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from the **Executive Director** — **David E. Smith**



LIVING OUR LIVES *immersed in Him*

When it comes to New Year's Eve celebrations, birthday and bachelor/bachelorette parties, and wedding receptions it is no surprise that, for many **worldly individuals**, these events usually include copious consumption of alcohol (even drugs) and impulsive, sinful behaviors that are often a direct result of the aforementioned alcohol and drugs. What *is* surprising is when we observe our friends, family members, neighbors, and coworkers, **who self-identify as Christians**, throw caution to the wind, ignore the voice of wisdom, and exhibit these same dangerous and deplorable behaviors.

Why? How can people who profess faith in Jesus Christ willingly stumble and fall? Do they really not believe what they claim to be true? Are they weak and easily led by the poor company they keep? Perhaps they want to continue to live in their old nature, reluctant to put on the new man and instead remain mired in their familiar and futile way of life. Still, there are others who feel they were sheltered and/or denied the "fun" the world has to offer and they give in to the temptation to taste that "forbidden fruit."

Whatever the reason, those who engage in these risky and foolish acts are slaves of this world and captives to sin. Satan, our adversary, sets many snares, and the world deceitfully, even cheerfully, invites us to embark upon the wide and treacherous path he has laid. Clearly, the old adage is true, "misery loves company."

Likewise, this adage rings true, "a man is known by the company he keeps." **God wants us to live our lives immersed in Him and His Word. This is the company we should seek.** God's Word, recorded in Holy Scripture, gives us the absolute best guidance on how to live our lives and reveals our purpose.

Illinois Family Institute

In John 15:1-4, 8 consider how Jesus calls us to live in Him and bear sweet, abundant fruit:

I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.

The Bible, God's instruction manual for Christian life in a fallen, sin-cursed world, tells us how to live through the power of the Holy Spirit as we walk in faith, clinging tightly to the hand of our Savior.

To sum up just one of many examples in Scripture, Romans 12:9-21 instructs us to be joyful, patient, and prayerful, humble and contrite, rejoicing with those who rejoice and mourning with those who mourn, overcoming evil with goodness, surrendering our enemies to God's vengeance, and striving to live in harmony with each other.

When we surrender ourselves to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and follow the commands of God's Holy Word – there is no better guidebook! – the world should see a zeal in our lives as we endeavor to serve the Lord, disciple our families, and witness to our friends, coworkers, and neighbors.

So, how do we move from head knowledge to real-life application?

First, trust God and pray.

Trust in the Lord with all your heart,



continued inside...



LIVING OUR LIVES

immersed in Him by David E. Smith, Executive Director

And lean not on your own understanding;

In all of your ways acknowledge Him,

And he shall direct your paths.

Do not be wise in your own eyes;

Fear the Lord and depart from evil. — Proverbs 3:5-7

When we trust God, we are confident in our identity as adopted brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ:

You are of God, little children, and have overcome them [worldly spirits], because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. — 1 John 4:4

This confidence enables us to:

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

— 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Therefore, as we pray with a thankful heart, we must make certain that our requests, and the motives behind them, are aligned with God's will:

You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures. ~ James 4:3

Secondly, dwell on good things, not bad.

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things. — Philippians 4:8

We must protect our minds by putting on the helmet of salvation, thereby shunning friendship with the world and taking care to not embrace or pursue the things the world honors and treasures:

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. — Romans 12:2

Do not attempt to save any part of the old nature. We were born sinful men and women, but God wants to transform us into something new and wonderful:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

— 2 Corinthians 5:17

As new creations in Christ, we are instructed to:

... gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the

revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." — 1 Peter 1:13-16

The amazing truth revealed here is that our thrice holy God, Lord, and Savior enables us to strive toward this lofty goal because He has given us the Helper. When we accept and embrace God's plan for salvation, we join what the second chapter of 1 Peter calls a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession "who once *were* not a people but are *now* the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy." (1 Peter 2:10)

Truly, it is hard to comprehend the magnificence of it all: He sets us apart from the world to be **His** peculiar people. As such, we are able to be a holy people in the midst of a Babylonian culture that repeatedly entices us to befriend their worldly ways and worship worthless idols of wood and stone.

In His Word, God reveals His purpose in setting us aside as His holy people:

For this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men – as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. — 1 Peter 2:15-16

Let your light [holiness] so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. — Matthew 5:16

Brothers and sisters in Christ, let us fully trust God – abiding in Him, immersed in His Word – and let us earnestly pray as we dwell on what is good, holy, and true. May we live lives worthy of the high calling to which our Lord has called us: to proclaim and glorify His name throughout the world. ★



Americans United for Life

Americans United for Life ranks each state based on state laws protecting those across the human right to life spectrum—the unborn, the elderly, the disabled, and the terminally ill.

Arkansas earned its first-place ranking after enacting an impressive 16 life-affirming laws over the course of the 2021 state legislative session. Arkansas is joined by Louisiana, Arizona, Oklahoma, and Indiana in the top five.

So far this year, 22 states have enacted at least 85 pro-life laws, and there are some big jumps on this year's Life List. Texas jumped eight spots to #12 after enacting chemical abortion protections and the first Heartbeat Law to take effect. Montana flipped its governor's mansion in 2020 and moved eleven spots up the Life List to #32 by enacting six impactful laws including born-alive protections, chemical abortion reporting and safety laws, and a gestational age limit on abortion based on the baby's ability to feel pain. ★





There may be a way to confront gender ideology and protect God's design

Written by Fran Eaton

There are uncontrollable realities that are determined before we even enter into the conversation: who our parents are; into which circumstances, how, when, and where we are born; and how our DNA works together to form essential bodily organs.

To admit there are some things in life over which we have no control is easy.

To embrace the One that made those determinations and set sights on the grander vision of being an irreplaceable part of the Creator's plan is, for some, more difficult.

Such counsel for a young person who has entered a crucial phase of life called puberty with questions about gender identity is now considered by secular humanist psychologists and psychiatrists as dangerous.

"Conversion therapy" – as such counsel is often called – is banned for minors in Illinois and 19 other states.

With those public policies, it is illegal to counsel a person under 18 to embrace God's design – but at the same time, counselors are protected by most of those same states' laws to encourage minors to experiment with and act upon their sexuality perceptions.

The American College of Pediatricians urges educators and legislators to reject all policies that condition children to accept as normal a life of chemical and surgical impersonation of the opposite sex. "Facts – not ideology – determine reality," they assert.

Plus, gender identity is malleable, especially among young children.

"The American Psychological Association's Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology says that prior to the widespread promotion of transition affirmation, 75 to 95 percent of pre-pubertal children who were distressed by their biological sex eventually outgrew that distress. The vast majority came to accept their biological sex by late adolescence after passing naturally through puberty," wrote Dr. **Michelle Cretella**, on

Transgender Ideology July 3, 2017.

"But with transition affirmation now increasing in Western society, the number of children claiming distress over their gender—and their persistence over time—has dramatically increased."

Nevertheless, more and more school districts are incorporating transgender ideology into their curriculum. Illinois' new sex ed law (SB 818) requires the idea of sexual identity be addressed down to age 5 or kindergarten.

And that's where the moral line may have been crossed, according to Illinois Family Institute legal counsel Jim Davids.

"Nearly 100 years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court publicly acknowledged that parents have a *fundamental right* to establish a home, raise children, and 'to control the education of their own,'" Davids said.

That decision was the first fundamental right found by the Court, and it followed a millennial-long tradition found in common law. The finding was repeated in 1925 when the Court held that the "liberty of parents and guardians" includes the right "to direct the upbringing and education of children under their control."

"This fundamental right is the reason we have educational choice in America. Parents can choose to educate their children in private secular schools, religious schools, or homeschool their children," Davids said.

"Remember, however, that this fundamental right is not absolute," he said.

"Generally, on curricular matters, once you decide on a public school you must abide by its curricular decisions," Davids said.

And at that place is where the line becomes clear. Curricular matters is one thing. Non-curricular matters – such as sex education – is another.

"Public schools generally insist that everything that transpires at school on a school day is its business, and parents must yield to the school. Drugs are dispensed through school personnel, and



some schools have health clinics that see the children," he said. "Counselors are available to see students, and often these sessions can tread on subjects particularly sensitive to parents, often dealing with sex and gender."

Illinois State Board of Education policies now promote protecting the students' privacy over parents' right to know issues their children are facing. With new requirements that sex education include addressing gender identity at kindergarten levels, there is more and more justified concern that parents will be the "last to know" about gender questions.

Already, Illinois parents are no longer required to be included in decisions their minor daughters may be forced to make concerning abortions.

But there may be parents that send their children to Illinois public schools that want their children to be fully informed and protected from school personnel that are anxious to push their worldview onto their innocent children.

Attorney Jim Davids has already filed suit against a school board in Maryland challenging its policy similar to Illinois', and will soon file suit against another school board in Minnesota. He is looking for courageous parents to challenge similar school board policies here in Illinois.

If you are the parent of a minor child who is in a school district with a gender ideology that imposes worldviews that counter yours, contact Illinois Family Institute. Davids says he will file suit keeping your identity, as well as the identity of your child, confidential.

It may be the only way to effectively stop an obvious affront to parental rights – and God's design for the family. ★



Prayer Requests . . .

“LORD, IT IS NOTHING FOR YOU TO HELP, WHETHER WITH MANY OR WITH THOSE WHO HAVE NO POWER;

Help us. O LORD OUR GOD, FOR WE REST ON YOU, AND IN YOUR NAME

WE GO AGAINST THIS MULTITUDE. O LORD, YOU ARE OUR GOD; DO NOT LET MAN PREVAIL AGAINST YOU!”

— 2 Chronicles 14:11



Reading the Old Testament, it’s discouraging to see how often God’s people forgot Him and took on the behavior of the nations around them. Each time, God withdrew His blessing of protection and His people suffered the consequences. It’s no different today. God hasn’t changed. He still demands that we keep Him front and center in our hearts. He is absolutely worthy.

Those of us who identify as followers of Jesus are required

to examine our own hearts and put Him first – every day and always.

We also know that when we repent and get right with God, He is faithful to forgive us and restore our fellowship with Him. Please keep that in mind as we pray through these difficult times and issues.



Please Pray...

...that God would stir His people up to vote in ways that honor Him.

...that God would be pleased to grant us mercy as we repent of our national sins of abortion, sexual perversity, drug use, murder and violence (to name a few).

...that God would protect the integrity of this election and expose any fraud.

...that parents would embrace their God-given role to train their children in the way of the Lord and remove them from 40 hours a week of indoctrination in public schools.

...Praise God that He has heard the fervent prayers of His faithful servants to right the wrong done 49 years ago when abortion was made legal in all 50 states. Moving forward, pray that our steadfast witness would continue, changing hearts and minds to protect God’s tiny creation who are unable to protect themselves. Pray that Christians would be salt and light in states like Illinois, New York and California.

Pray for Christian Leaders...

...that the Holy Spirit would prompt them to teach boldly about the things of God.

...would lead their people to love God and His Truths with their whole hearts, minds and strength.

...would speak boldly about the flawless ways of God and His standards.

...so that God would breathe new life into His Church and that the Kingdom would advance on earth.★

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, **according to the tradition of men**, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ. — Colossians 2:8



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