

THE DEATH PENALTY

David Halbrook

Capital punishment is often viewed just as a judicial decision. In reality, it is a religious subject because God has revealed His will on this matter. In Romans 13:1-4, Paul affirms that the government *does not bear the sword in vain* and is *God's minister, an avenger*. God intends for the government to maintain order and distinguish good from evil even when that requires the use of "the sword." God approves of the government killing certain evildoers.

On November 30, the Catholic's Pope Benedict, like his predecessor John Paul II, stated his hope for "a growing number of countries to eliminate the death penalty." The Catholic Pope wants to **eliminate** something that **God has commanded**. The apostle Paul approved of the death penalty for offenses *worthy of death* (Acts 25:11). Clearly he was a Christian, not a Catholic.

The United Methodist Church plainly admits "We oppose capital punishment" (archives.umc.org).

Does your church teach that the death penalty is God's idea or does it reject God's teaching? God has not appointed His church to administer it, but we must teach *the whole counsel of God* and pray for leaders who respect His ways, even when churches do not.

-- *Editor's Note:* As the article inside reminds us—we have daily duties. While gospel meetings provide "bulk" opportunities to teach, remember daily to look for opportunities to point men's minds to the original gospel of Christ, even in matters like capital punishment. Keep teaching!

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The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

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December 11, 2011

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"LESS IS MORE"

David Osteen

At least less *can* be more, but in order to understand the valuable principle of this lesson we need to first properly define it. Oftentimes when people use the phrase "less is more", they use the word "less" as it relates to time. For example, many churches mistakenly partake of the Lord's Supper "less often" in an effort to make it "more meaningful". However, throughout the course of this study, we are looking at the principle of "less" as it relates to "quantity", and "more" as it relates to time ("often"). Many times, doing less quantity more often is easier, more productive, more efficient, and better overall.

While buying in "bulk" and the "big box stores" are hit phrases in our modern day vernacular, bulk isn't always better. Think of when it rains. We all know how much rain is needed, but we'd much prefer less rain more often than we would much rain less often. Less rain more often produces bountiful crops. More rain and more rain can just lead to ruin and destruction (See: Story of Noah 40 days/40 nights in Genesis 7-8). Consider another example, eating. Our bodies aren't designed to eat "Thanksgiving Style" every day. They are designed to eat smaller portions regularly throughout the day. We can understand how the basic principles of "less is more" are oftentimes best in the world, but what about spiritually?

Consider a scriptural example from the book of Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy 31:9-13 God commanded the Israelites to gather together once every 7 years at the Feast of the Booths and to have the whole law of God read in the hearing of every man, woman, child, and foreigner of the land. So once a year they would take, by the command of God, a bulk amount of time (1 week) and hear the word of God; but was this the *only* time they were to hear God's word? In Dt. 17:19 we see that God said when Israel had a king, that he was to write the law of God and to, "...read it all the days of his life". God expected the king to daily be in His word, not just every now and then. Consider also that God commanded the Israelites to teach their children the

statues of the Lord (Dt. 4:9-10). When and how did God expect them to do this; once every seven years? Not hardly. We see in Dt. 6 that God said to teach your children, "...when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up." (Dt. 6:7) The bulk (hearing God's word for a week every 7 years) was good. God commanded it; but it was not to be at the expense of *the daily*.

We are in a time of year where people will start to get awfully religious. "Jesus is the reason for the season", "Put Christ back in Christmas", and gearing up for church parades and birthday plays and celebrations of the birth of Christ. It's a "bulk" time of year, where people feel it's the time to be giving, charitable, religious, and close to Christ. But Christ wants that daily. God didn't leave us authority in scripture to forsake the weekly gathering for an annual or biannual gathering (Hebrews 10:24-25). God didn't tell us to be charitable and giving and considerate just annually or biannually (I Cor. 16:1-2; Heb. 3:13; Titus 3:14; James 2:14-17; etc.). These are things that are to be done all year, and Christians need to understand that service to God is a daily thing.

Consider also, one's own faithfulness. If faith comes from hearing the word of God, then what do we need to do to grow and mature in faith? Is it best to read the Bible in bulk (ex. – one week solid out of the year), or to read "less more often". Think of these numbers. 15 minutes is about 1% of a 24 hour day. Say you were to devote 1% of each day to reading the scriptures. 15 minutes a day for 365 days adds up to 5,475 minutes. Take that 5,475 minutes and convert it into hours and you get 91.25 hours. Now convert those hours into 24 hour days and you get 3.8 days. Nobody can typically just stay awake for 4 days straight reading. We are normally awake about 15 hours a day. So go back and covert that to 91.25 hours to 15 hour days and you get 6.08 days. So reading your Bible 15 minutes a day for 365 days in a year is the equivalent of reading for a little over 6 days straight; but the question is, which is better? Which is going to provide a healthy spiritual diet for you? You can no better grow spiritually reading the Bible for only 6 solid days in a year than you could eating meals for 6 solid days in a year and then going hungry the rest of the time. In this case of reading scripture, less more often is definitely better (more).

There are a wide variety of other applications to a Christian's walk, work and worship that can be examined, but a principle that we can definitely see in scripture is that God expects us to devote ourselves to His will daily. Whether it be in prayer (I Thess. 5:17), or be in reading His word (Psalms 1:2-3), or working for His kingdom (I Cor. 15:58), daily service is what the Lord promotes in principle throughout

scripture. If you know you are lacking in the Lord's service, may you dedicate *this* day... to be the first day of a renewed daily walk with the Lord. "Less is more", and when we learn how to apply that principle correctly, there is no end in sight to our potential spiritual growth and faithfulness!

(Grace Gazette; 12-4-11; Texas City Church of Christ)

YOUR CHILD DESERVES THE BEST!

Author Unknown

- Your child deserves to hear you pray earnestly and often.
- Your child deserves to go to worship and Bible classes with you regularly.
- Your child deserves to see you sacrifice for the Lord.
- Your child deserves to hear you talk to others about their becoming Christians.
- Your child deserves to go with you to visit the sick and bereaved.
- Your child deserves to be taught the Bible by you.
- Your child deserves to hear you praise the church.
- Your child deserves to see you putting the Lord first.
- Your child deserves to know Christ, and His living in you.

Editor's note: This is more than just good parental advice—parents will answer to God some day for these things!

Fathers: *And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.* (Eph. 6:4)

Mothers: *...the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.* (Titus 2:4-5)

Your child is a special soul who will spend eternity in heaven or hell. You try to provide the best health care, education, nutrition, etc. for your child. What care are you providing for their spiritual health, education, and nutrition? Someday soon, they will leave your home and some day, you will not be on earth to teach and influence them in wisdom (Prov. 1:8). HURRY! Your opportunities and time with them is running shorter every day.