

Crossroad

NETWORK NEWS

NOVEMBER 2006

The Grinch Who Stole Thanksgiving



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NOVEMBER 2006

The Mission of *Crossroad Network News* is to promote partnership in the ministry of CBI through communication



| By Dr. David Schuringa, President



THANKS

Don't let any grinch rob you of your enjoyment of God's good gifts.

THANKS

A Meditation on I Timothy 4:1-5

The Grinch Who Stole Thanksgiving

For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

I Timothy 4:4-5

Disguised in a Santa suit, a hairy green creature has a sour expression on his face: knitted brows and covetous yellow eyes. Across his shoulder is slung a fat bag of gifts—loot stolen from under the twinkling trees of little children. While Dr. Suess may have created the character, he certainly didn't create the concept of a grinch, nor was his thieving little green man the first to steal joy at a celebration.

Some New Testament believers knew a group of “grinches” whose teachings dampened the enjoyment of God's creation. Unlike Dr. Suess' comical character, whose actions brought nothing more than frowns and a few tears on Christmas morning, there wasn't anything humorous about this group of heretical proto-gnostics called the Nicolaitans. The later Gnostics referred to their own teachings as the “doctrines of angels.” However, so gravely false were their teachings that Paul (perhaps with a dose of sarcasm) literally calls them the “doctrines of demons.”

What were these teachings that Paul so violently opposed? When reading early Gnostic documents, I came across writings like the ones Paul is refuting in I Timothy. Besides falsities like Eve being formed first and Adam falling first, the Gnostics taught that marriage and having children were bad and that many foods were unacceptable for Christians to eat (see also I Tim. 2:13-15).

The teachings Paul so abhors in this text boil down to forbidding God's people the enjoyment of God's gifts. Like the Grinch who stole Christmas, these ancient grinches were out to steal the presents. That's why Paul says in verse 4, “Everything God created is

good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it received with thanksgiving.” The Gnostic's teachings attempted to cultivate “godliness” by depriving Christians the enjoyment of God's creation. Paul counters their teachings by echoing the creation story where God declared that all His creation was good (Gen. 1:31) and charged mankind to properly steward *all* of it (Gen. 1:28-30).

We could say in doing so, the apostle “saved Thanksgiving!” In contrast with those who would make us feel guilty for the gifts we have, the apostle teaches that we may gratefully enjoy them. Paul says to consecrate these gifts with the Word of God and prayer, reminding me of the age-old practice of reading Scripture and bowing heads in prayer at mealtime, to receive everything with thanksgiving. Fortunately, Paul's urging in I Timothy was fruitful because Revelation 2:6 tells us that Timothy's congregation in Ephesus had learned to “hate the practices of the Nicolaitans.”

Of course, in our enjoyment of God's good gifts, we may not forget that many lack and that we are privileged to reach out to those in need—including the imprisoned. But the *basis* of our assistance is not guilt for the blessings we have. On the contrary, we give out of hearts overflowing with thanksgiving for what He has given to us, especially for the abundant riches of our salvation in Christ.

So, from my house to yours, have a GREAT Thanksgiving! And don't let any grinch rob you of your enjoyment of God's good gifts. Now *there's* a doctrine of angels!

GIVING



A Personal Touch

| By Rev. David Feddes

“I am writing in hope that your program can assist or guide me in my conversion from Islam to Christianity. I am a 37-years young black man.”

The letter from Ernest went on to say, “I adopted the religion of Islam, but I always questioned my belief in Islam. In all of my studies from childhood to Islam, I was misinformed about many things concerning the Bible and/or Christians. All of the answers I was searching for, I found within the Bible. I was one of the lost sheep. Now I am found. I earnestly ask that you rush me your biblical lessons.”

Ernest’s testimony is just one example of how God’s Word makes a personal impact. CBI exists so that people experience the personal, transforming impact of Jesus revealed in Scripture.

In recent articles I wrote about Islam and its presence in America, especially among prisoners. Those articles highlighted Muslim teachings and offered statistics on Muslim growth. However, the growth of Islam in prisons is not a concern because of cold teachings and factual statistics. We are concerned because these teachings are influencing *persons* and the statistics represent *individuals*.

Of course, CBI does not ignore teachings and statistics. We work hard to understand other religious ideas and to present biblical teachings as clearly and convincingly as we can. We keep

precise statistics on how many Instructors are active, how many lessons are sent out, how many students complete lessons, how many students are on waiting lists for a new level, and so forth. But all our careful attention to teachings and statistics aims at a single goal: making a *personal* impact.

I recently preached in a church about the gospel’s impact on people in prison. Afterward a man came up to me and said, “My name is Reggie, and you just preached my life story.” Reggie told me of his arrest and conviction for drug-dealing and murder. In prison he had become a Muslim and taught Islam to others. However, even as a Muslim, he began to study Bible lessons through CBI, and gradually God’s Word changed his mind and heart. Reggie became a Christian. Sentenced to life in prison, he thought he would never get out, so he dedicated himself to becoming a godly man, sharing the gospel with fellow prisoners. Eventually the Lord enabled Reggie to leave prison and serve Him in freedom. Reggie still stays in touch with imprisoned Muslim friends and wants to share Jesus with others.

Preaching in another church, I was approached by a CBI Instructor. He

told about a recent visit to a hospital. There he noticed a young man going from room to room, handing out Christian materials to patients. After talking with the young man, the Instructor learned that this gospel ambassador had spent time in prison and had been disciplined through CBI!

This Instructor, Reggie, Ernest—they are all individuals who have experienced the impact of God’s Word and Spirit and want others to experience that impact as well. While CBI’s ministry involves hundreds of thousands of lessons and letters, we are blessed that the real fruit of our ministry is not numbers but personal impact.

Rev. Feddes is the Director of The Center for Advanced Studies at Crossroad Bible Institute

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Ballots Behind Bars?

| By Chad Cook



In 2000, president of Prison Fellowship Ministries, Chuck Colson, was restored his right to vote by Florida Governor Jeb Bush. It had been 25 years since Colson, who was converted while serving time for his part in the Watergate scandal, cast his ballot. In response to Colson's request for restored civil rights, the governor said, "He certainly has served his time. The crime he committed was a serious one, but I think it's time to move on. I know him. He's a great guy; he's a great Floridian."

Not every convicted felon will be voting in the 2006 elections as Colson will. In fact, there is currently much controversy swirling around the topic of felon voting, and law-makers find themselves facing an important question. Is voting a *right* for all citizens or a *privilege* reserved for the law-abiding?

Based upon the 14th Amendment, which dictates that individual states may deny voting rights to those who have participated in crimes, current laws on this issue vary greatly from

state to state. With inmate voting denied in 48 states, Maine and Vermont are the only two states that allow inmates to vote. However, in some of these 48 states, an inmate may vote after release from prison, and in other states felons may vote after their parole is completed. Five states take the strictest position on this issue, handing down a lifetime voting restriction for *any* type of felony conviction.

This complicated issue involves justice and consequences, alongside reconciliation and democratic privilege. Those in favor of inmate and/or ex-offender voting have diverse reasons for their position. For instance, some say that citizens, regardless of past mistakes, should retain the right to vote because exercising the responsibilities of citizenship is precisely the kind of reentry preparation an offender needs. Others say that the right to vote should be reinstated only after an inmate's sentence has been served. Still others maintain inmates and ex-offenders should be allowed to vote because the large number of convicted minorities being denied the vote is akin to racial discrimination.

On the other hand, those against inmate and ex-offender voting hold that a felony offense merits permanent disenfranchisement—meaning that the right to vote ought to be denied forever. Others fear that allowing inmate and ex-offender voting could wrongly influence the policies of some

politicians in order to win felon votes. A few favor leaving open the possibility of reinstatement only in very special situations, as in the case of Chuck Colson.

On the cusp of state and federal elections, this issue is sure to continue surfacing, perhaps involving some of our students. As we continue to explore the meaning of liberty and justice for convicted felons, let us assure Christ's imprisoned disciples of their full citizenship in God's Kingdom where they are always granted full rights and privileges as sons and daughters of the King.

Chad Cook is an Assistant Editor at The Center for Advanced Studies at Crossroad Bible Institute

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IN THE NEWS...

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Study Shows Many Inmates Suffering with Mental Health Problems

WASHINGTON, DC—According to a study by the U.S. Department of Justice, over half of U.S. male inmates and 73 percent of U.S. female inmates suffer from mental health problems. Included in the report (which was based on 25,000 U.S. inmates) were those who showed signs of depression, mania or other psychotic disorders. Mentally ill inmates were found to be twice as likely to fight in prison and much more likely to have been abused as a child or to have been homeless at the time of their crime. Over half of the inmates had an incarcerated family member, and 19 percent had spent time in foster care—this is twice the percentage of inmates with no mental illness. Three out of four of the inmates studied were dependent on drugs or alcohol, and 34 percent said they had used drugs while committing their offense.

Nebraska Court Rejects Electric Chair Appeal

LINCOLN, NE—The state Supreme Court rejected an inmate's appeal that the electric chair amounts to cruel and unusual punishment, leaving Nebraska as still the only state with electrocution as its sole means of execution. No American court has ever ruled that electrocution amounts to cruel and unusual punishment. But as legal challenges were mounted against its use, other states adopted alternative methods of execution, primarily lethal injection. "Nebraska ... now is alone in the United States, actually in the whole world, in still requiring electrocution," lawyer, Alan Peterson, argued

to the court. "Nebraska is the last holdout for this universally rejected and condemned sole means of capital punishment."

Associated Press

Inmates Sue State Prisons

CONCORD, NH—Twenty inmates are suing the state prison system, seeking to shorten their sentences or gain their immediate freedom. They claim that prosecutors illegally break single crimes into multiple charges and that judges have imposed improper consecutive sentences since the 1970s. The Supreme Court recently accepted all their appeals and plans to act on them together as a matter of judicial economy. The cases reached that venue through eight different superior courts. If the state loses, the plaintiffs say hundreds of men and women who they believe have been wrongly incarcerated—some for decades—could be released.

Golden Dome News

Teens Allowed to Finish Football Season Before Doing Time

KENTON, OH—A judge decided two high school athletes can complete the football season this fall before they serve 60-day jail sentences for a car crash caused by a decoy deer placed in a country road. Two teens were injured. "I shouldn't be doing this, but I'm going to. I see positive things about participating in football," Judge Gary McKinley said Tuesday. Dailyn Campbell, a 16-year-old quarterback for Kenton High, and Jesse Howard, a 17-year-old teammate, will serve their time in a juvenile detention cen-

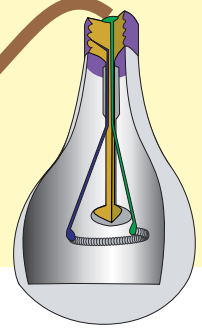
ter. They were also ordered to write a 500-word essay titled "Why I Should Think Before I Act." Last November, teens stole the decoy from a man's home and created a base to help it stand upright because it had only two legs. They then drove up and down the road, watching as drivers swerved to avoid it, prosecutor Brad Bailey said. Robert Roby, Jr. crashed his car into a pole and broke his neck, collarbone, arm and leg. His passenger, Dustin Zachariah, suffered brain damage.

Muslim Chaplain Position in South Difficult to Fill

ARKANSAS—Arkansas prison officials are struggling to replace the system's lone Muslim chaplain since his retirement three months ago. Over the past five years, Agin Muhammad drove hundreds of miles each week to minister to the Department of Correction's approximately 500 Muslim inmates, crisscrossing the state from Calico Rock in IZARD County, to the Delta Regional Unit in Dermott and every prison in between. The 67-year-old Muhammad's retirement on May 31 forced the Correction Department to rely on videotaped sermons and prayers, as well as a tiny cadre of volunteers while it tries to locate a qualified replacement to become its Islamic coordinator. The department has advertised the position five times without much success, drawing only one unqualified applicant, said Eddie Sensat, the department's administrator of religious services. Federal courts have ruled that Muslim inmates must have access to religious instruction.

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

QUESTIONS FOR CROSSROAD



Student Confused About Day of Worship

Q. My student said that some are telling him to worship on Saturday rather than Sunday. He writes, “This has confused me so much that I’ve stopped going to church. Please tell me the true teaching!” How should I respond?

Instructor in Michigan

A. This question is so frequently asked that we have an FAQ on this in the Tier 1 Instructor Manual. FAQ #5 clearly explains why we now worship on Sunday instead of Saturday. A short section of this thorough explanation says, “The first day, the day of resurrection, is also called in Scripture, ‘The Lord’s Day’ (cf. Luke 24:1; John 20:19; Revelation 1:10). God’s Word is clear that the first Christians immediately began meeting together on that day (John 20:19, 26; Acts 2:1; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2).” Feel free to share as much of this FAQ with your student as you see fit by paraphrasing it in your own words. However, we ask that you do not photocopy it to pass it on to your student. We hope this will help to clear up your student’s confusion so he can return to worship!



Q. How should I respond to my Tier 2 student who seems to be using a commentary to answer his Roadmap questions?

Instructor in Iowa

A. First, tell him it is great that he has biblical resources available to him, and it is wonderful that he is utilizing them! Commentaries are helpful in the study of the Bible. However, the Roadmaps are intended for personal devotional use rather than extensions of the Bible lessons. Questions that ask how a teaching can make a difference in one’s life should be answered in a personal manner. Students should look into their own hearts for guidance in filling the Roadmaps instead of looking to a commentary. It can be helpful to provide your students with examples of the type of responses for which we are looking. Showing by example is often one of the best methods of teaching.

SEND-A-CARD DEADLINE NOVEMBER 15

There’s still time to get involved
with the inmate Send-A-Card Program.

Go to www.crossroadbibleinstitute.org for details.

Let’s remind our students about the
true meaning of Christmas, and give
them something to celebrate.



THANKS

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GIVING



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November 2006 - February 2007



All seminars are free of charge, but advanced registration is required. You can register online at www.crossroadbibleinstitute.org or by calling the CBI Headquarters at 800-668-2450. The seminars are sponsored by The Center for Advanced Studies at Crossroad Bible Institute.

NOVEMBER 2006 - FEBRUARY 2007 SEMINARS

How Restorative Justice Aims to Resolve the Crisis in Criminal Justice

Dr. David Schuringa
Crossroad Bible Institute, Grandville, Michigan
2:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m., Tuesday, November 7, 2006
Registration Deadline: October 31, 2006

How Restorative Justice Aims to Resolve the Crisis in Criminal Justice

Dr. David Schuringa
Almond Valley CRC, Ripon, California
1:30 p.m.-3:00 p.m., Sunday, December 10, 2006
Registration Deadline: December 4, 2006

Countering the Cults with Trinitarian Doctrine

Rev. Allen Vander Pol
Marco Presbyterian Church, Marco Island, Florida
7:00 p.m.-8:30 p.m., Monday, February 5, 2007
Registration Deadline: January 29, 2007

Countering the Cults with Trinitarian Doctrine

Rev. Allen Vander Pol
Bradenton CRC, Bradenton, Florida
7:00 p.m.-8:30 p.m., Monday, February 19, 2007
Registration Deadline: February 12, 2007

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