

ANIMAL HOUSE

David Halbrook

Last week's article drew the ire of some. It seems that those people failed to see that in Scripture, homosexuality is one of many forms of sexual immorality. God made and joined male and female and commanded them not to separate (Matthew 19:4-6). This is marriage.

If we do not allow God to define marriage and family, then all human opinions of marriage become equally valid. In 2006, a British woman married a male dolphin "named Cindy." In 2006 in India, a woman loved and married a cobra. Should human-animal marriages or "civil unions" be recognized? "Ah, that's silly" you say? It is--but WHY is it silly?

Should pets be viewed as children? Is that silly? Should newspapers be forced to include pets in obituaries? Some people in Batesville believe so. What should we do to these people? Try to teach them the gospel of Christ and show them the folly of every man doing what is right in his own eyes. That is the purpose of these articles each week. *He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him--the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.* (John 12:48).

-- *Editor's Note:* Over the past two weeks, controversy in Batesville has even reached the governor's ears. Consistent with the *Batesville Guard's* policy for free obituaries, a local homosexual was not listed in the obituary of his "life partner" and controversy has ensued. According to *The Batesville Guard*, this same individual attempted to list cats and dogs in the "children" space of the obituary. Discuss this with people you know—not as gossip but in the interest of showing why the Bible must be our standard of authority. Our ad in the *Arkansas Weekly*, attempts to involve God's view on this controversy. Find and clip this article and hand it to anyone you know that reads *The Batesville Guard* to open a door of conversation on spiritual things.

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The Exhorter

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

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LORD'S RESURRECTION

Heath Rogers

1. Proves Jesus is the Son of God. The resurrection was the means by which God declared Jesus to be His Son. "*Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*" (Rom. 1:3-4).

2. Validates Our Faith. In 1 Corinthians 15:12-19, Paul indicated that there are some consequences to our faith if Jesus did not rise from the dead: the preaching of the apostles is vain (v.14), our faith is vain (v.14), the apostles were false witnesses (v.15), we are still in our sins (v.17), the dead have perished without hope of a resurrection (v.18), Christians are the most pitiable of all people upon the earth (v.19).

3. Assures Us of Future Judgment. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is the assurance of our own resurrection – to be followed by judgment.

"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

Christianity stands or falls with the resurrection. Either Jesus rose from the dead like He said He would, proving Himself to be the Son of God and gaining victory over death, or He did not rise from the dead, proving to be the greatest hoax that the world has ever known. If you believe that Jesus rose from the dead, why not act upon that belief by repenting of your sins, confessing your faith, and being baptized in water for the remission of your sins!

(The Way of Truth and Life, Church of Christ at St. Leon, May 1, 2011)

VBS AT “A FULL-SERVICE CONGREGATION”

David Halbrook

An elder of the Sunshine Church of Christ (Portsmouth, OH) described this congregation as “a ‘full-service’ congregation.” What kind of service does that involve? While planning for their VBS in 2007, the church appealed to its members for someone who has access to lambs, a picnic coordinator, refreshment coordinator, kitchen help, and craft activity leaders.¹ In Ephesians 4:11, God gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers to the church for its work. Did God assign any duties to the church that necessitates sheep-herders or refreshment coordinators? By examining the activity of churches of Christ in Scripture, we can know what work God gave the local church and see if picnics or lambs fit that work.

1. *Teaching the lost* The church at Philippi was involved in foreign evangelism by their fellowship with Paul-- *Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.* (Phili. 4:15-16). What was Paul doing in Thessalonica? Paul was teaching sinners (Acts 17:2-3). And when the church in Philippi was giving and Paul was receiving while he was in Thessalonica, the church was participating in teaching the lost. Were lambs, picnic coordinators, or refreshment coordinators needed by Paul for this work? No.

Sometimes churches use picnics and refreshments to motivate people to come to worship or to increase the pleasure of their visit. No Scripture can be found to show God’s approval of this approach. If it is valid then church-sponsored gymnasiums, ball fields, petting zoos, video games, and pool tables are also approved. These are not tools of bringing the lost to salvation in Christ.

2. *Strengthening the saved* After Paul made many disciples in Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, he returned to those areas and strengthened *the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, “We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.”* (Acts 14:21-22). Is this just the preacher’s job? No, for elders are to *take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood* (Acts 20:28). We find this happening from the beginning of the church when the church assembled to continue *steadfastly in the*

apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:42). Which of these duties are accomplished through lambs, picnics, or refreshments?

Some will say “fellowship is provided by eating lambs at picnics and drinking refreshments.” But, those activities do not strengthen the soul. All over the world, families spend the first day of the week in forests or on the beach eating lamb or ham at picnics along with other refreshments—does this strengthen their *souls*? No. These fathers are failing to strengthen their families (Eph. 6:4). Words spoken in song, prayer, or teaching strengthen souls (Eph. 5:19; 1 Cor. 14:15; Acts 11:14). Eating “this bread” and “this cup” in remembrance of the Lamb of God and gladly giving as we have purposed in our hearts to the Lord edifies each participant (1 Cor. 11:28; 2 Cor. 9:7). Lambs and food coordinators offer no spiritual fellowship or strength. Christians who associate “fellowship” with food are sadly mistaken, often misled by churches who offer picnics and entertainment without God’s approval.

3. *Physical care for needy saints* If there is any consistency among the record of the activity of the church in Scripture, it is that the church provided physical relief to Christians who were in physical need (Acts 4:35-37; 6:1-4; 1 Cor.16:1; Gal. 2:10). Yet, even providing physical care for saints has its limits (1 Tim. 5:3-16). Scripture never reveals the funds of the church being open for general distribution.

The church *must relieve* “widows indeed” (1 Tim. 5:16) and the unavoidable needs brought by disaster and tragedy (1 Cor. 16:1). Accessing lambs to provide for the needs of poor saints would have God’s approval, but this was not the context of the Sunshine church of Christ’s search. As this shows, many churches of Christ have created uses for the Lord’s money which He did not command.

Conclusion Brethren, are we so accomplished in the work God has given the church, that we need to add more things to it? Have we so thoroughly taught the lost, strengthened the saved, and cared for the saints that we can justify adding to the church, work that God chose not to assign? When we fully serve God and man consistent with the wisdom and revelation of God, then there will be “glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever” (Eph. 3:21).

As we plan for our upcoming Summer Bible Series, let’s consider what impression we are making on those who hear of and participate in the lessons.

¹ <http://sunshine-church.org/bulletin/2007/070429.pdf>