

#### Volume 2



# Apped



# Refreshing Your Memory

Ve're telling you the truth in this magazine when we identify me as Senior Editor. Just place the emphasis on "Senior." As I put together this issue, I'm just a few weeks away from the day when I'll have 80 candles on my cake. Does this help you understand why I found it easy to pen this issue of essays on memories? I've got lots of them.

All of us need to be remembering. "Look to the Lord," the psalmist tells us. "Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced" (1 Chronicles 16:11-12). Even more important, Jesus bids us in John 15:20, "Remember the words I spoke to you." And we worship him regularly because he commanded, "Do this in memory of me."

Our memories matter. A lot. Especially our memories of our mistakes and of God's grace.

-Gene Shelburne, Senior Editor

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"Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments..."

## \* 1 Chronicles 16



E arlier this week as I drove away from our church, I was pleased to see a young man hard at work in the yard of the home on a corner just south of us. For the first time in months, their garage door was up.

Almost 50 years ago when I came to pastor my church, back before vandals squelched their creative efforts, this young man's talented, always busy grandparents entertained the neighbors with seasonal yard decorations. Such as the colorful choo-choo train his grandfather installed in their front yard every Christmas. I loved it.

But Grandpa died several years ago, and Grandma got old enough that she couldn't stay in that special house alone. So the family moved her somewhere, and I was glad to see some activity this week at her lovely home that most days sits locked up, empty, too quiet.

It's not the only nearby house like that. In any direction I drive from my office I pass homes that used to bustle with landscaping projects and kinfolk invasions and the usual traffic of daily errands. Now the drapes are shut, the doors are locked, and nobody is coming or going. On several of the driveways older cars now sit idle, unmoved for weeks—even months. A lot of those folks didn't know me. I doubt they ever noticed me driving past their front doors, often several times a day. But I saw them, and I miss them.

Cars surround one of those homes today. Probably relatives. Here to celebrate a big anniversary maybe, or to attend a funeral?

Speaking of funerals—I know why several of the neighborhood homes are empty now. I buried their occupants. Those were dear, sweet friends—a blessing in my life. And I miss them. A lot.

In several cases, surviving family members who live several states away sold those homes, new residents moved in, and life goes on with hardly a blink.

But one nearby home has been vacant for two years now. I often visited the dear lady who died in it, so I knew she had been ripped off. A rogue bamboozled her into a reverse mortgage and then stole the resulting cash. The house she left may be in legal limbo forever.

The Bible warns us that all memory of bad people "will fade from the earth" (Job 18:17). Driving past these now-empty homes sets loose a swarm of memories that bless me. How will people remember you?



y Grandfather Shelburne—my dad's dad—was a leader of men. Over half his 80-plus years he served as an elder of his church.

During that same time, he filled half a dozen roles in his little town—everything from city judge to water commissioner to Justice of the Peace and Rotary club president.

When my grandfather died, his longtime neighbors wanted to honor him for his years of capable, selfless service to their community. So, by order of the city council, they named their town's only park after him and put up a big sign on the baseball backstop that told the whole world this was now SHELBURNE PARK.

Granted, his tiny burg was not the biggest or richest town in Texas, nor did his official duties impact the lives of many citizens outside his sparsely settled, semiarid county. But pride still welled up in my heart the first time I saw that sign. Big George (that's what our family called him) would not be forgotten.

But he was.

Two decades later my wife and I drove to that part of West Texas to visit with some of her kin. With us in our car were a couple of our grandsons who had never seen that part of the world. Although those kids had been born too late to know their great-grandfather, I thought it was worth the extra eight or ten miles just to let them see that SHELBURNE PARK sign.

Imagine my chagrin when we drove to the baseball field side of the park only to find the backstop about to collapse and that special sign nowhere to be seen. I doubt that more than half a dozen of the people still in that dwindling town had ever seen the sign or had any idea what the official name of their park might be.

Do I need to tell you that our grandsons were not impressed with the tour I'd given them? Nor could they detect even a hint of the disappointment that swept over my soul that afternoon.

How could such a wise, dedicated, faithful leader be so soon forgotten?

Do I need to tell you that this will happen to the best of us? In every family, in every church, in every community, in every nation, not many calendar pages will turn before a new generation arises who "know not Joseph." Even the best of us will not leave an indelible mark on our world.



Call it luck. Call it providence. Whatever you call it, I'll always be grateful that my years on my high school's tennis team were perfectly timed.

When I joined the team as a novice with limited skills, our top players guys and gals alike—were among the best in the state. So on many weekends our team traveled several hundred miles to the top tournaments in our region. And I got to tag along.

Early on, though, one huge problem arose that could have ended my tennis team days. Many of the best tournaments were so far from our front door that we had to motel on Saturday night and drive home on Sunday.

To my dedicated preacher/father, missing church seldom was okay. Certainly not to go play. This was not just some pastoral hangup. Back then almost nobody in our fellowship skipped church—not even to work, and certainly not to participate in leisure activities.

So my concerned but always irenic father went to visit with Miss Willie (Jane Williams, my tennis coach). If he let me travel to distant cities with the team, would she promise him to be sure I attended church on Sunday?

Doing so would greatly complicate

our team's travel schedule, but Miss Willie amazingly said yes.

This little slice of ancient history popped up in my memory bank when my lady and I drove nine hours south one weekend to care for two of our grandkids while their mama accompanied an older sibling of theirs to New Jersey to enroll in Princeton.

The little church their family has belonged to all their lives heard that we were coming and invited me to teach their adults that morning. I was thrilled.

We are always blessed to be with those sweet people, but our visit this time had a cloud over it. We found out that our 10-year-old grandson could not go to church with us because his traveling soccer team would be an hour away competing in a tournament that morning.

I realize that more than 60 years have flown by since my tennis team days, and blue laws are relics most millenials never have heard of, but in my opinion Sunday morning soccer for Christian families still borders on blasphemy.

Why was my fine young grandson kicking a ball instead of bowing down to his Maker on Sunday morning? When did Sunday cease to be the Lord's day?



was still in high school when God gave me two adopted brothers. Ivan Woodard and Eddy Ketchersid were coming to attend my father's Bible school in Amarillo that fall, and my parents invited them to lodge with us in our tiny three-bedroom house. It was an unforeseen blessing only God could have orchestrated.

Ivan paid his way that year by working in road construction. I had no idea what highway project he was part of until he heard me talking at breakfast one morning about my preaching appointment the next Sunday in the big city of Quitaque.

"Hey!" he reacted. "Let me go with you." He explained then that he knew a special way to get there. He and his road-building buddies for months had been paving the gravel road that crossed Palo Duro Canyon between Claude and Silverton—one route to Quitaque.

Ivan then explained that the road wasn't even open to the public yet. The new bridge over Palo Duro Creek wasn't quite ready for traffic, he said, but as part of the work crew, he could get us across it.

"Sounds like fun," I thought. So that Sunday morning on the way to preach, feeling somewhat like a trespasser on that barricaded highway, for the first time in my life I got to enjoy that majestic drive.

Fast forward sixty-two years. One Monday last fall I needed to attend a family funeral in Turkey, Texas—one stop past Quitaque. When I asked my lady if she felt well enough to make that jaunt with me, it didn't dawn on me that she had never traversed that particular canyon road.

As we suddenly dropped off the flat plains and aimed our RAV4 nose-downward into the deep canyon, she recoiled in delight and surprise. On that brilliant fall day the Indian-skirt hues of the canyon walls blazed as radiantly as I had ever seen them.

Nita was awestruck by the sight. But there was no way she could see what I was seeing. My view included what I saw decades ago when Ivan and I dodged road signs and paving equipment in my dark green 1950 Ford coupe. My view was tinted by precious memories.

Our Creator showed his genius when he fashioned us so that we see so much through memories—our baptism, our first communion, our wedding, our first babies, our first day in London or Paris or Quitaque.

"Been there, done that" sets the stage for today.  $C_{\mathcal{A}}$ 



My father and mother were not child abusers, but, typical of most godly parents in the WWII era, they swatted my bottom more than once when I needed it.

My very first paddling—at least, the first one I remember—happened when I was still three years old, or barely four. While Mom was napping one afternoon, I snitched a nickel out of my twenty-five cent allowance and used it to buy a popsicle when the ice cream man rolled by. And then I lied about it.

My dear mother made sure I learned that day that the surest way to get into big trouble in our family was to tell a lie. Whatever offense we might have committed, lying to cover it up quadrupled the penalty.

Evidently some of the top dogs in journalism and politics and industry today should have had a mama like mine. Lying has become their native tongue.

Lies are nothing new, of course. They have been causing us trouble ever since Eden. But in my eight decades I can't remember a time when fake news was the norm, and our biggest banks practiced fraud, and spreading slanderous falsehoods was the most common political strategy all across the land.

God's description of low-life

prevaricators in the days of the ancient psalmist Asaph perfectly capture what we're seeing all around us today. As *The Message* translates Psalm 50:19, God told those no-good deceivers, "Lying is a serious art form with you."

Another great psalmist, King David, described a blameless, righteous person as one "who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander on his tongue." Such a person, David went on to say, "casts no slur on his fellowman" (Psalm 15:2-3).

My cell phone rang yesterday. The caller was a scammer whose digital equipment let her fake the actual locale she was calling from. Her opening words were deceit designed to trick me into believing that I was already a customer of her disguised company.

I have no idea what this slicktongued crook wanted to sell me, because I hung up on her. But I wondered later why any company would expect me to do business with them if they start off by telling me lies.

We need to follow the example of Jesus. He seldom spoke without saying to start with, "I'm telling you the truth" ("Verily, verily," the old King James phrased it). Truth is all any of us ever should speak.



was just five or six. Too young to know what sex was. Too young to be even slightly tempted by nudity. But I'll never forget how totally one of my sweetest aunts lost it when we were visiting in her home and I dared to try to use the same bathroom where my two-year-old sister was in the bathtub.

For some reason that I never discerned, that totally innocent exposure to nudity set off an outburst of moral outrage in our much-loved relative. She made me feel like Jack the Ripper. When that explosion died down, my own dear mother took me aside and quietly assured me that I actually had done nothing wrong. But my ears were still ringing.

My reaction was a lot like that of one little fellow I heard about. He got lost at the YMCA and found himself in the women's locker room. When the gals spotted him, the room burst into shrieks, with ladies grabbing towels and running for cover.

The trespasser watched in amazement and then asked, "What's the matter? Haven't you ever seen a little boy before?"

Back when my aunt got so upset, I was too young to know how much good, Bible-believing people vary in their definitions of nudity. In our 1950 West Texas churches, what we called "mixed bathing" was a sin. In Arizona's desert heat, Christians called it fellowship.

It all goes back to Eden, of course. Nobody needed knickers or bras before Eve sampled that apple.

Did you hear about the little boy who opened the big old family Bible and looked with fascination at the aging pages as he turned them? Suddenly something fell out of the book. It was an oak leaf that had been pressed between the pages.

"Mama," the boy called out. "Look what I found!"

"What have you got there, dear?" his mother asked.

With astonishment, the little boy answered, "I think it's Adam's pants!"

Life would be so much simpler for all of us if our original parents had just behaved. All the dollars we invest and the time we waste worrying about our wardrobes could be so much better spent.

But, from the earliest days of our faith, one identifying mark of devout Christian women has always been modest apparel. And ever since the fiasco in Eden, God's people have linked nakedness and shame.



During the first two or three decades of my ministry I got to preach revivals in dozens of rural churches. Consequently, I baptized over half my converts in a creek or river or stock tank (what Yankees call a pond).

If you got baptized as an infant, or by having a few drops of holy water dribbled on your head, it may be hard for you to appreciate what I'm about to share about some challenges posed by immersion baptism.

Some of this ancient history came graphically alive in my mind today as I read a report of baptisms performed by a mission team in Malawi. At a bush village, fourteen people said yes to Jesus by being immersed.

For both the preacher and these new believers, this baptismal experience took far more courage than we might imagine. The Shire River where all of this took place is home to many hippos and alligators. So, the report went on to explain, all who entered the water that day were relieved to come out of it intact.

Would you agree with me that these folks really wanted to be baptized? Stepping into a river like that required real faith.

Reading this mission story transported me back over half a century to the days before my mother's little home church got modernized and added on an in-house baptistry. Our option then was to drive down to the usually lazy Colorado River and wade in to the deeper side across from town.

I'll never forget the last time I was in that same stream at the same place. We were in the baptizing hole, but this time I wasn't baptizing. A cousin and I were baiting a trotline, and I was almost neck-deep in the water, nearing the far bank, when 50 or 60 feet upstream I saw a rattlesnake head break the surface.

No sweat, I thought. He's far enough away not to pose any threat. So I just kept on baiting hooks. Until . . . until I felt that snake hit both of my knees as he swam right between my legs.

As far as I know, that trotline is still right there in that river. Never again did I wet my toes in that water hole either to fish or to baptize. As far as I was concerned, that domain belonged solely to that rattler.

Remembering this started me wondering if those African converts in the river were thinking as much about the Father, Son, and Spirit as about the alligator lurking nearby. What an amazing display of faith!



Let me tell you an Easter story that happened over sixty years ago.

After working most of a year as a part-time stock boy at the JC Penney store, I had been promoted. During the busy holiday season I became a clerk on the sales floor, first in the work clothes department in the basement, then upstairs in the men's clothing department near the front door. I loved it.

In the days right before our huge holiday sale, all of us in the store worked non-stop to have our racks and shelves loaded and everything properly tagged.

By then I was familiar with all our merchandise, especially with the men's coats and suits. So on the evening before the big sale I was shocked when I found our finest midnight blue suit, which usually sold for more than \$200, marked down to \$49.

Must be a mistake, I first thought. Then I shrugged it off and decided the store was just trying to sweeten the next day's sale. Then I saw that the high quality but now discounted suit was my size!

I needed a new suit. And I had the money to pay the marked-down price for this one. So after the store doors were locked that night, I hung that suit on a back rack, and just as soon as the store opened for business the next morning, I paid the sale price for it. I knew I'd made the deal of a lifetime.

The big sale was underway when I looked up a bit later and saw our store manager shuffling through the men's suit rack. Right next to him stood a JC Penney bigwig, our top district guy.

"I put it right here," my boss told his boss, with frustration etched on his face. Only then did I realize that the incredibly low price on the suit I just acquired had been marked down as a perk for the big boss. And I had stumbled into that bargain with my eyes closed.

Never have I worn a dress suit I enjoyed more.

Did the good Lord engineer that scenario to encourage a poor wannabe preacher? I don't have any idea. But I do know that the always-loving God in heaven does use human mistakes to produce blessings.

He used the hate of Joseph's brothers to save their world from starvation. He used the greed of Judas to save you and me from our sins.

You and I can't reform a messedup world, but God can use those messes to fix ours.



Tony was the biggest human I had ever seen.

I was just a wimp—ten years old and skinny for my age—when I started delivering morning newspapers in the quiet little central Texas town of Kerrville.

Our copies of the *San Antonio Express* came by bus. Long before the sun rose, each day I'd appear on the sidewalk in front of our newspaper office—which was just a tiny cubicle in the ground floor foyer of Peterson Hospital, right in the heart of downtown.

The papers came in bundles. Just how many were in each bundle depended on how many pages the paper had that day. But the bundles always were heavy. At least they seemed heavy to a runt like me.

It always amazed me to see Tony toting papers from the bus station to our spot on sidewalk outside the office. It took all the oomph I could muster to haul a single bundle just a few feet. Tony could cover half a block with a bundle tucked under each arm and two more clutched in his hands. Like I told you, he was big.

Tony had been a soldier. In the big war. When I met him in 1949, he'd been home from the battlefields of Europe for three or four years. I didn't realize it at the time, but I know now that Tony had taken on that early morning job to make a few extra bucks before going to his real job. His task was to get the newspapers off the bus and, with the exception of my paper route, to deliver the rest of them all over town via a '49 Chevy suburban.

Tony had a lot of miles to cover every morning, so he didn't tarry long with me. But, in that nook where I squatted to fold my papers and stuff them into my carrier bags, Tony did spend a few minutes with me most days. Perched on a couple of paper bundles, he would fold several dozen copies so he could sail them into our customers' yards.

In those brief moments, Tony always talked to me as if I were a man. Not once did he talk down to me. Some of the jokes he told pushed the envelope a bit, and some of his vocabulary wilted my virgin ears, but Tony usually had a joke to tell or a jest to jam home.

That big veteran made me part of his world so naturally—so effortlessly—that it never did occur to me at the time to be surprised or impressed by it. And not once, in that sadly divided age, did it ever dawn on me that Tony was black.



During the Christmas season last year I got fascinated by that verse in Galatians 4 that tells us God sent his Son to Bethlehem "when the right time came."

It turned out to be above my paygrade to identify all the forces and factors that had to align for the Creator to know that the night when the shepherds heard the angels singing was just the right time for Jesus to show up.

What God did so many centuries ago amazed me, but I then began to wonder if the same deliberations are still happening today. Does this God who planned his arrival on this planet at precisely the right time, use the same kind of timing when he comes into our hearts and lives today?

When I was a kid growing up in a small-town congregation, like most churches back then we always had summer revivals.

The preachers who came to our little burg to preach in those events always bore down heavily on the apostle Paul's famous lines, "Behold, now is the acceptable time. Behold, now is the day of salvation." Of course, those oftentoo-loud evangelists were trying to fill the church aisle with penitent sinners headed to our baptistry.

At the time it never dawned on me that the crowds they were preaching to included everybody from infants to old geezers. The "time of salvation" for the people hearing those sermons varied by multiple decades. In God's mind, what age was "just the right time"?

I was barely ten years old when I was baptized into Christ in that same little clapboard church building. I remember that frigid night as if it were yesterday.

Years later when I myself was preaching and baptizing converts, one of the first people I baptized in my present church was a gentleman in his mid-70s.

Was one of us too early or the other too late? Or were those old revival evangelists right when they implied that for each person who is drawn to Jesus, the right time to be saved is "now"?

Timing does matter. It always does. As the ancient wise man said, "There is a time to be born, and a time to die," and a right or wrong time for a lot of things in between. Sometimes we need to leave that up to God, because the timeless One alone can get it right.



Grab an eraser and start scrubbing. If you're a wise, decent, loving, well-informed inhabitant of the modern world, surely you won't leave a hint of Christopher Columbus anywhere in your history notes or your calendar or even your memory.

At least, that's what the leftleaning liberals at Notre Dame seem to be saying.

Long-honored classic murals depicting the arrival of Columbus in the New World had to be draped so that no unsuspecting students would be misled into honoring this famous ancestor.

After all—so these radical re-writers of history would have us believe that wicked Spanish sailor crossed the Atlantic to launch an aggressive attack on native North Americans and to steal their land. So today, more than 500 years later, we moderns must eliminate this Indian-hater's name from our history books and cover up his mug on university walls.

When I read news reports of this latest campaign to revise history, I began to scratch my head and wonder if my fourth-grade teacher Mrs. May was really that wrong when she taught us that when Columbus docked in the West Indies, he actually thought he'd arrived on the Asian shores of India.

If our history books were right back then, how could Columbus have been targeting Apaches and Comanches and Cherokees? How can we blame him for later abuses of natives on a continent that wasn't even on his maps in 1492?

As I read about Notre Dame's decision to excise Columbus from the history of America, I also asked myself how much longer we'll keep Columbus Day on our calendars. How can kind-hearted, right-thinking people celebrate the deeds of such a dastardly soul?

Do you remember how deluded we thought the Stalinists were when they began to rewrite Russian history? We hooted at them and marveled that rational people thought they actually could change what had happened just by revising their history textbooks.

But it's not just liberal historians. Liberal theologians have favored this strategy too. If you don't want God to be too active in your world, just degrade all the Bible miracles to myths. Use the same tactic to demote the Christmas and Easter stories to fairy tales. Then you won't even need a time capsule to edit the past.



Ny father grew up hoeing cotton, baling hay, stocking groceries, tackling odd jobs of all sorts. He never shied away from hard work. But he was totally devoid of mechanical skills. Our mother did all the plumbing repairs in our home because Dad didn't know which end of a screwdriver to take hold of.

When I reflect on this, it makes my early-teen Whizzer experience nothing short of incredible.

What's a Whizzer? you may ask. A Whizzer was a small engine that could be installed on a bicycle to turn it into a flimsy but speedy motorcycle.

I bought mine in the early 1950s when I had barely turned 13. An older paper-delivery buddy graduated from his Whizzer to a pickup, so, without asking my parents' permission, I bought it.

At the time, it seemed to me like a perfectly reasonable thing to do. Now I can hardly believe I did it.

When I became the proud owner of that Whizzer motor, I knew the old red bicycle frame my pal had attached it to was used up. It had been ridden hard and worn out. Any trip around the block might well be its last. So, from the moment I acquired it, I fully intended to transfer that Whizzer motor to the sturdier frame of my almost new bright green Schwinn bicycle.

Since my father had never taught me how to wield a wrench, I can't believe I dared to undertake such a mechanical challenge. But that didn't slow me down one bit. That fall I spent hours toiling in our tiny garage, greasy to my elbows, dismantling that older motorbike to transform it into a new one.

Little did I know how much I was learning in the process. Every bolt I tightened, every clamp I positioned, every belt I aligned honed a skill I would use for a lifetime. Half a dozen years later I could pull the heads and grind the valves of my 1950 Ford. And it all began with that Whizzer.

Could this kind of training preparation we don't even know we're receiving at the time—be what the Bible is referring to in Ephesians 2:10?

God has good works planned for you and me to do, this verse says. Has he been getting us ready to do them—developing in us the skills he knew we'd need for a certain task—but, like me working on that Whizzer, we had no idea at the time what we were learning?

What did God do to get you ready to serve him?

СА



Can vou believe we were ever that small?" my wife asked me as she looked at photos of our family when none of our kids were yet in school.

"No," I agreed with my lady. "Nor can I believe it's been so many years since that picture was taken."

About three months after that brief conversation, the good Lord willing, my bride and I would be retreating to Colorado along with the bulk of our still-growing family to celebrate on July 13, 2019, sixty years since she and I said "I do."

That's a lot of years. It must seem like eternity to the generation of great-grandchildren just sprouting on our family tree. But to us octogenarians, those decades and the incredible array of experiences we've shared in them have streaked by.

Just yesterday, it seems, we were finishing school, starting our first real jobs, bottling our first babies, planting our first gardens, stretching our first dollars. All of that happened just yesterday. At least, that's how it seems.

Our older friends probably affirm our conclusion that the pace of time seems to speed up every time we turn a calendar page.

We've reached an age when our

years literally are flying by. Now we understand what ailing, aging Job was moaning about when he said. "My days fly faster than a weaver's shuttle."

"Here today, gone tomorrow" can't be said fast enough to capture that reality.

If my lady and I have learned nothing else from all these vanishing decades, it is that we need to make time and take time to savor the blessings God is providing us today-the special friends, the never-to-be-repeated trips, the quiet moments in busy days, the unexpected opportunities to aid others.

Little did Nita and I dream that God would give us so many years together, and that he would fill those years with such an assortment of memorable blessings.

What lies ahead? Who knows? Our crystal ball is still just as hazy as it was 60 years ago. Only the Lord can see what lies ahead around tomorrow's corner, so we'll have to keep trusting him to have us where he wants us to be doing what he wants us to do.

This much we do know: if our tomorrows are even half as blessed as our yesterdays, we still have some glorious days to look forward to. CA



After working six decades as a writer/editor, I can't ignore modern misuse of the word "after." So, regular readers, welcome back to my hobby horse.

A typical example of what bothers me was the Fox News headline that told us, "Two Critically Injured After Accident." The news story revealed, though, that all the injuries suffered by five victims actually happened during the accident, not after it.

We saw the same time-based confusion when a headline told us a soldier and her dog were killed "after a pair of I-95 collisions," but the reporter got it right. The 28-year-old Army National Guard member "was struck and killed on I-95 Saturday," she told us.

Does all of this matter? Not much. But in an era when the credibility of journalists is waning, it seems as though they'd want to be more precise.

If the AP reporter tells us "a man fell to his death while inspecting a ride at a fair in Alabama," why did the headline writer say he died "after" the inspection?

When I read, "Child killed after being crushed by garage door," I want to know who killed him. Ditto when the headline says, "Missouri toddler killed after getting hit by

ice cream truck." The story told me what I expected-that the child died when the truck hit her.

Part of the verbal jumble here seems to stem from the journalist's intent to take inventory of the dead or wounded after the sirens hushed and the smoke settled.

Maybe this is why headlines tell us how many were killed after a plane crashed, although the victims actually died when it crashed. It's a body count.

Just shifting from "killed" to "dead" might clarify the significance of "after" in such news accounts. Had the headline writer told us. "Baby dead (instead of killed) after driver crashes into shopping cart," this would have agreed totally with the facts in the story. The infant died when a drunk driver hit the cart.

Headline writers seem to be the chief offenders. "7 killed after tractor-trailer, minivan crash," the headline declared, but the news story got it right. The headline would have been right if it had read, "7 dead."

It's time for me to confess that all of us professional wordsmiths fall into crazy habits that drive our readers or listeners bonkers. But if we worship the Word, we know he's always right. As Proverbs 30:5 tells us, "Every word of God is flawless." СА



That's what we taught in our schools until this present generation. The three Rs, we called it. Then the world went digital and basic education vanished.

Can you imagine, then, how much it warmed the heart of this old codger to hear news reports that kids in Texas schools may again be taught to read cursive writing? My great-grandchildren may actually be able to read the notes I've written to them on the flyleafs of the books I've authored. Whoopee!

Not only that, but they won't grow up thinking the heirloom letters and notes penned by their great-grandparents were written in Egyptian heiroglyphics.

This one change in public education will reconnect whole generations to the world they were born into. It will let them rediscover the world that gave them YouTube and Facebook and Google and the rest.

While we're at it, Texas legislators, would it be possible for us to turn back the clock and start teaching our younger students once more how to add and subtract and multiply without punching buttons on a digital apparatus?

Just imagine how we could transform our experience at cash registers in McDonalds simply by raising a new generation who can do simple math in their heads. Then the three pennies we hand a cashier to round off the change we get back would no longer leave her looking so totally baffled.

That's not all this generation needs to learn. While our schools were abandoning the traditional three Rs, unfortunately many modern churches were also jettisoning traditional Bible studies for their youth.

Once upon a time we expected everybody to recognize the main Bible characters and to know all the famous Bible stories such as Eden, the Flood, the Red Sea parting, David and Goliath, Daniel's den of lions, and Jesus in the wilderness or on the Cross.

But in far too many churches today we focus more on what our kids feel than on what they know. The same generation that can't read a handwritten note or add two plus two often look blank when they hear the names of God's heroes or when we ask them to turn to Acts in a printed Bible.

What are your youngsters learning in your church? Could it be that these Texas legislators could teach our churches something about education?

APPEAL

John Gulley

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