



Volume 3, Issue 9

West Suffolk Epistle

West Suffolk Baptist Church

"Thoughtfully Reformed - Redemptively Relevant"



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Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America

Our Family Forever



In the church, many people assume that men enter pastoral ministry simply out of a desire to be pastors. But such an assumption is far from the truth. God makes men pastors. He calls us, gifts us, equips us, and sustains us. We enter pastoral ministry not necessarily because we want to but because we must. It is not as if we are incapable of doing other things for a living, but rather that we are incapable of doing anything else that will allow us to obey God and find the God-ordained fulfillment that comes from serving Him with the particular calling and gifts He has bestowed on us. Left to ourselves and our own selfish desires, we would run from God's call upon our lives. However, we answer God's call because we cannot help it. For just as God by His sovereign grace makes us all the sheep of Jesus Christ, He makes some of us undershepherds of Jesus Christ, our Chief Shepherd, the one and only head of the church.

Although not every Christian is called to be a pastor, every Christian is called to serve the Lord and His church with the gifts He has given them. The church is not a business organization where the pastor is the paid visionary, entertainer, program director, and CEO. On the contrary, the church is a living organism wherein each and every communing member of the church serves the church with his or her gifts. One of the jobs that pastors perform is helping to shepherd and disciple God's people so that we might all serve one another, our families, our communities, and our neighbors as we proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. At Saint Andrew's Chapel, one of the questions we ask professing Christians when they take their vows to become members of our church is, "Do you promise to support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?" In taking that vow, members are agreeing not only to support our congregation and missional outreach financially but to support the congregation with their gifts and service, being faithful stewards of their God-given time, talents, and treasures. Furthermore, in vowing to support the church, members are not only vowing to support our congregation alone, but to support the one, holy, catholic (universal), and Apostolic church of Jesus Christ.

As pastors, one of the driving passions of our hearts is to see the church, the family of God, love one another. That each and every member of the church, both young and old, from every culture, race, and socioeconomic background, would serve one another with their spiritual gifts. That God's people would treat the church like their home, not like a hotel. That we would all see the church as our family, with whom, by the grace of God, we will love, worship, and enjoy our triune God now and forever. ~ **Burk Parsons - editor of Tabletalk magazine and serves as copastor of Saint Andrew's Chapel in Sanford, Fla.**



West Suffolk Epistle

West Suffolk Baptist Church



The Most Solemn Mandate



I don't know how many times I've heard parents who are members of churches say to me:

I intentionally never discuss theology or religion with my children, because I want them to believe whatever they come to believe honestly and not because they've been indoctrinated by us in the home. I don't want them to be slaves to a parental tradition. I want them to experience reality on its own terms and come to whatever conclusion they are drawn from the evidence.

Such sentiments mystify me because they are at such odds with the teaching of Scripture. Just consider Deuteronomy 6:4–9:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

What I find remarkable about this text is how closely it places the mandate to teach our children to what Jesus calls the greatest commandment, namely, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might” (v. 5; see Matthew 22:36–40). There is no commandment more important than to love our Creator, but what’s the very next command in Deuteronomy 6? That the law of God is to be on our hearts and taught to our children. The divine mandate is that parents should teach the Lord’s commandments to their children. Not that the parents should send their children somewhere else to learn these things, but the responsibility is given to the parents.

Moreover, Deuteronomy 6 doesn’t say that “you shall teach them casually, occasionally, once in a while to your children.” No, it says,

You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. (vv. 7–9)

That is, these things are to be taught so diligently that they are going to be taught every single day, in every place, even in every room of our homes.

I don’t think there’s a mandate to be found in sacred Scripture that is more solemn than this one. That we are to teach our children the truth of God’s Word is a sacred, holy responsibility that God gives to His people. And it’s not something that is to be done only one day a week in Sunday school.



West Suffolk Epistle

West Suffolk Baptist Church



The Most Solemn Mandate - Continued

We can't abdicate the responsibility to the church. The primary responsibility for the education of children according to Scripture is the family, the parents. And what is commanded is the passing on of tradition.

In our forward-looking age, many look upon tradition with scorn. It is seen as the province of reactionaries and conservatives who refuse to get with the times. But when we look at Scripture, we find it has much to say about tradition, some of it negative, some of it positive. One of the judgments of God upon the nation of Israel and upon the teachers of Israel was that they began to substitute human traditions for the Word of God, with the human traditions taking the place of Scripture. Because of that error, we may jump to the conclusion that we should, therefore, never communicate traditions.

Yet when we come to the New Testament, we find a distinction made between the traditions of men and the tradition of God. The Apostle Paul, for example, claims that he did not invent out of his own mind the message that he proclaimed to the churches and was passing on to the churches—the paradosis, the tradition, of God. Paradosis is the Greek word for “tradition,” and it comes from the same root as the Greek term for “gift” as well as the prefix para-, which means “alongside of” or “passing on.” Literally, the meaning of “tradition” in the Scriptures is the passing on of a gift. The gift that is to be passed on is the gift of the knowledge of God, of what He has revealed about Himself in His Word, of what He inspired the prophets and Apostles to tell us in sacred Scripture.

It's my responsibility as a parent and it's your responsibility as a parent to pass on that gift. If you aren't a parent, it's your responsibility to support the work of the church and those who are parents in passing on that gift. It is a great and glorious calling to lead our children into the truth of God's Word. Indeed, there is no more solemn mandate given to parents and adults in the church than to raise up covenant children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. ~ **Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.**

The Intellectual Roots of the Sexual Revolution



The new sexual morality did not emerge from a vacuum. Massive intellectual changes at a worldview level over the last two hundred years set the stage for the revolution in which we currently find ourselves. We are living in times rightly, if rather awkwardly, described as the late modern age. Just a decade ago, we spoke of the postmodern age, as if modernity had given way to something fundamentally new. Like every new and self-declared epoch, the postmodern age was declared to be a form of liberation. Whereas the modern age announced itself as a secular liberation from a Christian authority that operated on claims of divine revelation, the postmodern age was proposed as a liberation from the great secular authorities of reason and rationality. The postmodern age, it was claimed, would liberate humanity by operating with an official “incredulity toward all metanarratives.” In other words, postmodernity denied all of the big narratives that had previously shaped the culture and specifically put an end to the Christian narrative.



West Suffolk Epistle

West Suffolk Baptist Church



The Intellectual Roots of the Sexual Revolution - Continued

And yet, postmodern thought eventuated, as all intellectual movements must, in its own metanarrative. Then it just passed away. We still speak of postmodern thinking, even as we speak rightly of postmodern architecture and postmodern art, but we are speaking, for the most part, of a movement that has given way and given up. In retrospect, the postmodern age was not a new age at all; it was only the alarm that announced the end of modernity and the beginning of the late modern age. Modernity has not disappeared. It has only grown stronger, if also more complex.

The claim that humanity can only come into its own and overcome various invidious forms of discrimination by secular liberation is not new, but it is now mainstream. It is now so common to the cultures of Western societies that it need not be announced, and often it is not noticed. Those born into the cultures of late modernity simply breathe these assumptions as they breathe the atmosphere, and their worldviews are radically realigned, even if their language retains elements of the old worldview.

The background to this great intellectual shift is the secularization of Western societies. Modernity has brought many cultural goods, but it has also, as predicted, brought a radical change in the way citizens of Western societies think, feel, relate, and reason. The Enlightenment's liberation of reason at the expense of revelation was followed by a radical anti-supernaturalism that can scarcely be exaggerated. Looking at Europe and Britain, it is clear that the modern age has alienated an entire civilization from its Christian roots, along with Christian moral and intellectual commitments. This did not happen all at once, of course, though the change came very quickly in nations such as France and Germany. Scandinavian nations now register almost imperceptible levels of Christian belief. Increasingly, the same is also true of Britain. Sociologists now speak openly of the death of Christian Britain—and the evidence of Christian decline is abundant.

Some prophetic voices recognized the scale and scope of the intellectual changes taking place in the West. Just over thirty years ago, Francis Schaeffer wrote of a shift in worldview away from one that was at least vaguely Christian in the memory of society toward a completely different way of looking at the world. This new worldview was based on the idea that final reality was impersonal matter or energy shaped into its present form by impersonal chance. Significantly, Schaeffer observed that Christians in his time did not see this new worldview as taking the place of the Christian worldview that had previously dominated northern European and American cultures, either by personal conviction or cultural impression. These two worldviews, one generally Christian and the other barely deistic, stood in complete antithesis to each other in content and also in moral results. These contrary ways of seeing the world would lead to very different sociological and governmental results, including the conception and implementation of law.

In 1983, writing just a few years after Francis Schaeffer made that contribution, Carl F.H. Henry described the situation and future possibilities in terms of a strict dichotomy:

If modern culture is to escape the oblivion that has engulfed the earlier civilizations of man, the recovery of the will of the self-revealed God in the realm of justice and law is crucially imperative. Return to pagan misconceptions of divinized rulers, or a divinized cosmos, or a quasi-Christian conception of natural law or natural justice will bring inevitable disillusionment. Not all pleas for transcendent authority will truly serve God or man.



West Suffolk Epistle

West Suffolk Baptist Church



The Intellectual Roots of the Sexual Revolution - Continued

By aggrandizing law and human rights and welfare to their sovereignty, all manner of earthly leaders eagerly preempt the role of the divine and obscure the living God of Scriptural revelation. The alternatives are clear: we return to the God of the Bible or we perish in the pit of lawlessness.

Writing even earlier, in 1976, Henry had already identified the single greatest intellectual obstacle to a cultural return to the God of the Bible: "No fact of contemporary Western life is more evident than the growing distrust of final truth and its implacable questioning of any sure word." This obstacle to the return to the authority of a Christian worldview is really part of a vicious circle that begins with the departure from at least a cultural impression of God's revealed authority. Leaving a Christian worldview leads to a distrust of final truth and a rejection of universal authority, which then blockades the way back to the God of the Bible.

The reality is that Christians who define Christianity in terms of historic Christian doctrine and moral teachings do not believe merely that the Bible is true, but that it points to the only way we will produce real and lasting human happiness. We are not merely opposed to same-sex marriage because we believe it to be contrary to Scripture; we believe that anything opposed to Scripture cannot lead to human flourishing. ~ **Dr. R. Albert Mohler, Jr. - President of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky.**

The Extent of Satanic Opposition



The believer's conflict with the forces of darkness is rightly called spiritual warfare since Satan and his evil world system are hostile toward everything God does. By nature they are anti-God and anti-Christ.

Satan is the antithesis of every godly attribute. God is holy; Satan is evil. God is love; Satan is the embodiment of hatred. God redeems His children; Satan damns his. Jesus reveals grace and truth (John 1:17), but Satan "does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies" (John 8:44).

God gives life, whereas Satan breeds death (Hebrews 2:14). God produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Satan produces immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and the like (vv. 19-21).

God uses trials to prove the genuineness of your faith and increase your joy and spiritual endurance (James 1:3). Satan uses temptation in an attempt to destroy your faith and silence your testimony. God grants freedom from the bondage of sin, while Satan wants to enslave you to sin for all eternity (2 Timothy 2:26).

Jesus is your advocate, pleading your cause before the Father (1 John 2:1). Satan is your accuser, blaming you incessantly for things God has already forgiven (Revelation 12:10).

As Satan opposes everything God does, he'll also oppose God's children. When he does, don't be overly concerned or think of it as odd or unfair. Expect trials, be prepared, and rejoice because they show you're a threat to Satan's system and an asset to Christ's kingdom. ~ **Dr. John MacArthur**



West Suffolk Epistle

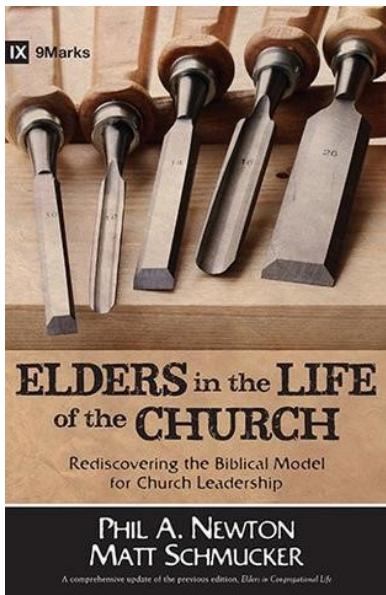
West Suffolk Baptist Church



Book Reviews

Elders in the Life of the Church

Phil A. Newton and Matt Schmucker



Paul and Barnabas made a decisive move toward the end of the first missionary journey: they appointed elders in the churches they had established, entrusting them with responsibility to shepherd the young congregations. The need for faithful shepherding has not changed since that time, yet the leadership structure of most churches no longer follows this model. The authors argue that a return to the New Testament pattern of elder plurality best serves the shepherding needs in a local church.

The authors suggest a workable process for improving a local church's leadership structure and making the transition to elder plurality. Along the way, the stories of the authors and other church leaders provide a narrative of how faithful elder leadership has strengthened their ministries. The book also addresses a plan for leadership development in difficult international mission settings. Church leaders will find this a useful resource for building a healthy leadership structure.

This book is an extensive revision of the previously-published *Elders in Congregational Life*, including updates throughout, additional illustrations, and a new chapter addressing how missionaries may effectively apply the New Testament's teaching on elder plurality. 9Marks is a well-known ministry organization dedicated to equipping church leaders with a biblical vision and practical resources.

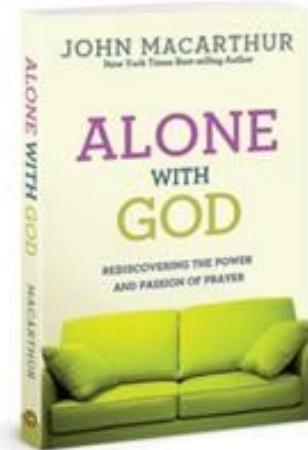
Alone with God

Dr. John MacArthur

A great champion of prayer once compared the praying Christian to a blacksmith stoking his fire. It's in the intimacy of prayer - when we are alone with God - that we keep the iron hot and God skillfully refines and shapes us. And like the blacksmith trade, prayer is not for those timid of work. Intercession is a difficult, perplexing, and solitary battle that is won or lost from one moment to the next.

But the battle to praying is worth fighting. Prayer anchors the soul while lifting us to the very throne of God. It's the language of heaven and the key to unleashing God's power in our lives. In *Alone with God*, Dr. John MacArthur explores the anatomy of effective prayer and presents a refreshing, biblical model you can begin following today. A powerful tool for fervency and frequency in your communion with the Lord, *Alone with God* is the primer on prayer you'll turn to again and again.

This book comes with a study guide in the back of the book.





West Suffolk Epistle

West Suffolk Baptist Church



The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689

The Last Judgment - Chapter 32

1. GOD has appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, to whom the Father has given all authority and power to judge. At that day the apostate angels will be judged. So too will all persons who have lived upon the earth; they will appear before Christ's judgment throne to give an account of their thoughts, words and deeds, and to receive His award in accordance with what they have done in this earthly life, whether good or evil.
2. God's purpose in appointing a day of judgment is to make known the glory of His mercy in the eternal salvation of the elect, and the glory of His justice in the eternal damnation of the reprobate, that is to say, the wicked and disobedient. In that day the righteous will inherit everlasting life, and receive a fullness of joy and glory in the Lord's presence as their eternal reward. But the wicked, who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ, will be relegated to everlasting torments and 'punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power'.
3. To deter all men from sin on the one hand, and to give greater comfort to the godly in their adversity on the other, Christ would have us firmly persuaded that a day of judgment lies ahead. For the same reasons He has kept the day's date a secret so that men may shake off all confidence in themselves and, in ignorance of the hour in which the Lord will come, may be ever on the watch, and ever prepared to say, 'Come, Lord Jesus; come quickly. Amen.'

Growing into Conformity

The modern distinction between the "carnal Christian" and the "Spirit-filled Christian" is a dangerous one. If a carnal Christian is described as one whose fallen nature has not yet been changed by grace, it is a contradiction in terms. If a person is carnal in the sense that the Holy Spirit resides in him without affecting his constituent nature in any way, then he is simply not a Christian. To view regeneration as not effecting any real change in the person is a serious distortion of regeneration. Here the Holy Spirit indwells but does nothing to effect change in the person.

If a Spirit-filled Christian is defined as one in whom the flesh is absent entirely, then the only Spirit-filled Christians are those now in heaven. Every Christian is to some degree carnal in this world, insofar as the remnants of the flesh are still there provoking warfare. In this sense, the Apostle Paul, after his conversion, was a carnal Christian. Every Christian is also spiritual in that the Holy Spirit indwells him and works in him, through him, and on him.

The biblical view involves the indwelling of a divine person within a human person who has been truly regenerated by the power of the divine person. The human person has changed. His old nature is dying, and by co-operation with the grace of the Holy Spirit, the new man is growing into conformity to Christ.

Thank God for the ministry of the Holy Spirit working in, through, and on you. ~ **Dr. R.C. Sproul, Sr.**



West Suffolk Epistle

West Suffolk Baptist Church



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Birthday and Anniversary Corner - September 2016

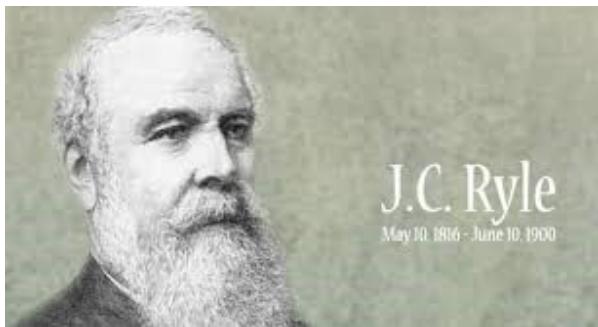
Birthdays

Ben Purser - September 3
Zachary Allesandro - September 9
Jonathan Dillard - September 15
Ruth Thomas - September 23

Anniversaries

Eddie and Melanie Massie - September 4

We Are All in Need of Forgiveness



J.C. Ryle
May 10, 1816 - June 10, 1900

Surely we ought all to cease from proud thoughts about ourselves. We ought to lay our hands upon our mouths, and say with Abraham, “I am dust and ashes,” and with Job, “I am vile,” and with Isaiah, “We are all as an unclean thing,” and with John, “If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (Genesis 18:27; Job 40:4; Isaiah 64:6; 1 John 1:8.) Where is the man or woman in the whole catalog of the Book of Life, that will ever be able to say more than this, “I obtained mercy”? What is the glorious company of the apostles, the godly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs – what are they all but pardoned sinners? Surely there is but

one conclusion to be arrived at: We are all great sinners, and we all need a great forgiveness. ~ **J.C. Ryle - First Anglican bishop of Liverpool - 1816—1900**

Disclaimer

The views and opinions from the contributors to this newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of West Suffolk Baptist Church or its leadership.



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Please submit information to Walt Lawrence by the second Sunday of the month preceding publication by e-mail, in person or at the church office. The editor reserves the right to edit for content or space. May the Father be glorified in every word.