

PRODIGALS

NUMBER 161

JUNE 2021

- Prodigal sons
- Prodigal fathers
- Prodigal daughters
- Prodigal mothers
- Prodigal husbands
- Prodigal wives
- Prodigal leaders
- Prodigal workers

Re: The parable of the lost son - Luke 15:11-31

It is God's will that all prodigals "come to their senses".

When prodigals have squandered their inheritance", bereft of worldly possessions and pride and humbled into the lowest state of self-inflicted poverty, they reach a state of created human equality – the platform of choice to succumb or survive.

Self-support requires self-starting at a beginning – the bottom, with a spirit of repentance and change of attitude – gratitude for life itself and opportunity to be lifted up step-by-step, equally with every common man and content with his lot.

Continued on page 2

TEST EVERYTHING

"but test everything that is said. Hold on to what is good. Stay away from every kind of evil." (1 Thes. 5:21-22)

How do we discern truth and stay away from evil? Our first caution is that we need to be aware that there is a lot of misinformation out there – that's the polite way of saying Satan's lies permeate everything. We need some standard to test everything we hear, see, read and think.

Continued on page 5

HERE WE GO AGAIN

A point of view letter submitted by a local minister on his struggles in dealing with an eldership. He readily recognizes that he is more outspoken than his elders would like, but his situation is instructive of the problems many minister face.

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SAVE THE DATE
OCTOBER 24, 2021

Plans are underway for an area wide Sunday evening Campaign for Christ service.

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YOU ARE GOING TO GO BROKE!

A comparison similarities of church organization with business organization from the point of view of a business person.

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PRODIGALS, P. 2

To onlookers and “brothers” in the world, prodigals are commonly regarded with suspicion, distrust, and disgust – despicable, unwelcome, undeserving, unlikely to be rehabilitated or restored to equal status in either family of birth or “family of God”. However; it is for these very “hopeless sinners” that God, The Father of all, sent his Son, Jesus Christ to rescue, restore, and reconcile everyone to himself. This mission includes all who condemned the prodigals for not conforming to the standards for self-righteousness set by the world. Therefore; ALL have been afforded salvation and restoration under grace WHEN they “come to their senses” of equality in the eyes of God.

“As it is written:

There is no one righteous, not even one;

No one who understands,

No one who seeks God”.

Romans 3:10-11

When each one returns, they are seen by a Father who is filled with compassion, and rejoices for the prodigal “who was dead and is alive again; lost and is found.”

Luke 15:20, 24

Many, many are tempted away from God’s Word by the irresistible allure of the world to fortune, fame, and self-gratification at risk to become prodigals. Others who refrain from obvious temptations become proud of their self-righteousness,

at risk of incurring God’s wrath for temptations to envy, contempt, and jealousy of returning prodigals as well as an attitude of “elevated status” with complacent sense of entitlement and superiority over the prodigals because having “maintained the faith” which they corrupted by simply following traditions while los-

ing sight of accountability, responsibility and obedience to the standards set by God, that were articulated and demonstrated by Jesus Christ.

What then, is the hope of such generations? Hope lies in repentance, forgiveness, and grace of salvation. Hope is found in new life complete in gratitude, service, and praise to God. It is unwise to risk a fateful accounting as we delay “coming to our senses”, while being prompted by our conscience to remember from whence we come, and the destinations that await our choice of the path ahead.

Let all choose wisely “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it; ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’, All the law and the prophets hang on these two commandments” Matthew 22:37-40

Larry S. Grubbs, Harrison, Ohio

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YOU ARE GOING TO GO BROKE!, P. 1

BUSINESS PARABLE

You are the President of a midsize manufacturing business and have a management team in place. Consider the following scenarios.

Your **Marketing** Manager has organized a web page which no one can find, and it is difficult to navigate if anyone ever finds it. He/she completely depends on the inadequate website and has not taken other steps to keep potential customers informed of your products. As a consequence, no matter how well sales, engineering, and manufacturing perform you are going to go broke as some of your present customers change to a competitor over time.

Your **Sales** Manager decided to meet his sales goals by offering lower prices. The lower prices were below your manufacturing cost. As a consequence, no matter how well marketing, engineering, and manufacturing perform you are going to go broke.

Your **Engineering** Manager wants to help provides the best products you can, so they never stop improving the product designs and get drawings out to manufacturing. As a consequence, no matter how well marketing, sales, and manufacturing perform you are going to go broke.

Your **Manufacturing** Manager has better ideas on how to make the products so he doesn't make the productions to the specifications your customers require and will accept. As a consequence, no matter how well marketing, sales, and engineering perform you are going to go broke.

All of the above are real life examples, and in each case, management stepped in to correct the situation so the companies did not go broke.

In large part, your job as President is to organize the symphony of others doing the work to get the best output. If you neglect your role of equipping, directing, mentoring, and leading the employees to do their jobs in favor of doing the tasks yourself, you are failing as a manager and failing your employees. If you have been able to fully engage your workers in accomplishing the company goals, you may choose to do tasks in your extra time. That is a good thing to do, but it is secondary to your primary role.

BUSINESS MODEL

Most companies with 200 or 300 employees will have a Board of Directors with 4-8 members. The one thing that no company would do is to have the management of the company overseen by each of the member of the Board of Directors on a rotating basis. The Board of Directors will provide oversight, but the oversight in the management of the employees will be focused through one individual, typically the President or CEO.

If a company were to try an experiment of having the Board of Directors oversee the employees on a rotating basis, it might work for a short time. However, it is sure to fail in the long run as early enthusiastic cooperation fades and personalities begin to show. The employees would see the ever-changing management styles by varying personalities as something close to chaotic.

Continued on page 4

YOU ARE GOING TO GO BROKE!, P. 2

Those are business situations and churches are not business. However, we are doing the business of the church. It is our theme and observations that situations similar to the above frequently occur in congregations.

CHURCH AS A BUSINESS:

The goal of a business is to make a profit. Going broke in business is losing money such that you cannot pay the bills. Going broke in a congregation is not doing your part of the Great Commission. Doing your part in the Great Commission involves a high level of involvement of a large number of your members.

When a congregation closes its doors and goes out of existence, anyone would recognize something parallel to going broke has happened. The question is if a congregation grows to having 200 members and then later declines to 175, is that a sign you are "going broke?" We have seen congregations go from 500 to zero and who told themselves they were holding steady the whole time. Is it only alarming when you get to zero?

FUNCTION COMPARISON

Marketing (Contacts): Consider that in a congregation if no one hears about you, you are bound to decline as your present members leave or die. You may be happy to attempt to convert someone if they were come in the door, but if no one comes you will die. Do you have dedicated resources specific to making new contacts as prospects for evangelism? Do you recognize how critical new contacts are to your survival? Do you measure it?

Sales (Conversions): Consider that if someone hears about your congregation but no one attempts to convert them. Basically no one closes the sale. You are bound to decline as your present members leave or die. Do you

have dedicated resources specific to helping bring prospects to the point of conversion? Do you measure it?

Engineering (Education): Consider that as you get more new members who are weak in the faith (by definition) and you do not intentionally train them. You will end up with an uncommitted congregation. This is not a problem in a very small congregation where everyone is desperately needed to be committed for the congregation to survive and so learn naturally. In a large congregation, new members can simply merge into the social activities and never develop a deep faith. Do you have resources specific to maturing new Christians to become dedicated and educated workers? A measure of this would be knowing when a member has arrived. Would most of your members actually know what to say if they were engaged in an evangelism situation? Have they been educated enough to handle an evangelism situation or would they have to call a preacher to do it for them? Does your education program equip them to be ready? Do you measure it?

Manufacturing (Involvement): If your members have come to understand that attendance at repetitive worship services is their service to Jesus, you surely have a lukewarm congregation. If the Shepherds say that the Deacons don't do anything, you surely have a lukewarm congregation. Unless the members of the congregation are actually involved in various activities which support the accomplishment of your part of the Great Commission, you are not going to do your share. Do you have specific resources dedicated to making sure new (and old) Christians are meaningfully engaged in the work of the church? Do you measure it?

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YOU ARE GOING TO GO BROKE!, P. 3

TEST EVERYTHING, P. 2

SUMMARY

Are making new contacts, converting a percentage of the contacts, making sure the new converts are educated in depth on what the Bible teaches, and involving them in the work of the church? If you are focused on some of these but neglecting one or more of these critical steps it is highly likely that your congregation is or will become a lukewarm congregation. It is repeatedly asked above if you measure these characteristics. It is a common saying that you measure what is important to you. These should all be important to you.

Leadership cannot do all these roles for the members. That would not be leadership. It is the role of leadership to organize the symphony of work to be done so it will happen. Leadership is delegating roles to others and mentoring those members to make sure they succeed in their roles to the common good.

Next month:

SCRIPTURAL CHURCH ORGANIZATION.

Continued from page 1

Claiming ignorance and listening to scoffers won't work. God has made his creative power and powerful truth so obvious that we are without excuse. "...I want to remind you that in the last day's scoffers will come, mocking the truth and following their own desires." (2 Peter 3:3) Knowing the truth demands a discipline of mind to seek and search for truth. "Truthful words stand the test of time, but lies are soon exposed." (Proverbs 12:19)

What can we do? "Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness." (Eph. 6:14) We must know the truth, believe the truth, guard the truth, stand firm in it and love the truth. "Let your roots grow down into him, and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness." (Col. 2:7)

Can you test the truth by listening to two or more eyewitnesses?

Have you tested your faith with Biblical teaching?

Will you speak the truth and avoid every kind of deception?

Elizabeth Brown, Texarkana

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HERE WE GO AGAIN

I have a nasty habit of telling the truth. This gets me in trouble. One of four things happens when you approach church leaders with the truth. First, truth can be perplexing; leaders don't know what to do with it, and they become confused. Second, truth can hurt; leaders don't want to face reality and can easily become defensive. Third, truth can bring insight; healthy leaders will embrace this and desire positive outcomes. Lastly, when ministers are the truth-bearers, truth can get you fired.

I wasn't exactly fired from my last church, but it sure felt like it. Too much truth-telling on my part. I spent eighteen months unemployed after this, soul searching in a spiritual and vocational desert. In the end, I chose to get back into congregational ministry. I think God ordained this, but who can ever know for sure. I certainly hope for a better outcome this time around.

But I remain a truth-teller. I've certainly said too much, probably too often, and many times with a bad attitude. I've shared content with conviction, but often with a crummy delivery. The crummy part of this is on me. I own it. I pray about it. I try to do better; be more careful and controlled. As my former executive minister coached me, I try to "manage myself" as best I can.

Sometimes managing myself feels almost impossible. I've failed often here. I've failed again recently. Tonight, I will attend and unscheduled leadership meeting to address "concerns" my elders have with me here – in my new congregation, the place I have served for just nine months. Already, my truth-telling is getting me in trouble. Here we go again.

The reality is that I keep many of the things I perceive as "truth" to myself. I really don't speak openly about every thought, opinion,

preference or even personal conviction every time I have the chance. There is much I would change about the church I serve. This may not even be the church I would choose for myself, if not a staff member here already. I keep all this to myself. My goal with this congregation is to honor the leaders here, along with their direction, even in the minutiae of day-to-day operations – as best I can. My larger commitment is to honor God in all things. Including telling the truth. Even when it is not appreciated. Ultimately, I answer to Jesus.

But I see room for improvement with every church I serve. I recognize systems and structures that need an overhaul to become healthier and more effective. I am regularly perplexed by policies, programs and personalities that fail to make good sense. This drives me crazy. I ask a lot of questions. Why do we do this or that? Have we ever thought of tweaking this or that? Are we willing to step back and assess this or that? These questions make church leaders uncomfortable. These questions get ministers like me in trouble – always have and always will.

I recently attended an elder meeting in which I snapped. My delivery was poor. My attitude was bad. The truth I shared was overshadowed by my raw emotion. This is on me – I own it. I've owned it before. I've apologized many times. I have confessed, prayed, sought counsel from mentors; I have talked with my doctor and incorporated anti-anxiety medications into my daily routine. Anything to "manage myself" better. Some days are better than others.

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HERE WE GO AGAIN, P. 2

Eventually the truth of systemic, congregational dysfunction becomes too much for me to ignore. Every church has its own version of dysfunction – this is the absolute truth, whether we like it or not. People are people and social systems are always flawed to varying degrees. I am comfortable saying so. I can acknowledge the truth of dysfunction without taking it personally. When church leaders are unwilling to do the same, the truth-teller in me struggles to respond gracefully. What if part of my service to the church includes exercising my ability to recognize and address reality? How to do this when others around me become easily perplexed or defensive?

Maybe I should just keep my mouth shut. Prophets get killed for telling the truth. Why would I invite this upon myself and my family? This is the conversation I have with myself all the time. “Just go to this meeting and keep your mouth shut.” Keeping my mouth shut would keep me out of trouble. Keeping my mouth shut would also be irresponsible. If your doctor sees a heart attack in your future, should she keep her mouth shut about this? Wouldn't you expect a diagnosis of your reality? Wouldn't you value a treatment of some kind, a plan of action? Or maybe you prefer your doctor to just smile and wait quietly for you to experience a potentially fatal experience?

know how this sounds. Who am I to assume the role of “doctor” in this analogy? Fair enough. Yet these same leaders hired me as their minister. These same men required their candidates to be professionally trained to do this work. This is true for many of our paid

ministers. Churches desire professionals to staff their ministries. Church leaders expect professionals to go with the flow. Never mind your training, experience or spiritual gifts – we just want you to do what we have always done here, the ways we are comfortable doing them, without asking questions and without speaking truth into our dysfunction. We would rather have a heart attack than be helped to avoid one.

Church leaders, please listen. Elders, please hear me. There are some truths of which you are unaware in your system. All churches have blind spots. Truthfully, you may struggle to identify some underlying dysfunction specifically because you are a part of this system yourself. Outside perspectives always see things we are blind to on the inside. If you have hired a professional minister to serve your church, please give him/her the opportunity to speak into this. If your minister has been with you for a while, please consider the value of an outside perspective to assess the health and functionality of your system. Furthermore, there may be truth-tellers in your church who offer valuable insights, if you are willing to listen with humility, in search of actual truth. Don't be defensive. Don't shut people down or write them off as critical. After all, isn't critical thinking a good thing with benefit to us all? Why not value and celebrate this in our churches. Let the prophets speak – and listen to them. Truth hurts sometimes. Failure to embrace the truth of things, with a willingness to adjust our sails when necessary, has far worse consequences.

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HERE WE GO AGAIN, P. 3

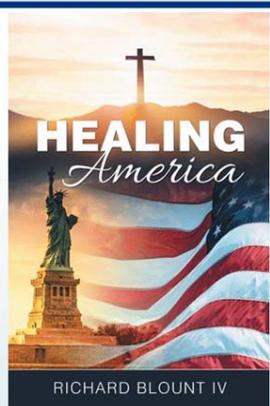
So, I anticipate my meeting tonight. I have sought counsel from mentors. I will pray fervently before entering the room. I will draw from the good and bad of my past experiences to best manage myself and assume best intentions from others around me. Truthfully, I am nervous. Truthfully, days like these tempt me to look for a different vocation. I must be responsible with my mode and manner tonight. I must also be responsible with my message. I may need to speak truth tonight. I hope it doesn't get me fired.

HEALING AMERICA

A timely new book by Richard Blount IV exploring the problems, causes, solutions, and benefits of being an American.

He provides an intentional approach for the country's healing process and aims at healthy relationships and spiritual maturity as the ultimate goal.

This book can be purchased for \$19.95 at: Amazon, Barnes & Nobles, and Westbow Publishing



A 13 lesson book written by a long time Church of Christ minister and servant of Jesus. Intended for Bible Class studies, this book can also be used for personal evangelism.

Most Bible class study books on this subject begin with Genesis 3. This study however, lays the foundation by beginning with a basic study-outline of Biblical History, which is sorely lacking among many Christians today. Then after laying this foundation, it seeks to present a "Synthesis of Scripture" by asserting that the theme of all the Bible is Jesus, His Death, Burial, and Resurrection! The Eternal Purpose of God for Redemption is then presented with an in-depth study of Ephesians 1, and other New Testament passages which describe God's redemptive plan.

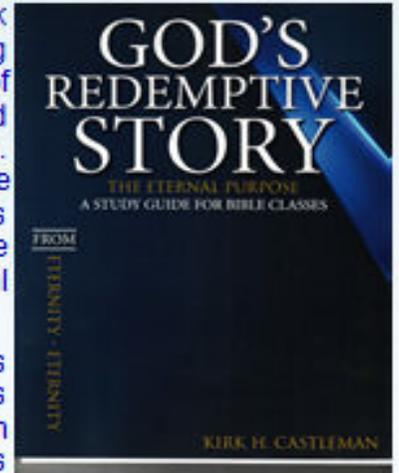
It is not until the fourth lesson that God's Eternal Purpose in Genesis 3 is presented. Then other Promises, Pictures, Prophecy, and Prep-

"AN EXCITING STUDY OF GOD'S POWER AND REVELATION IN HUMAN HISTORY"

aration, are fully described. This study includes a description of the Davidic Covenant, as well as a helpful approach to Old Testament Prophecy.

This guide is helpful for all Christians, but especially new Christians who need an understanding of God's eternal desire for all the world!

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"THE POWER WITHIN" PHILLIPIANS 2:13

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AUG. 14, 2021

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IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION #117 - TARANTULA

Tarantula spiders can eat a small mouse although it has no functioning mouth. They have an intelligently designed system for eating which lets them drink their prey.

Tarantula spiders range from the size of a dinner plate to the size of a flea. Whereas they are scary, they are not fatal to humans in the domestic variety. Some untreated Tarantula bites have killed a human in 24 hours. Most are simply painful.

Tarantulas kill and eat a variety of prey from bugs up to lizards and mice. When prey comes close, tarantulas ambush it, seize it with their legs, paralyze it with venom, and then kill it with their fangs. They can also crush prey with their strong jaws.

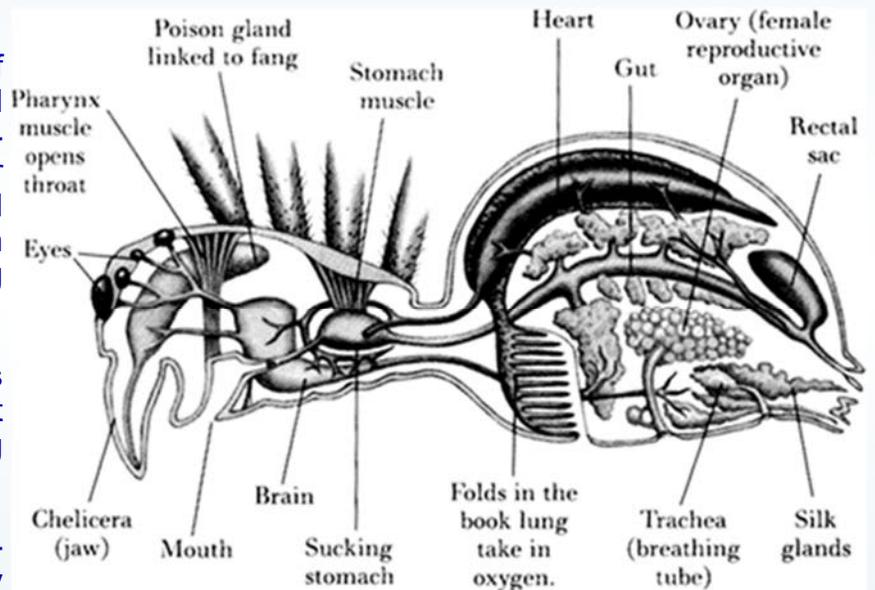
The Tarantula has a mouth which is a short, straw-shaped opening that can only suck, meaning that anything taken into it must be in liquid form.

After the prey is dead, tarantulas inject digestive enzymes into the prey to liquefy the body and suck it up through their straw-like mouths. Prey with large amounts of solid parts, such as mice, must be crushed and ground up or pre-digested, which is accomplished by coating the prey with digestive juices.

The tarantula's digestive organ (stomach) is a tube that runs the length of its body. This tube widens and forms the sucking stomach. When the sucking stomach's powerful muscles contract, the stomach is increased in cross-section, creating a strong sucking action that permits

the tarantula to suck its liquefied prey up through the mouth and into the intestines. Once the liquefied food enters the intestines, it is broken down into particles small enough to pass through the intestine walls into the hemolymph (blood stream), where it is distributed throughout the body. After feeding, the leftovers are formed into a small ball by the tarantula and thrown away. (WIKIPEDIA)

Details taken from Wikipedia



Ecowatch.com



WHICH GROUP?

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

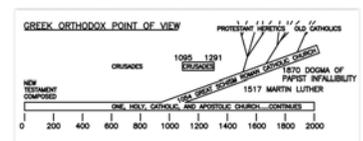


SUMMARY: A mixing of key historical and religious events since the birth of Christ.

The following data mixes key historical events and key religious events to give a better feeling of the context of many of the matters.

YEAR INNOVATION

- 0 CHRIST BORN (WAS ACTUALLY 4-5 B.C. DUE TO AN ERROR IN CALENDERS)
- 33 CHRIST CRUCIFIED 
- 64 NERO BURNS ROME
- 70 JERUSALEM DESTROYED IN TRIBULATION
- 79 POMPEII DESTROYED
- 100 WRITING OF N.T. COMPLETE
- 105 CHINESE INVENT PAPER
- 200 BEGINNING LISTS OF CANON MADE (LISTING OF INSPIRED WRITINGS)
- 378 CHRISTIANITY MADE ROMAN STATE RELIGION
- 390 ROMAN EMPEROR THEODOSIUS I MASSACRED 1000s IN THESSALONICA. BISHOP AMBROSE OF MILAN EXCOMMUNICATED HIM AND REQUIRED THEODOSIUS TO DON SACKCLOTH AND ASHES AS PUBLIC PENANCE. THIS ESTABLISHED CHURCH AUTHORITY OVER SECULAR RULERS.
- 400 CANON OF PRESENT 27 BOOKS AGREED UPON
- 476 LAST ROMAN EMPEROR DEPOSED BY GERMAN CHIEFTAN BEGINNING THE DARK AGES 
- 610 MOHAMMEDANISM BEGINS (ISLAM)
- 632 MOHAMMED DIES
- 770 CHINESE INVENT WOOD BLOCK PRINTING
- 800 CHARLEMANGE CROWNED EMPEROR (UNITED EUROPE)
- 1000 LEIF ERICKSON SAILED TO NORTH AMERICA
- 1054 SPLIT IN THE EASTERN ORTHODOX AND ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCHES
- 1095-1272 CRUSADES TO REGAIN HOLY LAND FROM MOHAMMEDANS
- 1100 MAGNETIC COMPASS INVENTED IN CHINA
- 1236 CHAPTERS ADDED TO BIBLE



WHICH GROUP?

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

- 1350 CANNON INVENTED
- 1382 WYCLIFF IS FIRST BIBLE TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH
- 1440 GUTENBERG INVENTS MOVABLE TYPE PRESS
- 1456 GUTENBERG PRINTS BIBLE IN LATIN VULGATE
- 1492 COLUMBUS DISCOVERS AMERICA
- 1517 MARTIN LUTHER POSTED 95 THESES ON THE CHURCH DOOR
- 1525 FIRST BIBLE PRINTED IN ENGLISH
- 1530 LUTHERAN CHURCH ESTABLISHED
- 1536 PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH ESTABLISHED
- 1551 VERSES ADDED TO BIBLE
- 1588 SPANISH ARMADA DEFEATED
- 1608 CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH ESTABLISHED
- 1609 EPISCOPAL CHURCH ESTABLISHED
- 1611 KING JAMES AUTHORIZED BIBLE PRINTED
- 1611 BAPTIST CHURCH ESTABLISHED
- 1628 KING JAMES BIBLE PRINTED WITHOUT THE APOCRYPHAL BOOKS
- 1739 METHODISTS CHURCH ESTABLISHED
- 1776 AMERICAN WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE
- 1861-65 U.S. CIVIL WAR
- 1914-17 WORLD WAR I
- 1918-1919 SPANISH FLU PANDEMIC, 500 MIL. INFECTED (1/3 OF POP.) AND 50 MIL. DIED (1/30 OF POP).
- 1920-1933 PROHIBITION MADE THE SALE OF ALCOHOLIC DRINKS ILLEGAL
- 1929 WALL STREET COLLAPSE STARTING THE DEPRESSION
- 1939-45 WORLD WAR II
- 1942 FIRST COMPUTER (ENIAC) BUILT
- 1950-1953 KOREAN WAR
- 1957-1972 VIETNAM WAR (U.S. COMBAT UNITS COMMITTED IN 1965)
- 1962 PRAYER IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS MAKE ILLEGAL.
- 1966 MIRANDA WARNINGS REQUIRED DURING ARRESTS.
- 1969 LANDED ON THE MOON



WHICH GROUP?

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE



- 1973 ROE VS WADE LEGALIZED ABORTION WHICH HAS LED TO 60 MILLION BABIES KILLED.
- 1972 EDUCATION AMENDMENT PROHIBITS DISCRIMINATION ON BASIS OF SEX TO RECEIVE ANY FEDERAL FUNDING (E.G. ABORTION, HOMOSEXUAL CONDUCT, GENDER IDENTITY)
- 1985 TEXAS BLUE LAWS PROHIBITING SELLING HOUSEWARES SUCH AS POTS, PANS, AND WASHING MACHINES ON SUNDAY ELIMINATED. NUMEROUS OTHER BLUE LAWS PROHIBITING BUSINESS ON SUNDAYS HAD FUNCTIONALLY SUPPORTED RELIGION.
- 1989 BURNING THE US FLAG MADE LEGAL AS FREEDOM OF SPEECH
- 2001 TWIN TOWERS COLLAPSE IN NEW YORK
- 2015 SAME SEX MARRIAGE LEGALIZED IN ALL 50 STATES
- 2020 COVID PANDEMIC, 80 MIL. INFECTED (1/100 OF WORLD POP.), 1.7 MIL. DIED (1/5000) AS OF 12/31/2020.



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- (3) **WHICH GROUP?** A brief history of the world and of Christianity leading to a discussion of how to find Christ's church.

Located at occg.institute, TOPICAL LESSONS , 02 WINGS OF EAGLES

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- (5) Sunday morning worship: A church growth sermon

See <https://occg.institute/services/refocus/> for more specific information.

For more information, contact:
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- 1 - I'd kill for a Nobel Peace Prize.
- 2 - Half the people you know are below average.
- 3 - 99% of lawyers give the rest a bad name.
- 4 - 82.7% of all statistics are made up on the spot.

Steven Wright

ADVERTISING POLICY:
Any scriptural event relating to more than one congregation at no cost

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