

Dear Friends,

January was a busy month for us. All of the end of the year financial stuff has kept Ellen in her office even more than usual. My sister Sarah has been trying to recover from surgery she had in the middle of December. Sarah watches my kids while I teach. She also is in charge of publishing and distribution of materials for Relational Concepts. Her inability to work made doing our jobs more difficult.

As you have read, James was in the hospital undergoing tests, keeping us alert in prayer. Just as those two things seemed to be coming to an end, my daughter Emily broke both bones in her left leg jumping off a couch. All these things have kept us extra busy and tired, but not distracted or discouraged. Actually, we have been focusing on how much God has given us this past month to be thankful for. One of which is the ability to continue meeting with women, teaching, and writing, in spite of being somewhat emotionally and physically depleted.

With His Strength,
Becky

MISSION

Women's Corner was created to serve Christian women by providing Bible teaching written by women, to and for women. It is our hope that women might become growing disciples of Christ as well as better witnesses to their families and in their communities for the purpose of building the Kingdom of God.



AUTHORS

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www.relationalconcepts.org

James' Corner

Today we scheduled James' surgery for February 27th. The surgeons will perform a right side hemispherectomy, which means they will be totally removing the small right side of his brain. Originally, we thought perhaps they would just disconnect it, but they determined that removing it would be a safer option. Because it is so abnormal, they do not have the typical reference points they need to determine the proper points at which to disconnect it. We would hate to find that they didn't fully disconnect it and he had to have surgery again to finish the job.



They will remove a portion of his skull, and when they are finished, re-attach it with small titanium welds that will hold it in place until the bone heals itself. He shouldn't have much pain as there are no pain nerves in the skull and brain. They will only shave a small line in his hair, not his entire head. It is a 6 hour surgery. He will be in intensive care for the first day or two and then in the regular hospital for maybe another four to five days.

In addition to the normal risks associated with any surgery, such as infection, bleeding or blood transfusion, this surgery also has the risk of stroke or the development of hydrocephalus (water on the brain). Thank you so much for all of your prayers for James and our family over the past few years. Please continue to pray that he doesn't develop any of these conditions and that the surgery is 100% effective in eliminating his seizures.

~Debbie

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A John 15 Kind Of Love

Jesus said, *This is My commandment that you love one another* (John 15:17). These were some of Jesus' last words to His disciples. But what did Jesus mean? How exactly were the disciples to do that? If they were to interpret love as the world (and Satan) understands love, they would have thought, "that means we are to unconditionally accept one another." Maybe you've been accused of being unloving because you would not support someone's decision to marry a non-Christian. Or maybe you've been labeled as hateful because you wouldn't support someone who wants a divorce. The reason you have been treated that way is because the world teaches, "if you really loved me, you'd accept me for who I am, no matter what I do."

Paul certainly did not understand that Christ intended love to be synonymous with acceptance. When Peter quit eating with the Gentiles because they were not Jews, Paul confronted him to his face and told him his actions were wrong (Galatians 2:11-14). He didn't unconditionally accept Peter. Rather, he called him a hypocrite. Was Paul acting unloving when he did that? He would be if he used the world's definition of love.

Did Jesus intend for us to define love however our particular culture defines love? According to the online encyclopedia *Wikipedia*, "love is a very strong feeling of affection." It is true that people have strong feelings and then they call it love. But if love is equivalent to a feeling, then it would be impossible to always love my husband, or my kids, or God, or anyone all the time. For example, if my daughter has been whining and arguing with me all day, what I feel for her is anything but affection. Does that mean I cease to love her? Well, if I believe what my culture tells me is true, then I do.

Do you remember the story of David's son Amnon? He loved his half sister Tamar. As a matter of fact, his "very strong feeling of affection" towards her motivated him to pretend to be ill, asking David to send her to care for

him. When she arrived, he forced her into his bed and "he violated her and lay with her" (2 Samuel 13:14). Lest we think his feelings weren't real, it says that after he slept with her, *Amnon hated her with a very great hatred; for the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her* (13:15). If our actions of love are justified by our feelings of love, then Amnon was right in expressing his love to his sister.

As always, the Bible has the answer to the question, What did Christ mean when He told the disciples to love one another? He did not mean that they were to accept one another. And He certainly did not mean that they were to have feelings of affection towards one another. He meant they were to do the best good (as God defines good) for each other. Paul was loving when he confronted Peter, because telling him he was wrong was the best good Paul could do for him. I can still love my daughter, even when I feel anger or frustration with her. Why? Because even in the midst of bad feelings, I can still do the best good for her. Amnon was not loving his sister, even if to him it felt like love, because he was not doing what was the best good for her.

Jesus did give us some examples of love in the context of John 15. *Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends*. For one thing, love is sacrificial. This is consistent with Christ's statement concerning His love for His disciples. Earlier in the same passage it says, *This is My commandment that you love one another, just as I have loved you*. Jesus was saying that He had sacrificial love for them—making them His friends. And Jesus proved His friendship to them by laying down His life. Christ also loved them by telling them the truth about God (15:15). If we are to model Christ's example, we will love our fellow disciples of Christ not only by sacrificially giving but also by telling them the truth. Charles Finney said, "True love, ... the highest ultimate good, can be secured only by a strict adherence to truth" (*Attributes of Love*, page 62).

~Becky

Womens' Ministry Goes to India

In January, Jan Spoelman, from Muskegon, Michigan, taught *The Bible Overview* to the first group of women disciples in Chennai, India. Here's an excerpt from her report: "My students were 12 hand-picked women who are already active Bible teachers. Three teach in a Bible school, one has a Ph.D. in literature. All but 4 spoke English and all spoke Tamil, so a translator was used—Mary Daniels—she's 80 years old, a warm, fun, and saintly woman. I was told by these women when I began to teach that they'd been praying for a course like this for 8 years. And they took it seriously. Some had to travel 2 hours a day and get up by 4 A.M. to get their family duties taken care of. They were always there early and when I'd walk in they were practicing and re-studying what they'd learned. I was privileged to hear their testimonies that included harsh treatment by their Hindu families and growing up in starvation settings. But their joy was their strongest trait, and we laughed and sang and totally appreciated each others' differences. We met six hours a day and using two main tools: a timeline and map, the women and I began



at Creation and worked through Revelation, keeping the theme of redemption leading to holiness as the thread that tied it all together. Throughout, I had them memorize, draw, and add daily to what they learned. They became adept at both tools and loved being able to tell the story of the Bible in a linear and visual way. What empowered women!"

Rhonda Fettig from Grand Rapids plans to travel there in October to teach and Ellen plans go in March of 2007 to teach. Jan says, "These Indian women can hardly wait for their next course/session. They decided to meet every Friday for prayer. ... that God will complete what He has started."

How to Have a Healthy Heart

In the Bible, the heart is synonymous with the soul, it is what makes you. It governs your actions, decisions, and emotions. It is who you truly are—"...the hidden person of the heart" (1 Peter 3:4). Because you are still in your flesh, your heart will be inclined to steer you towards serving fleshly things. But if you have the Spirit, you have the ability to redirect your heart toward God, "for God is greater than our heart" (1 John 3:20).

While flying my dad's airplane, he told me that a plane is made to go straight. "If you take your hands and feet off the controls, it will simply fly straight. You are the one who has to make it turn, go up, or down," he said. An airplane is exactly the opposite of your heart. God's path is the straight and narrow, but your heart will want to take you in every direction other than straight. However, like the plane, if you decide to take the controls, you can force it in a God honoring direction. But you must stay alert and on the controls because if you let go for even an instant, it will quickly take you in a flesh-serving disobedient direction.

An airplane is controlled by your hands and feet—your heart is controlled by your mind. Which is why the Bible says that it's possible to deceive your own heart (James 1:26). This happens any time you justify a sinful decision. Of course, that bad decision will probably "feel" right to you at that moment because your heart is deceitful (Jeremiah 17:9). That's why it is destructive (and quite frankly, ridiculous) to try to control your heart with your heart—saying things like, "this decision just 'feels' right." But if you choose to keep alert to your heart's sinful desires and you are diligent to control its direction with a Christ-centered mind, then you may experience the good that can come from a Spirit-filled heart. "...be obedient, ...in the sincerity of your heart, as to Christ; not by way of eye service, as men-pleasers, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free" (Ephesians 6:5-8).

"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, Oh LORD, my strength and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14). ~Becky

"Do not love the world nor the things in the world"

(1 John 2:15) — Know Thy Enemy - part 5

As we have already learned, Satan is a creature, created by God as a good angel with a free will, accountable to God (Ezekiel 28:11-19). But Satan wanted to be God, so from then on, God and Satan became enemies. Satan is the chief of all sinners—he has practiced sin longer than any other, and he sinned against the greatest light, being in the very presence of God Himself. This month I'd like us to look at Satan's world—the Satanic *cosmos*.

The Greek word *cosmos* is in the New Testament (NT) 187 times, and is translated every time but one as the English word *world*. Jesus used the term more than all others put together. He used it 41 times in His Upper Room Discourse and 19 times in His priestly prayer in John 17.

The NT concept of *the world* is that it is opposed to God. It is antigod in character. Jesus said, *My kingdom is not of this world* (John 17:36). Paul wrote, *The world by wisdom knew not God* (1 Corinthians 1:21). The *cosmos* is a civilization that functions apart from God. It is a vast order or system that Satan has promoted, which conforms to his ideals, aims, and methods. It embraces *godless* governments, conflicts, education, culture, religions of morality, and pride. And it is the sphere in which mankind lives. It's what we see around us. To the uncounted multitude, it is all they ever know as long as they live on this earth.

Satan has been given authority over this *cosmos*. In Matthew 4:8-9 in his temptation of Jesus, Satan declared he would give all the kingdoms of the *cosmos* to Jesus—and Jesus never said this was a non-truth. If it had been untrue, there would have not been any temptation to offer Jesus. This means Satan has God's permission to have dominion over the *cosmos* and to give the kingdoms of the world to whoever he chooses. God is sovereign over all (Romans 13:1), and it is He who has permitted Satan this power. In John 12:31; 14:30; and 16:11, Jesus referred to Satan as the *prince of this cosmos*—he occupies an earthly throne. In 1 John 5:19 we learn that ... *the whole cosmos lies in the power of the evil one*. The "whole *cosmos*" is not just the people—it's the entire economy, its lusts and principles and motives—all that is not "of God" lies in the power and bondage of the wicked one.

When we read Job, however, we notice that Satan's power over the world has boundaries set by God. Job is represented, not as one who needs to be punished for evil (which his friends kept insisting on) but as one who three times is declared by God to be *perfect and upright* (1:1, 8; 2:3). Satan's charge against Job was (a) that Job was so completely protected by God that Satan could not reach him and (b) that God used riches to buy Job's love. So God released Job to the power of Satan, but with the limitation that Satan could not kill Job—a boundary which Satan could not cross. Job had the privilege and honor of proving that God is worthy of all adoration, apart from His benefits. The lie of Satan was completely exposed, to the glory of God.

The *cosmos* represents the supreme effort of the supreme creature. There are certain things in Satan's vast system which are

good in themselves—many humanitarian ideals, morals, and aspects of culture. That good things are included in his system results in many deceptions. But the root evil in the *cosmos* is that its basis is complete independence from God. The humanitarian enterprises, the culture, the laws, and religious forms of the *cosmos* show no evidence that God is recognized in His true position as God or honored. It is a Christ-rejecting *cosmos*. Its rulers *crucified the Lord of glory* (1 Corinthians 2:8). The Savior is still disowned and rejected, and His precious name is constantly blasphemed. Social ideals are borrowed from His teachings, and His purity and grace may be held forth as a pattern of life, but salvation through His blood is treated with contempt. The independent, self-centered, self-satisfied, autonomous *cosmos* asks for no redemption since it recognizes no need. But what God sees is *there is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one* (Romans 3:10-12). God is not deceived by Satan's purposes. A *cosmos* which crucifies its Redeemer, hates those who are redeemed as it hates the Savior (John 15:18-19), and loves darkness rather than light, it will not deceive the Almighty. It is to be judged and destroyed completely. No attempt will be made to salvage anything out of it when its day of demolition arrives.

What started as an angel refusing to worship God will end with a human antichrist, possessed by Satan, demanding to be worshipped as god by all mankind but who will be destroyed by Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 2:4-8). The fact that the *cosmos* comes to a complete termination and destruction is written of in both Testaments (Psalm 2; Daniel 2 and 7; Matthew 25:31-46; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Revelation 14—22). *For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever* (1 John 2:16-17; see also 1 Corinthians 7:31; 2 Peter 3:10).

So what should be the Christians' attitude toward this Satanic *cosmos*? Jesus said, *I have chosen you out of the world* (John 15:19). Now what? (1) *If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world ... the world hates you* (v. 19). If the world loves you, it's probably because they think you are one of them ... that's bad! What are you doing that gives them that impression? (2) *But the worries of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful* (Mark 4:19). Satan and his *cosmos* do not want you to learn the Bible and practice it in your life. Jesus prayed, *Sanctify them in the truth; Your Word is truth* (John 17:17). (3) Christians are sent into the *cosmos* to be Christ's witnesses to it. They are *ambassadors* with the Gospel message (Matthew 28:18-20; John 17:18; 2 Corinthians 5:20). (4) Christians are *strangers and pilgrims* (1 Peter 2:11), that is, *citizens of heaven* (Philippians 3:20). "This world is not our home, we're just a-passin' through!" So live like that is true! ~Ellen