
CHRISTIAN LIFE REPORT

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WE HAVE A PRESIDENT BUT ONLY ONE KING

by Michael J. Brooks

A Facebook posting on President's Day caught my attention: "We have a president but only one king."

I began to think about the differences between our president and our spiritual king, Jesus.

We elect a president to lead. He represents us internationally at the United Nations and when visiting other countries.

On his desk in the Oval Office is a telephone connecting him instantly to any other leader on the face of the globe. When he speaks, his is the voice of the United States.

The president commands the media airwaves. At any time TV and radio networks will provide a microphone to address the nation. He commands the skies with Air Force One. No other craft can fly near the president's airplane and runways clear when it lands.

Our president proposes initiatives, thus setting the tone of government. President Theodore Roosevelt famously called the presidency a "bully pulpit." In our generation it was said that Ronald Reagan's optimism lifted our country from the doldrums.

The American president is a leader, but in our nation we don't have to follow the leader! Those on the other side of issues are called "the loyal opposition." As former U.S. Sen. Hillary Clinton said during the Iraqi War: "I am sick and tired of people who say that if you debate and you disagree with this administration somehow you're not patriotic. We

should stand up and say we are Americans and we have a right to debate and disagree with any administration."

However, as believers we serve a king and obedience is mandatory, not optional.

Jesus taught this in two parables in Matthew. The first in chapter seven is the story of two builders. One built on shifting soil and the other on rock. When the storms came, the first builder met disaster. The difference is that the second builder not only "heard" the words of Christ, but he "did" them. Obedience is key.

The second story is in chapter 21. A father asked his sons to work in his fields that day. The first son refused, but later repented and worked. The second agreed, but never made it to the worksite. "Which of these did the will of the father?" Jesus asked. The answer is obvious: the one who did the work the father assigned.

I daresay most people respect Jesus, but it's not enough to respect him as we do the president or Shakespeare or Beethoven. The true disciple is one who submits and obeys without question. The New Testament calls this "lordship," and you and I have a head start. We can bow to him as lord today before the whole world does at the end of the age.

Reflections is a weekly devotional column from an evangelical perspective written by Michael J. Brooks, college teacher and bi-vocational pastor.

(Brooks is a member of the Christian Life Commission, professor of communications, and assistant to the president for public relations at Judson College)

*The articles in this issue were gathered from various sources.
The opinions in the Christian Life Report are not necessarily the opinions of the Christian Life Commission.*

MENTAL HEALTH AND THE NEWTOWN TRAGEDY

by Shannon Royce



The innocents of Newtown, Connecticut, 20 beautiful children, will never flower. We will never see the doctor, teacher or athlete who could have been. And six adults lost their lives seeking to protect them and their classmates.

The loss is unimaginable. We grieve from a distance. The families and community grieve intimately.

And then it begins. Those who would make political hay out of this tragedy now have an opportunity to press their perspective on such issues as gun control with new fervor.

Over the weekend, however, I saw an article on the Internet, "Thinking the Unthinkable," by a mother dealing with mental health crisis in her home, struggling desperately to care for her son who is ill while also struggling with the ramifications for herself and her other children.

"In the wake of another horrific national tragedy, it's easy to talk about guns," the mother wrote. "... It's time for a meaningful, nation-wide conversation about mental health. That's the only way our nation can ever truly heal."

I agree with her that it is time. How many more tragedies must we have before we consider the issue of mental health in America? And closer to home, how many more tragedies must we endure before we consider the role of the church for families in mental health crisis?

How should the church engage these issues -- not just after they happen but before they happen? What would Jesus do? We are His body. What should we do?

We need to understand better what happens when a mental health challenge and evil meet, what happens when disability mingles with sin. We see the devastating results. We need to consider what we can do to prevent them from occurring.

Mental health concerns are hidden disabilities that don't show any physical marker on the outside. There is no wheelchair, no assistance dog that might indicate that this is an individual who might require assistance or accommodation.

Hidden disabilities cover the autism spectrum as well as encompassing those with mental health concerns such as bipolar disorder, depression, schizophrenia and those with neurological concerns such as epilepsy or Tourette's. Each of these disabilities is deeply life-affecting for the individual and the family who loves him or her. For a more detailed understanding of these disabilities, visit ChosenFamilies.org.

Clearly there are distinctions between those on the autism spectrum, those with mental health concerns and those with neurological disorders. But the thing they have in common is they each are hidden from obvious view. They tend to be misunderstood. We don't know how to respond to them. They make us uncomfortable.

We tend to avoid that which makes us uncomfortable. We are busy. Our calendars are full. Full of good things. Important priorities.

I am reminded of the man who fell into trouble as he went to Jericho. The church leaders who saw him did not throw a rock at him. They did not curse him. They took no deliberate action to harm him.

They just walked past on the other side of the road. Jesus commended the man who stopped, took notice and got involved. He said the good Samaritan was our example of how to respond. We need to stop, take notice, and get involved. This is not about programs, though programs may be fine. This is about personal engagement.

We are called as the body of Christ to engage the fallen and broken world with the grace and power of the Gospel of Christ. That includes those with mental health concerns. (BP)

(Royce is president of ChosenFamilies.org, a nonprofit organization for families living with hidden disabilities. She is an attorney, marathoner and cancer survivor who lives with her husband and two sons in the Washington, D.C. area. A Southern Baptist preacher's kid, Royce formerly worked with the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.)

AMERICAN CHARACTER BUILDERS can provide speakers for the following programs...

Skills for the Good Life – This module is designed to assist students in discovering the skills and principles basic for a joyful, rewarding and healthy lifestyle. This program is based upon scientific insights far beyond most prevention programs. It is comprehensive in the health information, primary life skills, and drug-resistance skills taught. (Grades 4-8)

Character Education – This program helps young people develop values that help them understand the importance of certain choices and the consequences of those choices. (Grades 4-up)

Other American Character Builders programs for which speakers can be provided...

Gambling Awareness - Suicide Prevention - Anger Management - Conflict Resolution - Violence Prevention in School - Prom Prep - Driving Under the Influence - Gang Awareness - Steroid Awareness - Pornography Awareness (for adult groups only)

For a complete description of each program visit our website at www.AmericanCharacterBuilders.org

Our desire is...

To change the culture by challenging the norms and expectations of students concerning drug use and other addictive behaviors
To help prevent students from experimenting with or using drugs
To intervene early, especially with high-risk students
To attempt to reduce drug use and its negative consequences

★ AMERICAN CHARACTER BUILDERS ★

AMERICAN CHARACTER BUILDERS

by Joe Godfrey

A brief history:

In June 1937 a group of concerned leaders from Baptist, Methodist and Presbyterian churches came together to discuss and organize an inter-denominational temperance program. The group met at the First United Methodist Church of Birmingham, AL and organized the Alabama Temperance Alliance (ATA).

In the 1960s the organization changed its name to the Alabama Council on Alcohol Problems and then in the 1970s, again changed its name to the Alabama Citizens Action Program (ALCAP). The school ministry, now known as **American Character Builders**, is a 501c3 organization that continues to provide evidenced-based educational programs which address addictive behaviors and some of the underlying causes that lead students and adults to get caught up in these addictive behaviors. Alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, gambling and other unhealthy choices contribute to the decline in the quality of life in any given society. *American Character Builders* offers an essential service by educating students and adults concerning the dangers of potentially addictive behaviors.

A six member Board of Directors performs its governing duties on a volunteer basis. The organization operates through the financial support of concerned individuals, corporate gifts and community-oriented organizations.

Programs:

American Character Builders has been taking a message of drug abstinence into public and private schools for over three decades. Now, four of the most popular programs are available for schools, churches and other organizations to use in a variety of settings. The programs are available as kits, which include a teacher's guide, a CD with PowerPoint and other resource material, and thirty student booklets for a donation to American Character Builders for only \$99.95 per kit. Additional student booklets are available for \$3.00 per book on orders of 20 or more, \$2.50 per book on orders of 50 or more and \$2.00 per book on orders of 100 or more.

Additional programs are being developed and will be available in coming months. Bible studies are being developed to accompany each kit for use in churches,

and future plans include the development of age-appropriate learning activities and videos.

Kit titles:

Alcohol: It's a Killer! – Beverage alcohol is the most popular and most abused psychoactive drug in America. This program helps students make the healthiest and smartest choice in dealing with this destructive substance.

Tobacco Awareness – The use of tobacco is the major cause of premature death in the U.S. This program helps students know the facts, evaluate the risks and, based on this information, make the right choice concerning tobacco use.

Saying NO to Meth, Marijuana & Cocaine! – This program deals with major illegal drug use and the powerful effects that these controlled drugs have on the mind. This study helps students develop the skills needed in order to resist the pressure to be involved in illegal drug use.

The Bully Issue: - This program will help create a psychologically secure environment for learning in your school.

All programs are suitable for students from 5th grade and up.

American Character Builders benefits students by teaching them how to make wise decisions and choices in life—choices that lead to a healthy, happy and productive life.

American Character Builders benefits churches, counseling services and community recovery programs by becoming a "first line of defense," heading off addictive behaviors before those behaviors develop and destroy lives and break up homes.

American Character Builders benefits the business community. By teaching students how to make healthy lifestyle choices and by advocating and promoting a healthy and productive lifestyle, citizens have more resources to spend on goods and services that have a positive impact on the economic development of their communities. Insurance costs, accidents and time away from work can all be reduced.

(Godfrey is executive director of American Character Builders and ALCAP)

By ordering and presenting *American Character Builders* programs in your local schools and/or church, you can connect with unchurched students and their families, as well as with school administrators and faculty members.

To request a program in your school or church contact us:

AMERICAN CHARACTER BUILDERS

2376 Lakeside Drive
Birmingham, Alabama 35244
(205) 985-9529
FAX (205) 985-9015
www.AmericanCharacterBuilders.org

*"Building Character
One Good Choice
at a Time"*

ALCAP (*Alabama Citizens Action Program*) serves as a resource for churches, community groups and interested individuals working to make Alabama a safer state for each and every citizen. An ethical, moral and responsible lifestyle based on biblical standards is an attainable goal to benefit the entire state.

ALCAP

2376 Lakeside Drive
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www.alcap.com



"Alabama's Moral Compass"

Pray for Joe Godfrey and his staff as American Character Builders and ALCAP minister across Alabama making our state safer for each and every citizen.



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FACTS & ISSUES

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PLIGHT OF PORNOGRAPHY

"Our enemy has found the perfect tool to deliver temptation to men -- men who love God, men who love their wives, love their children and love their churches. ... Yet their involvement in looking at pornography has virtually duct-taped their mouths closed and taken them out of spiritual leadership in the home and in the church." -- Jay Dennis, "Movement seeks '1 Million Men' to fight pornography addiction," Baptist Press, Feb. 23, 2013

www.eric.com - related resources: "Our Hardcore Battle Plan"

RE-ESTABLISH THE FOUNDATION

"I believe that it is imperative that we, the church in America, get to work on re-establishing the foundation. By examining the foundation of our lives, we are able to go higher, build stronger and may see a revival in America.... A return to the fundamentals of the Christian principles of faith and freedom, prayer and praise will turn us around. A believer who stands true on the Word of God will be a force to contend with in this hard, cold world." -- Jeff Fuller, "Living a Rock Solid Faith"

stonedwitnesses.blogspot.com, Jan. 27, 2013

THE NEW CIVIL DISCOURSE

"Is it improper for a church to vocally and visibly take a stand on biblical issues like sodomy, false religion, abortion and other issues of today? I expect most of our pastors have preached on all of these sins. We are seeing the beginning of Christian

speech characterized as hate speech in America. Mainstream thought and political correctness are all that is permitted in the new civil discourse. No condemnation of another's activities is permitted." -- Eric Johnston, president, Southeast Law Institute
www.southeastlawinstitute.org, March 2013

ON THE PROPER EDGE

"We struggle with the relative boredom of 'playing it safe', because the world holds before us all sorts of enticements and temptations to walk their edge. Truth is, we need to grow up, because mature believers understand that there is another 'edge' out there that is more exhilarating, more breathtaking and requires more courage than anything the world has to offer: It's the 'edge' of faithful obedience." -- Scott Guffin, "An Encouraging Word"

www.libertypark.org/blog, March 4, 2013

STANDS AND STEPS REQUIRED

"It is not enough to take stands against evil; we must also take steps toward godliness. The failure to take steps is a contributing reason to why folks don't take Christian protests seriously. They appear to be Christian grandstanding or posturing. Jesus never protested or ran public relations campaigns. Jesus saw wrong and corrected it. He knew what was right and did it. Common sense tells us that we will never move forward by just taking stands; steps are required." -- Gary Fenton, "The Next Reality Show: 'Spiritual Hoarders'"

www.characterpath.com/blog, Feb. 22, 2013