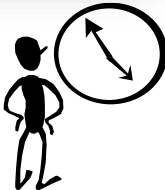


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Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m.
(Or every other week)

Bible Study 4:00 p.m.

Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

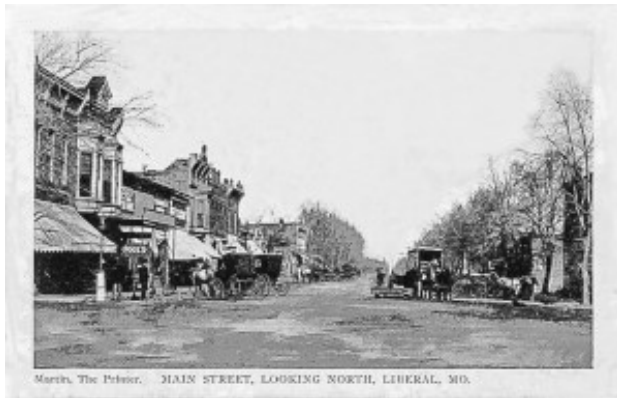
Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

Liberal, Missouri: A Failed Experiment

By Roger Shouse

The little town of Liberal, Missouri, lies near the Missouri-Kansas border, a few miles north of Joplin, Missouri. This sleepy little town of about 800 residents is typical of many small towns scattered throughout the United States. Liberal, Missouri, had a very interesting beginning. It was an experiment in intellectualism that backfired.

In the summer of 1880, George Walser established Liberal, Missouri, as a town for free thinkers. He did not want to be burdened by rules, doctrines, and creeds. Walser, by the city charter, banned all churches and religious thinking. He



March, The Interior. MAIN STREET, LOOKING NORTH, LIBERAL, MO.

welcomed non-believers to a community where they could bring up their children without religious training. So extreme was this community, that at one time a barbed-wire fence was erected around the city to keep out all influences to God, heaven, and hell. Local residents would board incoming passenger trains to inform any Christians that they were not welcome in Liberal, Missouri. A city street was named "Darwin" after the famous evolutionist, Charles Darwin. Liberal boasted of being the only town of its size in the United States "without a priest, preacher, church, God, Jesus, hell, or devil."

Walser and his co-founders were excited about the new town. They really believed that it would thrive for years and years.

Gospel preacher Clark Braden visited the town of Liberal five years after it was established. His report in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch (May 2, 1885) revealed a far darker picture than many realized. Braden wrote:

"Liquor can be obtained at three different places in this town of 300 inhabitants. ... Swearing is the common form of speech in Liberal, and nearly every inhabitant, old and young, swears habitually. Girls and boys swear on the streets, playground, and at home. Fully half of the females will swear, and a large number swear habitually. Lack of reverence for parents and of obedience to them is the rule. ... There are more people living together, who have former companions living, than in any other town of ten times the population. A good portion of the few books that are read are of the class that decency keeps under lock and key. These infidels can spend for dances and shows ten times as much as they spend on their liberalism. These dances are corrupting the youth of the surrounding country with infidelity and immorality. There is no lack of loose women at these dances. Since Liberal was started there has not been an average of one birth per year of infidel parents. Feticide (abortion) is universal. The physicians of the place say that a large portion of their practice has been trying to save females from consequences of feticide. In no town is slander more prevalent, or the charges more vile. If one were to accept what the inhabitants say of each other, he would conclude that there is a hell, including all Liberal, and that its inhabitants are the devils."

Braden indicated that "nine-tenths of those now in town would leave if they could sell their property. ... Hundreds have been deceived and injured and ruined financially."

It wasn't very long until the unattractiveness, inconsistencies, and corruption of Liberal destroyed its founding ideals. The city charter was changed. Infidels moved away. Churches were established. Today the town boasts of seven different churches and 50% of its residents are involved with some church.

Removing God only invites greed, corruption, indecency, and all forms of ungodliness. The Liberal experiment failed. The wonderful town without God became a nightmare of social and domestic problems.

What happened to George Walser, the founder of atheistic Liberal, Missouri? Near the end of his life he became a believer in Christ. He wrote a book entitled, *The Life and Teachings of Jesus*. He stated in that book that he had "wandered in the desert of disbelief, waded in the river of doubt and in the sands of desolation before he came to the hope that Jesus was the Son of God."

The Liberal, Missouri, experiment with an atheistic community failed. Or, did it? Maybe it proved that removing God from your life and your community invites disaster and heartache. "*The fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God'*" (Psalms 14:1).

Forgetting the Past

By Jefferson David Tant

“Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13-14).

“Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (II Corinthians 5:17).

The apostle Paul reminds his readers of something that we all need to keep in mind, and that is when we are baptized into Christ, we become a new person. We change our thoughts, our habits, our action, and our very lives.

We are aware that children who are raised by godly parents and who are baptized at a young age may not have to make any big changes in their lives, but many do not learn about Christ or decide to obey him until they are adults. They may have many behaviors that need to be changed as they look to the future. I am afraid that I have known too many who try to blend their former sinful lives with their new lives in Christ. Paul gives the admonition that we need to put away any questionable practices and focus forward to a new life in Christ.

I was reminded of Paul’s admonition when I came across the picture on the right. This shows the 1899 “Horseless Horseless.” This was when transitions were being made from horse-drawn carriages to automobiles. Some manufacturer thought it would help riders feel better about the change, so he built a motor-driven vehicle with a large fake horse head at the front. The hollowed horse’s head was used to store gasoline (a bit dangerous). His attempt to blend the old with the new didn’t go over very well, as you might imagine.



In my work in Jamaica, I have learned many “lively choruses” that they love to sing. The words of one are “Things I used to do, I will do them no more. I will keep them no more. Things I used to say I will say them no more,” etc. Consider some things of which we need to be mindful.

Our Speech

“Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear” (Ephesians 4:29).

“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person” (Colossians 4:6).

It used to be that crude words were not permitted in movies, on the radio, or on the TV. Those days are long gone. People were shocked that the 1939 movie “Gone With the Wind” had the star Clark Gable uttering a profane word.

Our Conduct

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden...Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:14, 16).

When we are around our neighbors, co-workers, schoolmates, and friends, is it obvious to them that we are different? A light that is turned on is obvious to anyone who has eyes to see. In the same way, the conduct of a Christian should be so obvious to others that they know there is something different about that person.

Our Companions

“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals’” (I Cor. 15:33).

“Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough? Clean out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened. For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed” (I Cor. 5:6-7).

Obviously, this does not mean that we cannot associate with people of the world, else how would we ever have an influence on them to lead them to Christ? But who are our closest companions, our dearest friends? Who do we spend most of our spare time?

This is especially important concerning our children, who are at a stage in life when they are developing their habits and character. Parents need to be watchful as to whom are their children’s close friends. But they don’t need to be so careful that they don’t want their children to spend much time even with other young Christians. Some parents shelter their children so much that they don’t really have any close friends, not even other young Christians.

Our Goals

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:19-21).

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

What is your goal in life? To achieve fame, wealth, accomplishments, education? Obviously, there are some worthwhile goals, but there is one primary goal that far surpasses all the others, and that goal is heaven. We remember the story of the rich man in Luke 12:19-21 who really worked hard to increase his material wealth, but things didn't turn out very well for him.

"And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry.'" "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' "So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Yes, we need to work to provide for our food and clothing, etc., but that must be kept in second place with respect to our life's goals and achievements.

In all matters in life, we have to make a choice between the things of this world or the things of heaven. One must take the preeminence. We cannot blend them as equals any more than the man who tried to blend the horse and the automobile. It didn't work very well.

Sin Ruins Everything

By Terry Wane Benton

We had Paradise and God, and everything was good, beautiful, and perfect.

Then sin entered the world, and we lost a perfect paradise, fellowship with God who is perfect, access to the tree of life, and were left to deal with a world of problems and hardships. Sin spread all over the place through people and more problems were experienced.

Why do we keep repeating the same misery-giving sins? What good do drinking alcohol and drug abuse do? A little pleasure for a lot of addiction and misery. Does that make sense? What peace and happiness can we have in a world of alcoholics, drug addicts, and hateful people who murder your character if not your body? The works of the flesh promote more evil and misery (Galatians 5:19-21). Not only do these things promote misery and unhappiness now, but they set people up for eternal misery and separation from God and all that is truly good.

There is a more excellent way (John 14:6; I Corinthians 12:31-13:13). It comes down to whether we decide to be wise or foolish (Matthew 7:21ff). The wise will make good decisions that make life better here and perfect in eternity, while the foolish will continue to make foolish choices that keep them enslaved to sin that leads to much misery here and nothing good in hell for eternity. Sin blinds them. Sin ruins everything! Jesus is the way out! Be wise and take hold of Him!