

“Church Fertilizer”

Acts 9:23-31

May 24, 2015

INTRO:

This Memorial Day weekend, let me ask you...

Whose sacrifice are you MOST appreciative of?

I pray... the Holy Christ – first & foremost.

I pray... the historical Church – second.

I pray... the helpful Church – third.

Which wounded warriors are you most thankful for?

I pray... Jesus, the crucified Christ – first.

I pray... the early, persecuted Church, 2nd.

I pray... the personal, persevering Church, 3rd.

How does the Gospel relate to Memorial Day?

Answer: (like everyday)...it defines it!

The Gospel gives meaning to all that is worthy of memory/memorial veneration.

Such is true most especially for the Christian Church

REVIEW

The FACTS

Acts 1:8

Blueprint of Acts
Blueprint for Christians
Blueprint of the Church

Acts 2

Pentecost
Ekklesia
Koinonia

Acts 3-8

Power
Passion
Proclamation/Preaching
Persecution
People

Acts 9:1-22

“Amazing Grace”
(BC @ AD)

Converted (Great Commandment)

Commissioned (Go...)

Championed (Ananias = “Here am I... Yes, Lord!”)

Church CONTEXT:

The FAITH

(of the Church)

1. God the Father: Genesis 1:1 & John 20:21
2. God the Son: Matthew 28:18-20 & Acts 1:8
3. God the Spirit: Acts 1:8 & Acts 2ff.

The FOUNDATION

(of the Church)

1. Grace
2. Faith
3. Obedience

8For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9not by works, so that no one can boast. 10For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. – Ephesians 2:8-10

4. Love

"If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. – John 14:15

5. Repentance

*From that time on Jesus began to preach, **"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."** – Matthew 4:17*

LAST WEEK:

The “FOUND” (of the Church)

"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost." - Luke 19:10

Acts 9:19b-22

Saul Begins to Preach Christ

Now for several days he was with the disciples who were at Damascus, 20and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, "He is the Son of God." 21All those hearing him continued to be amazed, and were saying, "Is this not he who in Jerusalem destroyed those who called on this name, and who had come here for the purpose of bringing them bound before the chief priests?" 22But Saul kept increasing in strength and confounding the Jews who lived at Damascus by proving that this Jesus is the Christ.

(The Facts, Faith, Foundation, & the Found)

TODAY:

1. ***The Formation*** (of the Church)
2. ***The Fertilizer*** (of the Church)
3. ***The Fruit*** (of the Church)

The Formation: *(of the Church)*

NOTE: The formation of the Church (macro) is akin to the sanctification of the Christian (micro). - JDP

v.23a = **Missional Persistence**

23 *When many days had elapsed,*

*** “Crook-pot Christianity” = slow, long, holy heat

v.23b = **Missional Persecution**

the Jews plotted together to kill him,

v.24a = **Missional Blessings** (from the Spirit)

24 *but their plot became known to Saul.*

v.24b = **Missional Shrewdness** (watching the watchers...)

They were also watching the gates day and night...

v.24c = **Missional, Murderous Enemies**

so that they might kill him;

v.25a = **Missional Teamwork**

25*but his disciples took him*

v.25b = **Missional Discernment**

*by night and let him down through an opening in the wall,
lowering him in a large basket.*

v.26a = **Missional Mobility**

26*When he came to Jerusalem,*

*** See **Galatians 1:11ff** to address 3 year
gap between Acts 9:25 & 26...

v.26b = **Missional Desires** (wanna-be want-to)

he was trying to associate with the disciples;

To BE Christian... is to BE Church – by divine design. - JDP

VIDEO: “The Gospel & Community”

v.26c = **Missional Empathy**

but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple.

v.27a = **Missional Relationships**

(encouraging, edifying & equipping)

27*But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles*

v.27b = **Missional Testimonies** (BC @ AD)

*and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that **He** had talked to him,*

v.27c = **Missional Proof**

and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly...

v.27d = **Missional Doctrine** (theology matters!)

in the name of Jesus.

v.28a = **Missional Koinonia** (Purposes: P.S.W.O.R.D.)

28*And he was with them,*

1. Prayer
2. Service
3. Worship
4. Outreach
5. Relationship
6. Development

v.28b = **Missional Trust**

moving about freely in Jerusalem,

v.28c = **Missional Boldness** (Evangelism)

speaking out boldly in the name of the Lord.

v.29a = **Missional Confrontation**

29*And he was talking and arguing*

v.29b = **Missional Adoptions**

with the Hellenistic Jews;

v.29c = **More Missional, Murderous Persecution**

but they were attempting to put him to death.

v.30a = **More Missional Spirit-Intervention**

30But...

v.30b = **More Missional Church (ekklesia)**

when the brethren...

v.30c = **More Missional Discernment**

learned of it,

NOTE: Biblical discernment, especially in matters of the heart, help, hope, and holiness is of the utmost importance within a church... a lack thereof can prove to be eternally deadly.

*** ARTICLE high-points ***

5 Indicators of an Evil and Wicked Heart

(Association of Biblical Counselors)

1. **Evil hearts are experts at creating confusion and contention.**
2. **Evil hearts are experts at fooling others with their smooth speech and flattering words.**
3. **Evil hearts crave and demand control, and their highest authority is their own self-reference.**
4. **Evil hearts play on the sympathies of good-willed people, often trumping the grace card.**
5. **Evil hearts have no conscience, no remorse.**

They want you to believe that:

A. Their horrible actions should have no serious or painful consequences.

The evil person will also try to get you to believe

B. That if I talk like a gospel-believing Christian I am one, even if my actions don't line up with my talk.

v.30d = **More Missional Shrewdness**

they brought him down to Caesarea

v.30e = **More Missional Sending** (by the Church)

and sent him away

v.30f = **More Missional GO-ing** (by the Christians)

to Tarsus.

T/S: Now... Acts 1:8 is being faithfully fulfilled and the Church is fully formed, all under the promise and power of the Holy Spirit – Amen.

With that said, let us forever remember both our “means of formation” and “meaningful form” as individual Christians & the collective Church.

31 So **the church** throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria

- (A). *enjoyed peace,*
- (B). ***being built up;***
and
- (C). ***going on...***

VIDEO: **“The Gospel & Missional Church”**

T/S: But perhaps most helpful of all...

Let us forever remember the over-arching fertilizer, the biblical truths that we embrace & apply that summarize our faith-filled roles in fertilizing the Church (and being sanctified as Christians)... per **Acts 9:31's "Church fertilizer"**

The Fertilizer: *(of the Church)*

NOTE: The fertilizer of the Church (macro) is akin to the fertilizer of the Christian (micro). -JDP

31 *So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on... **in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit**, the Church continued to multiply / increase.*

1. **Fear** *(of the Lord)*

"Our feelings follow our fears..." -JDP

"Our faith follows our tears." -JDP

2. Comfort *(in the Holy Spirit)*

The Fruit: *(of the Church)*

31 So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up; and going on... in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, **the Church continued to multiply / increase.**

Fruit = Engaging, Eternal, Exponential, Multiplication.

Fruit of the Spirit

1. Love
2. Joy
3. Peace
4. Patience
5. Kindness
6. Goodness
7. Faithfulness
8. Gentleness
9. Self-Control

Let us forever remember what Jesus said:

John 20:21:

*So Jesus said to them again,
"Peace be with you;
as the Father has sent Me,
I also send you."*

*"It's not that God's Church has a mission...
it's that God's mission has a Church."*

– Ed Stetzer

**Thus, let us "BE" missional Christians...
Let us "BE" missional Church!**

Let's Pray!

5 Indicators of an Evil and Wicked Heart

- Association of Biblical Counselors

by [Leslie Vernick](#)

As Christian counselors, [pastors](#) and people helpers we often have a hard time discerning between an evil heart and an ordinary sinner who messes up, who isn't perfect, and full of weakness and sin.

I think one of the reasons we don't "see" evil is because we find it so difficult to believe that evil individuals actually exist. We can't imagine someone deceiving us with no conscience, hurting others with no remorse, spinning outrageous fabrications to ruin someone's reputation, or pretending he or she is spiritually committed yet has no fear of God before his or her eyes.

The Bible clearly tells us that among God's people there are wolves that wear sheep's clothing ([Jeremiah 23:14](#); [Titus 1:10](#); [Revelations 2:2](#)). It's true that every human heart is inclined toward sin ([Romans 3:23](#)), and that includes evil ([Genesis 8:21](#); [James 1:4](#)). We all miss God's mark of moral perfection. However, most ordinary sinners do not happily indulge evil urges, nor do we feel good about having them. We feel ashamed and guilty, rightly so ([Romans 7:19–21](#)). These things are not true of the evil heart.

Below are five indicators that you may be dealing with an evil heart rather than an ordinary sinful heart. If so, it requires a radically different treatment approach.

1. Evil hearts are experts at creating confusion and contention.

They twist the facts, mislead, lie, avoid taking responsibility, deny reality, make up stories, and withhold information. ([Psalms 5:8](#); [10:7](#); [58:3](#); [109:2–5](#); [140:2](#); [Proverbs 6:13,14](#); [6:18,19](#); [12:13](#); [16:20](#); [16:27, 28](#); [30:14](#); [Job 15:35](#); [Jeremiah 18:18](#); [Nehemiah 6:8](#); [Micah 2:1](#); [Matthew 12:34,35](#); [Acts 6:11–13](#); [2 Peter 3:16](#))

2. Evil hearts are experts at fooling others with their smooth speech and flattering words.

But if you look at the fruit of their lives or the follow through of their words, you will find no real evidence of godly growth or change. It's all smoke and mirrors. ([Psalms 50:19](#); [52:2,3](#); [57:4](#); [59:7](#); [101:7](#); [Proverbs 12:5](#); [26:23–26](#); [26:28](#); [Job 20:12](#); [Jeremiah 12:6](#); [Matthew 26:59](#); [Acts 6:11–13](#); [Romans 16:17,18](#); [2 Corinthians 11:13,14](#); [2 Timothy 3:2–5](#); [3:13](#); [Titus 1:10,16](#)).

3. Evil hearts crave and demand control, and their highest authority is their own self-reference.

They reject feedback, real accountability, and make up their own rules to live by. They use Scripture to their own advantage but ignore and reject passages that might require self-correction and repentance. ([Romans 2:8](#); [Psalms 10](#); [36:1–4](#); [50:16–22](#); [54:5,6](#); [73:6–9](#); [Proverbs 21:24](#); [Jude 1:8–16](#)).

4. Evil hearts play on the sympathies of good-willed people, often trumping the grace card.

They demand mercy but give none themselves. They demand warmth, forgiveness, and intimacy from those they have harmed with no empathy for the pain they have caused and no real intention of making amends or working hard to rebuild broken trust. ([Proverbs 21:10](#); [1 Peter 2:16](#); [Jude 1:4](#)).

5. Evil hearts have no conscience, no remorse.

They do not struggle against sin or evil—they delight in it—all the while masquerading as someone of noble character. ([Proverbs 2:14–15](#); [10:23](#); [12:10](#); [21:27,29](#); [Isaiah 32:6](#); [Romans 1:30](#); [2 Corinthians 11:13–15](#))

If you are working with someone who exhibits these characteristics, it's important that you confront them head on. You must name evil for what it is. The longer you try to reason with them or show mercy towards

them, the more you, as the Christian counselor, will become a pawn in his or her game.

They want you to believe that:

1. Their horrible actions should have no serious or painful consequences.

When they say “I’m sorry,” they look to you as the pastor or Christian counselor to be their advocate for amnesty with the person he or she has harmed. They believe grace means they are immediately granted immunity from the relational fallout of their serious sin. They believe forgiveness entitles them to full reconciliation and will pressure you and their victim to comply.

The Bible warns us saying, “But when grace is shown to the wicked, they do not learn righteousness; even in a land of uprightness they go on doing evil and do not regard the majesty of the Lord ([Isaiah 26:10](#)).

The Bible tells us that talking doesn’t wake up evil people, but painful consequences might. Jesus didn’t wake up the Pharisee’s with his talk nor did God’s counsel impact Cain ([Genesis 4](#)). In addition, the Bible shows us that when someone is truly sorry for the pain they have caused, he or she is eager to make amends to those they have harmed by their sin (see Zacchaeus’ response when he repented of his greed in [Luke 19](#)).

Tim Keller writes, “If you have been the victim of a heinous crime. If you have suffered violence, and the perpetrator (or even the judge) says, ‘Sorry, can’t we just let it go?’ You would say, ‘No, that would be an injustice.’ Your refusal would rightly have nothing to do with bitterness or vengeance. If you have been badly wronged, you know that saying sorry is never enough. Something else is required—some kind of costly payment must be made to put things right.”¹

As Biblical counselors let’s not collude with the evil one by turning our attention to the victim, requiring her to forgive, to forget, to trust again

when there has been no evidence of inner change. Proverbs says, “Trusting in a treacherous man in time of trouble is like a bad tooth or a foot that slips” ([Proverbs. 25:19](#)). It’s foolishness.

The evil person will also try to get you to believe

2. That if I talk like a gospel-believing Christian I am one, even if my actions don’t line up with my talk.

Remember, Satan masquerades as an angel of light ([2 Corinthians 11:13–15](#)). He knows more true doctrine than you or I will ever know, but his heart is wicked. Why? Because although he knows the truth, he does not believe it or live it.

The Bible has some strong words for those whose actions do not match their talk ([1 John 3:17,18](#); [Jeremiah 7:8,10](#); [James 1:22, 26](#)). John the Baptist said it best when he admonished the religious leaders, “Prove by the way you live that you have repented of your sins and turned to God” ([Luke 3:8](#)).

If week after week you hear the talk but there is no change in the walk, you have every reason to question someone’s relationship with God.

Part of our maturity as spiritual leaders is that we have been trained to discern between good and evil. Why is that so important? It’s important because evil usually pretends to be good, and without discernment we can be easily fooled ([Hebrews 5:14](#)).

When you confront evil, chances are good that the evil heart will stop counseling with you because the darkness hates the light ([John 3:20](#)) and the foolish and evil heart reject correction ([Proverbs 9:7,8](#)). But that outcome is far better than allowing the evil heart to believe you are on his or her side, or that “he’s not that bad” or “that he’s really sorry” or “that he’s changing” when, in fact, he is not.

Daniel says, “[T]he wicked will continue to be wicked” ([Daniel 12:10](#)), which begs the question, do you think an evil person can really change?