

Independent Evangelist

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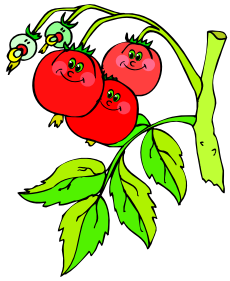


Follow the Leader

Phil Conybear – Writer

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Vol. 3 Issue 5 Mary Conybear – Editor



*"Home grown tomatoes, home grown tomatoes
What would life be like without
homegrown tomatoes
Only two things that money
can't buy
That's true love and home
grown tomatoes."*

- John Denver, Home Grown Tomatoes

A world without tomatoes is like a string quartet without violins. They complete salads and sandwiches in the same way and are one of the best tools God gives us to find fellowship with neighbors. Enjoy your garden this summer even if it attracts bees. After all, **the hum of bees is the voice of the garden.** Welcome to the July issue of the Independent Evangelist.

Fellowship

Bible dictionaries define fellowship as the bond of common purpose and devotion that binds Christians together and to Christ. That was from the Holman Bible dictionary but we shouldn't need a dictionary. John was one of the most quotable people in the Bible and he defined it most eloquently through the words of Jesus:

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

John 13:34

Humans like to consider themselves strong, self-centered individuals, like a lone wolf. All of us have it in ourselves to withstand a lot of hardship or venture out on solitary adventures on our own. But like it or not, we're more like pack animals and thrive with support from the pack.

I think back to when I first came home from Nam, I could spend months away from family and friends. I was a drifter and I carried a knife and a bottle of booze. I worked for cash and food and some of the jobs weren't the safest things I ever did but I never cared if I lived past 30 back then. I did okay and could pick and choose the company I kept.

The most ideal job I had in those days was driving a truck

cross country. Sometimes I'd be on my own and once in a while the company would set me up with a partner for the very long trips. I thought that might be cool to have a little "fellowship" in my life so yeah, "give me a partner".

I learned to trust people again, having a partner but he was a drinker and didn't care what drug he ingested. I was bad but I never did those things while I worked and especially while I drove. In time I found myself driving alone again, by request.

I saw how easy it was to mistake a bottle of laughs as a dose of fellowship. Something was missing and I just didn't know what yet. I just knew I was better off as a lone wolf than to form a pack with a drunken pot smoker who didn't care if he lived or died.

I tried to live a clean and decent life but my past caught up with me in a deadly way. I was diagnosed with cancer.

After I had cancer, I became active in veterans affairs and helped a lot of new friends make it through the "system" of the VA in their battles against Agent Orange, a very destructive dioxin that was killing vets. I was more home-centered and felt like my life had purpose.

I mistook the camaraderie we shared as fellowship though. The camaraderie revolved around similar things we experienced in combat. We were brothers and to this day, I would die for those guys. We lifted each other up through tough times but our support was weak; it lacked something cohesive and we were clueless what that could be.

Many of my friends from those days died or just drifted away. I know that if those guys don't want to be found, nobody this side of God will find them. It wasn't hard to find a new life. It just took a desire for a new direction. A wonderful new wife and God's guidance was my compass for a new direction.

That direction led me right into a church. It was like a foreign land at first. Gone was the common bond of a hard life I shared with vets. I found that Christians survived more hardships than I did but they had a "glue" that bound them together. What was that "glue, I wondered?

Fellowship and the knowledge they drew from the Bible made them a pack to be reckoned with. Lives devoted to Christ are stronger than those of battle hardened loners. I once was lost but fellowship of a true meaning made me "found" forever. Camaraderie is okay for a while but fellowship is forever.

MOVIE CORNER

If you find a rainy day this summer that's perfect for wasting on movies, here are two delightful stories that the whole family can enjoy.

When **August Rush** came out to the theaters, I missed it but it doesn't require the big screen for a big impact on your heart.

After cellist, Lyla and guitarist Louis share an enchanted night together, circumstances rip them apart, and the child produced by the union is sent to an orphanage through treachery. Their son, who hears music in everything, wanders away on his own one magical night while, "following the music".

He crosses paths with a somewhat caring stranger who cares for him and nurtures the boy's musical talent. Determined to find his parents, the boy, now known as August Rush relies on music to draw his mother and father to him.

It's an enchanting movie with sensational music and Freddie Highmore does an outstanding job in the role of August Rush.

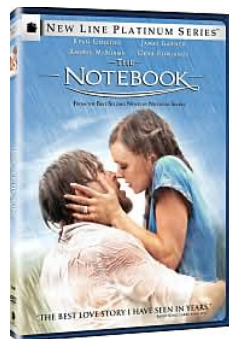
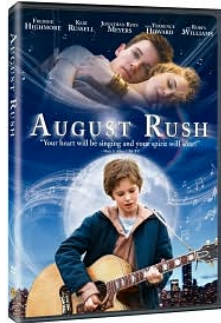
If you enjoy a good old-fashioned "weepee," this dreamlike adaptation of the Nicholas Sparks bestseller, **The Notebook** ought to be right up your alley.

Simultaneously heartwarming and heartbreaking, **The Notebook** tells a deceptively simple tale of a small-town boy Noah and his star-crossed romance with pampered princess Allie, who are thrown together one summer just before World War II.

Allie's upper-class parents insist that Noah isn't right for their precious daughter and whisk her back to their hometown, where a dashing young lawyer sweeps her off her feet. Fate reunites Noah and Allie after the war, and that's when the story really gets interesting.

We see this intimate tale being spun in a present-day retirement home, read from a notebook by an old gentleman to a friend suffering from Alzheimer's. Viewers won't be unduly strained to figure out how the current narrative relates to the 1940s part of the plot, but it doesn't matter because that's not what's important.

Beware though, the ending is very moving and you will need the hankies. Not me of course, because I'm a tough guy and real men don't cry from watching a movie. Yeah, right. I rate it a 3 hanky movie and both of them are great for a lazy day together with the family this summer.



Out of Sight, Out of Mind

We are a society of very busy people. Whether at work or at play, our minds are moving faster than our bodies. Most of us like to stay busy, but there is so much to do and not enough time to do it. We try "time management" to help us prioritize, but somehow we still go to sleep wishing we had the time or energy to do a few more things on our "to do" list.

The idea of, "**out of sight, out of mind**" prompts us to take care of those things that are right in front of us at the expense of leaving those things that don't seem as critical to do at a later date. For a man, that usually means taking care of the outside of the house first, which is what other's can see, and not worrying so much about the inside, which few people can see.

Spiritually we do the same thing. We go to church and help with various functions because that's what others see. What about the *inside*? Are we spending time in the Word and praying to be closer to the One we go to church to worship? Are we trying to be more like Jesus, who should be at the heart of every church function, whether we evangelize or build up the body of Christ?

The Pharisees were more concerned about their outward appearance to man than they were about their personal relationship to God. Jesus denounced their attempts to make themselves look good in giving, prayer, and fasting. He told His disciples to pray, give, and fast in secret, and then the Father would reward them openly. Being seen and praised by others cannot hold a candle to what God has in store for those who serve and love Him with sincere hearts.

Remember, **we are never out of God's sight or off His mind.** Psalm 33:18 says,

But the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear him, on those whose hope is in His unflinching love.

II Chronicles 16:9 says,

For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him.

Job 36:7 says,

He does not take His eyes off the righteous. He enthrones them with kings and exalts them forever.

Thank you, Lord, that even though I get temporarily distracted by the hectic pace of this life, You are never too busy for me. And He's never too busy for you.



PATRIOTISM OR CHRISTIANITY

The 4th of July is here and it has always been in my heart behind only Christmas and Easter. I believe Independence Day should be dear to all Christians. However, our liberal society has changed the meaning of the 4th just as they have tried to downplay the significance of Christmas and Easter.



The 4th has been reduced to a day of overindulgence during picnics and backyard barbeques and parades followed with fireworks. The word "Independence" is hardly used and the reason for celebration is glossed over and barely taught in schools. In fact, a grade school principal has eliminated the Pledge of Allegiance in her Portland, Oregon school because she said it insults the Muslims; but that's another story,

Here's why I am impassioned and believe patriotism should be a concern of all Christians in this country. Before the Revolutionary War and even before the Pilgrims or the founding of Jamestown, the shores of what would become Virginia was visited by a young man few of us ever heard of; Reverend Hunt.

As part of the Virginia Charter, King James sent three ships, the Godspeed, the Susan Constant and the Discovery to an area near present day Virginia Beach, Virginia. Their purpose was economics and evangelism. The King was not only the king of England, Scotland and Wales, he was also the head of the Anglican Church. He sent Reverend Hunt to make a covenant with God, "that the Gospel shall go forth to not only this New World, but the entire world".

On April 29, 145 weary colonists, purified by prayer, climbed the sandy dunes and heavy brush on what is now called Cape Henry (named after the king's son). They planted a large wooden cross to dedicate this land to God.

Rev. Hunt offered prayers of thanksgiving for the safe voyage and prayers of blessing for the new colony that they were about to establish for God and king. Never before in the history of the world had a nation been born like this. The spiritual DNA for America had been planted.

In the early 1700's there was a time when people were forgetting their spiritual roots. Gone was the God-fearing generation that had settled the land. The new generation had forgotten God. Immorality, debauchery, self-interest ruled. Few worried about the next world. Even those who held to the externals of religion had lost the heart of it.

In 1734 there was one of the most notable revivals of religion America has ever experienced. Nothing like it had happened before. Nothing quite like it has happened since. The covenant was renewed by the settlers.

You could say that economics took over by the time of the

Revolutionary War and the covenant took a back seat for a few years. However, our founding fathers renewed the covenant in the name of the United States of America.

I'm just pointing out the highlights because I would never have the talent to be a historian but those things really happened. Our country was not only founded on Christian values but the founders made a covenant that the Gospel shall go forth to not only this New World, but the entire world.

I find that each time the citizens of this nation forget their spiritual roots, immorality, debauchery and self-interest rule. In the mid 1800's revivals were necessary to get people focused on God again. The most notable revivals came in the heart of moonshine country, the Appalachians, spearheaded by the Reverend Robert Sheffey.

Brother Bob, as his friends called him believed that when you give away your faith to fit in with the ways of the secular world, you lose it forever as the "world" will not give it back. He converted everyone from moonshiners to local politicians with his infectious faith and the power of prayer.

The thing that bothers me is that there always seems to be a need for revival. People of this country forget our spiritual roots and become self-centered until we find ourselves in desperate need of God once again.

When the World Wars and the Great Depression happened, the presidents and all citizens prayed openly and without shame. When 9-11 happened we prayed as well. All the times in between, we suddenly become shy about our roots and we forget to pray. And now we have handed our right to pray openly over to five people of the Supreme Court and the ACLU. Ask yourself, "How is that working out?"

Coincidentally, no other democracy has lasted as long as the "One nation under God". Now, however, we have a Presidential candidate that refuses to say the Pledge of Allegiance and stated at the beginning of his campaign that he believes this is no longer a Christian nation. If we all suddenly believe that, we won't have a nation that protects our right to worship as we please. If we forget God, He may forget us.

*All the paths of the Lord [are] mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.
Psalms 25:10*

In April of 2007 millions of people pledged to renew the covenant Reverend Hunt made, marking 400 years. Since then, there have been revivals worldwide. Things seem to be looking up in some ways but there are still way too many people forgetting or refusing to admit that this is "One nation under God".

I, for one, will never break that covenant. I will always thank God that I live in a country where men and women have and will die to protect freedom of religion. Patriotism is essential only when the country is founded on Christianity.

Enjoy the 4th but never forget God or the price of freedom.

I usually leave pages 4 and 5 of the newsletter for stories in the news that might appeal to Christians or have relevance to Christianity. I regret that I only have 7 pages to work with this month because there is so much going on in the world.

People in China are still recovering from earthquakes and Myanmar is still trying to rebound from the typhoon. Here, in the U.S. there are floods that will affect the world for many years. Prayer and financial support to Operation Blessing and the Red Cross and other relief agencies is in order now more than ever.

As I looked at the news articles for this newsletter, I felt overwhelmed by the numbers of stories and prayed for guidance. God answered me when I went through old photos of my military past recently.

My eyes went to signs the Army had everywhere when I was in basic training. Each sign had the words, "God, Duty and Country" along with some depiction of life in the military. So, out of my love for the Lord and my loyalty to a country where I am free to worship, I offer two, non-news stories. They are longer than normal but worth reading. I thank the Christian Broadcasting Network, CBN, for publishing the following stories.

More Than a Song

By Mark Martin
CBN News
April 28, 2007



CBNNews.com - BALTIMORE -

It was during the closing months of the War of 1812, the year was 1814. The British fired more than 1500 mortar bombs on Fort McHenry in Baltimore.

A young lawyer by the name of Francis Scott Key anxiously watched the battle from down river, held prisoner on a British ship.

"They also communicated to Key and his companions, 'But you can't leave until we've done away with Baltimore,'" said Alan Gephardt, expert on Francis Scott Key.

For 25 hours, he watched the bombardment of the fort. Would it ever end?

Finally on the morning of September 14, 1814, the cannons were silent. Through the smoke, the stars and stripes boldly waved -- the Americans were victorious.

This emotional experience inspired Key to write a four-stanza poem that would become our national anthem.

So who was this man, inspired by the red, white and blue over Fort McHenry? Key was a man devoted to his country, his family, and God.

Key was raised in a Christian home.

Gephardt said, "His mother led prayers, not just for the family, but also for the servants, and so they would all gather around and have prayers in the evening."

After the War of 1812, the lawyer even considered going into the ministry.

Key was a cofounder of the American Sunday School Union, giving generously to seminaries, missions, and organizations that educated low-income children.

"He was a very fair-minded person, very charitable," Gephardt said.

He also wrote hymns: "Lord, with glowing heart, I'd praise Thee, for the bliss Thy love bestows, for the pardoning grace that saves me, and the peace that from it flows."

Key's faith in Jesus Christ motivated him throughout his entire life.

He's buried in Frederick, Maryland, near his childhood home.

"His family remembered his wish to be buried, as he said, 'beneath the shadow of the everlasting hills, the Catoctin mountain range' that was to the west of where he grew up and where he started his married life and law practice here in Frederick," said John Fieseler of the Tourism Council of Frederick County.

You can see the large monument, a statue depicting Key pointing to Old Glory.

On the back of the monument, you'll find all four stanzas of The Star Spangled Banner.

Fieseler said, "All four taken together are a pretty good reflection of just what he went through and where he wound up, and I think that speaks to the importance of faith in his life."

The final stanza of the national anthem reads, "**And this be our motto: 'In God is Our Trust.'**"

Key truly believed those words.

The flag is the embodiment, not of sentiment, but of history.
Woodrow Wilson, 28th president of US (1856 - 1924)

The Bible: The Foundation of Liberty

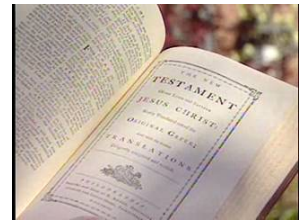
By Paul Strand
CBN News
April 29, 2007

CBNNews.com -

CHARLOTTESVILLE, Va. - The Bible was American children's first textbook. And most textbooks for centuries after were Bible-based.

In fact, in this age where many think that the Founding Fathers wanted a high wall of separation between church and state, it's surprising to see how much the Bible was at the root of almost everything that made America free, well-educated and prosperous.

Right from the start of America's history, the Bible has been in the thick of things.



Stephen McDowell from the Biblical Worldview University, said, "The Bible was the most central influence in the beginning, birth, growth and development of the United States -- in education, government, law -- in every area."

McDowell and Mark Beliles of the Providence Foundation co-authored America's Providential History, where they present the facts of this overwhelming influence.

The authors say that the Founding Fathers found knowledge of the Bible absolutely vital.

Beliles said, "Many, in fact, who were lawyers actually first went and got theological degrees, because they understood the need to know biblical ideas of law."

"The very laws and constitutions were written and drawn from the Scriptures," said McDowell.

Patriot Patrick Henry stated, **"the Bible is a book worth more than all the other books that were ever printed."** Congress found the Bible so important, it even printed it for the American people back in 1782.

When George Washington was inaugurated, he didn't just swear on the Bible.

"But he actually kneeled before it and kissed it," said Beliles.

Thomas Jefferson these days is seen as a Deist who wanted to erect a high wall between church and state. But Beliles said that Jefferson filled The Declaration of Independence with biblical concepts.

"He refers to our Creator as the source of our rights and liberties," Beliles explained.

Beliles and McDowell took us to the courthouse in Jefferson's hometown, Charlottesville, Virginia, where the young lawyer helped set up a church right inside that government building in 1777.

"Thomas Jefferson himself called it 'the common temple,'" said Beliles

President Jefferson jotted down notes that he thought would be helpful to convert Indians to Christianity. And he commanded that federal resources be used in that effort.

It's also evident that Jefferson wasn't afraid to mix religion and state as you walk the grounds of the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, a college designed by Jefferson himself. Even there, at the center of one of America's most prominent public universities, inscribed on a building, are the biblical words: **"The truth shall set you free"** -- a concept of particular significance to the Founding Fathers.

That's because they believed that **no one could be truly free without knowing the God who makes men free.**

Beliles said, **"And they understood that where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."**

"The founders of America realized that true religion was the foundation for liberty," said McDowell.

The founders believed that the Bible laid out most clearly what's right and wrong, and with that moral foundation, a people could govern themselves.

Without such self-control, their freedom would have to be curtailed and government would need to control them.

"The principles of the Bible are the groundwork of human freedom," stated newspaper publisher Horace Greeley.

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court wrote in 1824, "No free government now exists in the world unless where Christianity is acknowledged and is the religion of the country."

McDowell says that even America's prosperous economy can be traced to the Word.

"Our economic philosophy, principles of individual enterprise, benefiting from the fruit of your labor and the concept of wanting to labor hard," McDowell said, "all are rooted in the Bible."

Charles Carroll, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, explained that Christianity gave men a sublime and pure morality and that "without morals, a republic cannot subsist any length of time."

That's why Benjamin Rush, another prominent signer of the Declaration of Independence, wrote "the only foundation for a useful education in a republic is to be laid in religion. **Without this there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty."**

And that's why American education began with the Bible. The colonists believed that Satan wanted to keep people ignorant of what's in the Scriptures and how it could set them free. So to battle that, the colonists passed what's called "the Old Deluder Law" of 1647, establishing the first common schools.

And at the start, the Bible was the only textbook, since it was the only book every home and school were sure to have. Then the Pilgrims and Puritans began to print for students what are known as "hornbooks."

McDowell said, "And what it has is an alphabet around the edges, some syllables, then the invocation of the Trinity: 'In the name of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, Amen,' and then the Lord's Prayer."

In 1690 came the first printing of The Primer, a school book some call the most influential in American history, because it shaped the thinking of the Founding Fathers.

And you can see how Bible-based it was just from the way it taught the alphabet:

"C: Christ crucified for sinners died. D: the Deluge drowned the earth around, and on and on," said McDowell.

Then came Noah Webster, most famous for Webster's dictionary, but also enormously influential in education because of his Blue-backed Speller.

From 1783 on, Americans bought more than one hundred-million copies of the little book, which contained sentences like:

"God governs the world in His infinite wisdom. The Bible teaches us that it is our duty to worship Him," explained McDowell.

But after that came the school books that would dominate the nation almost up to the modern era --The McGuffey Readers, with 122 million copies sold across 75 years, from the 1800s into the 1900s.

For this, William McGuffey was dubbed "the Schoolmaster of the Nation."

We met with McDowell right outside the Virginia school building where McGuffey taught for decades. He told us that McGuffey leaned heavily on the Scriptures to shape the minds and character of generations of young Americans, as McGuffey himself mentioned in the preface to one of his readers:

McDowell read, "From no source has the author drawn more copiously in his selections than from the sacred Scriptures." McDowell also showed us the first history book used in the schools, published in 1818. Its author, Frederick Butler, wrote in it, "What is the use of history? To expand the mind of man and to lead it up to God as the great Author, Preserver and Governor of all things."

But [there is] a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.
Job 32:8

Today, almost all this has been stripped away from the public schools. And now, much of the country's youth are biblically illiterate.

One out of 10 think that Joan of Arc was Noah's wife. Only one out of three can name the four Gospels. And 50 percent of today's high school seniors think Sodom and Gomorrah were a married couple.

And with secular beliefs replacing scriptural doctrines, today it's widely assumed that man stands atop the evolutionary ladder, proud master of his own fate -- free from having to answer to anyone.

Many Americans today seem to think that the path to freedom is to be free of God and the command of His Holy Scriptures. But the Founding Fathers believed that the only true freedom comes from knowing this God and knowing His holy Word.

Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord [is], there [is] liberty.
2 Corinthians 3:17

Everything that is really great and inspiring is created by the individual who can labor in freedom.
Albert Einstein, physicist (1879 - 1955)

CHRISTIANITY AND PATRIOTISM

I'll leave you with two poems that were made into beloved songs. They should be remembered by all when you hear someone saying we need separation of Church and State. The Church hasn't ruled the State since the Renaissance but all democracies thrive when countries abide by the laws of God. In God we trust, now and forever.

America the Beautiful

*O beautiful for spacious skies, For amber waves of grain
For purple mountain majesties Above the fruited plain
America! America! **God shed your grace on thee,
And crown thy good with brotherhood From sea to shining sea.***



*O beautiful for patriot dream That sees beyond the years.
Thine alabaster cities glean Undimmed by human tears
America! America! **God shed your grace on thee And
crown thy good with brotherhood From sea to shining sea.***

My Country 'tis of Thee

*My country 'tis of thee, Sweet land of liberty, Of thee I sing,
Land where my fathers died, Land of the Pilgrim's pride
From ev'ry mountain side, Let freedom ring.*



*Our fathers God to thee, **Author of liberty,** To Thee we sing
Long may our land be bright with freedom's holy light;
Protect us by Thy might.*

- (Author of both songs unknown)

There is nothing wrong with America that the faith, love of freedom, intelligence and energy of her citizens cannot cure.
Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th president of US

THE LIGHTER SIDE

Some things I'd rather not do on my summer vacation



(I didn't ask what this guy was thinking)



*Remember, it's not what you do
It's how you do it.*

