

New Bethel Christian Life Commission Report – September 2009

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Quote of Month

“The Future is, of all things, the thing least like eternity.
It is the most completely temporal part of time—for the Past is frozen
and no longer flows and the Present is all lit up with eternal rays”
C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (letter XV, para. 3-5, pp. 68-70)

Is that a Bible in Your Pocket?

Lisa Miller, *Newsweek* (May 4, 2009), 12; edited down by Maness

Like so many Christian, Kevin McNeese carries his bible to church on Sundays. He “pops it open,” he says, and follows along as the pastor reads the week’s chapter and verse from the pulpit. For fun, McNeese reads additional, sometimes extensive, Bible commentary.

That was how Lisa Miller opened her article on how people are using Bible programs on their iPhone or Blackberry. Some not only follow in the Bible as others do, but some are actually interacting with the Pastor; that is, they text the pastor in the pulpit. And the pastor is able to interact with the texting. Hundred of “apps,” short of *applications*, can be downloaded.

Facebook’s Shadow Culture

Emily Walshe, *The Christian Science Monitor* (6-14-2009), 26; edited by Maness

With 200 million users, it is rare to find someone *not* there who is also even marginally computer literate. The author, Emily Walshe, is one of the ones, though her sister has continually been after to join. The common criticism is that these kinds of sites cheapen friendship. But they are doing more “reducing the value” of friendship: “They’re creating a shadow culture of friendship that spins cosmic sympathy into crowd sourcing.” The connectivity has granted an ability influence with more speed and efficiency. The same is true for Twitter and eHarmony. Real friendship is predicated on trust over time. “Critics consider the phenomena of chronic ‘friending’ to be a kind of memetic narcissism, and excessive self-regard is surely part of its appeal. But these ever-widening concentric circles of congeniality are subtly turning the desire for friendship into sinister temptations for power or profit... that ... blurs the distinction between community and commodity.” She can “browse” her sister’s “lemonade stand,” that is a specialized program *inside* of Facebook that “pays her when people buy items from his list of favorite things.” So then, “Influence is the elephant of the chat room,” and Walshe laments watching her kids “acquire the habit of thinking and experiencing on behalf of an audience” worrying that “they won’t develop the wherewithal to effectively relate one-on-one, or to appreciate people as people and not as payoff.” To them, a “friend is a technical term” for something that saps time. Walshe closes:

“A friend to all, said Aristotle, “is a friend to none.” We need a renaissance of intimacy and commitment. Now is the time to renew, in your hearts and in our souls and in our souls ... the perennial sense that friendship is both miracle and magic, and treat it less as cohort and more as covenant.

Getting to Know You

Jennifer Harris and Robert Dilday, *Word & Way and Religious Herald*
in *Baptist Standard* (May 4, 2009), cover and 6-7; edited by Maness

How many Christians are on Facebook Some say it allows them “to communicate with folks at a level and on a timeframe that multiplies my connections with people. Tyler Tankersley, director of youth at FBC Cape Girardeau, MO, said it hopes it is taught at seminary and believes it “a new wineskin” into which we must adapt to communicate. Some are setting up Twitter account, as Kirkwood Baptist youth minister did, allows their youth to communicate with each other. Thompson wrote in the *New York Times Magazine*, “This is the paradox of ambient awareness. Each little update ... is insignificant on its own, even supremely mundane. But taken together, over time, the little snippets coalesce into a surprisingly sophisticated portrait of your

friends' and family members' lives, like thousands of dots making a pointillist painting.... The ambient information becomes like a type of E.S.P., ... an invisible dimension floating over everyday life."

2012: A Y2K for the New Age

Lisa Miller, *Newsweek* (May 11-18, 2009), 12, edited by Maness.

Several books are scheduled to come out battling over 2012, which could spell the end of the world, the transformation of global consciousness, the end of the Mayan calendar, or the beginning of a new cycle of the Mayan calendar—depending on your worldview. While some see it as “bunk,” high-end publishers like HarperOne will be publishing. John Major Jenkins’ *Maya Cosmogenesis 2012* in 1998 helped usher in the craze. New Age conferences on “2112” are being held. David Freidal, an archeologist at Washington Univ. thinks some people like Jenkins are “popularizers” that invent “theology to support their view that the world is in decline.” Really now. Seems like, thinks Maness, the end came to the Mayans hundreds of years ago. So if they did not get their own demise right, what are the chances they will get anyone else’s demise right?

Research Reveals: No Substitute for a Personal Invitation to Church

Adelle M. Banks, *Religious News Service* in
Baptist Standard (5-4-09), 17

The Survey says following percentages:

- Invitation from family: 67%
- Letter in mail: 41%
- Weekly section in paper: 40%
- Billboard or sign: 38%
- Newspaper or magazine: 36%
- TV commercial: 34%
- Radio commercial: 33%
- Website listing or ad: 31%
- E-mail message: 30%
- Social networking site: 30%

Conducted in December from 150,000 respondents. Ed Stetzer, director of LifeWay Research, said invitations “need to be personal.”

Celebrating 400 Years of Baptist Heritage—1609-2009

Baptist Standard 121:1 (1-12,-2009)

The year 2009 is the 400th anniversary of the founding of the Baptist tradition. To help celebrate this big year, the Baptist History and Heritage Society has created a new 24-article series, HISTORY SPEAKS. Readers of these articles are urged to print copies for themselves and even to duplicate copies for distribution and study.



Complimentary Baptist Heritage Bulletin Inserts

www.BaptistHistory.org

**Baptist Beginnings, 1609 ~ Baptist Beginnings in America, 1639 ~ Separate Baptists
Baptist Contributions to Religious Freedom ~ The Move of Baptists Westward**

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