

providing a future with hope

# Challenger

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## ***DEAL OR NO DEAL***

By Jeff Bonzelaar, Executive Director

I was at a church-sponsored youth event. During some down-time, a computer generated version of prime time television's *Deal or No Deal* was presented. The kids were divided into teams. The host of the show along with his eye-catching female support cast was beamed up on a screen. The "contestants" were asked for their selections. And the quest for the big bucks began.

I began asking myself some questions:

- What does it mean to confess Jesus Christ as Lord?
- Specifically, what implications should His lordship have in terms of how I spend my leisure time and the forms of entertainment I allow into my life?

I engaged with another minister on the matter. We debated as to whether or not the show promotes gambling and greed. My friend then asked how the board game Monopoly was any different. (I love playing Monopoly!)

I continued questioning:

- What values are such games and shows based upon? Are those values compatible with following Christ?
- What do Scriptures like "Come out from them and be separate," "Be holy in all you do," "Abstain from all appearance of evil," and "Do not conform

any longer to the pattern of this world" mean in relation to these forms of entertainment (see 2 Cor. 6:17; 1 Pet. 1:15; 1 Thess. 5:22; and Rom. 12:2 respectively)?

My head was spinning. The answers are not always easy. (Not to mention that I'm afraid of what some of the answers might be.)

*"Will this activity help to **express or awaken** genuine, heartfelt satisfaction in God?"*

While the Bible is explicit about many areas of Christian behavior (e.g., thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal, and etc.), there are many other areas in which things are not so clear. I have a good friend who enjoys watching *The*

*Apprentice* starring Donald Trump. Another enjoys *American Idol*. Another screamo music. Another personally competes in wrestle mania. My own kids relish honing their firearm skills in various video games. I read my fair share of John Grisham murder novels.

Then I ask myself:

- Do these forms of entertainment promote thoughts that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy (see Phil. 4:8)?
- Are the themes and assumptions about reality these programs and pastimes propagate in harmony with such God-honoring values as forgiveness, forbearance, simplicity, humility, generosity, moderation, servanthood, submission to authority, and self-denial?

Maybe I'm getting too nitpicky. Then again, the Scriptures say that it is "the little foxes that ruin the vineyards" (Song of Solomon 2:15). They also say that "without holiness, no one will see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). I want to go to heaven.

*"Holiness . . . isn't about rules and regulations. It is about love."*

I also want to please Jesus.

In speaking to the Corinthians about disputable matters, the Apostle Paul says that while everything is permissible, not everything is beneficial (1 Cor. 10:23). It's not simply about my rights (see 1 Cor. 9). If my brother's faith is jeopardized, I must reconsider what my privileges are.

If we're honest, all of us have uncritically accepted and absorbed—in varying degrees—certain values of this world. One of the reasons may be that we don't question enough. The Apostle Paul

tells us to "examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves" (2 Cor. 13:5).

In aiming to honor God, I've found the following question helpful: **Will this activity help to *express or awaken genuine, heartfelt satisfaction in God?*** In other words, how will this help me treasure Christ more? How will this help me show that I do treasure Christ?

#### CONCLUSION:

I am not a legalist (at least not theologically). We are saved by grace through faith. We can't merit salvation through our own holiness. We are made holy through the sacrifice of Christ (Heb. 10:10).

I am a recovering Pharisee. There are inconsistencies in my life—both practically and philosophically. With regard to Monopoly and *Deal or No Deal*, for instance, can I logically approve of one and not the other? And in terms of practice, I fall terribly short. Thank God there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

We are not to pass judgment on any one (see Rom. 14:1ff.). We will all come out on different sides of the issues. Yet let us not shrink back from considering how we may "spur (literally, *provoke*) one another on toward love and good deeds" (Heb. 10:24; see also 3:13).

I encourage you to ask some hard questions—for your sake and that of your family and church, and most of all, for God's sake.

Holiness, in the final analysis, isn't about rules and regulations. It is about love. It is about relationship. St. Augustine summed up the guiding principle for Christian behavior with these words, "Love God *and others*, and do as you please" (addition mine).

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*"So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do,  
do it all for the glory of God."  
(1 Cor. 10:31)*

## Testimony

*Gail Karpovck*

“When I was two years old my older sister drowned in a swimming accident. Old photos taken of me show that I did not smile for two years. My parents handled their grief the way most people did in those days – they didn’t think or talk about it.

We went to church together as a family. I was saved and water baptized. I loved playing the violin in services and sang in the choir on Sundays. I enjoyed being in front of a crowd and getting positive attention.

I learned about the importance of faithfulness, tithing, Bible reading, witnessing, and submitting to authority. Looking back, however, there was one thing I couldn’t get a hold of – God’s love for me.

In 2001 my dad, my best friend, was admitted into the hospital for a heart murmur. He suffered a fall in his room and twenty-four hours later was gone. My world was shattered.

I thought I had to take care of everything and everyone. I became angry and depressed, unable to deal with my grief. I began taking medication to help me through the depression.

I still remained faithful in church and would go to work, but when I came home I would shut the curtains, climb into bed, and escape through sleep. I needed the medication to sleep. The more I took the more I needed.

One day I woke up in the back of an ambulance and was treated for an overdose. I was scared. I knew I could not keep up my destructive ways any longer.

A Christian doctor told me about Life Challenge. He said he thought it was the only program that could give me what I needed. I agreed to go.

It was awkward at first because I remembered going there as a guest to play at their fundraising banquets. The Holy Spirit convicted me of my pride. Then the thought of a year commitment started to overwhelm me. The Holy Spirit reminded me of how Queen Esther had to go in preparation for a year before she could be presented to her king. How much worthier was my King!

I was awakened to God’s love while in Life Challenge. I developed a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Through God’s grace I was able to let go of the anger, resentment, and pride I had held onto for so many years. Jesus Christ set me free.”

*P.S Gail graduated from the program this past April and attends her home church where she is a member. She is serving as an intern at another church and helping to develop a women’s home, serving in a community outreach program, and working in the church office.*



## Ministry Notes:

- **Golf Scramble:** Please note the new start time— **9:00 am!**
- **Evangelism:** As an outreach to the children in our community, we are excited to launch our portable bicycle-tire repair ministry this month.
- **Student Classes:** Did you know that some of the Bible classes we offer our students include: Genesis, Proverbs, Mark, John, Romans, Ephesians, General Epistles, Spiritual Disciplines, Authority, Guilt and Grace, and Christianity?

Please continue to remember us in your prayers and financial support. Our mission is to make holy men and women. Without God this is impossible.

Fighting the good fight,

*Jeff*