



McCLAIN MINISTRIES

Since 2000 A Monthly Christian Newsletter Publication

June 2006



Happy Father's Day

Melva's Corner

ARE YOU FRIENDS WITH GOD?

Bible Text: II Cor. 5:21

Central Truth: Broken relationships can't be repaired by rules or promises to do better or even church membership.

How long do you think the original experience of Eden lasted? Hours? Days? Years? I think we let our quick reading of a short section of Genesis – less than three whole chapters of the Bible – deceive us into thinking there was hardly the blink of an eye between Adam's utter lack of self-consciousness or shame about being totally naked before his wife and his Creator and his pitiful attempt to become a clothing designer and to hide from his Best Friend. Ah, yes, and that's my point. Adam, Eve, and God were "best friends" until something happened to alienate them. Put the man and woman on the run. Make them afraid of God to the point that they would try to avoid Him.

Let me tell you how I see this verse: **"Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as He was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the**

Life Events

Happy Birthday!



Hattie Ranson
Alice Payne
Betty Bryant
Shelia McDouglas

What Makes a Dad?

God took the strength of a mountain,
The majesty of a tree,
The warmth of a summer sun,
The calm of a quiet sea,
The generous soul of nature,
The comforting arm of night,
The wisdom of the ages,
The power of the eagle's flight,
The joy of a morning in spring,
The faith of a mustard seed,
The patience of eternity,
The depth of a family need,
Then God combined these qualities,
When there was nothing more to add,
He knew His masterpiece was complete,
And so,

He called it ... Dad

~~Author Unknown.~~

LORD God among the trees of the garden” (Gen. 3:8). God walking in the garden was commonplace. He did it every day. He probably walked around with Eve and Adam not only “in the cool of the day” but at sunrise and at lunchtime. Whenever they wanted to talk to Him – ask a question or figure out something about their humanity. He was there. They were tight with God. Best friends!

That’s why the next verse is among the saddest in all of Holy Scripture: “The Lord God called to the man, ‘Where are you?’ ” (Gen. 3:9). Intimacy had just become estrangement. Emotional closeness had been transformed into emotional distance. Friendship mutated into fear, and delight at His presence into dismay that He was around. There is no sadder scene anywhere in the Bible. The personal relationship between God and mankind had just been broken!

Redeemer God has been on a mission every since to close the gap and put an end to the alienation and fear; to restore the broken relationship. Although He is the aggrieved party, He has been taking it upon Himself to communicate with His estranged creatures. Loving us as a concerned Father who is grieving His prodigal sons and daughters, He has struggled to communicate His deep love and concern.

In Romans 5, Paul links what happened at the cross to the disruption that goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. I like the familiar words Eugene Peterson uses to express the ideas involved in reconciliation – people “at odds with God” have been “put on friendly terms” with Him through Christ’s sacrificial death.

Now that we are set right with God by means of this sacrificial death, the consummate blood sacrifice, there is no longer a question of being at odds with God in any way. If, when we were at our worst

we were put on friendly terms with God by the sacrificial death of his Son, now that we’re at our best, just think of how our lives will expand and deepen by means of His resurrection life!

With this new resurrection life my concern is that we do not take sin seriously enough!

We have worked out this neat self-deception to the effect that beliefs and actions, love and behavior may be contradictory. In our theology we try to have it both ways – we believe God for salvation but at the same time we refuse to obey Him. A professed faith in God that doesn’t obey God isn’t faith at all. Or, if you want to call it faith, it is dead faith (Jas. 2:14). In our personal relationships, according to this absurd parallel theology we’ve created, a man who can love his wife in spite of the fact that he beats her or cheats on her. Love is as love does. And it is a lie spawned in hell that we humans can love either God or one another while doing hateful things to them. The Apostle John says the phony claim is cancelled by contradictory behavior (I John 4:20-21).

God doesn’t play those games with us. He doesn’t allow us the luxury of denial. He forces us to admit that we are either believers or unbelievers; to be undeclared is to be an unbeliever. Jesus said people would either be for Him or against Him; there would be no third category. That means that we either have a relationship with God, or we don’t. We are either His friends, or we are His enemies. We are either reconciled to Him through the cross, or we are alienated in our thoughts and deeds.

The sin that had us separated from God was laid on Jesus when He died in our stead. He cried out, “**My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**” (Matt. 27:46). Do you think that’s just some minor statement used to fill up the Bible? Well I take it liter-

ally. – That Jesus was experiencing the alienation, enemy status, and abandonment sin brings on those in bondage to it. And I understand it to mean that He experienced so awful a fate in order to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. It is the biblical concept of reconciliation (i.e. putting estranged persons back in healthy relationship). Through Christ, God and humankind are put at-one again!

“All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (II Cor. 5:18-21).

The initiative in this reconciliation is with God. He was in Christ. He reconciled the world to Himself. He gives the message of reconciliation. **It is not** an invitation for us to come and try to make amends for breaking God’s heart by doing better or simply living by the rules. **It is** the announcement of a completed work on our behalf and an invitation to accept what has **already been done** for us. You can’t do anything to earn salvation. God through Christ has made the first step. All we have to do is turn around from our sin consciousness and make the next step-receiving. How different the gospel is from the moralism or legalism so often preached as gospel!

Broken relationships can’t be repaired by rules or promises to do better or even church membership. They must wait for a dramatic move by one or both of the parties involved at a personal level. The cross is

God’s move toward us to offer pardon, reconciliation, and a fresh start. It sets us free from the self-hatred and fear of judgment that so often passes for religion. It lets us live in **peaceful community** with one another. It gives the world a little glimpse of Eden - and invites them to live the experience themselves. Ah, yes, how wonderful it is to be friends with God!

Memory Text:

"For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." (II Corinthians 5:21)📖

☞ STORMY SEASON! ☞

Bible Text: Psalm 107:27; Mark 4:39

Central Truth: God's people have recognized God as the ultimate and perfect shepherd.

Here we are in that time of the year when storms come upon us often. We find that the weather person on the local news program is more important to us. If they say, grab your umbrella or raincoat we pay attention. Rain storms, thunderstorms, windstorms, tornados, storms of all kind cluster into this season of the year. We understand that is just the way it is with the weather; storms come, and you prepare for them as best you can. Life goes on.

We had so many hurricanes and storms last year. The sound and fury of the storms wore on you after awhile. Life has its storms, too. The storms of life can really wear on us, as well. However, the manner in which we respond to these storms can be a powerful witness.

Where can we go to find a dependable and constant source of strength, comfort, hope, and restoration? When we face life’s storms, is there any assurance or hope?

Absolutely! For centuries, God's people have recognized God as the ultimate and perfect shepherd. Let's confess His graciousness and goodness!

Sometimes the Lord calms the storms that rage in our lives.

He calms the storm, so that its waves are still. (Psalm 107:29)

Then He [Jesus] arose and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased and there was a great calm. (Mark 4:39)

I love it when God does that, but sometimes HE doesn't move the storm.

Recently I was studying about the early Christian servant Stephen. (Act 6:1 – 8) Stephen was not described as a weak, faithless person, but as a strong Christian with faith, wisdom, and spiritual power. In the midst of persecution, the way that he handled the storm became a witness and an inspiration to others. The key focus is the witness of Stephen's life: "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people... And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel ... and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep." (Acts 6:8; Acts 6:16; Acts 7:58 – 60 NKJV)

The way Stephen kept his eyes on Jesus in this storm was a testimony of faith to Saul — who at this point was persecuting Christians, but would later become the great missionary to the Gentiles telling the story of Christ.

The way that we demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit in difficult times today can also be a most powerful witness to those around us. Anyone can be joyful and peaceful when things are going well, but it is supernatural to have love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control when you are in the middle of one of life's raging storms. (Galatians 5:22 23)

When you find yourself in a storm, by all means pray that the Lord will remove it. If He doesn't, pray that the Lord will help you to be a witness to those around you in the middle of the storm. We don't want to be guilty of being fair weather Christians. In the midst of a storm, we certainly hope that God will glorify Himself through us by the way we handle our storms.

Paul's closing words to the churches of Asia Minor are our fitting reminder of this spiritual necessity yet great opportunity:

Finally, let the mighty strength of the Lord make you strong. Put on all the armor that God gives, so you can defend yourself against the devil's tricks. We are not fighting against humans. We are fighting against forces and authorities and against rulers of darkness and powers in the spiritual world. So put on all the armor that God gives. Then when that evil day comes, you will be able to defend yourself. And when the battle is over, you will still be standing firm ... Never stop praying, especially for others. Always pray by the power of the Spirit. Stay alert and keep praying for God's people. Pray that I will be given the message to speak and that I may fearlessly explain the mystery about the good news. I was sent to do this work, and that's the reason I am in jail. So pray that I will be brave and will speak as I should ... I pray that God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ will give peace, love, and faith to every follower! May God be kind to everyone who keeps on loving our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 6:10 – 13; Ephesians 6: 18 – 20; Ephesians 6:23 – 24 CEV)

Memory Text:

"We don't go around preaching about ourselves; we preach Christ Jesus, the Lord. All we say about ourselves is that we are your servants because of what Jesus has done for us. For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made us understand that this light is the brightness of the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. But this precious treasure — this light and power that now shine within us — is held in perishable containers, that is, in our bodies. So everyone can see that our glorious power is from God and is not our own." (II Corinthians 4:5 – 7 NLT) 📖

Higher Mountain...Higher Praises

WITH THIS CUP
Sylvia Washington

I just wanted to let you guys know just how much reading [With This Cup](#) has blessed me today.

I received a call from Melva about 12:03 pm telling me that the Lord instilled on her heart to tell me to read [With This Cup](#). I told her that I would and we talked a while longer and I got off the phone and went right over to the computer to do what I said that I would do.

Well, I pulled up McClain Ministries' website, found [With This Cup](#) and proceeded to read. I read about 6 pages and looked to see how many pages it was and there were 46 pages. I said to myself, I will read part now and part later. Well, needless to say, I read the entire 46 pages because God wanted to speak to me. He would not let me stop reading. I read from about 12:35 pm until 2:56 pm. This piece has blessed me so!

I cried and I wiped tears and I cried and I wiped tears. I got to the part where Melva

wrote, The Father was very much a part of the Crucifixion. He was there in His Son, listening to Every Word. When the Son looked up to Him and said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," He was close by saying, "I do, I have, I will," I cried so hard until it hurt so badly. I literally heard the Lord, my God say shhhhh, shhhhhh, don't cry. The Lord put these Words on my lips. This came out of my mouth. God loves me so much that he did not want me to cry.

I ask everyone to take the time and read this piece if you have not already, if you have already read it, read it again. [It will make a difference](#). There is an anointing on this [With This Cup](#). Please, don't miss this anointing.

Prayer Request – I received a call from our sister [Mary Jordan Smith](#) today...her father Reverend C. F. Jordan has been taken to the CMMC emergency room in Jackson, MS. No details at this time. Let's stay on our post!

Praise Report - I spoke with [Mary Jordan Smith](#) earlier today who shared the fact that her father Rev. Jordan had successful Pacemaker surgery and was released from the hospital yesterday evening.

MOTHER'S DAY BASKET'S WERE A GREAT TURNOUT!
Denise Jones



Attached is a basket I made for a co-worker's mother. I received SEVERAL text messages and voicemails yesterday telling

me how happy their mom was when they gave her the basket.

I am really enjoying myself and my clientele has really kicked in. I made \$2500 AGAIN. God is AWESOME!

I had baskets let over so I rode up and down the street my mother lived on and delivered baskets in her neighborhood

TEARS, TEARS, TEARS! TEARS OF JOY

I gave my mother flowers when she was able to enjoy them so I don't take flowers to her grave site. I think people would rather receive them while they still have breath in their body.

"MORE PRAISE"

SUDDENLY!

Denise Jones

Saturday morning I was driving along I-220 Interstate when a highway patrol car pulled up and SUDDENLY stopped the traffic to let a funeral pass. This caused everyone to brake SUDDENLY. Well, it was so scary. I applied my brakes as much as I possibly could but, my car didn't seem to want to stop.

Saints, all I could do was call on the name of "JESUS." I CALLED HIS NAME UNTIL MY CAR STOPPED and when it stopped it was on the tail end of the car in front of me.

That evening when I was getting out of the tub tears began to fall from my eyes because I thought to myself, "I'M STILL HERE." Satan tried to take my life today but JESUS stepped in.

As I was praising God for saving my life I went down to my feet and grabbed my ankles just praying and thanking Him for his Grace and Mercy. I heard a voice say,

"WHERE ARE YOUR HANDS?" I answered, "ON MY FEET."

You see saints; I've been having severe pain with my feet. The voice then said, "PRAY FOR YOUR FEET." I then began to really praise HIM. I began to quote verses in the Bible about healing.

God is Good Saints! He will NEVER leave you nor forsake you. All you have to do is "CALL ON HIS NAME...JESUS!

"AND MORE PRAISE"

Denise Jones

I received a call from the committee of Lanier High School Class of 1981 last night. They called to ask if I would CATER their REUNION. Ain't God good!

"THE PRAISE CONTINUES"

THE GOODNESS OF GOD

Lena Williams

Bless the Lord and praise His holy name!

On Monday Kim began her new position as an Analyst in the Information Technology Dept. at St. Jude Children's Hospital Research Center in Memphis TN. Kim called us Monday and informed us that she absolutely loves her new position. I could feel the excitement in her voice, as she talked about how she is going to love working there and how nice everyone is in her department.

Today I have in my hand a copy of the job description Kim gave me back in August. At the bottom of the page she wrote applied on website 08/06/05 (approx. 8 months ago). When I submitted the prayer request Melva said this is the ONE, because of all the good work that is being done for the children there, and I agreed with her.

Kim never heard a word from them, but in April she received a call asking her if she was still interested in applying for the same position. She did and was hired. *Note:* Most companies do not even keep your resumes beyond a couple of months, yet suddenly, at the set time she was called to take her position.

This is my point of truth. Our Heavenly Father answered this prayer back in August 05. Prior to being blessed she entered a wilderness period (there we can become bewildered). It is in that place of bewilderment that we can either grow close to God or give up. At the set time, she received her blessing, but the greater portion of the reward was the character and faith she developed as we encouraged her to stay faithful in the wilderness.

Now, Kim knows from experience, the providence and the hand of a loving God, a Father who will always prevail in our favor. These are the experiences that draw us closer to God to know HIM and the power of his resurrection. The power to give life back to everything that seems to be dead. Now, both of my children have experienced this power in their lives. It is what I pray for, that they will come to know HIM as I know HIM, to develop a relationship, not religion.

This day I am so thankful and grateful for answered prayers. The Lord has truly perfected everything that concerns me just as He said He would. This was the greatest mother's day gift I could have ever received. Both of my children, Kim and Jarrett have faith and a personal relationship with the Master of the Universe. Jesus is Lord. I have given birth to dreams and it is finished. Thanks for all of your prayers.

What have you been dreaming about lately or praying about? Stay in His WORD and Keep HOPE alive. The Answer is on HIS way and Hope maketh not a shame.

Response to Praise from Denise- Praise God Lena, Yes I am a witness to your testimony. I was getting ready for work when my husband called to tell me Nissan laid him off, you know what I said, "Oh Well." I went back in the bathroom to finish getting ready and all of a sudden I began to sing a song, "Jesus is on the main line, TELL HIM what you want." I've been singing it every since.

THIS WEEK, I've made over \$150.00 selling gift baskets. All you have to do is stand and DON'T GIVE UP! One thing I can tell you and that is, God is still on THE THRONE. TALK to Him...He's right THERE...He is right HERE...He is right NOW...He knows HOW, WHEN and WHERE WAIT I SAY ON THE LORD!📖

Scientific Wisdom Gean Tucker

My nephew LaMarc Humphrey won 1st place in the regional science fair in his category; Computer Science and 2nd place in the overall regional. LaMarc, a junior at Forest Hills High School and two other students attended the international science fair in Indianapolis the week of May 8th. His project at the international fair was, "How does Temperature Affect Metal Conductive Coatings".

Congratulations 8th Grade Graduates!

"...But the excellence of knowledge is that wisdom gives life to those who have it."
(Ecclesiastes 7:12)

Wishing all the best to: **Shanice Horton**, daughter of Jannice Horton

&

Gean Tucker's granddaughter, **Cerria Walker** who received honors May 18, 2006 along with other outstanding students from Jackson Public Middle Schools. Cerria is one of nine eight-grade scholars saluted from the Brinkley Middle School.

IN HIS PRESENCE
6:00 P.M. HOUR OF PRAYER



Use this wonderful supernatural tool the Lord has blessed us with **the 6 o'clock hour of power**. This is the time to intercede for the needs of others, the concerns of the ministry, and to pray for the leadership within our community, our nation, and our world.

Bring all of your cares and burdens to the altar and encourage others to do the same. Lives are being changed. Breakthroughs are happening.

Home Bible Workshop
Schedule



Mark your calendars for the June 2006 dates. Please join us and take the next step in your walk with God.

June 10th and June 17th

The Message...
"God's Power Principles"

✉ 1050 Ridgeside Drive
Brandon, MS 39042

☎ Phone: 601-824-7498

WEBSITE OFFERINGS

(Article Excerpts)
www.mcclainministries.org

EMERGENCY IN DARFUR



The conflict in Darfur is now over three years old. Millions of lives are at stake in the Darfur region of Sudan. An estimated 400,000 people have died as a result of the ongoing humanitarian emergency. Women, children and families struggle each day to survive. Nearly 2 million people have been forced to flee their homes, and an estimated 3.5 million people are hungry.

Survivors of the violence tell horrific stories of what they have witnessed. Villages were bombed by air and then besieged by horse-mounted militia. Those unable to flee were killed. Women and girls were viciously raped, often by multiple men. Villages were burned to the ground. Children describe seeing their brothers, sisters, parents, and grandparents thrown into bonfires. And now hundreds of thousands of survivors live in makeshift huts made from sticks and plastic bags.

We encourage you to pray about ending the violence in Darfur.

HOPE STILL ALIVE AND WELL

I realize the 'world' celebrated Easter on April 16th. But for weeks I have been meditating on the "Resurrection." The true Resurrection and what it should mean to believers.

Jesus is risen, and that means that there is no place where God is not, no evil so deep or dark that the light of grace and power and love does not pierce to its very bottom. There is no lost hope that cannot be restored or replaced, no discouragement that cannot be transformed into anticipation. Jesus is risen, and that means that sickness, sin, and death is defeated. Jesus is risen, and that means He walks with us in our discouragement and reminds us of the hope that because He lives, we live too. Jesus is risen, and in His empty tomb we see beyond a shadow of a doubt that wherever the road you travel might take you, He is right there with you.

Jesus is risen. So hope lives, too.

MELVA-MESSAGE FROM THE HEART

The feedback we've received regarding the **National Bulletin Board** project has been nothing less than overwhelming. And has truly gratified my heart and strengthen my resolve to complete the Entrepreneur Vision.

How exciting to be a part of this dramatic move of God in His effort to bless the 'doers' in the earth. As believers moved from a consumer based position into that of a provider, the Holy Spirit will strategically make resources, both tangible and intangible available to get the job done. The greatest resource that the Holy Spirit will provide is that of the Human quest to go beyond merely being blessed to that of being a blessing.

THE AVALANCHE OF GRACE

The emphasis on prayer must never be allowed to be routine or happenstance. God has given us this gift to unleash an avalanche of His grace. So as one who walked in the high country of grace and tasted the sweet air of salvation, isn't it time

you joined in the sounds that release an avalanche of grace?

Just when you are busy with your fairly-ordinary-not-real-exciting-but-not-really-boring-life, the Lord announces, "I'm here!" He answers a prayer. You win a victory. A relationship comes alive. You find answers to your questions. Life brings you new challenges.

At a time when you least expect it you discover that the Lord is doing something. Go see what it is that the Lord is doing. It may be the discovery of a lifetime . . . or an eternity.

INTERNET LONG DISTANCE

Stop typing and start talking. Talk to friends and family right from your PC.

Yes, we are finally ready to launch our Video Conference Feature. Members in Little Rock, AR will be the first to join our Bible Workshop on May 20th via Web Conferencing. Using MSN Messenger we will be able to connect 'live' with the folks in Arkansas both visually and audibly.

Over the weekend Carolyn Cooper, Sylvia Washington and I put the final touches on our Global outreach and were able to both see and speak with each other through the Internet. And you can do the same. If you haven't already, please contact me so that I can walk you thru the process.

MULTIMEDIA FEATURES

"SEED TIME AND HARVEST" WHEN WE FOCUS ON SOWING SEED-GOD WILL FOCUS ON MEETING OUR NEED

The quality of your life is in your hands. Wherever you are in life is a direct result of sowing seed in good ground. Want to improve your quality of life. Here is some additional seed to sow.

Start sowing today and never stop.

RENEWING

FORGIVENESS

PEACE

BEST FRIENDS

SHE IS WOMAN

PRESS ON

I WANT TO TESTIFY

FASTING

DOING THE KOOM BAYAH

McCLAIN MINISTRIES
National Bulletin Board Synergy Session

www.mcclainministries.org



The next Bulletin Board 'Networking' Party is scheduled for **Saturday, September 23, 2006**. Prior to our party date we will host one additional Synergy Sessions in an effort to galvanize the energy and resources necessary to successfully complete this massive project.

These 'synergy' sessions will allow us to pool all of our tangible and intangible knowledge.

PARTNERSHIP COMMITMENT

THANK YOU partners for doing your part. You are truly a blessing to McClain Ministries. Your faithful commitment and support is greatly appreciated. If you have not yet made a commitment to partner with us, please ask the Holy Spirit to speak to, and guide your heart about it. If you will do your part God will do His part.

HOW TO CONTACT MELVA

✉ 1050 Ridgeside Drive
Brandon, MS 39042

☎ Phone: 601-824-7498 or

Cell phone: 601-955-6722

✉ Email: melvamccclain@aol.com

3rd QUARTER TELECONFERENCE

Saturday, July 30th
8:00 A M. CST

Toll Free Dial-In Number
1-888-422-7124
Participant Code: 730940





THE DA VINCI CODE: FACT OR FICTION?

Part I

(II Timothy 1:7)

Central Truth: Our goal must first be the Jesus lifestyle rather than a set of facts to refute Dan Brown's fast and loose use of historical and non-historical information.

Needless to say, this subject can not be dealt with in one article. So today I will give a general overview and next week I will address the truths and errors of the book.

On May 19, 2006, the movie, starring Tom Hanks and directed by Ron Howard, hit the big screen. Dan Brown's faithful readers and many who have never read the book flocked to the theaters. Christians need to realize that *The Da Vinci Code's* message is not waning, but growing in social influence and cultural power.

What can the Church do? How do we prepare the next generation? We cannot close our eyes and hang on, knuckles whitening, to some ideal past. Under threat in the past, the Church has responded not with ghettos and retreat, but with confessions, creeds and deep analysis of the nature of error in order to speak with clarity the antithetical nature of the Truth.

The first thing to do is to examine book's claims. Such claims include that (1) Jesus Christ was married to Mary Magdalene, that (2) the four gospels were chosen from among several (namely 80!) that existed in the fourth century because the four gospels presented a divine Jesus versus a human Jesus in the excluded works and that (3) the divinity of Jesus became orthodoxy by a close vote at the council of Nicea in AD 325.

The key to the novel's plot is that many in the church knew that Jesus was married and to protect His late emerging divinity they conspired not to let that become known, even to the point of murder. Now as fiction, this makes an intriguing story, but what about as a historical skeleton that lays claim to being almost quasi-non-fiction? There are three major problems in the book we shall look at next week.

Christians and churches have many different responses to the release of the movie and to the impact of this incredibly popular book. Some have protested and advocated boycotts of the book and movie. Some have protested publicly or through email and letters. Others have structured classes and curriculum to refute the many different inaccuracies and blatant attacks on the Gospels, the divinity of Jesus and the reliability of the Scriptures.

"For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (II Timothy 1:7)

There is little doubt that *The Da Vinci Code* has hit a cultural nerve. It has been on the best seller list in the USA for two years. The same is true of many other countries around the world. Sales estimates run at forty-three million, while reader estimates reach as high as one hundred million. The novel's combination of mystery, history, conspiracy and the use of romantic locations and figures have made it a popular piece of fiction. Its plot has intrigued its readers and raised many questions about the history of early Christianity. Polls by George Barna show that 43 to 53 percent of its readers have felt spiritually benefited from reading the book. By any count, that means many people are being influenced by its claims, even though its genre is fiction.

What to Make of the Novel?

It is my view that the interest in this novel shows a few things about contemporary culture. There is a keen interest in things related to the origins of Christianity, indeed; there is a spiritual hunger of sorts out there. However, it is not a very discerning kind of quest. This makes it all the more important that those who teach about early Christian history today know the roots of the early history of Christianity and communicate some of that to their students, who in turn can have informed discussions with their inquisitive neighbors.

I have found four types of people responding to the novel. (1) Some treat the novel as fiction and do not believe its claims. **Just have a nice conversation with them.** (2) Others never having been in the church have heard this for the first time and have no way of knowing whether it is true or not. **Just interact with their sincere questions.** (3) Others in the church are in a similar position never having been taught about this material. **What they need is good information, not an overreaction.** (4) Some are looking for a reason, or, for reasons, not to believe.

The novel's information is something they grab onto for support. **Be patient in interacting with them.** In other words, as you talk about the novel and the movie do so with a calm and confidence that the supposed "facts" the novel presents have missed the mark.

One of my concerns is getting accurate information into the hands of Christians but my chief concern is that Christians live up to their own standards.

For those of us who are a bit older, a clean and "logical" presentation of fact matters greatly. However, for the emerging generation, more important than the facts of the argument are the facts demonstrated in the lives of the proponents of these arguments. In other words, there is no truth unless it is lived truth. Put in cornbread English, they want us to walk the walk and not just talk the talk.

Talk is cheap. Those who see themselves on the outside of the church today have already been bombarded with religious talk. They have seen Christians get all stirred up about all sorts of things and make a big commotion about a bunch of different issues. In fact, this younger generation is pretty much turned off by the facts proposed by the religious right, evangelicals, and televangelists and view Christianity — not Jesus, but the organized religious movements they see as Christianity — as irrelevant and out of touch. To them, the code wars are just more yada yada yada language ... the religious noise they can easily tune out and ignore.

I'm not saying facts don't matter. As a teacher the facts matter greatly. I'm not suggesting that truth is determined by the current drift of culture. Truth is truth. We do need to know the truth and the way so many obvious distortions of the truth can be swallowed is a reminder of how much we need to recommit ourselves to the truth.

However, I am saying that all our classes on *The Da Vinci Code* won't matter very much to those outside our Christian circles. The truth of the code wars is irrelevant to most of them. They want to see if we are serious about the real Jesus — His message, His lifestyle, His compassion, His character, and His involvement in the lives of non-believer who were on the fringes and margins of religious society and power in His day.

Most of us need to get back to the Gospels — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John — so we can live as Jesus' presence in our time. Our goal must first be the Jesus lifestyle rather than a set of facts to refute Dan Brown's fast and loose use of historical and non-historical information.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus calls us to the truth — authentic, real life as He lived it — in our life before God.

In Matthew, Jesus reminds us again and again that our righteousness has to be displayed in real life, in obedience, and in concern for the "least of these" rather than fighting over words we don't ever get around to obeying.

In Mark, Jesus demonstrates the power of God to redeem lives and care for the broken.

In Luke, Jesus makes clear that the Gospel is for all folks, even the most disenfranchised and forgotten.

The real code breaker, the real power to defeat the cynical and anti-Christian impact of both the book and the movie, is for us as God's people to decide to put into practice the truth we already know. We've got to shift the understanding of our culture about church away from buildings, politics, and powerful church hierarchies. To make a difference, we've got to leave our church buildings and enter our world as caring participants and not as cultural opponents — just like Jesus did.

If we are to have a counter-cultural impact, we've got to live as a counter-culture community in the world we're trying to reach. This call to incarnational style of ministry isn't optional, new, or a fad. It is rooted in the very work that God did in Jesus. (John 1: 1-18)

So Dan Brown and *The Da Vinci Code* have given us a wake up call. A call to know the facts of the Gospel better and a call to live the truth more fully in our daily lives in the real world around us. Let's answer that call and break the code and demonstrate the truth.

The fact that this book has put Christianity into the public square is a good thing. Perhaps if people are well equipped to dialogue with the novel's readers in an engaging tone, then more readers may uncover the real code that opens up the way to life. Those readers may

also be in a position to better appreciate the history of a faith that lies at the roots of our very existence.

There are a host of problems with the “historical backdrop” of the *Da Vinci Code*. More to come next week when I will discuss the following:

Is Jesus the Son of God?

What about the Lost Books of the Bible?

Was Jesus Married?

Scriptural References:

"For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (II Timothy 1:7)

THE DA VINCI CODE: FACT OR FICTION?

Part II

(II Timothy 1:7)

Central Truth: Jesus knows that the devil’s design is to get Him to stop trusting what God has said. So, instead of arguing with the devil about His own powers, Jesus replies to the devil in such a way that shows that He trusts what God has said.

Luke 3:21-22 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on Him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

When Jesus Christ began His public ministry, He was declared by His heavenly Father to be His “beloved Son.” This announcement did not escape the notice of the powers of darkness. Almost immediately, after the Father announced His good pleasure in His Son, Jesus “was led by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil” (Luke 4:1-2). How did the devil begin his temptation? He wanted Jesus to give him proof that He was the Son of God. He tempted Him with three different offers. Two of the three are a demand for proof. Luke 4:3 "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread;" Luke 4:9 And he took Him to Jerusalem and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to Him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here..."(The other temptation is a request by the devil that Jesus fall down and worship him.

Dan Brown, in *The Da Vinci Code* is not the first one to challenge the divinity of Christ. The devil himself receives that honor. Neither will Brown's challenge of Christ's divinity be the last one; others are bound to come. So how should we think about this challenge?

One way to think about it is to ask: "How did Jesus respond to the devil's requests?" Surely if Jesus is God He could have easily turned stones into bread. He could have thrown Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple without harm. But He didn't.

Instead, Jesus turned the devil's attention, not to Himself, but to God, and to what He had said. In response to the challenge to turn stones into bread, Jesus said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone'" (Luke 4:4). Why did Jesus respond this way? The devil wasn't asking about how we are to live, or about whether one can live by bread alone. The devil wanted Jesus to do something that no mere mortal could do. Did Jesus just dodge the challenge He was given? No, He didn't.

Jesus responds this way because He knows that the devil's challenge will not be answered if Jesus performs some powerful act; the devil's problem is not that he has failed to see God act in miraculous ways. The devil's problem is that he will not believe what God has said.

As a matter of fact, there was a similar temptation given many years before this one. It was a temptation given, not in the midst of a wilderness, but in a lush and plenteous garden.

Genesis 3:1 Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

The devil comes to Eve, not to tell her to disobey, at least not at first. He comes to Eve so that he might get her to question the word of God. And he tempts her by asking a question, a question that is close to the truth, but which is, as a matter of fact, a denial of it. God had not said that Adam and Eve could not eat from any tree; He had said that there was one particular tree from which they were not to eat. The devil knew that. His question was not out of curiosity. His question was designed to get Eve, and Adam after her, to disobey. And he succeeded.

Jesus knows that the devil's design is to get Him to stop trusting what God has said. So, instead of arguing with the devil about His own powers, Jesus replies to the devil in such a way that shows that He trusts what God has said. Even though He has been in the wilderness for 40 days, and even though He is hungry, He knows, because God has said, that His life is not defined by what He eats alone. It is defined by the "spiritual" food of God's word. God had already said, "This is My beloved Son." No more proof was needed.

The Da Vinci Code would like for us to believe that Jesus is not divine, that He is not the Son of God, the second Person of the Trinity. It wants us to see Jesus as "a mortal prophet," and "a great and powerful man, but a man nonetheless. A mortal" (*The Da Vinci Code*, p. 233).

Despite the fact that the author Dan Brown's facts are wrong (for example, Jesus was not declared divine by way of a vote as Brown says on p. 233), the question we must ask ourselves is, "Whom do you trust?" Do you trust *The Da Vinci Code* to guide you into all truth, or at least to destroy what has been foundational to Western civilization? Or do you

trust " every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4)? This does not mean that there are no evidences or supportive documents on both sides of the discussion, there are. These can be easily perused by any interested party. But evidences and documents are always discussed in the context of that fundamental question, "Whom do you trust?" Answering that question goes a long way toward determining how you will look at evidences and supporting documents.

Do you want to put your faith in *The Da Vinci Code*? Or would you rather put your faith in one in whom millions, for over two thousand years, have trusted, not only for their "spiritual food" in this life, but in the life to come as well.

If Dan Brown is right, then there is no hope for anyone. If Dan Brown is right, it is not simply a Western religion that dies, all of humanity - past, present and future - dies; and death is the bitter end.

It means that there is no hope. It means that no baby was born in a manger in Bethlehem. It means that there were no tidings of great joy brought by angels. It means that the angels never sang, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased" (Luke 2:14)! It means that the message of the entirety of history, since Adam gave in to the devil's temptation, the message that God would save a people for himself, that message is not true. It means that no people are saved, that God has not come down to us, and that sin and evil will have their way. It means Satan wins. If you choose to believe Dan Brown, you have chosen not to believe every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. That is a choice with consequences that are terrible now and will be even worse in eternity.

If, however, you choose to believe what the Father has said - that Jesus Christ is the Son of God - then there are tidings of great joy for you. If you believe what God has said about His Son, then Christmas is a reality for you, not just on December 25th, but every day of this life, and into the next.

Revelation 11:15 "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever."

Melva McClain

ENTREPRENEURS
McClain Ministries E-List Featuring

Denise Jones/Bruce Haralson

Eternal Creations
Denise Jones
356 Broadview Ct
Jackson, MS 39209
Contact: 1-888-374-9220
Home: 601-948-7094
eternalcreationmshome.com/
dwj@eternalcreationmshome.com



Bruce's Delight
Bruce Haralson
4615 Norway Drive
Jackson, MS 39206
Contact: 601-238-1810

Synergy has produce the double pleasure of Bruce's Delights now available in Denise's Baskets

OUR GLOBAL OUTREACH MAILING LIST

Fill in the information below and mail using the self addressed envelope enclosed.

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone Number() _____

Fax Number _____

Email Address _____

Send To:

**McClain Ministries
1050 Ridgeside Drive
Brandon, MS 39042**