

# CHRISTIAN LIFE REPORT

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## SMOKE FREE ALABAMA

by Joe Bob Mizzell

The Alabama legislature is attempting to pass a bill into law to ban smoking in all public places, and they are counting on the support of everyone from doctors to bus-boys to help get it passed. The measure calls for smoke-free workplaces and restaurants.

Alabama has only local laws that prohibit public smoking. Montgomery, Birmingham and Decatur have such ordinances. Backing is coming from the American Cancer Society, the medical community and the restaurant trade association. The American Cancer Society has released the results of a poll it commissioned showing 78 percent of all Alabama residents – non-smokers and smokers – favor a statewide smoke-free ban.

Twenty-eight other states, including Louisiana and Florida, have statewide smoke-free laws according to the American Cancer Society. Senator Figures who is sponsoring the bill cites a 2006 report from the U.S. Surgeon General that showed workers exposed to secondhand smoke are one-third more likely to develop lung cancer and that secondhand smoke contains more than 60

known or probable cancer-causing agents.

The cancer society estimates Alabama smokers have \$1.5 billion in healthcare costs every year, including \$238 million a year in state Medicaid funds.

Opinion Research Associates of Little Rock, Arkansas, conducted the cancer society poll between December 14-18 in a telephone survey of 503 registered Alabama voters, said Ernie Oakleaf, its founder. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 4.5 percent.

In other poll results:

- 95 percent of respondents viewed second-hand smoke as a health hazard
- 92 percent strongly agreed no one should be exposed to secondhand smoke in the workplace
- 79 percent believe the government should promote and protect public health

*(This article is based on an article in the Montgomery Advertiser by Kenneth Mullinax – January 15, 2008)*

### - - - *You Can Stop Smoking* - - -

Although there is no universally accepted and easily applied smoking cessation formula, there are many effective strategies that can help you to become smoke-free. While some individuals are able to succeed alone via “cold turkey” quitting, others need the support and encouragement provided by cessation groups. Generally, the use of an individualized plan will yield the most optimal results. The following suggestions, presented to help you develop and carry out such a plan, can also lead you to better general and oral health and a more satisfying lifestyle:

- ◆ **Set a quit date in the near future.** Select a time that is far enough in the future to allow for mental preparation, but not so distant that it will result in procrastination.
- ◆ **Explore personal reasons for smoking/quitting.** Design a self-discovery exercise that includes the following questions: “What payoffs am I presently receiving from smoking? Is smoking adversely affecting my systemic and oral health—my personal/family/social/occupational life?”
- ◆ **Consider attending a formal, community-based quit-smoking program.** The American Cancer Society, American Lung Association, and the Seventh-day Adventists offer low-cost programs that will help you understand the physiological, psychological, and social factors that relate to your addiction.

- ◆ **Use a multiple-pronged approach.** Be willing to work diligently and employ all available resources, including audio and videotapes, books, pamphlets, tipsheets, self-testing material, etc.
- ◆ **Remember that the quitting process continues over an extended time period.** Do not be discouraged by setbacks—keep trying! Research shows that chances for success increase with each attempt.
- ◆ **Seek ongoing help and encouragement from family members, friends, health-care professionals, and co-workers.** A supportive group of concerned and caring others will contribute significantly to your long-term recovery.
- ◆ **Spend as much time as possible with nonsmokers in smoke-free surroundings.**
- ◆ **Consider using nicotine reduction therapy,** especially if you are a long-term, heavy smoker. The medication that is used in this therapy releases nicotine directly into the bloodstream, where it decreases withdrawal symptoms and helps to reduce and control cravings.

*(Clinical descriptive materials by Arden G. Christen, D.D.S., M.S.D., M.A.; taken in part from a brochure of The Health Connection, Narcotics Education, Inc., Hagerstown, MD)*

*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*

# ONE IN CHRIST

by Henry Cox

## INTRODUCTION

As I have struggled in my spirit with His Spirit, a portion of His Holy Word has come to mind. It is **Galatians 3:26-29**, and it reads like this in the New King James Version:

*For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

Here it is! It is obvious. It is clear. It is the divinely inspired Word of God. It is truth. There can be no misunderstanding of it.

But my Pastor didn't preach it.

My daddy didn't teach it.

My generation didn't reach it.

So today, I don't want to breach it. Instead I want to gladly, willingly, lovingly and thankfully proclaim it... WE ARE ONE IN CHRIST!

I grew up in a Christian home. My parents were Christians. My grandparents on both sides were Christians. We were regular in church attendance. Our family was involved in the church. They taught me to be quiet in worship and listen to the sermon. They taught me to respect the pastor and the deacons and my elders. They taught me to tithe. They taught me to pray. They taught me to love the Word of God. They taught me to sing. Yes, we even learned to sing:

*JESUS LOVES THE LITTLE CHILDREN,  
ALL THE CHILDREN OF THE WORLD.  
RED AND YELLOW, BLACK AND WHITE.  
THEY ARE PRECIOUS IN HIS SIGHT.  
JESUS LOVES THE LITTLE  
CHILDREN OF THE WORLD.*

BUT, THEY DIDN'T TEACH ME THAT "IN CHRIST" WE ALL ARE ONE! How could they have missed it? How could they have read the scripture passage that I read a few moments ago and not seen it? For that matter, why didn't I see the contradiction between my talk and my walk when I was a young Christian, a young person, yes, and even a young preacher? The answer is simple.

## I. WE WERE ALL VICTIMS OF BLIND PREJUDICE

My parents taught me what their parents and grandparents had taught them. And they were simply passing on what their parents and grandparents had taught them. It can be traced all the way back to the Old South and the times of slavery. The Civil War may have freed the slaves, but it didn't free the minds and hearts of the white landowners. They were still enslaved by their beliefs that African Americans were not equal to Anglo Americans. They still held the view that somehow black people should serve the whites.

As a small child my first memories of black people are good memories. This is true because those precious people, those people whose skin was a little darker than mine, those who worked as field hands and housekeepers on our farm were more godly, more Christian than we were. Oh, I was taught to be respectful to the workers. I was taught to say "Yes Sir" and "No Sir" or "Yes Maam" and "No Maam" to elderly black people. I was taught to not mock or be disrespectful to any black person. As a small child I played with black children my own age and I enjoyed them just as much as white children. I saw no difference

and, when we were out in the yard playing, I made no difference. **BUT, I WAS TAUGHT THERE WAS A DIFFERENCE.** I was taught that black people were good as long as they stayed in their place...and that place was somewhere beneath where I was.

I simply accepted this. I was blind to the truth and I never questioned my prejudice. So, I grew up in a small county seat town in central Alabama. I grew up attending a segregated school and a segregated church living in a segregated society. I drank from "white only" public water fountains and made use of public restrooms that were clearly marked "white only" and never really gave it a second thought.

I enjoyed my early years. Life was good for me and I thought it was good for everyone else. But, during my early teens I began to notice the inequities between blacks and whites. I noticed that many black people were being mistreated, used and abused by white people who had money and power and also by white people who had nothing but their prejudicial attitudes that they were better than the blacks.

When I was fourteen years old, the Lord began to deal with me about surrendering to His call to preach. I later fully surrendered to the Lord when I was sixteen years old and immediately began to preach whenever I had the opportunity. Soon I had graduated from High School and was a ministerial student at Howard College (now Samford University). The year was 1957, and Howard College was a segregated college. Even though I was reading God's Word, studying God's Word, and preaching sermons based on God's Word, I still was not dealing with my prejudice. You see, I was moving in Christian circles, but they were all "white only" Christian groups.

In 1960, the Lord led a small church to call me to be their pastor. So, at age 20, I was ordained and began to serve a church as the pastor. The congregation was just as prejudiced as I was and so there was no reason to face my sin. Things were happening about this time. Right here in Montgomery a lady named Rosa Parks refused to go to the back of the bus. She was arrested and the Montgomery Bus Boycott was started as a response to her unfair treatment. A young black Baptist preacher named Martin Luther King, Jr. helped to lead that boycott. Oh, we talked about it in the church where I served as pastor, but we all agreed that those people in Montgomery were just "trouble makers." **THE MODERN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT WAS BEING BORN AND I REALLY DIDN'T HAVE A CLUE WHAT IT WAS ALL ABOUT. BUT, MY SPIRIT WAS BEGINNING TO BE TROUBLED. I BEGAN TO QUESTION SOME OF MY ATTITUDES.**

## II. THEN THE LORD OPENED MY EYES

It didn't happen all at once. My spiritual growth was slow but it was sure. During the early 60's I finished college and enrolled in seminary. It was in seminary that I finally had a class with two African American ministerial students enrolled. For the first time in my life I saw them as my equals. They were called by God to preach just as I was. They were serious about following God's call just as I was. They were serving God to the best of their ability just as I was. I was beginning to deal with my prejudice, but I still had a long way to go.

**AND THEN IT HAPPENED. DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., LED A MARCH ON WASHINGTON IN 1963. I**

watched the news coverage of that event on television. And I heard his "I Have A Dream" speech. It is the greatest sermon I have ever heard. For the first time in my life, I understood the sin of my prejudice. God opened my eyes.

But, I was still not where I needed to be. I was not overly excited about Dr. King winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. I watched the events of "Bloody Sunday" on March 7, 1965, and I knew that the violent beating of some of the marchers was wrong. Later, on March 25, 1965, I was excited in my heart when the march from Selma to Montgomery actually began. I knew that march had great significance to African Americans and to other right thinking white Americans. I knew I had to get my heart right with God and right with my brothers and sisters who were black.

About this time God led me back to Alabama following my seminary days. I served a church near Tuscaloosa, Alabama, that was segregated. In fact, I found out after I became their pastor that they had a "closed door" policy and had actually voted not to admit black people if they came to worship. This was a very hypocritical stance since many of them were proud of their history and were quick to point out that the church used to have slaves as members. They could accept slaves attending worship and being members in years past but they wouldn't tolerate the idea of African Americans being members during the present.

I was not able to do anything with their prejudice because the Lord moved me to a church in Montgomery after only two years of service in the Tuscaloosa area. One of the first questions I asked the Montgomery congregation before agreeing to be their pastor was about their membership policy. I was assured that they had an "open door" policy. I found out soon after becoming their pastor that there "open door" policy applied to everyone except African Americans. They felt that the blacks who were visiting some all white congregations were just trying to cause trouble and get on television news. Realizing that I had not been told the truth in the beginning and that the policy was not Christian, I set about to try to change it. There was a sizeable group supporting the "closed door" policy. Four deacons were leading that group. They informed me that if we voted to admit black people to the congregation they would leave the church and many others would leave with them. But, I was really under conviction. I knew we had to change that policy. At that time no African Americans had attempted to worship with us. We had a called business meeting and we voted to have an open door policy. It wasn't long until an African American man and his family started worshipping with us every Sunday. I visited them and assured them our doors were open. They indicated they wanted to join the church. About that time I had a visit from the wealthiest man in our congregation. In fact, his tithes and offerings accounted for about one-third of our annual budget. He sat in my office across from my desk, looked me in the eyes and said, "Brother Cox, if you and these people vote to receive black members my family and I will leave and we will take our money with us." I looked at him, called him by his first name and said, "I'm sorry you feel that way. But the day a born-again Christian African American person or family comes and asks to join our fellowship, that's the day we are going to vote them in." He said, "I was afraid you were going to say that" and he walked out of my office.

Satan had a lot of fun with me for a few hours after that. I had to turn to the Lord and rely on Him alone. But, in that time of prayer and seeking the Lord, He spoke to me and said, "Don't be afraid. You will lose some members over this, but I'll give you two for every one that leaves." I called a deacons meeting

and told them what the Lord had said. A couple of weeks later we voted to receive Brother Milton Boyd and his family into our fellowship on the promise of their letters from a sister church. THE PRETTIEST SOUND AND THE UGLIEST SOUND I HAVE EVER HEARD IN CHURCH CAME DURING THAT VOTE. I ASKED ALL WHO FAVORED RECEIVING THESE NEW MEMBERS TO SAY "AMEN" AND THE "AMENS" SHOOK THE WALLS. IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL SOUND. THEN I SAID, "ALL THOSE WHO OPPOSE SAY 'NO'". ONE DEACON YELLED OUT "NO" AND I'VE NEVER HEARD AN UGLIER SOUND THAN THAT IN CHURCH.

Forty members left the next week and went down the road and formed a new church. But, within a few weeks God added eighty (80) new members. Within a few months 20 of the 40 who left came back, publicly apologized to the church for their actions and asked to be reinstated. We gladly took them back.

The man with the money left. But, we never missed his giving. Milton Boyd was called to preach and a couple of years later we started Westside Baptist Church as a mission and asked Milton to be the pastor. Milton went on to pastor another great church here in Montgomery and later was called to a position with the Florida Baptist Convention's State Board of Missions in the area of interracial relations. Milton went to be with the Lord this year.

Milton and I had a great fellowship. Through his love and gifted ministry and the working of God's Holy Spirit, I overcame the prejudice in my heart. AND, THERE IS ANOTHER BLESSING TO THIS. I BROKE THE CHAIN. I HAVE TWO CHILDREN. I DIDN'T TEACH THEM THE RACIAL PREJUDICE THAT MY PARENTS TAUGHT ME. MY SON IS A PASTOR AND HE HAS AN INTEGRATED CHURCH. MY DAUGHTER ATTENDS AN INTEGRATED CHURCH. THEY BOTH HAVE MANY AFRICAN AMERICAN FRIENDS. AND THEY HAVE TAUGHT THEIR CHILDREN THAT "WE ARE ONE IN CHRIST."

### III. SO TODAY MY PRAYER IS THAT GOD WILL GIVE US SPIRITUAL VISION

God has used many events and people to bring me to where I am today in the area of loving and accepting people as Jesus would have me to do. But, I have to believe that the great turning point in my life in realizing my racial prejudice and in deciding to deal with it was Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 1963 sermon, "I Have A Dream." So, today, I thank God for Dr. King and the influence of his life and ministry upon us.

I'm sure you know that part of his dream was that we all might have the right to dream our dreams and to live out those dreams in this great land.

WE NEED TO DREAM SOME DREAMS TODAY.

- A. As Christians we need to herald the truth that "We are one in Christ" and dream that all our brothers and sisters in Christ will truly believe this.
- B. We need to dream that our individual churches can find new ways to work together to carry out the Great Commission.
- C. We need to pray for more congregations to have a greater blend of blacks and whites.
- D. We need to stay active in our society as Christians and work for equal rights for all.
- E. We need to make and develop friendships that reach across racial lines.
- F. We need to stay in God's Word and obey it.

*(Cox is retired pastor of Bay Minette FBC and former president of the Alabama Baptist State Convention)*

# FACTS & ISSUES

Compiled by Joe Bob Mizzell, Director  
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## BOTTLED WATER

Downing the last gulp of a fancy name-brand H<sub>2</sub>O, as well as remembering to toss the empty bottle in the recycling bin, makes you feel pretty good about yourself, right? It shouldn't. Even when the bottles are recycled—and only about a fifth in this country are—there are all kinds of other consequences of quaffing bottled water, says Melissa Peffers, the air-quality program manager for Environmental Defense. (And yes, it is an air-quality issue.)

The containers are often filled in faraway lands, then shipped overseas, transported across the country in trucks, and stored in refrigerators at your local convenience store. Compare that with the environmental impact of turning on your tap, filling a glass, and sipping away.

Anyone who is opting for bottled over municipal for health reasons is misguided, says Peffers: "Most bottled water is just tap water." (And what comes out of your faucet is carefully monitored to follow strict EPA guidelines.) Add in the fact that it's outrageously expensive, especially when set against the (practically free!) alternative, and it is astounding that America's thirst for bottled water seems unquenchable, reaching nearly 30 billion bottles a year.

Source: U.S. News and World Report

## A VERY SERIOUS CONSEQUENCE OF UNDERAGE DRINKING....

is the part it plays in addiction. Eighty-seven percent of drinking adults began before age twenty-one, and adult alcohol abuse is most common among those who began to drink in their early to mid-teens. In fact, the average age for a new drinker is twelve, and very few adults begin drinking alcohol after they reach the legal age.

More than one parent, in dealing with an intoxicated son or daughter, has said with relief, "I'm glad it's only alcohol!" They fail to grasp how serious alcohol is. In addition to its immediate effects, alcohol opens the door to greater "highs" with other drugs.

The entertainment industry glamorizes alcohol and seldom realistically depicts the sad effects of abuse. Of eighty-one G-rated animated films, a shocking 34 percent associated alcohol with wealth and 19 percent with sexual activity. Beer advertising appeals to kids by using images such as talking lizards or a rock star ferret. Continued marketing to the very young is critical because two-thirds of alcohol sales are to underage and problem drinkers.

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission

## Substance Abuse Prevention Sunday

March 16, 2008

*"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." 2 Corinthians 7:1*



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