erprotective rents might ve right idea

friend who guards f they were in mor- feel like she should ead their wings a lit- igh they're only 9 of age. Who do you t?

ades ago I would ed that she give because overprotec- ren creates some ic problems. Today, ree with your nvironment in re being raised has matically in recent akable dangers hools and streets nost unheard of a go. Yesterday's fam- orry about drive-by egal drugs, sexual d kidnappers.

s a kid in the early ks were more con- polio than all olence combined. old, I moved freely ometown. If I was a e coming home for obson household d by panic. But now out our kids playing ard. Indeed, little as abducted in 1993 room, and then was dered for the per- e of her killer. rrible news broke, nudder was felt by parent in the na- ears later, beautiful ld JonBenet Ram- ally assaulted and th in the basement me on Christmas

Dr. James Dobson

children? By watching them every moment! Never leave them in the care of those whom you don't know personally and aren't sure you can trust. Do not let teenage boys baby-sit your girls. I know that is a controversial recommendation, but I've seen too many cases of abuse resulting from masculine adolescence and the sexual curiosity that is typical of that age. Walk your kids to and from school or the school bus. Pick them up on time. Watch for any unusual behavior that may signal sexual abuse or molestation from neighbors or child-care workers. Protect them at every turn.

Does that sound unnecessarily cautious? Just remember this: The average pedophile abuses 150 children in the course of a lifetime. Each sexual exploitation lasts for seven years, typically, before the truth comes to light. Boys and girls are often too intimidated to call for help. Don't give a child abuser a shot at your kids.

Write to Dobson in care of The Pantagraph, 301 W. Washington St., Bloomington, IL 61702-2907.

FROM THE PULPIT

Use Scripture as your guide

By Brad Bryant
FOR THE PANTAGRAPH

Scripture is a very powerful record of God's encounters with people of the past. It's a tool, given to us by God, to help us along our spiritual journey.

Is it a weapon to hurt and divide people? I don't think so!

Our books of Scripture are crucial in our growth and understanding of God's purpose and plan for each person, and the decisions we need to make to grow closer to Him and to each other in this life.

Scripture alone, however, does NOT represent God. It is impossible to capture an infinite, loving God between the covers of a book, just like we cannot condense your life into a book, and have the reader know everything about you. However, the Scripture that we DO use is important in helping us understand parts of God's nature and purpose. We need to use them that way!

Too often recently, we see people using the Scriptures as a weapon — beating each other with Scriptures because they don't "fit" one particular interpretation. We're using a tool, designed by God to "edify" (improve, build-up and encourage) the world, to beat people into a state of rebellion and anger. Instead, Scriptures need to be used to help us choose to grow into God's image of us: a global, loving, healing, supporting family for one another, and for His purposes.

God himself is involved in the creation of Scripture. Sometimes it is through telling the story, as in the Old Testament, where God shared with us the Creation story through Moses; or through records of God's encounter with people and prophets; or through the inspired letters and writings of the apostles. God has provided each writer with "inspiration": divine guidance about the message that the people need to hear. The author, in response to God's inspiration, then struggled to put God's perfect message into the limited languages that we use in this world.

Tony Chavala-Smith of Graceland University has said, "Some approaches to evangelism are rooted in questionable, as well as offensive, theology: the God of some Christians seems more the enemy of human well-being than the source of it."

Fortunately, we know through the Scriptures, and daily encounters with God's Holy Spirit, that God is NOT the enemy of man! Rather, God is a caring, loving parent, who desires only the best for us, His children. The Holy Spirit calls us into a more God-focused life: as individuals, families, churches and nations. God's ultimate goal is to help US understand the power of one line in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on Earth, as it is done in Heaven." (Matthew 6:10)

We often say these familiar words mechanically — but stop and realize what Jesus taught us to pray for: God's kingdom to come among us on the Earth! Heaven on Earth, where all of creation is fulfilling the purposes of God. Wow!

When we encounter the Scriptures in a POSITIVE way, as a tool for building relationships and each other, then we are truly working toward this kingdom of God on Earth.

Your friends and neighbors, local members of the worldwide Community of Christ, have committed our lives to proclaiming Jesus Christ as the living Son of God. We work together in His name, promoting communities where we understand the fact that:

- Every life is important to God – yours included;
- Every person has gifts from God, to find, develop and use to benefit others;
- All people are invited to build a relationship with God, in this life;
- God WANTS to be found by each person;
- Only through community can we truly learn to live together in a Christ-centered life.

Our goal is to be engaged in the lives of those seeking to find and follow Jesus, so that His spiritual gifts of Joy, Hope, Love and Peace can be experienced by all who seek them. If you want to know Jesus better, or to be introduced for the first time, we invite you to journey with us. Working together for His purposes, we support each other in our ongoing relationships, life experiences, and in service to our communities and world.

Bryant is pastor of the Bloomington congregation, Community of Christ. Contact him at brad.bryant@hp.com

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