

In search of...

Truth & Right

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Spina Absentia

According to my 9th Grade Revised Latin, the title means **"no backbone."** Physically, this devastates the body, making it impossible to function. This is tragic. But more tragic is spiritual "spina absentia." This "spinelessness" is too common in the Lord's body, and we need the "Great Physician" to stiffen the backbone so that the function of the body of Christ might not be impaired. Consider some of the disease's symptoms.

Failure to Discipline Influential Members

Many denominations are reluctant to practice discipline, for this may cause them to lose money, members and popularity. But could it be that some of us are have the same thinking? There are churches where influential members are guilty of flagrant sins, and

nothing is done about it. Elders' relatives, rich folks, preachers' children, etc., are winked at in their sin because of a "don't rock the boat" attitude. If such is not a "respect of persons," and therefore a sin (James 2:1-9), then what is it?

Failure to Teach an Unpopular Truth

Is it possible that part of the problem with immodest dress in the church is because some teachers, preachers and elders are afraid to teach their convictions? Afraid they would have some upset people to deal with? Is there any connection to Paul's urgent charge to Timothy to "*preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching*" (II Timothy 4:1-2)? Yes, Paul knew there would

be "itching ears," but they do not change the teacher's responsibility to speak the truth in love. How many other unpopular subjects are left alone, which then harm the church, because error will *not* stay in the closet!

Failure to Stand for Right when Among Those Who Do Wrong

Peter got in the wrong crowd, and didn't have the backbone to stand up for Jesus. Where is your tongue when you are among those who are gossiping, slandering God's name and telling filthy jokes? What about the admonition to "*reprove the unfruitful works of darkness*" (Ephesians 5:11)? If one is ashamed to stand up and be counted on the Lord's side, perhaps a careful study of Matthew 10:32 and II Timothy 1:8 might prove to be helpful.

Failure to Rebuke or Exhort a Friend Who Is in Error

How misguided are such friends. If I am about to eat something contaminated with poison, should my friend warn me? Love should motivate us to do what is in the eternal interest of our friends, and it may mean correcting them, as Paul did Peter (Galatians 2:11ff). Granted, our words will not always be well received (Galatians 4:16), but a soul

is worth more than a superficial friendship any day, isn't it?

Failure to Correct Our Children

Dr. Spock's philosophy of not saying "No" to our children for fear of warping their personalities seems to be common today. Even our government in some areas seems to consider a corrective tap on a child's bottom to be a grievous offense. We are reminded of the evil that came upon Eli's house "*because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them*" (I Samuel 3:13). Wise Solomon urges: "*Correct your son, and he will give you comfort; he will also delight your soul*" (Proverbs 29:17). Children without discipline are considered as children who are illegitimate, i.e. without fathers (Hebrews 12:8).

Failure to Be a Man and Admit "I Was Wrong"

What injury pride and ego bring when they refuse to allow us to humble ourselves and admit that we, too, are capable of error. How blessed are those who have the spirit of David and the prodigal son who were able to swallow their pride and say, "I have sinned." It seems that this spirit of pride comes dangerously close to those in I John 1:8

who say they have *no* sin.

Failure to Teach Sound Doctrine

With some the norm must be "Offend no one, be tolerant of all." Obviously it should never be a Christian's intention to offend anyone, but truth sometimes offends. It seems Christ offended some. "*Then the disciples ...said to Him, 'Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this statement?'"* (Matthew 15:12). Paul must have offended some, which earned him being stoned, beaten and imprisoned. He even to called names (I Timothy 1:20, II Timothy 2:17), as did our Lord (Matthew 23:14, Mark 8:15, etc.). We must not be as those who told the prophets to "*Speak to us pleasant words*" (Isaiah 30:10), but must be willing to endure sound doctrine, which sometimes "*reproves and rebukes*" (II Timothy 4:2).

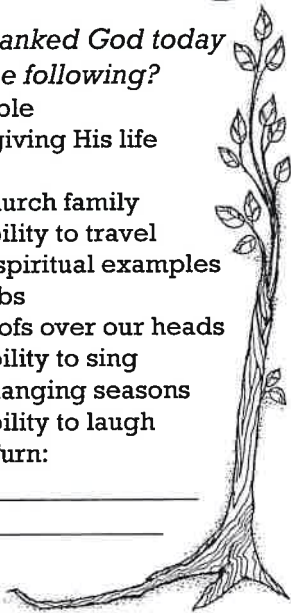
There are many symptoms of "spina absentia," and we need to learn to recognize the warning signs, and take preventive steps, lest we be overcome, and thus render the body of Christ a helpless invalid. Too much is at stake for us to allow this disease to go untreated.

Jefferson David Tant

dear God,
thanks for this
beautiful life
and forgive me if
i dont love it
enough.

*Have you thanked God today
for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- The ability to travel
- Good spiritual examples
- Our jobs
- The roofs over our heads
- The ability to sing
- The changing seasons
- The ability to laugh
- Your Turn:



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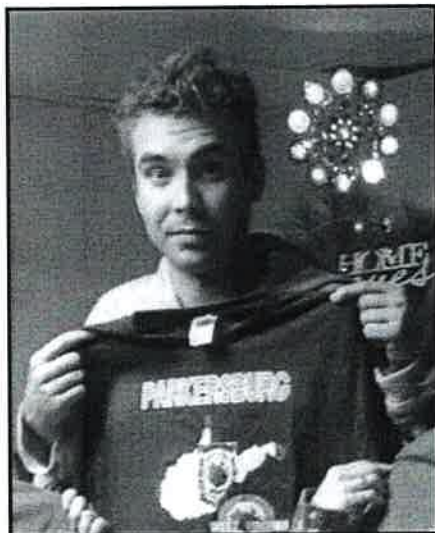
Christian Q&A

Nathan Marshall is the subject of our interview this month. He is Harold & Linda's son, Paula's brother, and has been a member here for several years.

What inspired you to be baptized?

I was baptized on July 24th, 1999, but as to how I got to that point? It is never just as simple as I read my Bible, I understood, and therefore, I became a Christian. You can say it is, but even the Ethiopian eunuch had more to his story than that.

The inspiration for my baptism began with attending church my whole life, literally since the week I was born. I grew-up with parents who were learning what it was like to be a Christian their self. I witnessed their struggles, their successes. I saw them research their Bible in times of trouble, as opposed to seeking out their own solutions. I still remember my parents deciding to leave the Waverly church of Christ, a church that was transitioning from conservative to liberal, because of the leadership it had received from the preacher at the time. I remember it being like any other Sunday morning, running around the parking lot after church with Trenton Hall, who is a cherished friend and brother-in-Christ to this day, but at this time, he was a curly headed child running around in diapers. There are moments in life when no matter how normal it all seems, something just seems to be amiss. That was this Sunday morning. It was if the air itself had even morphed into this other worldly state. I remember my father and the preacher having a very serious discussion, and the next thing I knew, we were in our old station



wagon driving home. My father said, "We aren't coming back here again." Endings tend to leave a lasting mark on a child. I don't care how old they are. They realize when something is changing in their lives, and for me, that day I learned that the preacher is not always right, every church member can be fallible if they don't go by the Bible, and I learned what it was like to miss my Christian friends and family for the first time. I was separated from people that I had learned an invaluable amount from, my family, my home. I will never be able to repay the great ladies who had taught me about the Bible there. Sometimes we forget that, if they are fortunate enough to, our little ones grow-up to be adults, and they taught me from the ground up like they knew that all along. They provided me with building blocks that I am unbelievably grateful for to this day, ones that began to build my faith and love for God.

Next month, part two!