

Gospel POWER



"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation..." (Romans 1:16)

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Symbolic Religion

Allen Dvorak

The fish has long been a symbol used by those who claim to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Its use supposedly dates back to the days of Roman persecution of Christians when to openly identify oneself as a Christian to the wrong person could mean death. I have read that the fish was used as a secret sign of discipleship; one Christian would draw an arc (thus making half of the simple fish symbol) and the other Christian would identify himself as a disciple also by drawing an identical arc in contraposition, thus completing the fish symbol.

Why did the fish become a symbol of affiliation with Jesus Christ? Several possibilities exist. The gospels record that Jesus multiplied fishes and loaves to feed thousands. Perhaps the fish, in addition to being a secret means of identifying disciples, was intended to remind disciples of this miracle. Several of the apostles were fishermen. However, the reason most commonly suggested for the use of this symbol was that the Greek word for "fish" (ICHTHUS) formed a neat acronym for the phrase "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior."

Symbols are still popular among religious people, although perhaps for different reasons. Rather than being a secret sign, the symbols of the fish and the cross are used by many people to advertise their allegiance to Jesus Christ.

There is even the modern use of the acronym WWJD which appears on bumperstickers, T-shirts and even jewelry and which asks us, "What Would Jesus Do?"

I applaud the desire of individuals to let it be known that they believe in Jesus Christ. Our Lord commented on the consequences of being embarrassed or ashamed of Him. "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels" (Luke 9:26). Jesus didn't encourage "secret" discipleship.

On the other hand, we must be careful that our religion doesn't become little more than symbolism. There were people in Jesus' day who wore phylacteries (small containers holding passages from Scripture), suggesting their respect for the Law of Moses. Yet Jesus noted that their religion was shallow, only for the purpose of looking good in the sight of others (Matthew 23:1-5).

Ultimately the test of discipleship does not consist in public advertising (the wearing of symbols, etc.), but rather in practical application of Jesus' teaching. Wearing a cross on a necklace or as an earring has become fashionable even for those who have little or no religious conviction, but loving one's neighbor

has not caught on quite as well. Religious bumperstickers are common, but respect for what Jesus actually taught is fairly uncommon.

In an era of religious rationalism and traditionalism, I wonder if most people even know what Jesus would do in various situations! The only way to know is to be familiar with His teaching and that is accomplished by honest and diligent study of the Scriptures.

~via *News & Notes*, Madison, Alabama



The Character of Nathanael

Kent E. Heaton, Sr.

He was not numbered as one of the twelve but Nathanael was a man of great character before God. Little is known of him as the gospel writer John is the only one who mentions him. The two references given of Nathanael are found in John 1 and 21. On the first occasion, we find Philip coming to Nathanael to tell him that he had “found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph” (John 1:45). Nathanael was unsure of what value anyone would be who came from Nazareth.

The prophets had written that the Messiah would come from Bethlehem. Philip refers to Jesus as from Nazareth and Nathanael cannot see any purpose in the Messiah coming from Nazareth. At the bidding of Philip, Nathanael agrees to investigate the man who claimed to be the Son of God. Jesus becomes aware of Nathanael’s coming and greets him with great enthusiasm. “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!” (John 1:47).

Jesus knows the hearts of all men. He knew the heart of Nathanael and expressed it with words of confidence to the noble character he possessed. To be without guile is not to suggest that Nathanael was without guilt. Jesus ac-

knowledges that Nathanael is a man of integrity, honesty and truth. Guile is a character of deceit, treachery and cunning.. A person who is filled with guile cannot be trusted and is full of dishonesty. In a world filled with the wickedness of men, an honest heart is a rare commodity.

Nathanael was known by his friends and by the Lord as one whose heart was measured by truth and righteousness. He had a character that was humble before God and he sought to conduct his life with the integrity of virtue. David wrote in Psalm 32:1-2, “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.” To be without guile is found in the actions of our speech. Peter writes in 1 Peter 3:10, “For he who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit.” Honesty and truth find themselves in the lives of God’s people by the manner of speech. The power of the influence of the Christian is discovered in Nathanael. The measure of character is exemplified in the character of Nathanael. Honesty and truth are a must!

The apostle Paul exhorts the Christians at Ephesus to live their lives without guile. “Therefore, putting away lying. Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave

you” (Ephesians 4:25-32).

The final place we find Nathanael is John 21:2 where he was gathered with the disciples and Jesus appears to them. Nathanael remained faithful to the Lord and one can only imagine the great influence and power of

teaching Nathanael gave to the early church. His character still lives on today as an example of truth and the noble character of virtue. “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue ...” (2 Peter 1:5).

~via *The Bulletin*, Trenton, Florida



A Story About Susie and Debbie

Mark W. White

I was recently treated to a story about a little four-year-old girl named Susie. Her parents are members of the church in Birmingham area. Each Sunday morning and Wednesday night she would skip across her front lawn to the house next door. A tender knock on her neighbor’s door was followed with the question, “Can Debbie come to church with us today?”

Her friend Debbie and Debbie’s parents did not attend church anywhere. Usually the answer to Susie’s question was “yes.” She continued her invitations for nearly a year. But one Sunday morning as Susie called for Debbie to go to church with her, Debbie’s father said, “No.” In fact, he said “No, Debbie cannot come to church with you this morning because she is going with us. We will all see you at church, Miss Susie!”

Debbie’s family visited the church, Bible studies followed, and in a couple of months Debbie’s mother and father were baptized into Christ for the remission of sins. The Lord added them both to His church (Acts 2:47).

What was the high-dollar program that resulted in this conversion? What magical formula brought about interest in the Gospel? There was nothing but a sweet little girl’s persistent invitations. She invited again and again. Debbie’s family was introduced to the Lord and His people by such simple means.

We could canvass the city with an expen-

sive mail-out and some might be reached. We can broadcast the Gospel over the local television station. We could organize an elaborate structure of visitation teams and personal work groups. All of these things could be helpful tools if we wished to use them. But nothing substitutes for a personal, sincere invitation.

Who can I invite to services? My neighbor, postman, doctor, mechanic, coach, teacher, friend, parent, co-worker, boss, and banker all need me to be concerned enough to say to them “Come and see.”

Philip invited his friend Nathanael (John 1:43-45). At first, Nathanael was skeptical (v. 46). This is a pattern we should expect to see when we offer invitations, too. But ultimately, given enough exposure to the truth, Nathanael came to believe in Jesus (vs. 47-49). Some we invite will become believers, too.

Some soul you know may just be waiting for your invitation. Will you extend it?

~via *College View Columns*, Florence, Alabama

News & Notes

THE SICK: *Wanda Tucker’s father, Billy Letson*, is in the ECM hospital in Florence, room 678, following a stroke on Friday... *Mary Best* was not feeling well and not able to be out

on Wednesday night ..**Henry Trousdale** was sick this past Wednesday night and was unable to be at Bible study...**Rocky Rose's uncle, Doug Patterson**, is in CCU in the Huntsville Hospital... Remember **Jerry Dickey's mother, Pat Dickey**, continues in the Florence Comprehensive Care Rehabilitation ... **Kerry Cox's grandfather, Coy Lowman**, continues at home ... **Millinea Word** as she continues her treatments/medication ... **Mattie Blanche Word** continues at home and not able to be out .. **Aldeen Noles** is in the SunBridge Nursing Home in Lawrenceburg ..**Sheila Moore's mother-in-law, Laurene Whitehead**, is in the Athens Convalescent Center .. **Mary Best's nephew, Shannon Johnson**, who is at home ... **Millinea Word's mother, Nola McCafferty**, and **Tisha Thomas' grandmother, Nellie Hunter**, who are both in the Meadow Brook Nursing Home in Pulaski.

NEW BABY: We want to congratulate **Mark and Suzette McIntyre** on the birth of their baby boy this past Thursday. His name is **Luke Andrew**; he weighed 8 lbs. and 6 ozs. and was 20 inches long. Luke is now at home with his parents and his big sister, **Sadie**. Also we want to congratulate **Michael and Sissy Clemmons** on their new grandson.

CONFESSION: Last Sunday evening, **Patrick Martel** came forward and asked for prayers and forgiveness of sins that he had committed. I appreciate the courage and determination of Patrick to make things right before God and his concern for the example that he sets for those around him.

OUT OF TOWN: **The Mosleys:** Roger and Cindy were out of town last week...**The Rogers:** Mike, Tisha, Zachary and Jacob are in Mississippi this weekend...**Glenda and Andrea Phillips** are away this weekend.

COMMUNICATION GROUPS: Communication group two will meet tonight after the evening service. If you are in group two remember to meet with your group this evening.

Gospel POWER

is published in interest of New Testament Christianity and to enhance the work of the Anderson church.

Schedule of Services

Sunday

Bible Classes 9:45 a.m.
Morning Worship 10:45 a.m.
Evening Worship 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Classes 7:00 p.m.

Anderson church Home Page

Anderson-church.org

Elders

Michael Clemmons (256) 247-0836
Scottie Goode (931) 565-3391

Deacons

Phil Pressnell (256) 232-8509
Rocky Rose (256) 247-0011
Larry White (256) 247-0988

Evangelist & Editor

David A. Cox (256) 247-1049
Office-(256) 247-5539
E-mail address: dacox@hiwaay.net

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Anderson church of Christ
P.O. Box 66
Anderson, Alabama 35610

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