



The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. (1 Corinthians 1:21)

So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading. (Nehemiah 8:8) Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend. (Proverbs 27:17)

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“Behold the Lamb of God” — John 1:29, 36

I invite your attention to the Gospel of John where our text is taken. Our title: “Behold the Lamb of God.” John exclaimed this. It was John the Baptist’s testimony introducing Christ. Where was John when he exclaimed this? He was by the river Jordan preaching to the people, calling men to repent and turn from their sin and baptizing those who brought forth the fruits of repentance.

Read John 1:19–41. Behold carries the thought “to fix the eyes upon, to look at, to observe with care.” Secondly, it means, “to direct or fix the mind upon.” We want to do that. We want to behold this Lamb of God. We want to observe Him. John exclaimed, “Behold the Lamb of God.”

To whom was this exclamation directed? In verse 29 John addresses his audience as Jesus

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came to be baptized. John was by the river Jordan preaching, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). He saw Jesus coming and he said, “Behold the Lamb of God.” “Here is the one that I am talking to you about. Here is the one who is coming after me.”

Why was this exclamation given? It was directed to the audience. Verse 31 gives the thought, “that he should be made manifest to Israel.” He was intro-

ducing the Messiah to Israel, who Jesus was — the Lamb of God. In verse 29 he points out His mission, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Not only did John manifest who He was, but he also manifests His mission, who this individual was and why was he here at this time.

The second exclamation in verses 35, 36 was directed to John’s disciples. “John stood, and two of his disciples; (36)

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And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God!" What was he doing? He was directing, his disciples to Jesus. In verse 37 "The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." In verse 38 Jesus saw them following Him and said, "What seek ye? They said unto him . . . where dwellest thou?" They went. They followed Him and went to His abode and abode with Him that day.

What did they observe while they abode with Him? Notice what it says in verse 41, "He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah." We have found the Messiah. How did they identify this Messiah? I believe part of it was John's sending them to Him, but that was not all. It says that "They . . . abode with him" (verse 39). It does not tell us what was discussed that day. Most likely, we know how it is when we go and visit someone. We learn something about the other individual. These two disciples as they abode with Jesus that day they were observing His character. They were listening to His speech. They were observing His conduct. What they saw convinced them that here was the Messiah.

I) *Why did John describe Jesus as a Lamb?* John says, "Behold the Lamb of God." Why did he describe Him as a Lamb. 1) *To illustrate character. What does the lamb symbolize? It symbolizes the Old Testament sacrificial system.* The sacrificial lamb was to be perfect and without blemish. It was to be the choice and the best that they had. You know as well as I that lambs are used for sacrifice from the earliest times in human history. In Genesis 4:3, 4, the first sacrifice, the first offering that is listed is the one where Abel brought a sacrifice. We have Cain and Abel, "in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD. (4) And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering." It says he brought the best. He brought the fat. He brought the choice.

The lamb symbolizes sacrifice. The blood of the Lamb was the substitute that God accepted to make an atonement for man's sin. The blood of the lamb did not take away man's sin. It only covered man's sin pointing forward to the perfect sacrifice of the Lamb that John mentions would take "away the sin of the world." It was a substitute until Christ

shed His blood, the perfect sacrifice.

2) *What does the lamb symbolize? It symbolizes submission.* Sheep are models of submission. Sheep are models of submission. Isaiah 53:7 describes Jesus, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” John described Jesus as a lamb to illustrate His character. He was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isaiah 53:3). Yet, He was the Lord of heaven.

Since Jesus demonstrated the purity and trustful obedience to the Father, He was called the “Lamb of God.” I am not well acquainted with sheep, but from what I read and what I am told, you can hardly chase a sheep, but you can lead them. It speaks of a one who was willing to follow. It speaks of submission.

3) *What does the Lamb symbolize? It symbolizes nourishment.* The lamb was the staple meat in the Israelites’ diet. Yes, they had their other vegetables but the lamb was the staple of their meat. Jesus said in John 6:35, “I am the bread of life.” He invites all men to take of Him and live. I would like to read a few verses in John 6:53. Notice how John applies and describes

Jesus as the Lamb of nourishment. Jesus fulfilled that. John 6:52–58 says, “The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” This follows where Jesus say, “I am the bread of life.”

“(53) Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. (54) Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. (55) For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. (56) He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. (57) As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. (58) This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.” Notice the nourishment Jesus provides that of eternal life. He says, “he that eateth . . . shall live.” It speaks of nourishment, does it not?

4) *John described Jesus as a lamb because of His defenselessness.* We know that sheep have no weapon of natural defense. A horse will kick. Many other ani-

mals will kick in self-defense. We have nothing in the sheep to defend himself. Jesus in His earthly life did not defend Himself. He allowed His enemies to take Him captive. He voluntarily offered Himself. When they came to the garden, He said, "Whom seek ye? (5) They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth." Jesus response was, "I am he" (John 18:4, 5). He willingly gave Himself. Peter was one who was ready to defend his Lord. However, Jesus said, "Put up thy sword" (John 18:11). He allowed His enemies to take Him captive.

Further, He allowed His enemies to mistreat Him. What did they do? They "mocked him" (Matthew 27:29). They placed a crown of thorns on His head. "They bowed the knee" in mockery and said, "Hail, King of the Jews!" — mockery. Finally, "they crucified him" (Matthew 27:35). In all this what did Jesus do? He was as the lamb is "before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7). He willingly gave Himself. No man took His life from Him.

Jesus also calls us, His followers, to be defenseless. He commands us in Matthew 5:39, "resist not evil." He calls us to also be defenseless. We read

many accounts in *The Martyr's Mirror* and in Church history of the defenseless Christians. Why were they defenseless? They were following the Lamb of God. They were following the pattern that Jesus established.

II) *Who was this Lamb?* John

said, "Behold the Lamb of God." 1) *In Revelation 13:8 it speaks "of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."* Who was this Lamb? He was the one who was promised many years ago to Eve in the Garden of Eden when man sinned. In Genesis 3:15 we read of the Lord God coming into the Garden in the cool of day and He called to Adam and said, "Where art thou" (Genesis 3:9)? Adam said, "I was afraid . . . and I hid myself" (Genesis 3:10). Then God said, "What is this that thou hast done (Genesis 3:13)? Then, He cursed the enemy, the serpent, "Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life" (Genesis 3:14).

Then verse 15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." God was prophesying here of One who would make an atonement for man's sin, One who would bruise the serpent. We will look at that a little bit

later. Who was this Lamb? He was the one promised from the very beginning of time that would bruise the head of the serpent.

2) *Who was this Lamb? He was the one through whom "all the families of the earth [would] be blessed" (Genesis 12:3; 28:14).* In Genesis 12:3 God told Abram "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." Psalm 72:17 says "His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed." Who is in focus in these two verses? It is speaking very prophetically of Jesus. God told Abram through, "thy seed will all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 28:14). It was the prophecy concerning the one, the Lamb of God that would come some day yet in the future.

3) *Who was this Lamb? He was the one of whom the prophets prophesied would come.* We have many prophecies concerning Jesus. They wrote in great detail by the inspiration of God concerning His birth, where He would be born, His work, what He would accomplish, His death, how it would happen, His resurrection and ascension. We

find those prophecies scattered throughout the Old Testament especially in the book of Psalms. We have many prophecies of this one who would come. Who was this Lamb? He was the fulfillment of all those prophecies. In Jesus' coming to earth as a babe, and various times throughout His life, we have Jesus saying, in my own words, "This was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets."

4) *Who was this Lamb of God? He was the one the Old Testament sacrifices pointed forward to.* The rivers of shed animal blood could not atone for man's sin. They only covered man's sin until the perfect sacrifice could be offered. Hebrews 10:4-7 reads, "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. (5) Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: (6) In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure. (7) Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God." Again, speaking of Christ.

The Old Testament sacrifices, and animal blood only covered man's sin. It did not do away with it because God required perfect blood. Animal sacrifices

were perfect in one sense but not in the way that met God's requirement for sin.

5) *Who was this Lamb? He was the co-Creator of heaven and earth.* Notice what it says in John 1:1–3, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) The same was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” The co-Creator of heaven and earth. He had perfect knowledge of the tendency of man, His creation. Yet man did not perceive who he was. I would like to notice now John 1:10, 11, “He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. (11) He came unto his own, and his own received him not.” The co-Creator of heaven and earth was come down to earth. God revealed part of Himself to mankind.

6) *Who was this Lamb? He was the source of all life both physically and spiritually.* Through Him is the only way to eternal life. While on earth He had the power to bring dead men to life because He was the source of life. He was with God when God “breathed into [man's] nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis

2:7). I was speaking of the beginning of physical life. In 1 John 5:12 John writes, “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.” This is speaking of spiritual life.

John 1:12 says, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.” In the beginning of time, Jesus, the Lamb of God was with the Father and breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life. We have physical life. Then, here Jesus came to earth as the Lamb of God to provide spiritual life — the fulfilment of God's plan.

7) *Who was this Lamb of God? Verse 14, He was “the Word . . . made flesh.”* He was God revealing Himself in a new way through Jesus Christ. One time, in John 14:8 one of Jesus' disciples said to Him, “shew us the Father.” Jesus answered, “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9). He was the Word made flesh. Colossians 1:15, referring to Jesus says, “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.” Who was this Lamb? He was Word of God made flesh. He was the image of the invisible God. Jesus said “he that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

Jesus, as part of the Godhead, demonstrated to man some of the divine attributes such as love, mercy, and holiness that characterized the eternal Father. Jesus personality and His character can be described by paraphrasing a part of 1 Corinthians 13. Jesus is patient, and kind. He is just and not boastful. He is not arrogant or rude. When Jesus was here on earth He did not insist on His own way but allowed even His enemies, even sinners, to have their way with Him. He was not irritable or resentful. He did not rejoice at wrong, but rejoiced in the right. Jesus bears with all the imperfections of His disciples. He believes in His saints no matter how weak they are. He always hopes for their perseverance and His love for them endures through all their days. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind" (1 Corinthians 13:4), and patient and so forth. Jesus' character is described.

8) *Who was this Lamb of God? He was "the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).* He was the greatest gift that God ever gave to mankind. Galatians 4:4 says, "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law." He was the only begotten Son of God. God's timing is always perfect. He had

been preparing man to receive this gift. The Old Testament Law revealed man's helplessness to help himself. He needed something or someone beyond himself to meet the needs of his soul.

III) *I would like to look at the mission of the Lamb. Why did He come? His birth, in Luke 2, was announced to the shepherds. They said, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). 1) What is His mission? Why did He come? He came to be a Saviour. Saviour means "to be a deliverer." What was He to deliver from? He came to deliver man from the bondage of sin. Sin has blighted the human race ever since Adam and Eve yielded to the serpent's temptation in the garden of Eden. The sinful nature has passed upon all men.*

Man is doomed to die because the verdict of sin is death. Ezekiel 18:4 says, "the soul that sinneth, it shall die." Notice the finality — death. All of us are doomed to die. Why did He come? To provide salvation. Man is helpless to help himself. He needs someone to span the gap between sinful man and a holy God. Jesus does that for us today.

In Matthew's Gospel, when the angel was speaking to Joseph

about Mary, the angel describes Jesus, “for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). There is the reason why He came. There is His mission. It was not to save people in their sin, but from their sin. There is a great vast difference between the two.

2) *Further, what is the mission of the Lamb? The mission of the Lamb is to make an atonement for sin.* The sacrifice of His life and the shedding of His perfect, sinless blood met the requirements of a holy God to remove man’s sin. Matthew 20:28 says “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” There we have the purpose, the reason for His coming.

Jesus’ death opened the way for man to come into the very presence of God. 1 Peter 3:18 says, “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.” Why did He come? To die was the ultimate reason why Christ came. His atoning work of redemption was for Old Testament saints as well as the New Testament saint. All men are redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus.

3) *Why did He come? To bruise the head of the serpent.* In Genesis 3:15 (we read that verse before) God promised one who would do this. Jesus death on the cross dealt the serpent a death blow. 1 John 3:8 says, “He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” Not only did He bruise the head of the serpent but he also crushed it. He rendered him powerless in his grip of mankind. He broke the grip of the serpent upon mankind. Jesus came to earth to make an atonement for man so that man can be reconciled back to God.

4) *Why did He come? He came to be a light.* John 1:5 says, “And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.” Verse 9 says, “That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” Why did He come? He came to be a light. He came to give a light to those who sit in the darkness of sin. The sin of man places man outside fellowship with God. Matthew 4:16 says “The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.” Notice Jesus came to pro-

vide light to those who sit in the bondage of darkness of sin. He came to give hope to the hopeless to those who accept His person and work. Jesus said in Luke 5:32, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

5) *Why did He come? He came to minister.* I would like to read Matthew 20:28 again, “Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” To minister means, “to be an attendant, to wait upon, to serve.” We see that throughout Jesus’ earthly life. We see Him constantly giving a life of service to mankind. He met the physical needs and the spiritual needs of mankind as He moved among men. Those who were open to Him accepted Him, and He was able to work His work. However, for those who refused Him, He was not able to.

I would like to read Luke 7:22. This is the account when John sent his disciples to ask Jesus, “Art thou he that should come? or look we for another” (Luke 7:20)? “Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor

the gospel is preached.” Notice His mission there in a nutshell — why He came. His purpose was to seek and to save that which was lost. His message was “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17).

Further it did not stop with repent. He showed us how to live. He left “us an example” (1 Peter 2:21–23). how we should live. “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: (22) Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: (23) Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” Jesus came to give us an example how we should live. We can tell someone something. They may not understand, but if you show them then there is no question. Jesus did that in His coming to earth. He showed us by example. He demonstrated by example how He wants us to live.

He showed us by example how we should serve others. He gave himself constantly for the benefit of others. He was a man of compassion. Many times the Bible tells us that He had compassion on individuals when He saw their

suffering, He saw their illness, He was moved with compassion. He was a man of selflessness, a man of mercy, a man of truth whose words could not be gain-said.

Today, we are without excuse. We have His Word teaching us and His example showing us. “Behold the Lamb of God.” Where do we behold Him? We behold Him as He moved among men. Finally, we behold Him as He hung on the cross completing the plan of God shedding His blood so that we might be

redeemed, so that we can have forgiveness of sins and finally hope of eternal life beyond this life.

My desire is that those who stop to behold the Lamb of God may see beyond the physical man to the great plan of God and to the great cost of our redemption. May we come away with a deeper appreciation for our salvation and a burden to reach out to others around us. May others also may learn to know this Lamb of God. May the Lord bless.

Safeguarding the Social Life of Our Youth

It is with a sense of need that we come to you. We sense our own need for a discussion like this. We do not claim to have all the answers. Nevertheless, we want to, by the grace of God, present a few things that perhaps can challenge us in our thinking and in what we are doing. As we think of social life, it has to do with interrelating with one another as humans. We are social beings. God has created us as social beings with the desire to fellowship, the desire to communicate, and the desire to find companionship with others. We like to talk with those of our own age group because of our common interest and goals. We are

thinking about a specific age group — the youth in our midst. I do not plan to try to define what we mean by youth. I think we understand who the youth are.

There are sometimes parents who feel slighted if their children do not find companionship the way other people’s children do. Sometime ago a father came to me and he said that one thing that is a real burden, and concern to them is that none of their children have seen fit to involve themselves in courtship at this point. For some parents that means more to them than others. Sometimes perhaps our desire to have our children be accepted socially can really be a detriment

to them. As parents we want to guard against this.

Youth is a time of life when the energies are high and strong. They like activity and that is right. That is normal. Youth is also the time of life when the passions run strong. That is also normal. Therefore, some safeguarding needs to be done so that there is a proper conduct and activity in the youth of life. We are living in a day when many people in society, parents in society about us, prefer to turn their heads the other way and not pay attention to what their children are doing or to their children's social life. As Christians we are concerned about what our children are doing. It is our desire that each one would make it through to glory.

We will follow a simple approach in this discussion. I) Why we should be safeguarding our youth's social life. II) How to safeguard our youth's social life. I) *Why should we safeguard the social life of our youth?* 1) *We need to safeguard their social life because their moral purity is at stake.* Call to mind with me Genesis 39 and how Joseph was thrust into a social experience. He faced temptations in Potiphar's house that had the potential to destroy his purity. The social purity of our children

and our youth is at stake. It is in focus when we think of social life. Moral purity is at stake. A few unguarded moments can leave scars for the rest of life.

I am glad for the example of Joseph, and that the grace of God is sufficient for experiences such as this. I am not sure why God has made human beings with the ability to procreate before they are emotionally ready or prepared for the responsibility. However, that is the way God made us. As I said before youth is a time when the passions run strong and much of the social activity revolves around this type of thing in society. The fleshly urges of our bodies are not very far below the surface. Let us not think that our youth are any different from normal human beings.

One does not need to circulate long in society till we become aware of how morally corrupt the minds of many people are and how close to the surface immorality really is. Let us not fool ourselves. The casualty rate in society in relation to moral purity is very high. It is this kind of society that we are called to live in. Brethren and sisters, parents, we do well to safeguard our young people because there are some things that are at stake.

2) *We need to safeguard the*

social life of our youth because their souls are at stake. 1 Peter 2:11 says, “Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims,” now get this, “abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.” There are certain things — the fleshly lusts that have the ability to destroy spirituality. They have the ability to destroy the soul. That is what he is saying here. Their souls are at stake. Not only is their purity at stake but their souls are at stake. The Scriptures do not say for nought that in Revelation the “whoremongers, and [adulterers]” (Revelation 22:15), and so on are “without.” They are without. They are not within. Those things have the ability to damn the soul.

We want our youth to make it through to glory do we not? Why sure. It is the only thing that we have to take along to heaven with us. If we will let them run uncontrolled, it has the potential to damn the soul. It is simply that serious.

For this reason, as a church, we take a negative view of young people getting together after church for the express purpose of having a good time and playing together. It has the potential to destroy the soul and to destroy spirituality. We want to have the conviction that is instilled

through Bible preaching. A good way to destroy spirituality is to allow our youth to congregate. Recently, this winter on December 31 (it was not in our church group) there was a group of young people that met together to go ice skating and to skate the new year in. This was done after a church service. They skated the new year in. I tell you brethren and sisters it is a good way to destroy spirituality and to destroy conviction, through that which is only for the fulfilment of the fleshly lusts.

3) *We safeguard the social life our youth because they lack experience and understanding.* Proverbs 7 is a familiar chapter. The wise man says here Proverbs 7:6, 7 “For at the window of my house I looked through my casement, (7) And beheld among the simple ones, I discerned among the youths, a young man void of understanding.” We need to safeguard the social life of our youth because of their lack of understanding and experience. It says how he went through the streets and was seduced by a harlot. It was a social interchange and he was seduced. It says in verse 22, “He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks.” It grabbed a hold of him. It led him on, “Till a dart strike

through his liver; as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life” (verse 23).

I had to wonder as I read over this from time to time, what the outcome would have been of this young man, this youth who was void of understanding if some safeguards had been put in place or if some direction had been given. If his parents had been there to say, “No, you do not do this.” What would the outcome have been? Would it have been different? I venture to say it would have been. Our youth lack understanding and experience. This is not to their discredit. Rather, it shows that we need to instruct them, teach them, and guide them. This is why we have Bible schools and Christian day schools. It is to help them in their understanding and to gain knowledge that is godly.

There is a certain amount of understanding that comes by way of experience. Nevertheless, it is unfortunate when youth need to learn everything by experience. I am glad for the church group of which I am a part of and that is represented here in this congregation, and for the instruction and the teaching program that we have. Nevertheless, let us remember that regardless of how good our teaching program is,

that it is finally what we tolerate in our midst that will make us or break us. May the Lord help us to be safeguarding our youth so that we do not need to hear the commentary that is given here about this simple one — this young man void of understanding.

4) *We need to safeguard the social life of our youth because the tendency of man is downward.* Every person who is born into this world has the sin nature within them and has the pull within them away from God. We need to safeguard them because the tendency is down. I like Job’s example of Job 1, and it is my desire to follow his it. “And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them” (Job 1:4). They were having a social interchange and a social experience. They were experiencing social life. They were having a good time together.

Verse 5 says, “And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their

hearts. Thus, did Job continually.” Job reckoned with the fact that the potential for his children to sin was latent. He took measures to see to it that they did not sin and he prayed for them. Brethren and sisters, regardless how good we think our children are, or regardless of how good a model they might be, there is still that nature within that tends to lead them down and lead them away from God.

We must reckon with the fact brethren and sisters that we need to set some safeguards and restraints in place so that they can learn what discipline is. We do this so that when they are faced with a decision themselves they have learned to discipline themselves. That is really what we are teaching. Again, we need to safeguard their social life because the tendency is away from God.

5) *We need to safeguard the social life of our youth because habits and patterns are formed in the youth of life that follow them throughout life.* Breaking down barriers and crossing the barrier of the forbidden can break down and reduce an individual’s resistance. The next time it will be easier. The opposite is also true that when an individual says “No,” “Each victory will help you some other to win.” It is

important that we are establishing habits and patterns in the youth of life so that they will be a blessing to us later on life.

There are those individuals that allow themselves privileges in courtship that they should not. Those things will follow them and cause them to wince at the memory of it years later. It can be a means of discouraging them. It is important that we are establishing the right kind of habits and patterns.

6) *We need to safeguard the social life of our youth because the testimony of the church needs to be safeguarded.* It is said that if you look at what the young people do in a given church, or church groups, you can fairly well glean what the spiritual level is of the church group. I think there is truth in that. That is right. The spirituality, or the testimony of the church needs to be safeguarded. 1 Peter 2:9 says, “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” There is tremendous potential when there are faithful young people in spreading the gospel and in calling people to salvation. The opposite is also true in that we can turn people

against us if we allow our young people to run at will and let them do what they want to.

Some years ago, I was in a local store in the Ephrata area and it was a store that sold televisions. And there on the one wall was set after set of televisions that they had on display for sale. Every last one of those televisions was on. There, standing in front of that wall of televisions was a young man watching televisions, and by all appearances, by the way he was dressed, he came from a conservative Mennonite home. What kind of testimony does that leave? I say brethren and sisters God forbid that our young people should be seen doing that kind of thing. There is a testimony at stake and there is the testimony of the church is at stake. The spiritual level of a church group, I believe is seen in their young people.

II) *How do we safeguard the social life of our youth?* 1) *We safeguard the social life of our youth by curbing the playing activity.* Recall with me some years ago the bishops of the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite church drew up a statement on playing. I do not have that statement with me, but I would urge you to go and search it out and read it in its entirety for yourself. One of the points that I glean

from that statement is that the playing of our young people should get less and less as they get older.

There is place for playing in the home and at school. However, as children come up into the years when they are old enough to be courting, the playing should be going downward and becoming less and less. For young people to get together for the express purpose of playing whether it is volleyball or what have you, I believe the same thing applies that I said earlier, it is a good way to kill conviction and destroy spirituality. Ultimately if we are not careful it can “war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11) and damn the soul.

It has come to my attention that there are, within our church group in certain segments of our church group, young people getting together or congregating and playing the game *Rook*. I am not sure if you are all familiar with that or not, but it is a card game that does not really have the best connotations. As I understand it, one of the main threats of it is the conditioning effect that it can have on us to playing other “harder” card games (if you will allow me to call it that). It opens the door to such card games as Pinochle and Poker. These are played in the bar rooms of the

world today. If we will have this kind of thing, it will create spiritual dwarves of our youth and of our young people.

As parents we do well to know what our youth are doing when we go together, when we go visiting and that type of thing. Gathering together and playing this type of game can have the same kind of effect that playing any other game can have. It can destroy spiritual life.

When I was a young person, I can vividly see in my mind's memory a group of young people together that had their heads together playing *Rook*. I do not think there is any one of them with our group today. It identified them with something that was not right.

2) *We safeguard the social life of our youth through parental involvement and direction in courtship.* Parents need to be involved in their young people's courtship. They need to know what they are doing, where they are going, and what their activities are. The bulk of our activities when we are courting should revolve around spiritual experience such as attending worship services, street meetings, or that type of thing. Parents need to be alert to the extended trips. We are living in a day when our young people have a very broad

circle of friends which encompass states and provinces. Sometimes they are invited to weddings and such like. As parents let us be aware of that kind of danger that comes through our courting young people travelling distances together. Let us be alert to that and guard against that.

3) *We safeguard the social life of our youth by establishing some good lines of communication with our children.* I would be the first one to admit here that I feel I have much to learn yet by way of establishing good lines of communication. Nevertheless, it is my desire and ideal that our youth would find meaning in sharing their social interests and their social activities with their parents, and discussing issues, and discussing church related matters. I believe it all plays a part. If they cannot find meaning in discussing such things with us we are in a very poor position to require things of them and to safeguard, or put some regulations in place regarding their social interests.

4) *We safeguard the social life of our youth by guarding their exposure.* We discuss in our history classes what the C.O.'s faced. Somehow, it sends the chills up my back to think of our eighteen year olds needing to go

to the cities to the hospitals to work. I somehow cannot understand how that could have been possible and have them come out right. I am glad for the high percentage of our young people who were faithful in the midst of that kind of environment. However, there were multitudes upon multitudes of casualties in that as well. We need to guard their exposure.

One area we need to be alert to as parents is that we need to guard the exposure of our youth on the shopping scene. I am not sure that our young people have any business going shopping by themselves or having that kind of liberty and freedom. We might say, "Well, they do not go shopping in the evenings." That might be true and there probably are dangers there, but the corner minute markets also have some very real dangers. There is a social side to that, which we need to guard. It might not only be on the shopping scene but it might be also in those people who come into our place as salesmen or servicemen and that type of thing. We need to guard their exposure.

There are those who have been led astray and have been caused to fall by such individuals. Let us guard their socializing, and the opportunity that they have to socialize in those kinds of situa-

tions.

4) *We safeguard the social life of our youth by knowing who our children's friends are.* Parents, are you aware of whom your children are congregating with after church? What circle are they in? Sometime ago a father came to me and said, "My son became acquainted with such and such a young man from your congregation at Numidia." He asked, "What kind of boy is he? Is he the kind of friend my son should have? What about him?" I say the Lord bless that kind of inquiry and desire to know who his children's friends were and what kind of calibre they were.

I would like to say here parents that even though our children become acquainted with young people and socialize with young people, it does not say that they are the right kind of friends. We need to do some scrutinizing and be alert. I am glad for the many good friends that have been made at Numidia and for the right kind. However, let us remember that not everyone who goes there thinks rightly. We may as well reckon with that. We are living in a day when, as I said before, where our children are coming into contact with a broadening circle of friends and it encompasses distances and miles.

Recently, a father came to me

and he said that his son bought himself a cellular phone so that his friends can call directly to him. They do not need to go through the parents, or through the home. He was lamenting what a curse that was to his home life. I say parents must be alert to that kind of thing. He said, "The thing that is happening is that my authority is being undermined." I can understand what he is saying. I know what he is talking about. He said, "My son can go up into his room on the Sunday afternoon and his friends know what his telephone number is and they can call him and talk to him."

Parents, there is danger at our door [knocks on pulpit three times] that we must be alert to. I do not think our young people have any business having their own personal telephone. There are very few that are good enough to know how to handle that kind of liberty. Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned" (Job 1:5). He recognized the tendency that was there.

5) *We safeguard the social life of our youth by not being too free to allow them to go here and there.* The best way I can say it is by not being too lenient in allowing our children to run. There is the need to set some boundaries. There are very few children — youth who have the

experience and the understanding to be able to control their own private telephone. Therefore, there are very few young people who have the moral uprightness and fortitude to control themselves in the framework of unlimited liberty to go wherever they want to. Maybe you do not face that in your congregation. However, in our area we have churches here and here and here and our young people can, for the most part to church in our own group every Sunday night there is a Sunday evening service. As parents we must guard that as well.

I have observed homes where the young people have been allowed to go wherever they want. It has not worked out for the best. As parents we do well to set some boundaries and say, "Maybe this many Sunday evenings of the month you can, or this Sunday evening you can go over here, but the rest of the time you spend with your family." As parents, it takes wisdom to know how to direct that and guard that.

6) *We safeguard the social life of our youth by regularly praying for our young people.* Parents, we need to pray for our youth. We need to pray for them even as Job did of old. He offered a sacrifice on behalf of his young peo-

ple, his youth, his children. I do not know how old they were, but they were his children and he prayed for them. I am glad for this opportunity to pray for my children. I have felt the need for doing that time after time, when my children were without, were outside of my reach, as it were. I was not there to say no to them. I did not know what they were facing. Perhaps they went some distance to a wedding or something like that.

I am not advocating that we expect God to do something that we are not willing to do. However, unless we are touching the throne on behalf of our youth, we probably will not make it. If there is any one area that I as a parent feel a need to grow in, it is in the area of praying for my young people, for my youth. We do not know what they are facing when we are not there to tap them on the shoulder and say, "No, you should not do that." Or, "You should not go here." Or, "Do not become too inquisitive over here." We can touch them through prayer. That is the way I look at it. We need to pray that they would know how to drive when they are perhaps going with a friend or two. We need to pray that they would know how to conduct themselves in relation to other people. Let us follow

Job's example of prayer.

7) *We safeguard the social life of our youth by providing every opportunity possible for their spiritual life.* I would like to emphasize that it is more important for them to avail themselves of spiritual opportunities in worship than what it is to have socializing with their friends. It is more important that they come to church than it is that they go visiting their friends. There is no better place to enlarge the social circle than in the context of a spiritual experience including street meetings and so on. That is why Numidia has been a blessing to us. It is because their social life has been broadened and increased in the context of spirituality, spiritual experience, and spiritual exercise.

Enlarging and increasing our social life in the context of spiritual service and worship is a good way to do it. We need to be providing every opportunity possible for their spiritual growth. That is why we emphasize the importance of attending church and bringing our children to church. We allow them to socialize in a limited way after church because it follows on the heels of a spiritual experience and a preaching of the Word.

8) *We safeguard the social life of our youth by maintaining sep-*

aration, distinctive attire, and emphasizing a separate lifestyle.

It is important that we appear like Christians and that we appear in the way in which we should. As parents we should be emphasizing that and be guarding against the casual appearance. With regard to the socializing and the social life of our young people, unless there are some safeguards put in place, it probably will not turn out right because the bent of human nature is down. I am glad for the church direction and the restrictions that are placed in relation to the church disciplines. I am glad for that. Nevertheless, as parents we basically are responsible to monitor that and to direct and to guide it. We have a very solemn responsibility.

In conclusion, we could look at the rewards of safeguarding the social life of our youth. The rewards are many. There is the rest, the stability, and the security that it brings to name a few. However, the challenge still rests with us that we need to put safeguards in place. Really, our children will need to do some choosing for themselves if they will make it. 2 Samuel 18:29 relates a sad experience. It is king David. The king said, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" Was Absalom safe? No, he was not. In fact, he was dead. He was not

safe. He died rebelling against his father.

I would appeal to youth that there are two choices for you. You can either accept and appreciate the godly way which your parents are so faithfully endeavouring to set up and safeguard, or in the end die among the rebellious ones. I would appeal young people, even though you perhaps do not understand why there are certain safeguards put in place, let me assure you, it is for your spiritual well-being. I would plead with you that you would follow in the right way.

Again in verse 32, "Is the young man Absalom safe?" "And the king was much moved, and went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept: and as he went, thus he said, O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:33). It was a bitter and lamentable cry. Parents, is your young person safe? Is your son safe? Will he go right? Or, will you someday awaken to the reality, as David did here, that Absalom was gone? Perhaps, and only perhaps if David would have put a few safeguards into place and said, "No," to Absalom earlier in life he would not have come to this point that he had a lamentable and bitter cry.

My heart goes out to those parents who have children that have turned their backs on the right way. We know that children need to choose, but parents, let us not give up and follow them. Let us continue to hold to the right. Let us continue to hold to the tried and the proven. Let us continue to hold to the way of the right so that our children have something

to hold fast to, and we can look back with memories, blessed memories, fond memories. I tell you it will not simply happen. Some safeguards need to be put in place so that by the grace of God the right thing can happen. May the Lord help us to have wisdom and understanding as we face the challenge of directing our youth.

Scripture References

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From a message by Allen Weaver

Sunday, September 13, 1998

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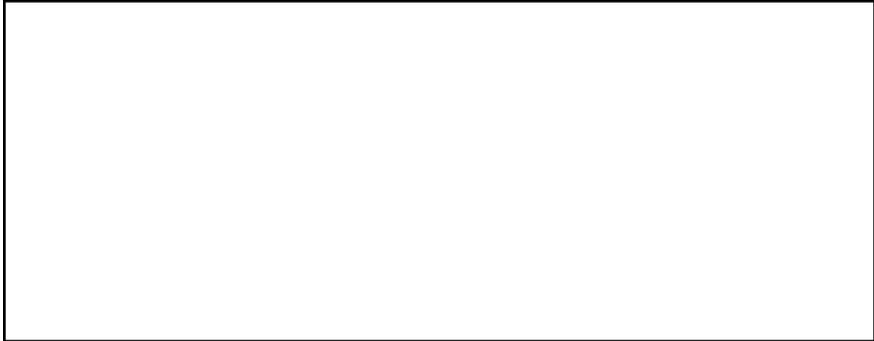
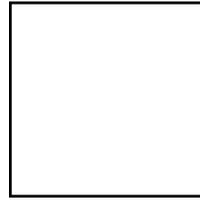
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