

Old Testament's moral law is timeless

This week I heard a sermon on YouTube from one of America's most popular megachurch pastors. He contended that today's church needs to "unhitch" from the Old Testament and live by the simpler ways of the New Testament. The Old Testament is too old, bloody and complex for believers, he said.

One can appreciate the passion to bring the Gospel more simply to today's public, but is completely disconnecting the Old Testament from church life the way to achieve the goal?

The sermon claimed that New Testament writers — Peter, James, Paul and others — had themselves disconnected from the Old Testament in the early days of the Christian Church. He said they too wanted to make the faith simpler for those who sought God.

But did Jesus not say the following? "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Matthew 5:17-18). Jesus came not to annul or even simplify the Old Testament but to embody its positive truths in living form. He came to save sinners, and the moral law as lodged in the Old Testament had a specific function in this saving ministry. He came to awaken them to their sinful condition and bring them to the savior. As Paul wrote to the Galatians, "the law was like a strict guardian in charge of us until we went to the school of Christ and learned to be justified by faith in him" (Galatians 3:24).

Contrary to the megachurch pastor's sermon, New Testament writers did not abandon Old Testament scriptures. For example, Paul's letter to the Romans spells out clearly the way to salvation by faith in Christ and is clear about the Old Testament's function in that process. He

wrote: "I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law" (Romans 7:7). The searchings of the law awaken us to our sin and our need for the Gospel.

It is true the Old Testament is ancient and has content that can shock modern sensibilities. And many of its ceremonial rituals are no longer relevant. But the moral law revealed in these writings and contended for by the prophets is timeless. Without the Old Testament what would we substitute for the hymn to creation in Genesis 1? Or the story of God's miraculous deliverance of his chosen people out of slavery in Egypt? What would we substitute for the warnings and promises of prophets like Isaiah and Jeremiah? And how would we replace the treasures of the Psalms as aids to worship?

To abandon the Old Testament would also require major editing of the New Testament. Paul wrote to Timothy: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is suitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16).

We dare not forget the Old Testament was the only inspired text at hand when Paul said this. The New Testament had not yet been gathered as a sacred document. If we were to decouple Old from New Testament, would we not be declaring that the Old Testament is no longer God-breathed? Luke tells us that when Jesus was a 12-year-old boy, he lingered in the temple courts with the teachers of the law listening and asking questions. Onlookers were astonished at what he grasped and the questions he asked. What more powerful affirmation of that ancient text could we ask for? With this memorable moment on record, we dare not unhitch law and prophets from their place in the whole sweep of both testaments. God has given both to the historic church to direct us. ■



THE FREE METHODIST CHURCH

Bishop Donald N. Bastian

Choose faith when in trials



LIVING ON PURPOSE
DR. BILLY HOLLAND

I had lunch with a middle-aged couple the other day and they were sharing about a crisis situation they are struggling with. The stress has been building for quite some time and the heavy burden of trying to deal with this is taking a toll. They are both believers, but at the same time they admit there is much to learn when it comes to spiritual warfare and getting into position to listen and trust God with their lives. You know, we all have a difficult time with these aspects of the Christian life, but admitting we are vulnerable and weak in our times of adversity is a step in the right direction. Many times it's our pride that leads us into even more difficulty when we believe we can handle our own problems. When we approach our circumstances through our emotions, it usually does not end up well — but when we humbly follow God's instructions, we can trust that his wisdom knows exactly what to do.

It's true, the Lord can make all things work together for the good, but we must cooperate with his plans. 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 says, "And he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.' Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong."

Most of us have heard the saying "Let go and let God," but this is not easy. There may be times when we need to take the bull by the horns, but surrendering is associated with trust and this is an area where we humans often hesitate. Remember when your dad would hold out his arms and tell you to jump? This is the same idea that we are trying to learn about our spiritual relationship with God — and if we cannot trust him, we cannot please him. Our nature has a stubborn and independent determination as we are not naturally wired to yield our con-

trol to anyone, even God himself. This is why the Bible speaks about our mind being renewed, as learning to submit and obey is a learned behavior. This is especially the case when it comes to turning loose our problems, because it seems we would much rather spend our time and energy trying to defeat them with worry and anxiety.

The frustrating reality is that many of our misfortunes are simply too difficult for us to handle on our own. We might as well face it — we cannot solve, repair, heal, restore or resolve our serious challenges, but God can. "But Jesus beheld them and said unto them, with men this is impossible: but with God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26). When we finally realize we are unable to fix what is broken, we then have the choice to give our problems over to God and believe that he will step into the need and create a miracle. Isn't this great news? Charles Swindoll is quoted as saying, "We must cease striving and trust God to provide what he thinks is best and in whatever time he chooses to make it available. But this kind of trusting doesn't come naturally. It's a spiritual crisis of the will in which we must choose to exercise faith."

I realize it's difficult to understand, but Jesus offers a very different perspective about suffering. While we are asking how God could possibly create anything good from our difficult situation, we usually forget that he knows everything and is waiting to use our circumstances to manifest his glory. Even though we may experience a thunderstorm occasionally, let us be reminded that eventually the storms stop and the sun comes out. Our life was not intended to be a continual valley of shadows or for us to carry our worries and heavy burdens. Matthew 11:28 declares, "Come unto me all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

Today as you continue to face your giant and it seems there is no hope for victory, consider transferring this burden over to Jesus and allow him the opportunity to intervene. Linda Shepherd is quoted as saying, "If you are caught up in situations beyond your control, the solution is not figuring out how God can save you; it's trusting that he will." ■

HIGHLIGHTS

Bible study meets Monday

LA GRANDE — Zion Lutheran Church of La Grande will worship at 9 a.m. Sunday followed by a time of fellowship. Mothers and grandmothers will be honored for Mother's Day.

Monday at 7 p.m. the Evening Bible Study will meet at Cathy Lease's house. On Tuesday, a non-denominational Bible study group will meet at the church at 6:15 p.m.

Mothers recognized during service

LA GRANDE — The message at the 9:30 a.m. Sunday worship service at the First Presbyterian Church in La Grande will be "Mortals, Set Apart and Sent." The congregation will recognize mothers during the service. A fellowship time will follow.

Message expounds on love

LA GRANDE — Pastor Ray Smith's Mother's Day message Sunday will be "The Main Ingredient." Speaking about love, he will refer to John 13:31-35 where Jesus commands that we love one another. The service will begin at 10 a.m. Mothers will be honored during worship and the fellowship time following.

Worship services held in two locations

LA GRANDE, ENTERPRISE — The sermon at Faith Lutheran Church Sunday will consider Jesus' words from John 10:29 to those who follow him: "no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand" — receiving security in a world of uncertainties is indispensable. Worship services will be

held in La Grande at 10 a.m. and Enterprise at 2 p.m.

Lesson focuses on marriage and eternal life

LA GRANDE — Primary children will sing during Sunday's Sacrament Meeting in honor of Mother's Day at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. The second hour of the service will hold Priesthood and Relief Society meetings. Visit www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/maps/meetinghouses to find start times for meetings at a church near you.

The lesson for the week of May 13-19 from the "Come Follow Me for Individuals & Families" is based on Matthew 19-20, Mark 10 and Luke 18 with a focus on the topics of marriage and eternal life. It can be found at www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org/study/come-follow-me?lang=eng.

Northeast Oregon Directory of Churches

Services This Week

IMBLER CHRISTIAN CHURCH
440 RUCKMAN, IMBLER 534-2201
www.imblerchristianchurch.org

Sunday Services
9:00 a.m. Sunday School
10:00 a.m. Worship Service

First Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
901 Penn Avenue 963-2623
lgdisciples@gmail.com

Worship 10:00 a.m.

~Join us at The Lord's Table~

SUMMERVILLE BAPTIST CHURCH
A Place for All

Sunday Services:
Sunday School & Adult Bible Classes 9:45AM
Children's Church & Worship Service 11:00AM
Family Worship Service 6:00PM

Wednesday:
Prayer Mtg. Children's Bible Club, Youth Group 7:00PM

A church for your whole family
Visit us at summervillebaptistchurch.org

Service

DIRECTORY

COVE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
1708 Jasper St., Cove, OR

NORTH POWDER UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
390 E. St., North Powder, OR

JOIN US... *Catch the Spirit!*
Worship: 9:00 a.m. Cove
Worship: 10:00 a.m. N. Powder

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH SERVICES
La Grande - Our Lady of the Valley
1002 L Avenue
Saturday 5:30 pm Mass
Sunday 10:00 am Mass
Weekdays 8:00 am Mass
Union - Sacred Heart
340 South 10th Avenue
Sunday 8:00 am Mass
No Weekdays
Elgin - Saint Mary's
12th and Alder
Sunday 12:30 pm Mass
No Weekdays

VALLEY FELLOWSHIP
963-0340
507 Palmer Ave
(just east of city pool)
Sunday Worship 10:02 am
Come and share in a time of worship, prayer and the study of God's word with us.
Worship includes communion on Sunday.
www.valleyfellowship.church
Email: vfchurch2@gmail.com

La Grande Seventh-day Adventist Church
A Place where hope is found in Jesus
Join us in Fellowship & Worship Every Saturday
9:30 a.m. - Bible Study/Fellowship
10:45 a.m. - Worship Service
2702 Adams Avenue, La Grande • 963-4018
Pastor: Mike Armayor
www.lagrande22adventistchurchconnect.org
Learning for Today and Eternity
Little Friends
Christian Preschool/Childcare 963-6390
La Grande Adventist Christian School
Christian Education K-8th Grade 963-6203

FIRST LANDMARK MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH
1812 1st St. La Grande
Pastor Dave Tierce • 541-605-0215
We use the King James Version Bible
Sunday School - 10:00 am
Worship 11:00 am
Sunday Evening Bible Study - 3:00 pm (Effective June 10)
Wednesday Evening - 6:30 pm
"Where you can find TRUTH according to the scriptures"
www.flmbclagrande.com

Zion Lutheran Church
(an ELCA church)
ZION LUTHERAN
902 Fourth Street, La Grande, OR (541) 963-5998

9:00 am - Worship
10:00 am - Fellowship & Refreshments
10:30 am - Classes
Pastor:
www.zionlagrande.org

Union Baptist Church
1531 S. Main St., Union
541-562-5531
www.unionbaptistoregon.org
Sunday School 9:45 am
Morning Worship 11:00 am
Sunday Night 6:30 pm
Thursday AWANA 6:30 pm
Knowing, Loving and Proclaiming Jesus Christ

First Baptist Church
SIXTH & SPRING, LA GRANDE
541-963-3911
Building Together On Christ Alone

Sun. 9:00 AM - **Worship**
Sun. 10:30 AM - Exploring the Bible
Wed. 6:15 PM - AWANA

CALVARY CHAPEL
1433 Jefferson Ave.
963-5884

Contemporary Worship
Expositional Teaching

Sunday Service - 10:30 a.m.
Studying The Book of Romans
Wednesday Service - 7:00 p.m.
Studying The Book of Revelation
Wednesday Night Youth - 6:00 p.m.

Tune in to Calvary Radio 88.1 CSN

Amazing Grace Fellowship
1316 T St., La Grande, OR
541-568-4567
Sunday 10:30 a.m.

2 Cor 12:9 My Grace is sufficient for you.
IS 40:31

GRACE COMMUNITY LUTHERAN CHURCH
LCMC
667 N. Main in Union
"We are called to Serve"
Sunday School for all ages - 9:00 am
Sunday Worship 10:00 am
Pastor Carl Seelhoff
Phone: 541-786-0447
grace.lutherancove@gmail.com

LaGrande CHURCH OF THE NAZARENE
109 18th Street • 963-3402

Sunday School 9:15 a.m.
Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m.

LA GRANDE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
"OPEN HEARTS, OPEN MINDS, OPEN DOORS"
1612 4th Street — 963-2498
Pastor Al Trachsel
lgumc@eoni.com
www.lgumchurch.org
Office Hours: Mon-Thur 9am-Noon
Worship 10:00 am
Fellowship Coffee Hour 11:00 am
• Nursery provided •