



Truth Matters

A Publication Discussing Matters Related To Truth Because Truth Matters

Scripture Reading
Week of
August 7th - August 13th



Monday

- ❖ Esther 3, 4
- ❖ Psalm 135
- ❖ 2 Corinthians 7

Tuesday

- ❖ Esther 5, 6
- ❖ Psalm 136
- ❖ 2 Corinthians 8

Wednesday

- ❖ Esther 7, 8
- ❖ Psalm 137
- ❖ 2 Corinthians 9

Thursday

- ❖ Esther 9, 10
- ❖ Psalm 138
- ❖ 2 Corinthians 10

Friday

- ❖ Job 1, 2
- ❖ Psalm 139
- ❖ 2 Corinthians 11

Saturday

- ❖ Job 3, 4

Sunday

- ❖ Job 5, 6

Fence Building and Dog Training *The Residue of Fundamentalism's Dearth of Discernment*

You can take a fish out of the water and for several minutes after, there will still be residual dripping of water. Though the fish is not in the water, the residue of his time in the water is still apparent. I have found this to be the case for my own life. I am one who holds Fundamentalism as a portion of my past. I was reared by parents who attended an Independent Fundamental Baptist Church (IFBC). More than that, I graduated from a Christian high school that was part of the ministries of an IFBC. Even more than that, I graduated from a Fundamentalist Bible college.

I assure you that even today I still find the residue of my time in Fundamentalism. I must confess that I view my past in Fundamentalism as more of a baggage than a heritage. But let me be clear up front. I appreciate the education I received at each of these schools. They provided for me a love for Scripture and a commitment to both

God's word and his church. They have given me a sufficient grid for interpreting both Scripture and life. My education at both the undergraduate and graduate levels provided me the necessary hermeneutical tools that have brought me to different conclusions. I simply have come to see things differently; but according to the education I received from them, I have come to my different conclusions honestly and fairly by playing according to the rules I was taught in Fundamentalist institutions.

In coming out of the waters of Fundamentalism, I have had to re-train my heart and mind in how to think through issues because of the residue left over from my days in Fundamentalism. I want to be rid of the residue known to me as **"...by association."** That is, one of the residual affects fundamentalism has on its followers is the dearth of discernment. In my opinion, Fundamentalism does not equip its people

with discernment.

So many of the questions that arise in the minds of individuals over disputed things, doubtful things, grey areas, or Christian liberty issues are settled in Fundamentalism largely "by association." Both guilt by association and endorsement by association is the chief litmus for whether or not Fundamentalism will embrace or reject certain issues, people, or ministries. Contemporary Christian music (CCM), for example, is wholly rejected not on its own merits as much as by its associations. That is to say, rather than judge a single artist or a single song on its own merits, they simply sweep the whole category away "by association." Certain evangelical ministers and ministries are rejected not on their own merits but "by their associations." (I would love to recount the irony between the ways Chuck Swindoll was handled by my Alma Mater the same year that one of their own gurus changed his doctrinal

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positions. Which one do you think was shot-down first? And why do you think he was shot-down first? You guessed it, "by association.") Some IFBC pastors are embraced who hold to some outlandish doctrines and theologies while other non-fundamentalist evangelical pastors, who are doctrinally pure, are written off "by association." Fundamentalism separates from some and endorses others based on association. In my estimation, this kind of reasoning and politics wreaks havoc on biblical discernment.

Are we followers of men or the groups of associations formed by men? Are we whole-hearted endorsers of every word on every page of every book written by certain men in our association?

The average person in the pew of Fundamentalism begins his or her thought processes by asking the question, "Are they / is it approved?" I know because my wife and I have found ourselves falling into this trap time and again. We were leery of books, songs, ministries, etc. when we knew nothing about them. We often held out until we could ask around to see what so-and-so thought or knew about the thing. We found ourselves to be sheepish when it came to trusting our own ability to discern. I believe with all of my heart that is owing to the fact that we were not taught how to discern. I believe with all of my heart that this lack of ability is part of the baggage carried over from Fundamentalism. (Praise the Lord for men in Fundamentalism who taught us how to think!)

I can also assure the reader that I have heard all of the mantra defending this "by association" approach. I know all about Fundamentalism's belief regarding

second and third degrees of separation. I know all about their desire to keep their people safe, etc. Quite frankly, I think it is all misguided and weak. What brings an individual further into safety: keeping him always in the control of standards or teaching him how to live and fight for survival through discernment? We are called to equip our people for living in the real world not to protect them from ever encountering the world. We are called to portray for our people the loveliness and beauty of Jesus Christ such that nothing in the world looks appealing. There are ways to teach discernment and to protect people that are far more effective than retreating into an isolated holy-huddle.

Consider with me, two dogs. One is named Fenced-in Fido and the other is named Well-Trained T-Bone. As you guessed by their names, Fenced-in Fido knows nothing of the world outside his small fenced yard. Every morning he is released to his domain when his master goes off to work. The boundaries have been firmly established. He knows his daily routine. He has beaten down a path as he daily walks the fence line looking out to the huge outside world. Every car is chased; every rabbit and squirrel is hopelessly charged; every dog is challenged. Fenced-in Fido is constantly barking and endlessly defending his territory.

Every day Fido notices another dog walking freely along the sidewalk outside his fence. Fenced-in Fido barks with all his might as he walks the fence line furiously protecting his turf; and every day, Well-Trained T-Bone goes un-phased by this noisy little yap-trap. He just keeps his pace

and walks on.

Several weeks into this routine, Fido sits on the porch and begins to observe the life of T-Bone. Every morning he jogs a steady pace just in front of his master. Fido notices that there are no leashes, no collars, and no chains. T-Bone is completely free. Every day, T-Bone and his master cross the street to the big park where they run and laugh and play. Other dogs come rushing and barking and yelping and T-Bone doesn't challenge; cars race by and they are not chased; squirrels and rabbits hop around without being charged by this big dog. He doesn't even see them. Frisbee toss after Frisbee toss and T-Bone is caressed and patted and loved. Then like every other day, they return down the same path that they had come.



Which dog has the boundaries more clearly established? The answer is they both have the boundaries equally established.

Which dog has the greatest amount of freedom? Fido assumed that T-Bone was totally free because he saw no leash, no collar and no chain. But what he did not observe was that T-Bone was continually reigned in by the voice of his master. The answer is that both dogs are equally under authority, the one to a fence and the other to a voice.

The bigger question for my little parable is which dog is more equipped for enjoying the world?

One day Fenced-in Fido caught his first break. He noticed that his daily routine had beaten a path in the fence line such that there is now space between the fence and the sod. He

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sniffs, looks up and side-to-side and begins pawing at the dirt beneath the fence. He is free! Out of the yard he races!

He races three steps beyond the side-walk when all of a sudden he is smashed beneath the tires of a car. Woops. Fido had not been trained on how to handle streets and curbs and cars.

If you don't like that ending, imagine that Fido made it to the other side of the street where he is running unfettered in the park. Along come the other dogs that he has seen daily. But unlike T-Bone, Fido challenges the first dog he sees. In one clamp of the jaws, Roscoe the Rotweiler breaks Fido's neck. Woops. Fido was never trained on how to approach other dogs.

You see, the problem is that Fenced-in Fido is dependent upon the fence for his safety. There is no thought required. The fence was imposed by someone who could not possibly be with Fido every waking hour. That is, the fence required no relationship between the builder of the fence and the dog. Much like the fences imposed by some pastors, churches, schools, and even parents, they require no thought and no relationship. If pastors represent the fences, or parents, or schools, the day will come when they will not be there. What then?

Well-Trained T-Bone, on the other hand is dependent upon his master. When he comes to a curb, he sits and looks for the approval of his master before he continues. He tunes his ears to the voice of his master and returns to the circle of safety after each Frisbee toss. He tunes out the barks and challenges of other yipping dogs. He is constantly under the control of his master.

Fundamentalism builds fences and does not train for discernment. Instead of teaching how to approach dogs, it just builds the fence - "No CCM." Instead of teaching how to approach curbs and cars, it just says, "No parks." Is there nothing to be gained from evangelical pastors like Swindoll, Piper, MacArthur, Warren, Hybles, Stanley, Evans, etc.? Should we just make them off limits or should we teach people how to be discerning? Is there no worship to be had in the lyrics and songs written by Smith, Patty, Green, Chapman, Paris, Third Day, Go-Fish, Mercy Me, etc.? Should we just make them off limits or should we teach people how to be discerning? By the same token, is every person, book, song and lyric that comes from Greenville, Pensacola, Watertown, Dunbar, Detroit and Lansdale infallible and worthy to be trusted without discernment? Is everything Bob Jones says to be accepted unchallenged while everything John Piper says is to be rejected unquestioned "by association"?

Sure, you can keep your dog safe by building a fence and you can keep your dog safe by training him well. Which dog is happiest? Similarly, pastors, churches and schools can keep their children "safe" by building fences; but how does that enhance their relationship and walk with their master?

I am afraid that Fundamentalism is creating a breed of "Christians" who can safely navigate the world without being dependent upon the voice of their master simply because they are dependent upon their fences.

Next, I want to take up a closer look at several central texts that deal with discernment and the will of God. Stay tuned... In the mean time, ponder this strange observation:

Why is it that the path is beaten down around the fence line? Why is it that Fenced-in Fido does not enjoy the grass and ground in the middle of the yard? What does that tell us about his nature? What does he know? Then, how does that relate to Christian teens and the way we are wiring them? Next time...

Corporate Arsenal Passages

God is Faithful to All His Promises

Promise 20: Promise to discipline you



Proverbs 3:11-12

My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline or be weary of his reproof,¹² for the Lord reproves him whom he loves, as a father the son in whom he delights.

Proverbs 15:10

There is severe discipline for him who forsakes the way; whoever hates reproof will die.