

Haven Newsletter

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www.havenministry.com

5796 South Lisbon Way, Centennial, CO 80015

(303) 766-3527, Honz1@msn.com

The Dog Days of the American Church

As I write this column I am watching the NY Yankees defeat the Tampa Bay Devil Rays on my computer. As an avid fan of the greatest baseball team in history (shameless plug for the Yankees!) this has been a frustrating season. They have the largest payroll in the history of the game—well over 200 hundred million dollars!!! They have incredible talents all over the field.

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They have many players doing very well and yet the team has struggled all season

long. They have had great winning streaks, only to turn around and lose 9 of ten. Inconsistency has been their one consistent factor this whole season. "Team Sybil" as I have come to think of them this year, painfully reminds me of the status of the American church. We too have an incredible history, incredibly gifted individuals and by far more resources, especially money, than any other collective church in history. Yet the numbers tell us something is deadly wrong. We are shrinking percentage wise as our population in the country goes up! 85 % of our young people leave the church after high school. Collectively most people in our culture either yawn or get angry when they see us in the public eye. Yet the church is growing dramatically in Asia, South America, and Africa. How is it that we have lost our

light? Just how many bushels have we hidden it under?

I have argued for years that two terrible ills, one internal and one external, have affected the American church. The internal sin was racism, which was especially seen in the practice of slavery. The external problem was extreme skepticism and naturalism, as seen in the Enlightenment and Darwin. Both of these issues created huge problems for the church and in some important ways still do. While not particular problems of the church, they have certainly been problems in the church. What I have in mind are a little more personal.

Here are the more basic problems and what I think we need to do:

1—Me. Simply put – the problem is me. I sin against the Lord and against my brothers and sisters. No excuses will do here. No blaming it on my past or on demons or on cultural influences. I must repent every day, seek the Lord's face every day and choose to follow His commands every single day. If we all started with this, most of the rest of what I am going to say would be redundant.

2—Lack of forgiveness – Even though this is part of number one, It needs to be singled out. It is amazing how much friction I see inside and between churches and families over basically fairly petty stuff. Churches rarely split over important issues (doctrinal heresy, immorality, etc) but we will split or leave in a heartbeat if people disagree with us on side issues.

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agree with us on side issues. We will toss a Pastor or Elder because we don't like the

way they laugh, or because they voted on an issue differently than us. And of course if we do that to leaders, we will certainly nail each other as well. The "wrong" elders get voted in or the "wrong" decision is made in our minds, then someone will pay! We need to repent. We need to forgive and we need to give grace and mercy to those whom we have hurt and to those who have hurt us. We have proven in American churches that we are very good at "shuffling" the deck – in that we just continually leave one church and go to another. What we do not see much of at all is people coming to Christ. Could at least part of that be that non-Christians see the way we treat each other? Who could blame them for not wanting to be a part of the mess we have made?

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seem to remember Jesus saying something like "You shall know my disciples by their love for

one another". Ouch. Maybe we just don't want to go there... But we must. If we do not love another, we do not love the Lord. First John 2:10-11 says "the one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause f

(Continued on page 2)

Haven Newsletter

(Continued from page 1)

But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness..." There are real issues which need confrontation and repentance and there are trivial issues. Both need to be dealt with in love and with much forgiveness being spread around.

3 —Flirtation with the world. I am not talking about movies or clothes or some of those kind of issues, but rather something larger.

The Emerging Church movement claims that the problem with the Baby Boomer churches is that they are too aligned with "modernism". While I think that is the case with so called "liberal Churches", it is much more controversial as applied to Biblical Christianity. The irony here is that the EC thinks the solution is to be found in post-modernism, which again springs from worldly thinking. Another bad marriage is not the cure for what ails the church. We always seem to chase the latest fad or program. This weeks bestseller is next weeks new church vision. In opposition to that, actual faithfulness to God's word might bring about wonders in our churches. Churches are growing in China and yet the Chinese churches rarely have a building, are often severely persecuted by the government and have virtually none of the resources we take for granted. What many observers of the Chinese situation point out is their incredible faithfulness to the Lord, the word of God and to each other. Many will face beatings and imprisonment rather than sell out the Scriptures or reveal the pastor or other church members whereabouts. We of course don't face that directly, but we are bought much cheaper. If some marketing

analyst tells us to do so, we will hide the Scriptures as fast as we can. And I already said what we are willing to do with our leaders. God will reward only the faithful. May we be those kind of followers.

4 — Did I mention repent? How about loving the Lord with all our soul, mind, heart and strength? How about loving our neighbors as ourselves? The Christian church does not need another program, building or best seller to set our course. We simply need to return

to what we already have been told and I believe that the church can return to the dynamic force in the culture that it ought to be. Nothing I have written is original with me nor is it too difficult, at least not in theory. Obedience is the key here. Pray that I will be obedient. Pray that we all will be.

Like I am with the Yankees, I am ever optimistic with the American church. We can correct our path and model the love of Christ for a cultural that desperately lacks hope, meaning and truth. Our Lord is calling – we must listen, trust and obey,

Big Event:

Midwest Christian Outreach (good friends and ministry partners) are sponsoring an apologetics/witnessing conference for women in Kansas City this fall. The conference is called "Heart, Soul, and Mind: Women Equipping Women to Know and Share Their Faith". This is an excellent opportunity to be trained in reaching out to your neighbors, friends, coworkers and family. The Date is **September 23-24**. Contact MCO at:

www.heartsoulandmind.com
or at (630) 627-9028.

Non Prophet Update

The Calvinists talk of the "Perseverance of the Saints". By this they mean that one will know who is a Christian at the end of the day, not at some mid point in a persons life. In other words, the snapshot of a given point in life may not mean anything, but take notice of where that person is later on. Or even simpler – the proof really is in the pudding! Ok all analogized out?

Kim Miller of "Concerned Christians" infamy at one time spoke at many of the major conservative churches in Denver. Now he is the lone voice of God. Joseph Smith joined the Methodists (back when they still believed!) four years before publishing the "Book of Mormon". Rev. Moon was kicked out of the Presbyterian church in Korea for theological errors and sexual sins. Starting to get the drift here? This has become more meaningful to me recently as people I went to Bible college with have descended into cultdom and have their own compound up in the mountains above Denver. It is a sad thing and so far they are resisting any critique or accountability. The leader thinks he is a true prophet and is not accountable to anyone not of his "level". These are people I have known and cared for a very long time and it is sad to hear the destruction in some families they have influenced. Please pray for Russ and Mary Jo, their kids, and others who have fallen under their spell.

"The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness..."
1 John 2:10-11

"You shall know my disciples by their love for one another"

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Prayer Requests

- 1) Please continue to pray for our family members. There has been some movement here, so we are thankful and excited about what is happening.
- 2) Pray for those whose marriages have been damaged by sin and destruction through cults and personal failure. Pray for Bruce and Diane, JJ and Marc, Mike and Cheryl, Jeanette and Brad, Michael and Pam and others. Don and Peggy are doing much better! Please keep praying for them as they continue to heal.
- 3) Pray for our friends with chronic disease problems. My wife Terri is still wrestling with her problems. Please also pray for Rebecca, Sherri, Liz, Julie and Josh. Our friend Shannon has recovered from cancer surgery, but now has some different serious concerns.
- 4) Pray for our troops at war. We have many young friends who serve our country and need your prayers. Please keep in mind Matt and Chris C., Matt R. and others.
- 5) Praise the Lord for his continual protection and provision. We are so blessed to have so many who take an interest in our ministry. We had a great trip to Nebraska this summer and spoke at a new church for us. Please pray that the Lord will raise up new supporters and help our existing ones to continue their help in this ministry effort. . We appreciate everyone and are thankful to represent and serve.
- 6) We have had some wonderful conversations with Mormons, JW's, Muslims, New Agers, Buddhists, Jews, Atheists and many other people in different religions lately. Pray for the CUT people like Fausto and Jason. Please pray that our efforts to share the Gospel will be fruitful and that we will be faithful in this work at all times. Also I had some extended talks with two Jehovah's Witnesses recently, Bruce and Bianca. Also remember Ian, Zach, Tim, Denver, Cathy, and many others we have talked to over the years.
- 7) I am still on my third draft of my dissertation proposal. Pray that I get it right one of these times! Keep this one up. It has been busy and I have neglected my studies. The committee told me I must defend my proposal this school year so I must get it going soon!!!
- 8) It has been a busy summer and looks to be the same this fall. I am honored to be accepted as an adjunct for the fall to teach an apologetics class at Denver Seminary. Pray that I will honor this responsibility and be edifying and challenging for the students. Pray that I will be faithful and be diligent to spend my time wisely with ministry and family concerns.
- 9) Pray for some individuals who are potential new members of Haven Ministry. We always are on the look for others to grab an oar.
- 10) Praise the Lord!!! We had a series of "Conversations and Cuisine" meetings at one of our friends house. The talks were all advertised and I spoke on "Is there Truth", "Are all religions the Same?", and "Why the Bible?" respectively. We had over 30 people (mostly non Christians – Muslims, Jews, New Agers, lapsed Catholics and so on) attend each of the evenings. One young lady, Heather, who was an atheist, recently received Christ and tells us that the meetings had a great influence on her! We are very excited for her and ask you to pray for her growth and discipleship. Also pray for the others who attended. Some left mad, but others were interested and we pray for all of them as the Lord does His work with them.
- 11) Through a series of minor miracles it looks like we will be moving into a new home this winter! The Lord has been literally dropping people out of the clouds to help us. We can't thank them enough and the Lord enough for their help to us. The house has tons of space for kids and is a ranch model, which will help Terri with her condition. Praise the Lord for this as well. This winter when we close, a group of ministry friends/supporters/ farmer types will be coming out to build out our basement (where we will be throwing most of the kids). If you are interested and know how to build (hopefully this means you know more than me – not hard if you are alive!) let us know and we will give you the details of when the crew is coming out. If you live in Nebraska and wish to help, contact Steve Mead in Aurora. He is heading up the project.



Speaking Schedule

August 30 – The Home Bible Study starts again on Tuesday nights.

August 31 – Defending the Faith (Apologetics) class at Denver Seminary, Littleton, CO

Sept 6, 13, 20 – Home Bible Study

Sept 7, 14, 21, 28 – Defending the Faith class at Denver Seminary.

Sept 6-8 – World Religions class at YYAM, Arvada, CO

Sept 9, 30 – Community of Grace College/Career group, Aurora, CO

Sept 22-24 – Heart, Soul and Mind Conference in Kansas City, MO.

Sept 26 – 28 – Horizon Calvary Chapel Huddle in San Diego, CA

Oct 4, 11, 18, 25 – Home Bible Study

Oct 5, 12, 19, 26 – Defending the Faith class at Denver Seminary.

Nov 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 – Home Bible Study

Nov 2, 9, 16, 30 – Defending the Faith class at Denver Seminary.

Dec 11 – Haven Ministries Christmas Party/Open House – All friends, supporters and others are invited to our house for a great time of fellowship!

There will be many other engagements. Check the website for more information.

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Bill and Terri Honsberger
 5796 South Lisbon Way,
 Centennial, CO 80015
 (303) 766-3527, Honz1@msn.com
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Address Note:

Address for Ministry Support:
 Haven Ministries
 P.O. Box 460366
 Aurora, CO. 80046-0366



We thank the Lord again and again that ya'll love us and put up with us. So many people have been so kind to us and so giving we are left in tears when we think of it. The Lord's grace and mercy is constantly our portion. We thank Him for ya'll and pray that He blesses you with all His will provides....

Thanks Again
 Bill and Terri and Kids

