search our own hearts, take time to listen to how the silent power of eternity is conducting a symphony of Holy Truth in our hearts, all kids of "musical" truth and beauty become conscious and real to and in us.

Because of the Image of God in us, the fundamental mystery at the heart of God ever speaks to our heart in the communicating vitality of Reality — the Heart of God — speaking to His own image. The heart is the means of converse. By learning our own heart, all that it is and can be, we can learn the very heart of God for He is reaching constantly to fulfill the reasons of our hearts, to bring to fullness His Image in us.

It is the beauty of the heart that when we seek and listen God speaks to our hearts in ways that so often bring us to say "yes, the heart has its reasons" and its reasons are God speaking to our yearning hearts with the glory of His love, a mystery to be known even when it yet passes all human understanding. Search your heart carefully and discover that God is speaking there to you. •