



The Fountain
1023 N Chinowth St.
Visalia, CA 93291



The
FOUNTAIN
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Intentionally Growing, and #LivingSENT for Jesus



The
Fountain
Christian Church

1023 N. Chinowth St.
Visalia, CA 93291-4114
Phone: (559) 732-6623
FAX: (559) 732-6625

Website: www.thefountaincc.org
Follow Us on Social Media
Facebook @ The Fountain Christian Church
Instagram @ thefountain_vis

Office Hours:

Mon-Thurs 9:00 AM— 4:30 PM

Staff E-Mail Addresses:

Sam Sears, Senior Pastor

Sam@thefountaincc.org

Carrie Guy, Associate Pastor

Carrie@thefountaincc.org

Kevin Ronk, Next Gen Pastor

Kevin@thefountaincc.org

Chuck Romer, Music Director

Chuck@thefountaincc.org

Sheila Ronk, Office Administrator

Sheila@thefountaincc.org

Twin Errors and Deuteronomy 17

By Sam Sears

A few months ago, I began a series focusing on bad ideas that worm into the church body and can cause harm. “Ideas have consequences and bad ideas have victims,” is an important truth that connects well with Ephesians 6:12, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” It’s ideas, not people who disagree with us or behave or believe differently than us, that are our enemy. Sometimes, our enemies come in pairs.

I’ve lived through intense and dangerous situations, but I have never walked a literal tightrope. Someone who walks a tightrope must keep perfect balance, and if they lean too far to the right, or too far to the left, they plummet. In looking back at some of the tensest situations I have experienced, there sometimes have been two goals or ideas held in tension. When I was a Juvenile Justice Officer, it could often feel like walking a tightrope. My priority while on duty was everyone’s safety, and yet my long-term goal was the increasing maturity of each individual resident. Because I needed to both gain their trust and build a relationship with them, but also hold them accountable up to and including cuffing and restraining them, I could err in many ways, as anyone in that job could do. The chief two errors that were often addressed by those managing us and training us were being either too lax, or too tough.

Although I was only in the position a few years, turnover was high. (Given the positions at the facility, I once calculated a well over 200% turnover rate in just those few years.) Some were let go because they were over-focused on building relationships to the point that they were taken advantage of and were not doing their duty to promote safety; others were dismissed because they were too stern and were agitating the young residents and making the situation less productive. You might be able to connect with a situation in your own life where the correct path was narrow, and you could error on either side. This was also a reoccurring theme in Scripture.

Jesus informed us that, “For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Matthew 7:14) This is not the only place where Scripture warns of a narrow path. Deuteronomy 17 warns the Israelites about a time when they will have a king, and some of the dangers of government; it in-

“For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.” (Matthew 7:14)

cludes a command for the king to have the Old Testament law with him, and even to make a copy of it himself. Verse 20 records the reason for this, “... that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.”

When we talk about God’s instructions for government, we often go to Romans 13. Deuteronomy 17 makes it clear that government can go wrong in more than one way. Similarly, as Christians called to be salt and light, as we respond to our government, we can err in more than one way.

While I do not have the space that Wayne Grudem does in his book, *Politics: According to the Bible*, I want to agree with him on two related but very different errors that he points out in his work. I encourage you to pick up a copy or download the audio book for further well-reasoned and well-articulated thoughts on this complex issue and the finer points involved.

The first error is an over-emphasis on government and politics. Hold your applause. In covering both sides of this issue, I believe that if I do this fairly, it will challenge a wide array of individuals. I think many of us can relate to feeling that politics intrude into media or relationships in an uncomfortable and often unproductive way. I completely understand that we want moments to escape, but I also understand the importance of these issues. I, too, get frustrated when it seems they are over-emphasized. I sometimes feel like many actors and media “entertainment” productions are far more “preachy” than I have ever been.

While it’s a bit clichéd, I affirm the statement, “It’s the Lion and the Lamb, not an elephant or a donkey that can save your soul.” Jesus is obviously far better than any politician. He is honest. Beyond that, He is also “The truth, the light and the way,” Love, and perfectly just. He isn’t a “respector of persons” (Acts 10:34) in that He doesn’t value or love some people less than others. He has the wisdom to sort all of that out, and every politician we elect or who runs for office is just a flawed human being, in need of a Savior.

No political ideology, no matter how well-thought or how well-intended, can turn this world into a utopia. Even if it gets all the ideas right, it still must deal with fallen human beings, and we will introduce error into the system. No political ideology, even when it’s most successful, can suddenly cause a lost person to repent and trust in Christ. Some who went before us tried marrying the church and the state, despite what I think are clear biblical teachings to the contrary, with disastrous results both in Rome and in Geneva.

The Gospel deals with matters of the will. Laws can and should encourage what is called “surface compliance,” but the Gospel gets into not just doing the right thing, but — after being saved and transformed — having the desire and the ability to do the right thing. It is in some sense more about who you are than just what you do. It is more than just a list of actions, but about the

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By Sam Sears

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privilege of becoming a child of God. Once you are a new creature in Christ, then good actions naturally flow from that identity.

Connected with this error is failing to recall that our enemies are not flesh and blood. It's easy to see the division on Facebook or even at a family gathering. I, too, have felt this temptation. You see someone in office (or running for office) get caught in a lie or announce support for bad ideas, and you don't want others to be victims of those bad ideas. However, if we aren't careful, we forget that God loves that individual running for office too, and the name calling starts and division increases. I think it's wise of us to discuss ideas, but I am reluctant to name individuals. Yet I do so see some churches crossing where I would be comfortable with, and naming individuals and in a way that might be mistaken for endorsing someone's behavior not just certain ideas they represent or attacking an individual, and not just the ideas that they old.

On the flip side, we have another error. An article written several years ago by Pastor and author Timothy Keller warned, "Those who avoid all political discussions and engagement are essentially casting a vote for the social status quo. American churches in the early 19th century that did not speak out against slavery because that was what we would now call "getting political" were actually supporting slavery by doing so. To not be political is to be political. *1" This warning remains true today.

If we are not part of the discussion, how can we be salt and light as we are commanded to be? We live in a democracy, so to apply Jesus' command to "render unto Caesar's that which is Caesar's" (Mark 12:17) means that we MUST participate if we are to be obedient. If we are to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31) then we must care about their wellbeing, including if they are being taken victim by false ideas.

While we must continue to work to share the Gospel, we will always have non-Christians among us. The answer to how to deal with drunk drivers, to borrow the analogy from Wayne Grudem, is not simply to try and get everyone saved and disciple them so that they don't abuse alcohol and then get behind the wheel. We must have systems in places.

The article from Keller was entitled, "How do Christians fit into a two-party system?" His answer was: we don't. I'm sympathetic. Our founding fathers warned us against political parties, and certainly the intent wasn't a two-

*1 https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/29/opinion/sunday/christians-politics-belief.html?fbclid=IwAR3RBhulrDhsW2d4zkZTKfmN-fO47fhz_ldx18s_YxC-swP5ijwqEv1Fwo

party system. It locks us into only two choices, and sometimes it feels like it's A or C and the right answer is B — or maybe even E.

But if not being involved in politics is wrong, even sinful, since as I argued earlier that to be obedient to

Christ's command we "render unto Caesar," we also shouldn't pretend that both choices are equally in line with Scripture. The choice is not between two neutral parties. Greg Koukl, of <http://www.str.org>, has a

saying, "Truth isn't ice cream." This is not picking what your favorite flavor of ice cream is. We can all have our personal flavor. Truth claims are involved in politics. Economic strategies are either more effective or less effective. Claims about the constitution and what the authors intended are either true or not true.

Recently, I ordered from one of our favorite restaurants. I was stunned when it arrived with no cheese or sauce. My wife had not checked our order when she picked it up; they were usually so accurate, and she was in a hurry. Why would she? I discovered that I was missing several ingredients in my food, a keto-friendly pizza that didn't have cheese or sauce! I called them up, and the manager told me that the employee said that they had put the missing ingredients on. I offered to take a picture and send it to her to verify my claim, and she said, "Well there are two sides to every story." The fact that two different people made different claims wasn't what needed to be determined. We already know that. What we needed to verify was reality. While I had evidence, she declined to see it.

In a similar way, there are opposing claims in the world of politics and the choices we have set before us. On each issue, if the claims are opposing, at least one of them is wrong. While it takes some investigating, the right answers can be determined, and there is a real right and wrong. Therefore, there is a vote that will do the greater good.

I mentioned a moment ago that claims about the constitution and what the authors' intent was are either correct or not. For nearly all recorded history, when something was written and it was read, folks read it to try to understand what the author intended. In recent years, there has been growing concern about the impact on the reader and allowing the reader to determine the document's meaning. These two views are at play in deciding who is appointed to the Supreme Court. One side wants to read what our Founding Fathers intended, which thankfully included legal ways to progress and change the law; the other wants to read into a "living document" and create laws that were never intended by our Founding Fathers. The challenge with

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"Truth isn't ice cream."

Greg Koukl

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By Sam Sears

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Since the Bible says, "Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all the unfortunate" (Proverbs 31:8), we should feel compelled to stand up for those obviously incapable of speaking for themselves.

the latter is that without an objective base, the interpretation can continue to go farther and farther away from the original and can change depending on who is in power.

Keller mentioned slavery as an important political issue of the past. Then, they questioned if all human beings had

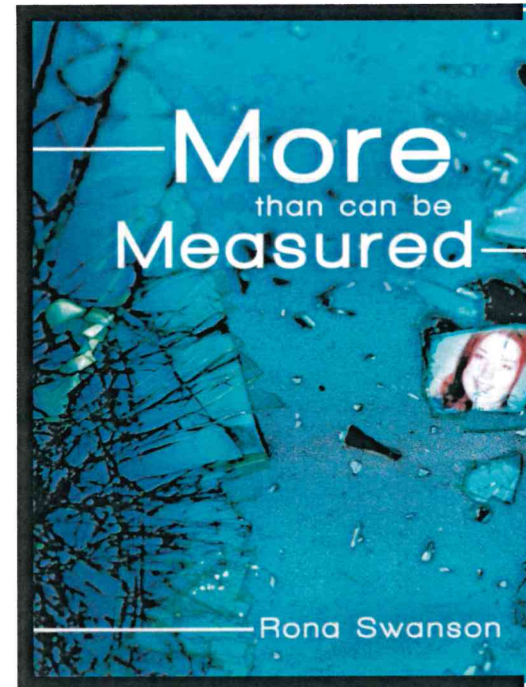
the same rights; today, the question is still debated. Size has replaced skin color, and despite the declaration of independence using the phrase, "life, liberty and pursuit of happiness," many argue that if a small, genetically distinct human being is dependent on its mother, it can be killed. Since the Bible says, "Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all the unfortunate" (Proverbs 31:8), we should feel compelled to stand up for those obviously incapable of speaking for themselves.

Politics and government policy can directly impact the mission of the Church. While I respect, and even encourage those most at risk to stay at home, our Constitution protects our God-given right to of freedom of religion, which all the Founding Fathers knew included assembly to worship. One side is attacking that right now. From the less obvious additional taxes, permits, and building requirements that all impact churches to limiting free speech, and funding programs that are directly opposed to biblical teaching. While we are relatively blessed here in America, it would be much harder for us to share the Gospel, something we are commanded to do, in North Korea, because of the politics and power in place there.

Who we vote for is not a salvation issue. Despite our current culture focusing on national elections, there are many local elections and state elections that are equally important. All these elections are important, and yet they shouldn't be so contentious among us as brothers and sisters in Christ as they sometimes are. I think it's wise to remember Augustine's statement, "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity." We must pursue the right choices in these difficult times, but I am convinced that we can't simply hide, not voting as we should — nor can we trust either party for our salvation.

More Than can be Measured

By Rona Swanson



Check out the new book by one of our own, Rona Swanson.

You can find it in print or audio here:

Paperback: https://www.amazon.com/More-Than-Can-Be-Measured/dp/1495619486/ref=tmm_pap_swatch_o?encoding=UTF8&qid=1601595403&sr=8-1

Audio: https://www.audible.com/pd/More-Than-Can-Be-Measured-Audiobook/Bo8GB5PL8G?ref=a_typ_c1_lProduct_o_1&pf_rd_p=9161e73b-1da4-4835-9d0a-6e130501757a&pf_rd_r=5102DDVTENCJ2P90AAB4

A bright light was extinguished in the universe on January 13, 2004, when twenty-one-year-old Rebekah Swanson, a college senior, died in a car accident. In *More Than Can Be Measured*, author Rona Swanson, Rebekah's mother, shares her thoughts, feelings, and emotions as she and the family deal with their grief in the aftermath of Rebekah's sudden death.

Weaving in entries from Rebekah's journal and photos, this memoir shares the wisdom and understanding Swanson gained as she felt the stark pain of the loss of her daughter. *More Than Can Be Measured* narrates the story of how she sustained herself and her family through God—the anchor and strength of her faith.

An intimate look into shattering loss, *More Than Can Be Measured* shows the sweet and gentle way God tended to Swanson's wounds and healed her damaged heart. It communicates there is hope and help from God.

Rona Swanson manages an insurance agency. She is active in women's ministry at her church. She has written 2 other books - *Fruit in Its Season* and *Heart of Christmas*. Rona and her husband Sam have 3 granddaughters and live in Visalia, California.

October 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4 8:30 AM Outside Worship 10:15 Worship	5	6	7 11:00 AM Staff Meeting	8	9	10
11 8:30 AM Outside Worship 10:15 Worship	12 HOLIDAY - OFFICE CLOSED	13 9:30 AM Staff Meeting	14	15	16	17
18 8:30 AM Outside Worship 10:15 Worship	19	20 9:30 AM Staff Meeting	21	22	23	24
25 8:30 AM Outside Worship 10:15 Worship	26	27 9:30 AM Staff Meeting	28	29	30	31
						DRIVE-IN MOVIE NIGHTS 6:30 - 8:30 PM

Living Organic Outreach

By Carrie Guy

The two-degree rule is a concept we practice through the Organic Outreach mindset we work from at The Fountain, and was our source of discussion in the September Organic Outreach Team Meeting. Organic Outreach has been a framework from which we do ministry and it puts sharing the love of Christ with the world at the forefront of what we do in life. The two-degree rule basically teaches us to take what we are already doing, not just in this church building, but as the people who make up this church, and adjust it to be outreach focused: using the life God has given us to share the good news with the world around us.

That may be a family mission trip instead of a vacation, but often we don't have to look that far from home to find a place to share God's truth and love. Building relationships with those already in our lives is a great way to be a person of outreach. Even if our friend and family circles are primarily made up of Christians, we all have neighbors or people we frequently encounter in our daily errands that need Jesus.

Are we utilizing our time around people to be ambassadors for Jesus? Do we allow the moments waiting in line at the post-office to be opportunities to share Jesus? Maybe you aren't comfortable sharing the gospel with a stranger in line, but so many times our attitudes and actions speak louder than any words we could speak. We can share Jesus just by tuning in to what is happening around us: noticing someone behind the counter after they've been berated by an unhappy customer and sharing an encouragement can be Organic Outreach, leaving a water bottle on our front step for the Amazon delivery driver can be Organic Outreach. When you look at your life, even in pandemic, where do you encounter people?

Each month when we have an Organic Outreach Team Meeting, we ask each other, what our spiritual temperature is as an act of accountability. Spiritual temperature speaks to our heart for God and his mission, more than it speaks to what we are doing for God. In this time of quarantine and pandemic, we can see our ministry as diminished, and yet, if we see the hurt in the world and aim to connect with people in different ways, and take that to God in our time with him, we can see our spiritual temperature rise, because what is on God's heart is being transferred to our heart. God desired family and that is what we are in the body of Christ. We all know others created by God that are missing from the family, let's allow God to use us in our daily lives to be beacons of hope and love in a world that is getting darker by the day.

If you'd like to know more about Organic Outreach, let us know, we'd happily share some resources that you could read or watch to learn more.

Blessings! - Carrie

New Sermon Series beginning October 25th



Judges

Thank You

I would like to say thank you to each and everyone who sent birthday wishes! It was wonderful to hear from you. I enjoyed the beautiful cards and sweet words.

Love,

Neoma Cowing

Reformation Day

October 31, 2020

While many families will be participating in Halloween with costumes and candy, the 31st marks the anniversary of an other holiday that is sometimes overshadowed, and is important to our Christian faith.

In 1517 Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Thesis on the door of Wittenburg Castle church in Germany on October 31st. It marked a turning point. There had been internal attempts for biblical reform inside the catholic church, and Luther intended the same, but this time, momentum grew and eventually lead to what we call the protestant reformation.

Remembering this holiday is important, and while we want to take advantage of a cultural holiday in hopes that we build relationships with our community and share the good news about Jesus, reformation day is really a holiday for us.

Luther recognized the Catholic Church was out of step with scripture in several important ways as well as corrupt. There was a desire from Luther, and other reformers to get the common man back into bible study, making sure that they had access to the Bible in their own language, and making sure that together, Christians were calling out inappropriate actions, so that sin in the church could be addressed. We must continue to do the same, pursuing truth, and making sure we don't allow corruption into the body of Christ.



Trunk or Treat is going to look a little different this year. We want to engage with our community but in a way that is both safe and offering something fun when the traditional fun doesn't seem to work.

We have decided to offer a drive-in family movie night. We are doing it two nights so that more can come and families with other weekend plans have more than one opportunity to join in the fun.

We will have the taco truck here and will a photo booth and hashtag contest for those who want to do costumes. We will also hand out bags of candy to families that come since 2020 already has offered tons of tricks. If you would like to be involved in volunteering and/or candy donation, please let us know. Be on the lookout for more information as the planning continues this month.

Attendance & Giving

September 2020

Date	Attendance	Giving
Sept 6	79	\$5,822.47
Sept 13	66	\$3,298.62
Sept 20	66	\$2,612.25
Sept 27	78	\$3,111.55
Online Giving		\$3,275.00
Total		\$18,119.89



THANKS

Thank you to everyone who prayed for me through these past trials. With the passing of my son and then my fall. I appreciated all the cards, calls and love you sent my way.

Also, thank you for the birthday cards they were lovely.

Love, Mary Cosmey



www.allfreethankyounotes.com

Birthdays & Anniversaries

October 2020

Haley Thomas	1
Angelica Lara	2
Robert MacLean	9
Abdul Massaquoi	10
Charles Douglass	13
Leila Ritter	14
Faith Lowery	15
Chet Phillipe	15
Sam Sears	16
Edward Grant	18
Jack Lowery	19
Praise Subejano	19
Glenda Gunning	22
Ian Yale	27
Jeri Eubanks	28

Happy Anniversary!

Phil & Frankie Parker	1
Kevin & Carrie Guy	7
Greg & Kelli Stowers	15
David & Shannan Ajluni	27

Prayer Concerns

October 2020

Pray for the desire and opportunity to effectively share your faith!

Our Nation and Leaders

Teachers & Students in Visalia

Health

Ana Morales, Ashley Banuelos, Barbara Grant, Bill Bianchi, Cindy Marks, Donna Eastin, Frank Henley, Jean Lamb, Kevin Guy, Pam Shattuck, Pauline Gurule, Rick Hamilton, Fred Wilder, Sandy Zinger

Cancer

Charles Douglass, Hazel Bahrenburg, Jiggy Greene, Jim Ramsey, Joe Grant, Joe Ryan, Michael Elder, Mike Brazil, Olly Ajluni, Shannan Ajluni

Other Needs

Debbie Englebrecht (back surgery recovery), Earl Baker (shoulder surgery recovery), Mary Cosmey (hip surgery recovery), McMath Family (House fire), Nina Suttles (Vision), Sheila Wharton (Heart attack)

Military

Andie Richwine - Marine, Brett Boland - Virginia, Jason Mariel - Afghanistan, Matthew Calhoun - Fort Knox, Michael Reid - Fort Worth, TX, Preston Correa - Marines, RJ Ajluni - Navy