

Are There Worse Things Than An Oil Spill? Try Biblical Illiteracy!

REASONS

MINISTRIES

Words like oil spill, BP, the Gulf, tar balls, etc. have all been in the news over the last many weeks. Since April 20, million gallons of oil have polluted the Gulf of Mexico since the oil rig, Deepwater Horizon, caught fire and sank. The oil spill in the gulf is a disaster. The cost for cleanup will be in the billions. And we do not know yet what the spill's impact will be on oil and food prices, tourism and the broader U. S. economy!

Clearly the oil spill is poisoning the Gulf waters. You would think that when you compare the size of the Gulf (660 quadrillion gallons of water), with the amount of crude oil that has leaked into the Gulf (80-150 million gallons), you might mistakenly think that it is merely a drop in the proverbial bucket. The residents of the Gulf states have found out that it does not take much oil to mess things up. As bad as the Gulf oil spill has been and will be, we all know there are far worse things.

The same could be said for the impact of biblical illiteracy (i.e. biblical ignorance) and its impact on the church and society. It does not take much illiteracy to render the church ineffective and society more secularized. The less we know, the more dangerous it is for the purity and spreading of the gospel. As biblical illiteracy spreads, our culture suffers as it drifts further and further from its Judeo-Christian roots which have provided a moral anchor for centuries. Just like oil on the water, biblical illiteracy in the church and culture is disastrous.

Over ten years ago, Gary Burge, professor of New Testament at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, asserted that biblical illiteracy was at a crisis level not just in our culture in general but in America's churches. "Burge points to research at Wheaton College in which the biblical and theological literacy of incoming freshmen have been monitored. This research . . . has produced some surprising results: One-third of incoming students could not put the following in order: Abraham, the Old Testament prophets, the death of Christ, and Pentecost. Half could not sequence the following: Moses in Egypt, Isaac's birth, Saul's death, and Judah's exile. One-third could not identify Matthew as an apostle from a list of New Testament names. When asked to locate the biblical book supplying a given story, one-third could not find Paul's travels in Acts, half did not know that the Christmas story was in Matthew, half did not know that the Passover story was in Exodus.

The Gallup organization in 1999 in reviewing the results of several of their polls on America's knowledge of the Bible concluded, "These findings point to a "knowledge gap" in Americans' religious condition—the gap between Americans' state of faith and their lack of the most basic knowledge about that faith. Surveys show that many Americans do not know what they believe or why. Furthermore, despite the growing level of formal education in the U.S., biblical illiteracy remains."

Due to this rampant biblical illiteracy, Christians in the U.S. are susceptible to all kinds of aberrant teachings. If you do not know the truth you cannot spot error. If you do not know the truth, you cannot share the truth, will not share the truth and you will fall for anything. The result is a weak, ineffective and confused church that will continue to lose ground in the battle for souls.

Consider this fictional account: The new pastor decided to visit the children's Sunday school. The teacher introduced him and said, "Pastor, this morning we're studying Joshua." "That's wonderful," said the new pastor. "Let's see what you're learning. Who tore down the walls of Jericho?" he asked. Little Johnny shyly raised his hand and offered, "Pastor, I didn't do it." Taken aback the Pastor asked, "Come on, now, who tore down the walls of Jericho?" The teacher, interrupting, said, "Pastor, Little Johnny's a good boy. If he says he didn't do it, I believe him!" Frustrated, the pastor went to the Sunday school director and related the story to him. The director, looking worried, explained, "Well, sir, we've had some problems with Johnny before. Let me talk to him and see what we can do." Really bothered now, by the answers of the teacher and director, the new pastor approached the deacons and related the whole story. A white-haired gentleman thoughtfully stoked his chin and said, "Well, Pastor, I move that we just take the money from the general fund to pay for the walls that Johnny tore down and leave it at that."

Sad, isn't it! With today's biblical illiteracy, the above fictional story could conceivably be true!

Since 2001 I have taught in a local Christian university. The adult students do not have to be believers to attend, and many are not. Of those who are professed believers and those who are not, I see little difference in Bible knowledge; even though they are hungry to learn. I count it a privilege to share Christ in such a context. Many students who have been churchgoers have told me they have learned far more in my classes than they have learned from church. This, in part, is why Reasons Ministries was birthed. In fact, a student wrote the following in a paper for a recent New Testament class: "I have gained more knowledge about faith and God from this class than I have from any church."

How well prepared are you to "give an answer to every one who asks them to give the reason for the hope that they have?"

Reasons Ministries exists to equip believers to know and communicate biblical truth so we can stand firm in the Christian faith, be effective tools in God's hand for reaching those that do not yet know Christ and to be able to apply practical apologetics to everyday life. I want to team with you in helping to equip and train believers to be able to defend the Christian faith to anyone the Holy Spirit brings across their path. I want to help equip believers to be able to give three or four arguments for the existence of God, explain why a good and all powerful God can allow evil in the world, defend the resurrection of Christ with four or five basic arguments or cite why the New Testament is trustworthy, reliable and true.

Please pray for me as I continue to study apologetics and prepare for ministry in churches, as I contact churches about the possibility of serving them and as I seek to expand the ministry of RM. If the Lord so leads, I would welcome your financial support. Building and expanding a ministry takes much time. Your support enables me to spend less time painting and more time equipping believers to be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks.

Sincerely In Christ,

David Holdcraft

Info you can use:

—Accuracy of the Bible – 54% of Protestant church attendees agree strongly that “The Bible is the written Word of God and is totally accurate in all that it teaches”.

—Only 16 percent of Protestant churchgoers read their Bible daily and another 20 percent read it “a few times a week.”

—Salvation by Grace – 58% of Protestant church attendees agree strongly that “Eternal salvation is possible through God's grace alone; nothing we do can earn salvation.”

—Born a Sinner – 56% of Protestant church attendees agree strongly that “Every person is born a sinner due to the sin of Adam being passed on to all persons.”

—Jesus' Death and Resurrection – 72% of Protestant church attendees agree strongly that “Jesus died on the cross and was physically resurrected from the dead.

—Bible – 14% of American teenagers ages 12-19 read the Bible regularly in the last 30 days

(The above survey results from: LifeWay Research)

Reasons Ministries' Mission

The mission of Reasons Ministries is to equip believers to know what and why they believe so they can stand firm in the Christian faith, be effective tools in God's hand for reaching those that do not yet know Christ and to be able to apply practical apologetics to everyday life.

About David

18 Years of Pastoral Ministry in The C&MA. Ordained and Licensed through the Ohio Valley District of the C&MA

Adjunct Professor @ Indiana Wesleyan University at the Louisville, KY Campus since 2001

Have taught 11 different courses including several Bible/Apologetics courses, Cultural Anthropology, Marriage and Family, two business courses and two introductory courses for new students.

Have taught around 700 students.

Graduate of Toccoa Falls College with a B.A. in Missiology and Alliance Theological Seminary with a Masters in cross-cultural and theological studies. Additional Masters level work at TFC and Columbia International University

Started Reasons Ministries in November 2008

Serving on Ohio Valley District LO&CC and as a District Presbyter

Married 30 years to Beth with three adult children

Recent and Future Ministry Activities

June 28, 2010

Spoke at the Sunday a.m. service at the Bridge Community Church in Elizabethtown, KY.

July 18, 2010

Speaking at the Sunday a.m. service at the Bridge Community Church in Elizabethtown, KY.

July 25 and August 1, 2010

Speaking at Grace Crossing Church in Louisville, KY and giving a seminar on August 1.

October 29-31, 2010

Weekend of ministry at Coshocton Alliance Church, Coshocton, OH

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Reasons Ministries is a developing ministry under the auspices of the Ohio Valley District of the Christian & Missionary Alliance. All contributions are deeply appreciated and tax deductible.