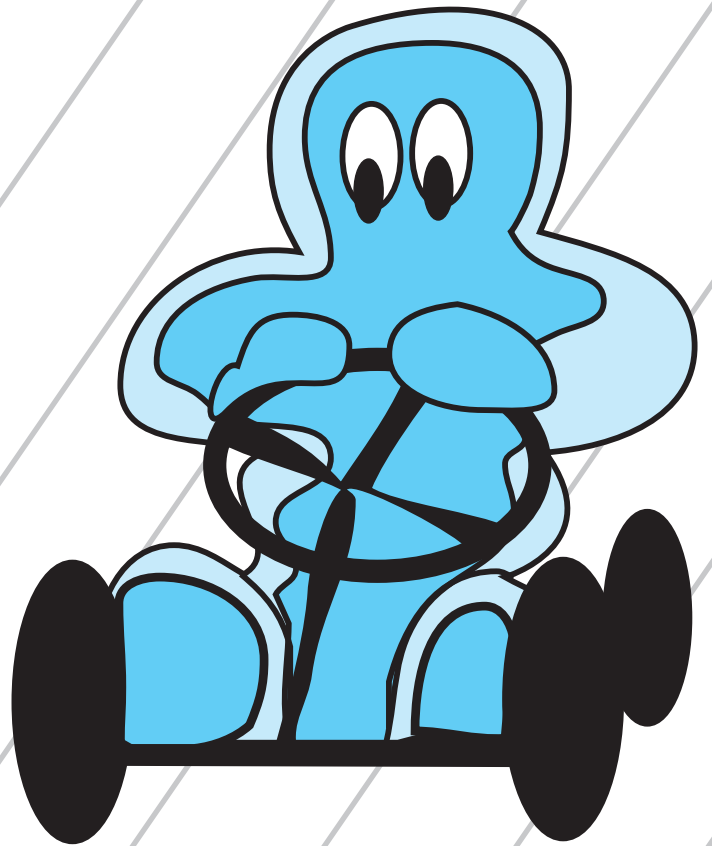


The Bible Meditator

Maybe You Can't Handle It

Are you trying to win the
Indianapolis 500 in a

Go Kart?



Meditating on: *Judges & Psalm 40*

Meditation Tips: *Study Bibles*

Troubling Thoughts About School Shootings

Maybe You Can't Handle It

By
**Weldon
Langfield**

Are you trying to win the *Indianapolis 500*

David knew this and learned to avoid such problems.

David wrote, "...Nor do I involved myself in matters, or in things too difficult for me" (Psa. 131:1). When I noticed this passage, I realized its comfort. David was brilliant and accomplished: perhaps the greatest military leader in history, author of the most-read collection of poetry ever, administrator of a vast kingdom, a man of world-class courage, and one who loved the Lord so much that he is called, "The man after God's own heart."

Yet, there were matters David couldn't handle; perhaps no one could. David had learned to stay away from them. What lessons can we learn?

We cannot handle some difficulties. Some problems are so tangled; a Christian may not have the talent, time, wisdom, and patience to untangle them. Trying to



in a

Go Kart?

straighten some problems out may be for him like trying to win the Indianapolis 500 with a Go Kart. The harder he tries, the more frustrated and unhappy he gets.

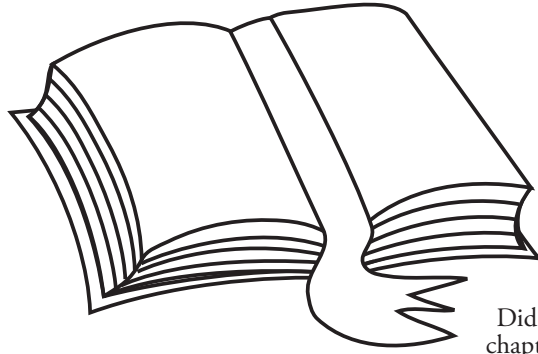
Other godly men could not solve every problem. Noah never solved the problem of the entire world except eight people dying in sin. Jeremiah, even with God's inspired help, could not keep Jerusalem from falling. The father could not stop the prodigal son from leaving with his share of the inheritance and spending it all on sinful living.

Peace comes from avoiding problems that are too difficult. David later described himself as weaned; he was so peaceful and trusting of God (Psa. 131:2). God understands that we cannot do everything. Sometimes, we simply need to trust in the Lord to bring about the end He desires. If

something seems impossible, maybe it is. God may be a lot more understanding than we give Him credit for. †

Meditating on Scripture Daily

Based on the New King James Version



Judges By Don Ruhl

Jul. 1 Jdg. 18:22–26

Someone Stole His Gods!

22, 23a ...they called out to the children of Dan. Here is the local neighborhood watch, or the local gang.

23b, 24 "...Now what more do I have? How can you say to me, 'What ails you?'" Micah is angry and sarcastic. Interestingly, he had stolen the silver for these gods, now someone steals the silver gods from him. What is wrong with these gods?

- First, a woman had to dedicate her and her son's silver to Yahweh God.
- Second, the son stole the silver, the ingredient for their new god, from his mother.
- Third, after returning the silver, they make the silver into various forms, including a god.
- Fourth, the silver, that is, the god, is stolen again.

Is something wrong here? These are gods. Can Micah not see the irony? He created defenseless gods! If someone could steal his god, something is wrong. Whereas, no one can steal the true God. Do you know how to discover your god? What do you value as the greatest good in your life? Is there something that if it was taken away from you, you would much rather die? Look again at Micah's words recorded in verse 24. Once he realized that his gods were gone, he asked, "Now what more do I have?" He did not give the God of Israel a thought. No one can steal the true God from us. On the contrary, if our things are stolen from us, He can replace them. When a king of Judah in Second Chronicles 25:9 asked what to do about losing millions of dollars in silver, a prophet who knew the true God set the record straight, telling the king that God could give the king much more.

Jul. 2 Jdg. 18:22–26 Someone Stole His Gods

25, 26 ...And when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back to his house. The men of Dan offered no logical Scriptural defense for their theft and for turning to idolatry. How could they? What is the matter with these men? Do they expect these gods, who cannot even protect themselves from thievery, to help them conquer new land? Goebel Music says, "...these men might have even killed for these gods (Jud. 18:25). Thus it seems they forgot another commandment... Their idolatry began in theft, and could have led them into murder. Where is man without a standard, without the true God? When one leaves that which is the rule, the supreme law, there is no telling just what he will do or where he will be found." Micah's gods were weak. If they were true gods, they could have helped him defeat the 600 men. Samson defeated over 4,300. Gideon and 300 defeated 185,000. Both Samson and Gideon had the help of God, with whom numbers are nothing, because He is the true God, but Micah's god was a false and dead god.

Jul. 3 Jdg. 18:27–29 No One to Help

27, 28 So they took the things Micah had made, and the priest who had belonged to him... Do not let the quiet and secure nature of Laish convince you that these people were righteous. The Lord brought Israel from Egypt to remove the people of the Land of Canaan because they were idolaters who practiced many evil things. This included the people of Laish.

29 And they called the name of the city Dan... Therefore, this must have been the first place that the tribe of Dan conquered. It is sad that they used idols during their campaign to take the city.

Jul. 4 Jdg. 18:30, 31

Perverting Religion Remains

30, 31 ...his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land...

Did you follow closely what these last two verses of chapter 18 said? Once a sin is allowed or promoted in a nation or group of people, it is hard to displace it.

It was not until the captivity associated with Shiloh that it was removed. This event is shown more in the Book of First Samuel. The marginal note is correct in showing that Jonathan was the grandson of Moses, not the grandson of Manasseh. This shows that the episodes of chapters 17 and 18 were before there were any judges in Israel. It also shows how quickly apostasy can enter a family. Dan became one of the main places of idolatry that King Jeroboam set up in the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

What is your god? Can someone take your god from you? Are you greater than your god is?

When Everyone Does What is Right in His Own Eyes: Immorality Happens

Jul. 5 Jdg. 19

Are you prepared for one of the most shocking chapters in the Bible? If you have never read Judges chapter 19, your response will likely be that you never knew something like this was in the Bible, and that it is so horrible you just do not see how it could happen. It is recorded that we might understand what happens when people decide for themselves what is right. I shudder every time I hear people say, "You just have to decide for yourself what is right;" "What is right for you may not be what is right for me;" "The majority rules." One preacher said, "The great and illustrious nation of Israel had reached a low ebb. The race and nation that Jehovah had selected to bring Christ into the world had sunk into the mire of worldliness. As we study this portion of Scripture, we will see the reason for such: a lack of respect for God and His Word. When an individual or nation ceases to respect God and His Word, disaster will surely follow" (Ken Butterworth, *Annual Denton Lectures*).

Jul. 6 Jdg. 19:1 When There Is No King

1 And it came to pass in those days, when there was no king in Israel... "In those lawless times when in theory God was king, but in practice men did what was right in their own eyes..." (Charles Pfeiffer in *Wycliffe*). If there is no leadership, people will do what they think is right in their own eyes. Having said those things, the Bible introduces us to a Levite.

Jdg. 19:2, 3 A Levite and His Concubine

2 But his concubine played the harlot against him... By the Law of Moses, what she did was worthy of death. However, her husband, perhaps in mercy, did not pursue that action. Or does he? Does this give insight into what he allows later in the story?

3 Then her husband arose and went after her, to speak kindly to her... He uses kindness to win his concubine/wife back. In this, he was wise, because forcing a spouse to love you and to return to you rarely works. If the spouse returns, it may only be out of a sense of doing what is right rather than out of love for the spouse. Many are kind to the world, but

drop it when they get home. Let kindness be so a part of your nature that you cannot cease being kind at home.

Jul. 7 Jdg. 19:4–13 A Look at Hospitality

4–9 *Now his father-in-law, the young woman's father, detained him...*

The concubine's father knew the art of hospitality. Those who do not practice hospitality, miss enriching relationships. In a moment, we will discover that lack of hospitality takes people on the road to hostility.

10–13 ... *"We will not turn aside here into a city of foreigners, who are not of the children of Israel; we will go on to Gibeah"*... Interestingly, this man preferred to stay with brethren. While typically this is better, in this case, it was disastrous. What happens in verses 11 and 12, is crucial to the rest of the story that is found in chapters 19 and 20. The Levite had the right convictions. The last Levite we saw had little to no convictions. This Levite knew that Israelites should not be fellowshipping idolaters. He did not know what kind of reception he would have in a city of Jebusites. Surely, he may have thought, that it would be safer physically and spiritually to spend the night in a city of the Israelites. Thus, they turn from what later becomes Jerusalem, deciding to stay in Gibeah or Ramah. Gibeah is the future city of the first King of Israel. "The irony here, as subsequent events will show, is that Israel has become more wicked than even the native pagans of Canaan" (Dorsey).

Jul. 8 Jdg. 19:14–21 Urgent Hospitality

14, 15 ... *for no one would take them into his house to spend the night.*

Something was already wrong. The Levite went to Gibeah, believing good treatment awaited him. Initially they do not receive bad treatment, just lack of proper treatment.

16, 17 *Just then an old man came in from his work in the field at evening...* Now someone was going to show hospitality. Interestingly, the old man was not even from Gibeah. He was from the same place as the Levite. The men of Gibeah were from the tribe of Benjamin.

18, 19 *So he said to him, "We are passing from Bethlehem in Judah toward the remote mountains of Ephraim..."* The Levite was not a burden. He was traveling through, not asking for a permanent home. He was a spiritual man on his way to the house of the Lord, which was not yet located in Jerusalem, but in Shiloh. It would not be in Jerusalem until the time of David. Being a spiritual man, he was not a threat to anyone. The man had all his own supplies. There was no reason to turn this man down.

20, 21 *And the old man said, "Peace be with you! However, let all your needs be my responsibility..."* Perhaps feeling a kinship to someone from his home area, he wanted peace for the Levite. He was willing to be put out financially and otherwise for the safety of the Levite. The old man's urgency indicated that it would not be a good thing to spend the night in the open square. Everyone felt better with the Levite and his wife and servant inside.

Jul. 9 Jdg. 19:22–28

Gibeah Abuses the Concubine

22 ... *"Bring out the man who came to your house..."* When the Levite was sitting in the open square, seeking a place to stay for the night, and the people turned him down, they were looking at him, thinking of other ways they would like to spend time with the man. They did not ask for the woman, but these Benjamites were homosexuals, wanting to homosexual gang-rape the visitor. What would Abraham have thought if he knew that someday his own descendants would commit the ungodly sins of Sodom?

23, 24 ... *"No, my brethren! I beg you, do not act so wickedly..."* The situation gets worse, just as it did in Sodom, but this is even worse because the master of the house makes an offer to the Benjamites that is incomprehensible.

Jul. 10 Jdg. 19:22–28

Gibeah Abuses the Concubine

25 ... *they knew her and abused her all night until morning...* Remember why this episode was happening in Israel. They had no king, but did whatever was right in their own eyes. If you believe that we are to be free to decide what is right in our own eyes, keep that philosophy in mind as we continue through this text. Genesis chapter 19 and Judges chapter 19 are good examples of the unwillingness of homosexuals to reason. They are so bent on their vile "alternate lifestyle," even the threat of AIDS will not deter them.

26–28 *Then the woman came as the day was dawning...* This man spoke kindly to his wife earlier in the story! He was headed for the house of the Lord. He did not want to go to Jebus. Everything about him seemed

right. How do we explain the offering of his wife? How do we explain his callousness? The men of Gibeah just raped his wife to death!

Jul. 11 Jdg. 19:29, 30 Something Must Be Done

29, 30 ... *he took a knife, laid hold of his concubine, and divided her into twelve pieces...* Why did the man employ this method? If he wanted shock value, it worked. Israel agreed that nothing like this had ever been seen. Therefore, they needed to think about what to do and act.

How did these things happen in Israel? First, and this is extremely crucial, Benjamin failed to obey the Lord fully. Remember the beginning of the Book of Judges, "But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day" (Jdg. 1:21). Their failure to drive out the inhabitants of Jerusalem meant that Benjamin would learn the works of the Jebusites. Psalm 106:34–36 is a commentary, written centuries later, about what happened in Israel. Obey the Lord precisely and totally.

Jul. 12 Jdg. 19:29, 30 Something Must Be Done

29, 30 ... *sent her throughout all the territory of Israel...* How did these things happen in Israel? Second (for first point see yesterday's reading), the tribe of Benjamin, the concubine, the Levite, and the old man were all doing what was right in their own eyes. When people reject God, everything is permitted. Just look at our modern society for proof of this. The most dangerous person is the one who does not fear God. Doing what is right in their own eyes led to the sins of adultery, homosexuality, general fornication, and not honoring women. Nehemiah 4:14 shows a much different attitude. First Peter 3:7 is often misunderstood, but it does say how to treat wives, or any woman. Peter does not mean that the woman is the weaker vessel, but treat her as a weaker vessel is treated. In addition, this story in the Book of Judges shows the sin of defending that which is wrong. When relatives are wrong many people will defend them and abandon God. Sin is sin regardless of who commits it.

When Everyone Does What is Right in His Own Eyes: Genocide Happens

Jul. 13 Judges 20

What happened in Gibeah was so horrible that Hosea 9:9 uses it as a measure of corruption, "They are deeply corrupted, as in the days of Gibeah. He will remember their iniquity; He will punish their sins." Hosea 10:9 again references the incredible sin we read about in Judges 19, "O Israel, you have sinned from the days of Gibeah; there they stood. The battle in Gibeah against the children of iniquity did not overtake them."

Jdg. 20:1, 2 Israel gathers together

1 *So all the children of Israel came out...* Everyone saw it as his responsibility to do something about the evil. The congregation was united in eliminating evil and in appearing before the Lord.

2 *And the leaders of all the people...* There were leaders in Israel, though not with the authority of a king. They presented themselves in the assembly of the people of God and they were all ready to do what had to be done.

Jul. 14 Jdg. 20:3–7

Israel Is Zealous and Investigates

3 ... *Then the children of Israel said, "Tell us, how did this wicked deed happen?"* This attack only happened to one woman, yet all of Israel was ready to punish the evildoers. While the actions of the old man and Levite mortified us, let us be encouraged that hundreds of thousands were angered by the Benjamites and were ready to take action. Rather than acting irrationally, they want to know what happened.

4–6 *So the Levite, the husband of the woman who was murdered, answered and said...* Here is the problem with this Levite's testimony of the crime:

- He did not relate the whole story.
- He did not tell of his allowing this to happen.
- He did not confess his lack of defending his wife.

7 "...give your advice and counsel here and now!" To his credit, the man did not pre-determine what punishment was appropriate. Moreover, there is safety in seeking the advice of many people, as it is written in Proverbs, "For by wise counsel you will wage your own war, and in a multitude of counselors there is safety" (Pro. 24:6).

Jul. 15 Jdg. 20:8–10 Israel's Determination

8–10 *So all the people arose as one man...* Rather than overwhelming Gibeah, they decide to go up by tribes. Yet, they all fully commit to stay until the crime is repaid. As it is written, "Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecc. 8:11).

Jdg. 20:11–13a They Seek Justice

11 *So all the men of Israel were gathered against the city, united together as one man.* They knew that united we stand, divided we fall.

12, 13a *Then the tribes of Israel sent men through all the tribe of Benjamin...* The tribes of Israel do not have anything against the whole tribe of Benjamin. They only wanted the evildoers. This story, and others in the Book of Judges, sounds like America's current war against terrorism.

Jul. 16 Jdg. 20:13b–17

Benjamin Refuses to Cooperate

13b *But the children of Benjamin would not listen...* Could Benjamin not see the 400,000 soldiers arrayed against them? Could Benjamin not see Israel's resolve? Matthew Henry says, "The wretched obstinacy and perverseness of the men of Benjamin, who seem to have been as unanimous and zealous in their resolutions to stand by the criminals as the rest of the tribes were to punish them, so little sense had they of their honour, duty, and interest."

14 *Instead, the children of Benjamin gathered together...* Rather than admit their error, they were willing to go to war against their own brethren. There will always be someone to fight but let it be the enemies of God and not our brethren. Moreover, when we discover sin in our midst, let us find out if it is true and take care of it rather than taking Benjamin's approach. Do not defend sin because it is found in your family.

Jul. 17 Jdg. 20:13b–17

Benjamin Refuses To Cooperate

15, 16 *...seven hundred select men who were left-handed; every one could sling a stone at a hair's breadth and not miss.* Benjamin put his trust in his military capabilities. The last time we heard of a left-handed Benjamite, he was a hero, and that was Ehud in Judges 3. His brethren in chapter 20 were experts at using their left hands in battle, but morally they had no skill. First Chronicles 12:1, 2 also mentions left-handers from Benjamin who were skilled in slings and the bow.

17 *...all of these were men of war.* While Benjamin was outnumbered greatly, they felt emboldened, like the Taliban in Afghanistan did before America attacked. Benjamin failed to count the cost. Could they with 26,700 defeat an opposing army of 400,000? It is possible to win with odds like these, as we saw with Gideon, Samson, Shamgar, and others. If Benjamin was right, he would win easily. If he is wrong, defeat loomed before them regardless of the expert left-handed sling-shooters.

Jul. 18 Jdg. 20:18–48 Justice

18 *Then the children of Israel arose and went up to the house of God to inquire of God...* They inquired of God, but not about what to do, rather it was to find out who should go first, because they had already determined what to do. Courson says, "As He did with Hezekiah (II Kings 20), the Lord answered Israel's prayer according to His permissive will rather than His perfect will. 'If that's what you want to do,' He said, 'send Judah first.'" You will now see why this is a critical distinction.

19–21 *...on that day cut down to the ground twenty-two thousand men of the Israelites.* Benjamin defeated almost as many Israelites as Benjamin itself numbered. If Benjamin were wrong and Israel right, why did Israel lose this battle? It may be because of what I suggested earlier, that Israel sought God, but not in the beginning. They decided what action to take, then asked God how to implement it. God may have suggested another course of action, and He may have revealed the sins of the old man and of the Levite. Perhaps Israel trusted in his numbers. Remember Judges 7. God did not want Israel to boast. Another possibility is that Israel was not alarmed by the idolatry of the house of Micah and the tribe of Dan in chapters 17 and 18. Whereas when one of their own is harmed, they seek justice. What happened in chapter 19 was horrible, but which is worse?

- The idolatry of Micah and Dan
- The homosexuality, gang-rape of Benjamin

Jul. 19 Jdg. 20:18–48 Justice

22, 23 *And the people, that is, the men of Israel, encouraged themselves...* Benjamin did not deter Israel. Interestingly, while there was weeping, Israel did not ask God what was wrong.

24, 25 *...cut down to the ground eighteen thousand more of the children of Israel; all these drew the sword.* Israel followed God, but the nation did not follow Him precisely.

26–28 *...And the LORD said, "Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand."* If Israel was not consulting God properly, why was God now promising to deliver Benjamin? It is possible that Israel had suffered enough. They were full of vengeance rather than putting it on God. They were trusting in the superiority of their cause and in the superiority of their numbers.

Jul. 20 Jdg. 20:18–48 Justice

29–34 *...the Benjamites did not know that disaster was upon them.* Knowing that God was now with Israel, a new plan is tried. It must be that the new plan was of God. Matthew Henry said, "Sometimes God suffers wicked men to be lifted up in successes and hopes, that their fall may be the sorer" (Henry).

35a *The LORD defeated Benjamin before Israel.* The writer has just noted what Israel was doing, but gives credit to the Lord.

35b *And the children of Israel destroyed that day twenty-five thousand one hundred...* The Lord defeated Benjamin, but Israel did the fighting. Both the Old and New Testaments affirm that we work with God or that He works through us. Paul wrote, "We then, as workers together with Him also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. 6:1).

Jul. 21 Jdg. 20:18–48 Justice

36–48 *So the children of Benjamin saw that they were defeated...* This was a sad day in Israel. Fuller says, "In v. 35 the number given is 25,100. Verses 44–46 give the details of the loss on that day: 18,000, 5,000, and 2,000; in all 25,000. But as the Benjamites numbered 26,700 men (v. 15), and 600 escaped to the rock of Rimmon, it is clear that 1,100 are unaccounted for, partly from no account being taken of those who fell in the battles of the two first days, partly from the use of round numbers, or from some other cause. The numbers given both here and in v. 35 are expressly restricted to those who fell on that (the third) day." It does not pay to defend sin, regardless of a nation's military expertise. Doing what is right in their own eyes led Benjamin to the sin of defending that which is wrong. When relatives are wrong, many people will defend them and abandon God. Sin is sin regardless of who commits it. Therefore, see God as your first relative.

When Everyone Does What is Right in His Own Eyes: Weird Things Happen

Jul. 22 Judges 21

Intentions can be good but when they are directed by self rather than God strange things happen.

Jdg. 21:1 A Foolish Oath

1 *Now the men of Israel had sworn an oath at Mizpah, saying, "None of us shall give his daughter to Benjamin as a wife."* The oath of Jephthah is well known in the Book of Judges, but not this one. Like his, this one seems well-intentioned, but it leads to sorrow, just like Jephthah. We understand why Israel made this oath, for it was rooted in their zeal to eliminate evil. We wish all people were more zealous for the same. However, zeal and wrath must be tempered with self-control and knowledge, which are rooted in God's will. James 1:19, 20 explains why, "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." Judges chapters 20 and 21 illustrate this New Testament principle well. We are now going to see that Israel created a difficult situation for itself by their vow. "It was an oath that flowed from rash rage rather than from real zeal" (*The Bible Illustrator*).

Jeremiah 4:2 gives wise guidance in making vows, “And you shall swear, ‘The LORD lives,’ In truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; The nations shall bless themselves in Him, And in Him they shall glory.”

Jul. 23 Jdg. 21:2–4 Israel Weeps For Benjamin

2 Then the people came to the house of God, and remained there before God... The people presented themselves before God, because their hearts were broken, distressed over a family member. Did they know why one tribe was almost cut off? Had God commanded this action? No, but in their lack of God-directed fury, they created the situation. Moreover, they appealed to God by the repetitious use of Israel (3x). Fuller says, “The repetition of the name of Israel is very striking in connexion with the title of Jehovah as God of Israel. It contains a very forcible pleading of the Covenant, and memorial of the promises. The very name ‘Israel’ comprehended all the twelve tribes; with one of them blotted out, the remnant would not be Israel.”

4 So it was, on the next morning, that the people rose early... Rising early the next day shows that this matter was heavy on their hearts and that they were zealous in solving it. They seek God’s favor with sacrifices. Matthew Henry says, “They came to the house of God, for thither they brought all their doubts, all their counsels, all their cares, and all their sorrows... Every thing that grieves us should bring us to God.”

Jul. 24 Jdg. 21:5 Who Did Not Fight?

5a The children of Israel said, “Who is there among all the tribes of Israel who did not come up with the assembly to the LORD?” Imagine every citizen of your nation appalled at some evil, but there is a group not appalled. You lost many men doing something about it. How would you feel towards that group? You may be wondering why Israel brought this up. We shall find out later. For now the rest of the verse gives a clue.

5b For they had made a great oath concerning anyone who had not come up to the LORD at Mizpah, saying, “He shall surely be put to death.” Was this another foolish oath? This is introduced to show how Israel plans to help the tribe of Benjamin recover.

Jul. 25 Jdg. 21:6–11 Benjamin Needs Wives

6, 7 And the children of Israel grieved for Benjamin their brother... Israel had been full of wrath, wanting to rid Israel of the horrendous evil that occurred in Gibeah of Benjamin. The nation has cooled off and does not wish to lose Benjamin. Since only 600 men, and no women or children remain, Israel wonders what they are going to do. Israel had made an oath to the Lord and did not want to break it by giving wives to Benjamin.

8, 9 ...not one of the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead was there. Later Jabesh Gilead reversed itself when the men of that city rescued the body of Saul. Saul saved Jabesh Gilead from the Ammonites. When Jabesh Gilead heard that the Philistines had defeated Saul in war, decapitated him, and hung up his body, the men of Jabesh Gilead went bravely and recovered his body and that of Jonathan from the Philistines. Later David blessed Jabesh Gilead for their valor. However, before those things happened, Jabesh Gilead suffered greatly for failing to participate in removing evil from Israel.

Jul. 26 Jdg. 21:6–11 Benjamin Needs Wives

10, 11 So the congregation sent out there twelve thousand... Jabesh Gilead will suffer what Benjamin was about to suffer—extinction. However, there is a condition on the women they are supposed to kill, leaving certain ones alive. Only the women who have known a man intimately were to be killed.

Jdg. 21:12–15 400 Wives

12 So they found among the inhabitants of Jabesh Gilead four hundred young virgins... They found 400 virgins, but Benjamin had 600 men.

13, 14 ...yet they had not found enough for them. What a reversal of the situation between Israel and Benjamin! First, Israel was bent on exterminating Benjamin. Now Israel is finding wives for the survivors! The recovery of Benjamin has started. Eventually Benjamin will become strong. The first king of Israel will come from among these 600 men. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, will also come from among them. Benjamin alone will side with Judah when the kingdom splits. Benjamin was alone in the evil of chapters 19 and 20. Benjamin will reverse himself and be alone in standing for the right during the kingdom division.

Jul. 27 Jdg. 21:12–15 400 Wives

15 And the people grieved for Benjamin, because the LORD had made a void in the tribes of Israel. The situation was made better, but it is not good enough. Therefore, Israel was still grieved for his brother. They did not grieve over their zeal against the sin. They grieved over having gone too far in removing sin. As Matthew Henry notes, “It would have been enough

to destroy all they found in arms; they needed not to have cut off... the women and children. Note,

(1) There may be over-doing in well-doing. Great care must be taken in the government of our zeal, lest that which seemed supernatural in its causes prove unnatural in its effects. That is no good divinity which swallows up humanity. Many a war is ill ended which was well begun.

(2) Even necessary justice is to be done with compassion. God does not punish with delight, nor should men.

(3) Strong passions make work for repentance. What we say and do in a heat our calmer thoughts commonly wish undone again.”

Jul. 28 Jdg. 21:16–18 More Wives

16–18 Then the elders of the congregation said, “What shall we do for wives for those who remain...?”... They wanted to complete the job. Gibeah’s problem was homosexuality. Therefore, they did not need to leave 200 men without women.

Jdg. 21:19–22 They Steal Women

19–21 Then they said, “In fact, there is a yearly feast of the LORD in Shiloh...” Was this idea much different than what the men of Gibeah did? True, the men of Gibeah fornicated and murdered. In this case they would marry, but taking women against their wills for marriage is wrong, even as rape is wrong for the same reason.

22 “Then it shall be, when their fathers or their brothers come to us to complain...” They anticipate how the men will react. They figure out an explanation ahead of time on how this will not violate the oath. Courson comments, “...the two hundred [men] in Benjamin without wives were instructed to kidnap the daughters of Shiloh. This way, the Israelites would not be technically breaking their oath because they weren’t really giving their daughters to the Benjamites—just allowing them to be kidnapped.”

Jul. 29 Jdg. 21:23, 24 Benjamin Took Women

23a And the children of Benjamin did so... Were any of the men of Gibeah among this number? What did they think about all this? First, they are killed for doing something similar. Now they are encouraged to do it.

23b, 24 Then they went and returned to their inheritance... The matter was resolved. They removed the evil. They saved a tribe. There is only one more comment for the writer of the Book of Judges to make. That will be verse 25. By the way, why did the women in the rest of Israel did not speak against any of this?

Jul. 30 Jdg. 21:25 Summary of Judges

25 ...everyone did what was right in his own eyes. Do you see what happens when there is a lack of leadership or when people do not recognize God’s leadership? For the past couple of decades our nation has been deciding that it does not want God in national life. Let us not be surprised by the increase in evil and unexplainable things that happen. It will only get worse as we continue to deny the true King and determine to decide what is right in our own hearts. What happens when the parents go away for the first time when the children are old enough to be left alone? They will start doing what is right in their own eyes. There might be fighting. They may even be united in doing some evil. They may be perfectly good. If they are, will it last? The same things can be said about a nation who refuses to have the knowledge of God.

When people use their own eyes to decide what is right, strange and weird things happen. What is happening in your life? Have you tried to figure out why? Is Jesus your King? Is His word your rule of life? Read the following: Jeremiah 10:23 and Proverbs 21:2.

Psalm 40

The Lord Thinks of Me!

The world may forsake you in your problems, but
God is thinking of you and helping you

Jul. 31

Does the most important person on earth think of you? Does he even know you exist? Does he care? Here is an irony. There is Someone who is so great that it is not even worthy to compare this Someone with the greatest person on earth. Yet, this Someone thinks of you. He knows you exist. He cares for you. ☩

Troubling Thoughts About School Shootings

The World Cannot Figure Out What is Wrong

**Editor's Note: I ran this article in January 2000, but with the many new subscribers we have, and with some new school shootings, it seemed good to run this article again with some editing.*

By Don Ruhl

Just listen to the world struggling for answers. No one but God knows all things. Nor can we keep people from committing crimes. Proverbs 4:19 is a classic text, explaining the world's bewilderment, and how it often contributes to the problem without realizing it, "The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble." When I hear Hollywood condemn the NRA for the school violence, it reminds me of the time that "The Artist Formerly Known as Prince" called Michael Jackson weird. Luke 6:39 is also a perfect picture of the world trying to explain school shootings, and of the world trying to figure out the solution, "And He spoke a parable to them: 'Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into the ditch?'" Jeremiah 13:16 shows exactly what is happening, as long as the world refuses to acknowledge the true problem and the true solution, "Give glory to the LORD your God Before He causes darkness, And before your feet stumble On the dark mountains, And while you are looking for light, He turns it into the shadow of death And makes it dense darkness." Isaiah 59:9, 10 gives some interesting thoughts, "Therefore justice is far from us, Nor does righteousness overtake us; We look for light, but there is darkness! For brightness, but we walk in blackness! We grope for the wall like the blind, And we grope as if we had no eyes; We stumble at noonday as at twilight; We are as dead men in desolate places." John 12:35 shows that Jesus addressed the problem also, "Then Jesus said to them, 'A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.'" First John 2:11 seems to be so sadly right on target (I hope that is not a poor choice of words), "But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes."

Christians Should Not Be Surprised By The Violence

That is not meant as an arrogant claim, but we have been observing for years what is being taken out of society, and what is being put into it. We have been telling the world that the more you take the Bible out of society, the more violence you will have. When finally the Bible is removed totally, then you will have total violence. Christians are modern day sons of Issachar, "who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chr. 12:32; See also Est.

1:13; Pro. 14:8).

When you take the Bible out of schools, you will have to replace it with metal detectors.

It's the Truth

By Paul Harvey

Whoa! What in the world is happening with our kids today? Let's see... I think it started when Madeline Murray O'Hare complained that she didn't want any prayer in our schools, and we said OK.

Then someone said you had better not read the Bible in school—the Bible that says thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, and love your neighbor as yourself. And we said, OK.

Remember Dr. Benjamin Spock, who said we shouldn't spank our children when they misbehave, because their little personalities would be warped and we might damage their self-esteem? And we said, OK, we won't spank them.

Then someone said that teachers and principals better not discipline our children when they misbehave. And our administrators said whoa, no one in this school better touch a student when they misbehave because we don't want any bad publicity, and we surely don't want to be sued.

Then someone said, let's let our daughters have abortions if they want, and we won't even have to tell their parents. And we said, that's a grand idea.

Then someone else said, let's give our sons all the condoms they want, so they can have all the "fun" they desire, and we won't have to tell their parents. And we said, that's another great idea.

And then some of our top officials said that it doesn't matter what we do in private as long as we do our jobs. And we said, as long as I have a job and the economy is good, it doesn't matter to me what anyone does in private.

So now we're asking ourselves why our children have no conscience, why they don't know right from wrong, and why it doesn't bother them to kill.

Probably, if we think about it long and hard enough, we can figure it out. I think it has a great deal to do with "we reap what we sow."

Troubling Thoughts About School Shootings: People Will Think There Is Nothing But Bad In The Schools

Millions of teenagers, millions of times a day do good things. For example, during the same week as the Columbine shootings, hundreds of students at a local high school in Klamath Falls, Oregon (where I lived at the time) were honored in a special ceremony for outstanding grades. This, of course, did not make the news. If it had, I doubt that it would have changed people's opinions about the schools. Hundreds of students can do wonderful things in a school, but let one student in that school, commit a crime, and we condemn the whole school system or that particular school. That one student will make adults ask what we did wrong, but when the hundreds do right, the same adults do not ask what we did right.

People Will Propose The Removal Of Guns

And The Placement Of Metal Detectors In School, And Stationing More Policemen In The Schools, Use Of School Uniforms, And Surveillance Cameras. This will not solve the problem, because it is not the root of the problem. If removing weapons was the solution, God's word would have said so. I am not trying to make a statement for or against guns. Biblically speaking, it does not matter to us whether it is a constitutional issue or not. What I am saying is this: if guns, knives, bombs, swords, spears, and other instruments of death were the problem, hence their removal the solution, God would have commanded their removal. If it could be proven that removing guns would cease all murders, I would be for it. If it could be demonstrated that prior to the invention of guns, there were no murders, I would be the first to declare their removal.

People Will Propose More Self-Esteem And Psychology

Research has shown there is no connection between low self-esteem and violence. The research has actually revealed the reverse. Regardless of the research, can we not see that if low self-esteem were the problem, the Bible would have revealed it. People want to put together profiles that will tell them ahead of time who is going to commit these acts of violence. The whole world, including the psychological society, the school system, and

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other organizations designed to deal with children, do not know Jeremiah 17:9, 10, for if they did, then they would know that they could never succeed at this, “The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings.” With this profiling in place, who would have known: Judas would betray Christ? Peter would deny Christ? All the apostles would forsake Christ? David would commit adultery and order a murder? Solomon would forsake the Lord? *We cannot predict human behavior.* The world is convinced that counseling, or talk therapy, will solve the world’s problems, but with it, and without the Bible, the world and the schools are only getting worse, and that is the way they will continue to head.

LITTLETON: The Killer Narcissists, The missing explanation

BARBARA LERNER

Dr. Lerner is a psychologist and writer in Chicago.

THE questions won’t go away. The recent shooting spree—the eighth in two years—forces us to face them again. Why all these wanton killings by schoolboys, this senseless spiral of schoolhouse slaughter? Who are these kids? Why are they doing it? What can we do? In the ‘90s, most parents look to psychology for answers, but psychology doesn’t have one set—it has two: pre-‘60s answers and post-‘60s answers. And they conflict.

Every sensate American knows the post-‘60s answers. You hear them from all the talking heads. Not just establishment experts, but mainstream teachers, preachers, politicians, and journalists. All subscribe to the conventional wisdom of the ‘90s: Kids who kill are in great distress, they’ve been neglected, rejected, and abused, their self-esteem is low, they are crying out for help. They need more love and understanding, more communication and parental attention, more early intervention, professional counseling, and anger-management training. And the reason we have more of these kids today is that we have more absent parents, more media violence, more guns.

Will the Colorado killers fit this profile? Were they the abused offspring of harsh, uncaring parents and a cold, indifferent community, desperately unhappy beings with nowhere to turn for help? It doesn’t look like it. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold both came from intact middle-class families variously described by neighbors as “solid,” “sensitive,” and “utterly normal,” and both had already been through the therapeutic mill. Each boy had gotten individual counseling; each got anger-management training as well. Both finished their therapy in February, two months before the crime, and both got glowing reports from their counselors.

Maybe, when all the facts are known, Harris and Klebold will turn out to be a lot more like Kip Kinkel, the 15-year-old Oregon shooter who vanished from the news as soon as his life story began to emerge because it didn’t fit the profile at all. Kinkel was a problem for the conventional wisdom because he had it all, everything ‘90s experts recommend. His parents were popular teachers, one of them was always there for him when he came home from school, and both did their best to make him happy, spending time with him, taking him on family vacations, helping him get whatever he wanted, even when the things he wanted unnerved them. They made few demands, rejected firm discipline as too harsh, and sought professional help, early and often. They were in counseling, along with Kip, when, in May 1998, he shot them both dead, killed two of his many school friends, and wounded 22 others.

Looking at cases like this, psychologists in the 1950s and earlier had a set of answers you don’t hear much anymore. Here’s an updated sample: We have more wanton schoolboy killers today because we have more narcissists, and the step from being a narcissist to being a wanton killer is a short one, especially in adolescence. A narcissist is a person who never progressed beyond the self-love of infancy, one who learned superficial social skills—narcissists are often charming—but never learned to love another and, through love, to view others as separate persons with an equal value. To the narcissist, other people have no intrinsic worth; their value is purely instrumental. They are useful when they satisfy his desires and enhance his self-esteem, disposable as bottle caps when they don’t.

Only the narcissist matters, and because his sense of self-importance is so grossly inflated, his feelings are easily hurt. When they do get hurt—when others thwart him or fail to give him the excessive, unearned respect he demands—he reacts with rage and seeks revenge, the more dramatic the better. Take guns away from kids like these, and many won’t settle for knives and baseball bats: They’ll turn to deadlier weapons—to explosives, as that overgrown schoolboy, Ted Kaczynski did, or to environmental poisons, as the young subway saboteurs of Japan did. Kip was on his way—police found five bombs at his house. And the Colorado killers upped the ante: They made more than 30 bombs and used shrapnel as well as bullets to blow away their victims.

Will more counseling and anger-management classes help? At best, they are palliatives, in cases like these. They can put a patch over the hole at the core of these kids, the moral void, but they cannot fill the hole. No brand of psychology can, and earlier brands—Freud’s especially—had the humility to recognize that. He saw the hole for what it is, a

moral hole that only moral training can fill. Not just calm, rational, smiley-face, didactic lessons, but the kind of intense, gut-level experiences children have when their parents draw a sharp moral line and demonstrate a willingness to go all out to defend it.

Through experiences like these, normal children learn that the parental love they could take for granted as infants and toddlers can no longer be taken for granted. That love is no longer unconditional; it can be withdrawn. And to avoid that frightening outcome, the child learns to see his parents as more than human piñatas, full of goodies he has only to bang away at to get. He learns to see them as moral beings with standards and values that are more important than his own immature wishes, and he begins to internalize those standards and values, making them his own, and developing a conscience.

Many ‘90s experts don’t understand this process. They focus only on self-esteem, not on esteem for others, and they obsess about the methods parents use to teach their kids, ignoring the content, the moral lessons they are trying to teach, insisting that any physical punishment, however infrequently and judiciously applied, is child abuse. These experts have no real solutions to offer, when the problem is overindulgence rather than abuse, as it now so often is. They are part of the problem. And the sooner we recognize that, the better. (*National Review*)

People Will Propose More Drugs

Rather than teaching people, especially young people, to control their behavior more medications will be given to control behavior. However, the world cannot do this properly, because it has no moral absolute on which to stand.

People Will Still Fail To See The Wisdom Of Proper Sentence Against Evil

Ecclesiastes 8:11 speaks common sense, “Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.” Romans 13:4 explains that people ought to fear the government, that is, fear the death penalty which God authorizes the government to use, “For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.” However, when the government is not doing as God wants, then, as Solomon taught in Ecclesiastes 8, men have no fear.

People Cannot See That Our Citizens Are Being Marinated In Violence

You have marinated meat before. You put the raw meat in a container and let it soak in a marinade, hoping to add flavor to the meat. When you cook the meat and then eat it, you fully expect

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Meditation Tips

Edited By Don Ruhl

Study Bibles By Steve Lloyd

There has appeared a glut of study Bibles in the bookstores, each one taking its marketing aim at some particular segment of the professed Christian world. There is the *Spirit-Filled Bible*; *The Open Bible*; *Life-Application Study Bible*; *Student's Life Application Bible*; *Zondervan's Study Bible*, etc.

Some of these Bibles feature the work of an individual like the *MacArthur Study Bible*, containing commentary by Calvinist expositor John MacArthur.

Others target various groups of people. For example, those who are associated with various 12-Step programs can purchase a Bible whose notes emphasize the kind of help

a person might receive from Scripture for addiction issues.

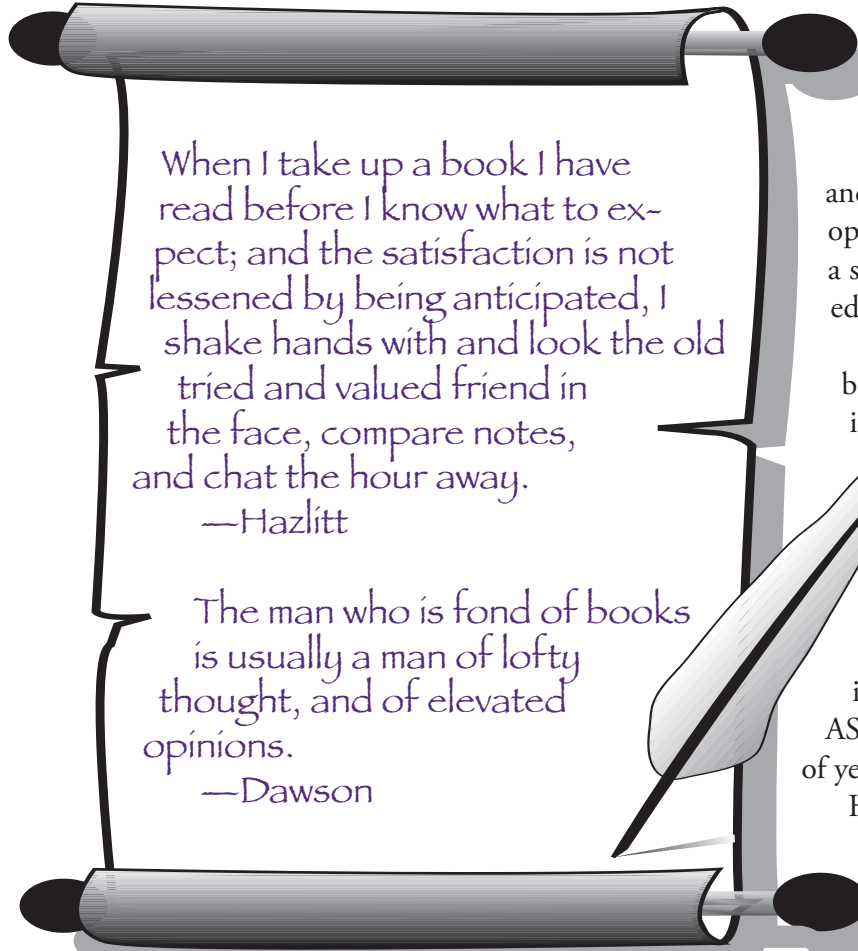
There are study Bibles that feature a particular doctrinal stance like the new *Reformation Study Bible* edited by R. C. Sproul. This is a Bible I wanted desperately to like. It features the English Standard Version of the Bible in slightly larger print than the edition published by Crossway Books. It is annotated by scholars who believe the Bible to be the word of God. They are not, for the most part, premillennial. And it contains outstanding articles throughout on various theological topics. But if you are not a Calvinist, some of the articles and notes will frustrate you.

For example, the articles on "Infant Baptism" (p. 37); "Original Sin and Total Depravity" (p. 781); "The Freedom and Bondage of the Will" (p. 1078); "Baptism" (p. 1623); "Perseverance of the Saints" (p. 1627); "Election and Reprobation" (p. 1630); and the notes on Romans 9; Psalm 51; among others are openly Reformed—which is what one should expect from a study Bible with the name, *The Reformation Study Bible*, edited by R. C. Sproul.

I would like to see a McGarvey Study Bible that combines J. W. McGarvey's book, *A Guide to Bible Study* (kept in print by Star Bible), with the ASV or some other reliable translation. Simply place brother McGarvey's comments in the appropriate place throughout the Bible.

I am not familiar with all the study Bibles on the market. I am told that some of our brethren have attempted to produce such a Bible, but I have not seen it. Wayne Jackson was invited to offer brief notes for an ASV pocket New Testament published by Star a number of years ago.

Hugh Shira offered the best advice I've heard to date. Because the help you get in these study Bibles are abridgements, buy a good reliable translation and buy the helps separately. †



When I take up a book I have read before I know what to expect; and the satisfaction is not lessened by being anticipated, I shake hands with and look the old tried and valued friend in the face, compare notes, and chat the hour away.
—Hazlitt

The man who is fond of books is usually a man of lofty thought, and of elevated opinions.
—Dawson

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to taste the marinade. People, especially young people, are being marinated in spiritual sauces of violence. It is only natural that is how their lives are turning out.

People Cannot See The Effect Of Evolution

Evolution says advancement is made when the weak are eliminated. Should we be surprised then when abortion is fully accepted by the general population; partial-birth abortion is actually being practiced; infanticide has been going on for years; and now Oregon voters have endorsed physician-assisted suicide? Evolution does not come out and teach students to be violent, but it implies that is how we arrived at our present advanced state, and that it is how we shall progress. The story that is between the lines is that violence is perfectly acceptable.

People Fail To See That It Is A Fad, Though A Deadly One

Do you remember the Freeway Shootings? How about the Post Office Shootings? How about the Restaurant Shootings? Remember the McDonald's in San Diego when a man shot 21 people? At a Luby's Restaurant in Texas a man drove his truck through the restaurant and got out and started shooting people. There were others. Fads come and go.

The World Still Does Not See The Value Of Teaching An Absolute Standard

D.A.R.E. has attempted to teach school children to make up their own minds about what is right and wrong concerning drugs. Virtually every study now shows that this approach fails, and that it even encourages drug use. Why? Students are taught to follow their own standards. People have erroneously interpreted the Constitution to say absolutes cannot be taught. Post-Modernism has pervaded our thinking, so that it is not politically correct to teach that one way is right and another way is wrong.

The World Cannot See That People Do Not Love Others

The Bible teaches that love is the highest commandment, but these violent people as a whole do not know this because the Bible has been kept from them. People think more of themselves than they do of others. Second Timothy 3:1-4 is a perfect picture of what we are looking at with this issue, "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God." All these things are so because they are not receiving moral training, and they are being encouraged in a culture of violence.

People Fail To See Eternity

When anyone murders others, and then takes his own life, he believes erroneously that

he has ended his existence. He believes he is escaping any punishment and humiliation, but it is only beginning, which he obviously does not believe. When eternity, which begins with the Judgment, is left out of a person's thinking, then murder and other horrendous deeds will happen.

People Will Still Fail To Name Sin As Such

Concluding Remarks Why Did Cain Kill Abel?

Had Cain been watching a violent video game? Had he been watching violent television shows? Was it the easy availability of guns? Do any of these things encourage violence? They may feed an appetite, but they do not make someone want to kill. Someone kills because he wants to kill. Even as listening to the Bible does not make us do right, but encourages us to do right, because we have decided that we want to do right. Could Abel's murder been prevented by behavioral medication? Counseling early in life? All the other solutions the world is offering? Cain killed because it was in his heart, that is, he wanted to do it. Mark 7:21-23 shows where the beginning of school shootings is, "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile a man."

Let Us Pray For Our Nation. †

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