

Blue Ridge Brandmarks

“...I bear on my body the brandmarks of Jesus” - Gal. 6:17

Volume 4

April 4, 2010

Number 4

Thrilled to Death

Last month, a married couple in South Korea was arrested for child neglect. Their three-month-old daughter had starved to death. The cause of the neglect? They were spending up to 12 hours every night at Internet cafes playing online games.

According to a report by ABC News, they spent that time in one of many popular multi-user role-playing games (MRPGs) on the market today. Their game of choice, "PRIUS", allows players to live a virtual life in the online world, choosing a job, interacting with other players and after reaching a certain level, earning an cyber-character to take care of and train. The parents whose child died of starvation were raising a virtual daughter online.

As a recovering computer game addict and parent of five children myself, this story hits home with me. I don't have to starve a child to death to fail to put my children ahead of lesser concerns. Our personal priorities are on display every day to the little ones growing up in our homes. They know where they stand with

us. *"Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart."* (Colossians 3:21) *"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."* (Ephesians 6:4)

As a Christian, this story also hits home with me. It is a demonstration of the success Satan has in taking us captive with empty deception. This world offers diversion, distraction, entertainment, a sense of accomplishment and a cheap victory in the theatre, in the bottle, in the video chat rooms, in the concert halls, in the casinos, on "adult" websites and in "adult" video stores and, yes, in the video-game console or computer game. While engaged in these activities we are thrilled, engaged, alert, interested, empowered and affirmed. But what do these diversions divert us from? Real life! What do these distractions distract us from? Our own need for personal, moral, and spiritual development! Regardless of how we pass the time, our personal priorities are on display every day to Jesus Christ. He also knows where He

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Forgiveness

Did you ever hear, “To err is human, to forgive, divine”? That is not an idle use of words. The concept of forgiveness is divine in nature; it is an attribute of God. In fact, forgiveness is our greatest need and our greatest gift. It is our greatest need because it is just not possible, of ourselves, to erase the sin that separates us from God, or to restore our own relationship with Him. There is no sacrifice we can offer, no act of contrition we can perform, no prayer we can offer up, apart from His mercy and forgiveness which will allow us to be atoned to Him. It is our greatest gift because it is the most tender, most beautiful, most consoling concept in any culture because its consequences are so far reaching. This is true because it has to do with human relations which involve the destiny of the soul. Jesus could not have been more direct when He taught in Matt. 6:14-15 that God will not forgive the transgressions of those unwilling to forgive their fellow men. *“For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”* Forgiveness is the very heart of the gospel.

At times, some who profess to be Christians don’t seem to take seriously the need to be forgiving in order to be acceptable to God. Perhaps that is a result of a limited view of what sin is. I think

we all have a tendency to view sin as those gross, passion-driven, easily recognizable sins such as murder, violence, robbery, adultery, or drunkenness. But what has God included in His definition? What about sins of temperament—jealousy, vindictiveness, a quick temper, bitterness? Look again at the example of the parable of the Prodigal Son. The younger brother represents the sins of passion... drunkenness and adultery and such like. Certainly, those sins are destructive of character, but the one who was guilty of those sins repented and returned to his father. In the older son we see the sins of jealousy and temper and it was that son who was deaf to the father’s plea to come in and rejoice. Which one was more hopeless in Jesus’ eyes? Let me ask you, what sins are you susceptible to? Maybe it is pride, or self righteousness, or the neglect of others. There are many to choose from. Do we occasionally find ourselves anywhere in there?

The point is that we all need forgiveness and pardon: forgiveness in order to be restored to God’s divine favor, and a pardon which will exempt us from His righteous punishment. Without it we are condemned! With it we have God’s promise that every blot, every sin we have ever committed will be wiped away. Can you imagine that!

Maybe the single greatest aspect of God’s forgiveness is that it is available to

everyone. It will not be granted to all men—indeed, it will be a relative few who receive it—but all men have equal access to it simply by obedience to God's Word. I Tim. 2:4 teaches us that God desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of truth. God has given us all the knowledge we need to be right with Him and the strength to overcome all

obstacles. Yet, most will still find the price of submission too high a price to pay. Have you accepted God's merciful forgiveness? Have you forgiven those who have wronged you but who would like to be reconciled back into your good graces? Forgiveness: what a soul-comforting word.

◀Charlie King▶

What Does Each Group Have in Common? by Dody Gibson

1. Moses, King Joash of Judah, Jesus
2. Sarah, Hannah, Elizabeth
3. Pharaoh (Joseph's), Abimelech, Nebuchadnezzar
4. Ruth, Esther
5. Samson, Absalom
6. Solomon, Zerubbabel, Herod the Great
7. Jephthah, Jairus, Zacharias (John the Baptist's father), Manoah
8. Lot, Mrs. Manoah, Mary (Jesus' mother), Cornelius
9. John the Baptist, Stephan, James the Apostle
10. Mary, Miriam, Deborah
11. Apostles, Sons of Jacob, Adar
12. Naomi, Ruth, Shunammite woman
13. Child Jesus, child Manasseh, Jairus daughter
14. Tables of stone, Aaron's rod, Bowl of manna
15. Daniel and his friends, winds of the earth, Elijah's barrels of water
16. Ishbosheth, Rehoboam
17. David, Samson
18. Hadasseh (Esther), Kezia (Job's daughter), Tamar
19. Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba
20. Zimri, Judas, King Saul, Athithophel, Samson
21. Jacob, Esau, Thomas, Pharez, Zerah
22. Cedar, costly stones, gold, brass
23. James, Joses, Simon, Judas
24. 7 years famine, 3 months before enemies, 3 days pestilence
25. Lot's wife, Uzzah, Ananias

Answers in next month's bulletin!

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stands with us.

Entertainment has its proper place, but face it, your boss at work will not be impressed with your high score or experience points if you fall asleep on the job. Your child will not swell with pride if you manage to defeat a super-villain by skipping a meal with her. And your Creator God will not say, "Well done, good and faithful servant," if you waste

the life He gave you pursuing a "Second Life" in cyberspace.

"See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ." - Colossians 2:8

◀Brent Paschall▶

Source: "Did Game-Addicted Parents Starve Baby?,"

APRIL 2010 DUTY ROSTER

Weekday	WED	SUN	WED	SUN	WED	SUN	WED	SUN	WED
Date	3/31	4/4	4/7	4/11	4/14	4/18	4/21	4/25	4/28
Opening Prayer		Charlie K.		Jeremy L.		Tripp H.		Randy F.	
Morning Message		Eric B.		Alan M.		Leo R.		Charlie K.	
Announcements	Larry P.	Matt M.	David T.	Larry P.	Jimmy F.	Charlie K.	Alan M.	Jimmy F.	Bill A.
Leading Songs	John M.	Bill A.	Alan M.	Brad F.	Matt M.	Randy F.	David T.	Matt M.	Larry P.
First Prayer	Alan M.	Randy F.	Leo R.	Jimmy F.	David T.	Eric B.	Brent P.	Larry P.	Eric B.
Lead at Lord's Table & Contribution		Jeremy L.		Bill A.		Ed M.		Jerry D.	
Assist		Tripp H.		Jerry D.		Brad F.		Don H.	
Assist		Ed M.		Ed M.		James M.		Tripp H.	
Assist		David T.		John M.		Jeremy L.		Jeremy P.	
Read Scripture		Jeremy P.		James M.		John M.		Brad F.	
Preaching		Brent P.		Brent P.		Brent P.		Brent P.	
Wed. Exhortation	Leo R.		John M.		Larry P.		Eric B.		Matt M.
Closing Prayer	Jimmy F.	Jerry D.	Jeremy P.	Don H.	Brent P.	Jimmy F.	Randy F.	Bill A.	Alan M.

ALL ARE WELCOME!

Sunday

9:15 - Morning Message

10:00 - Bible classes for all ages

11:00 - Worship

Wednesday

7:30 - Bible Classes for all ages

Elders:

Jim Fields, Alan Moeller & Leo Rodrigue

Deacons:

Eric Bridge & John Malloy

Evangelist:

Brent Paschall

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www.blueridgecoc.org

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