



# OAK GROVE ENCOURAGER

**"And let us consider one another in order to  
stir up love and good works" Hebrews 10:24**

*MARCH 25, 2007*

## **Serving God Will Help Your Family Meet Modern Challenges**

by Gary Henry

To his Ephesian brethren, Paul wrote, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:15,16). The more evil the environment in which the Christian must live, the more necessary it is to be careful and to be strong in the Lord.

Here at the end of the twentieth century, Christians in America know something about what Paul meant when he said that "the days are evil." From nearly every direction, our culture threatens our faith. The person who takes seriously his relationship to Christ can't help being concerned about what the future

holds. And for many of us, the spiritual survival of our *families* heads the list of our concerns. Modern challenges to the family are as deadly as they are real.

The wave of sexual promiscuity that has resulted from the Sexual Revolution strikes at the very heart of the family: the mutually faithful one-flesh relationship between husband and wife. Homosexuality promises to redefine the very concept of what a family is. Rampant divorce has made it impossible for children to have any confidence that their home will hold together long enough for them to grow up. The children's rights and social parenting movements are advocating that children be raised by the state rather than their parents. Abortion, suicide, and euthanasia each have disturbing family implications. The entertainment media, the educational system, and the welfare state all are arrayed against the traditional family. All in all, it is a frightening array of alien forces that confront the family in our nation.

What can we do to meet these challenges? *We can serve God faithfully in our families!* It may be a simple idea, but it is true: serving God has always been the best way to stay strong spiritually and survive the attacks of a hostile culture.

Think, for example, about Daniel's three friends. In the familiar story of Dan. 3, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego were strong enough to risk their lives rather than worship the image Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Threatened with death, they simply said, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. If that is the case, our God *whom we serve* is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king" (Dan. 3:16,17). There is more than a coincidental link between these men's strength *in* God and their previous service *to* God. They had what it took to meet their test because they had been serving God before the test arrived.

The same principle governs the spiritual strength of our families. If, as families, we genuinely love the Lord and our fellow man (Mt. 22:37-39), if we have truly given ourselves to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:5), and if we "serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Hb. 12:28), we will find that we have what it takes to overcome difficulty. To ward off spiritual disease and destruction, a family needs an "immune system," and the immune system God intended families to have is built up day by day in the process of serving Him. There is no shortcut. Without the resources that are built up in this way, there is really nothing that can protect a family from the devastating influences that we have to contend with right now.

For one thing, serving God is what builds up *faith*. Most of the modern threats to the family have grown out of a humanistic philosophy that denies the existence of God. Faith in the reality of God, real trust in Him personally, is what is necessary to meet these challenges. Long ago, John wrote, "For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world -- our faith" (1 Jn. 5:4). There is no pill we can take that will give us this faith that overcomes the world. Faith is gained in the daily process of serving God to the best of our understanding.

In the second place, serving God is what builds *genuine character in the inward person*. The worst dangers our families face today are those that strike at our inmost being, our very nature as beings created in God's image. The strength required to deal with such dangers is the strength of deep, godly character. Paul prayed for his brethren to be "strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man" (Eph.

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Sunday

Bible Class:

9:30 AM

Morning Worship:

10:30 AM

Evening Worship:

5:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Class:

7:30 PM

Evangelist:

Bruce J. Dehnt

Home Bible Studies Available

Upon Request

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3:16). Character is not built up relaxing in an easy chair; it's developed in the active work of serving God. Families today that hope to survive what's happening are going to need more than the superficial strength of those who merely talk about the Lord. We need the real strength of character that comes from genuine, daily service to God.

Thirdly, if our families are to meet modern challenges, we must enjoy *deep, rich relationships* among family members. These relationships don't just happen; they develop and deepen over time as we serve the Lord. What is true of the local congregation is no less true of our physical families: strength comes from "the effective working by which every part does its share" (Eph. 4:16). The best strength in the world is the strength of those who have grown strong serving the Lord together. Serving the Lord enriches our family relationships, and in so doing it builds into those relationships a strength that can hardly come any other way.

It so happens that serving God does one other thing for us. It gives us *courage!* Without courage, we are lost. Paul urged the Corinthians, "Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13). The godly family that survives modern culture and overcomes in the Lord is not one that makes cowardly compromise with evil. It courageously stands for what is true and good. Ultimately, the courage our families need today is formed in our hearts as we *experience the reality of living life in Christ*. We must do more than attend the services of the church; we must "taste" that the Lord is gracious (1 Pt. 2:3). When we do, our families will have the kind of power that the devil flees from.

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## 'Fools for Christ' help clean up checkout magazines

Ed Thomas OneNewsNow.com  
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The effort to speak up for decency at checkout stands in retail establishments is the motivation behind the "Fools for Christ" campaign from the American Decency Association (ADA). From magazines to newspapers, advocates are hoping to remove objectionable material as members of nationwide communities speak up.

The weekly and monthly display of *Cosmopolitan*, the *Sports Illustrated* "Swimsuit" edition, or any pornographic magazines are often the concern of parents and pro-family supporters at retail checkout areas. So ADA president Bill Johnson says his organization's campaign is designed to provide volunteer participants with some educational material helping to tailor an approach to speaking with local store managers.

The objective, he explains, is to keep those kinds of magazines away from high-visibility locations like the checkout counters.

"It's best that these magazines not be sold at all," Johnson acknowledges, "but at the very least that we speak up and we speak out, and we speak for decency at the checkout counters."

An ID card and as many follow-up visits as it takes, help to fulfill what Johnson says is a Christian's duty to identify with Christ and make a difference for the sake of decency -- rather than just shop and keep silent at the place where we spend our money. The ADA president says he knows that much of the

time, people are genuinely concerned -- "yet they just go ahead and ... still buy their groceries and spend that money without even letting their voice be known," he laments.

### MY THOUGHTS

After reading this article a line from one of the songs we teach our children in Bible class popped into my head; "...be careful little eyes what you see..." I know many godly parents that position themselves strategically at the check out lane so as to protect the hearts and minds of their little ones from the soft-core porn filling the racks, quite often at a four year olds eye level.

Even if the photos on the covers aren't bad enough we are bombarded with headlines like: "I had big foot's baby." The public at large seems obsessed with who is sleeping with whom or scandalous peeps of celebrities in private moments.

*Genesis 3:10 So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."*

If Adam and Eve had lived in 2007 the paparazzi would have their pictures plastered on some magazine cover praising them for finally "coming out." Instead of being embarrassed or ashamed some in our culture choose to flaunt their sinfulness.

The society at large seems to have lost their shamefacedness but I appreciate the few like those above they are speaking out and attempting to get our nation back on the correct moral axis, let's do our part in the same.

*Psalms 119:37 Turn away my eyes from looking at worthless things, And revive me in Your way.*

Bruce J. Dehut

## THE LORD'S DAY PRIVILEGE LIST

### Sunday Morning Service

Announcements: **Arvil Young**

Song Leader: **Brian Shepherd**

Opening Prayer: **David Shepherd**

Lord's Table: **J.O. Smith  
Jr. Stout  
Chris Runner  
Randall Hood**

Scripture Reading: **Steve Smith**

Sermon: **Bruce Dehut**

Closing Prayer: **Doug Smith**

### Sunday Evening Service

Announcements: **Arvil Young**

Song Leader: **Brian Shepherd**

Opening Prayer: **Jim Phelps**

Sermon: **Bruce Dehut**

Lord's Table: **J.O. Smith**

Closing Prayer: **Wayne Runner**