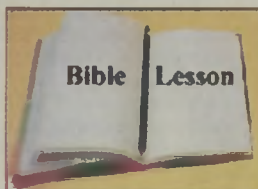


5B

RELIGION

Life 1B



What does it mean to be a champion Christian?

Timothy 2:14-18

Paul reminded Timothy about Hymenaeus and Philetus, who had led some people astray teaching that the Second Coming already had occurred. He warned that there were other assaults coming, which Paul could only speculate about.

He also warned Timothy about those who would be disobedient and deny the faith, about others who would quarrel over phraseology and semantics, and about those who engage in pointless arguments. Paul had seen many challenges against his own ministry and knew that Timothy would face the same and more.

Paul told Timothy that it was going to be essential for him to develop the kind of character that could meet and overcome any challenge. He would have to study hard so he would know the word of God thoroughly. A champion Christian knows God's word well and is able to draw upon the principles therein to meet challenges, much like Jesus did in the wilderness.

Champion Christians, Paul said, are prepared to do good works, are righteous, are strong in faith, love and peace, which are gifts from God, and live their lives with pure hearts that are dedicated completely to serving God. Champion Christians are holy and set apart.

God cares about the kind of people we are, and He desires for us to seek him with out whole hearts. While He does not wish suffering upon any person, He never said that following Him would be easy. Living in a fallen world under the dominion of Satan, we find ourselves facing all kinds of adversity. That is why champion Christians must trust God to strengthen them so they can overcome those challenges.

• Can you think of a time when your character was tested?

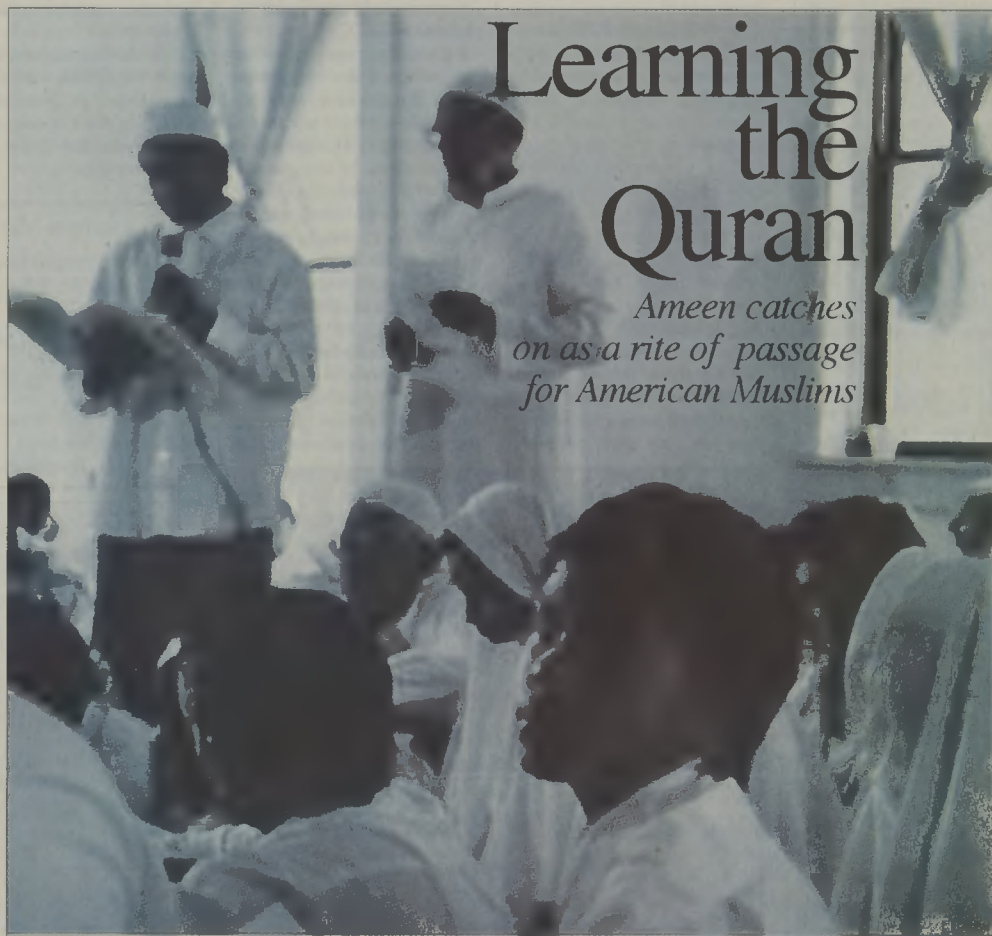
• List qualities you think a sports champion must have. How do those relate to being a champion Christian?

II. Why should we desire to be champion Christians? (2 Timothy 2:19-21)

As Paul was instructing Timothy about developing the character necessary to take care of the churches in Ephesus in face of Satan's attacks, he gave Timothy a few reasons why it was in Timothy's best interest to seek the character of a champion.

By developing a strong character, Timothy would make himself useful to God. As the wood and clay vessel he was when God first saved

Please see TIMOTHY/6B



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NISKAYUNA, N.Y.—Taha Ahmed was all of 5 years old when he stood in front of a Muslim congregation and read from the Quran in Arabic.

It wasn't so hard, he whispers now, curled up between his parents on the living room couch at their home near Albany. After all, he was there to celebrate the fact he'd read the holy book completely.

Now, having just turned 7, he's busy memorizing it.

In the world of religion, there are certain milestones. Young Roman Catholics have confirmation and, along with some young Protestants, first Communion. Now a growing Muslim population in America is

importing a rite of passage called Ameen.

The cultural practice is a mostly south, southeast and central Asian one, familiar to perhaps a third of Muslims in the United States.

It has two parts. The first Ameen, or "Amen," is held when a child finishes reading the Quran, roughly the length of the New Testament, for the first time in Arabic. The child reads the holy book aloud, sounding it out without necessarily understanding the words.

The second, and more rare, Ameen comes when someone finishes memorizing it, a task that can take a full-time student as long as three years.

"It's like a bar mitzvah for Jewish

children," says Eide Alawani, interfaith outreach coordinator for the Michigan-based Islamic Center of America, the largest mosque in the United States. "It's an excellent idea."

America is home to as many as 6 million Muslims. U.S.-born blacks and South Asian immigrants each make up about one-third of the community, with the rest from the Mideast, Africa, parts of Europe and elsewhere, according to the Mosque in America study released in 2001 by the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

Muslims in the United States say it's important to hold on to tradition.

Please see RECITING/6B

Drive on for Pentecostal memorial

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES—A group of civic and religious leaders are trying to build support for a long-stalled memorial honoring a black preacher who a century ago launched a multiracial mission that grew into the worldwide Pentecostal movement.

The project in the Little

Tokyo area of Los Angeles has been bogged down for nearly 10 years in part because the Japanese American Community and Cultural Center has refused to allow a mural on a wall it owns on the Azusa Street site where the Rev. William J. Seymour's church stood in the early 1900s.

Hoping to capitalize on February's Black History Month, memorial supporters held a conference Friday at Los Angeles City Hall to gather support.

Seymour "stands shoulder to shoulder with such leaders of African descent as Nelson Mandela, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X," said Les Hamasaki, an

urban planner who serves on the Azusa Street Memorial Committee.

Seymour was a son of slaves whose around-the-clock religious revivals drew thousands to the Azusa Street Mission and made him a revered figure.

Proponents argued the "Azusa Street SpiritWalk" Please see MEMORIAL/7B

Convention leader embraces infamy

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

FORT WORTH, Texas —The sign hanging on the Rev. Michael Bell's office door shows where he began his journey. His new post demonstrates how far he has traveled.

"Colored Only," reads the wooden memento from Fort Worth's segregationist past, and it greets Bell every day at the Greater St. Stephen First Baptist Church.

"All of us are always caught between the past and new beginnings, between basically what we once were and what we are not yet," said Bell, who's led his church in a poor area of Fort Worth for more than 20 years. "Your yesterdays influence who you are and keep your feet on the

ground."

Bell recently began serving as president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, becoming the first black person to lead the overwhelmingly white, 2.5-million member denomination.

His election comes at a time when the moderate state convention has become increasingly distant from the more conservative Nashville, Tenn.-based Southern Baptist Convention.

"He's capable of being a bridge-builder, and he's capable of being confrontational," said Rabbi Ralph Mecklenburger, who has known Bell for many years. "The issue is his mind is what he sees as the just solution in a

Please see LEADER/7B

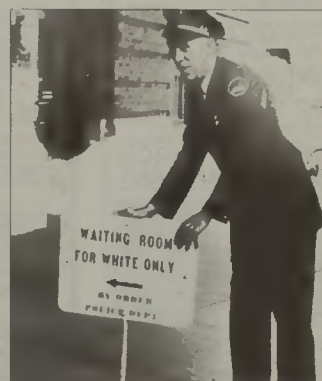


PHOTO:NYPOST.COM

White Waiting Room Only sign from the Jim Crow era.



Praise & worship goes urban

Various Artists

Praise Life - Beyond 1.0
Antonio Neal, producer
EMI Gospel



EMI Gospel Records is capitalizing on the appeal of praise & worship music.

Though the genre hasn't been around a long time but it's already evolving to appeal to younger church by offering a hip hop and urban flavored sampler of new, established and future writers, producers and singers.

"Praise Life - Beyond 1.0" is 10-songs deep of songs aimed at youth ministries. There will be a few of the older faithful that will enjoy this recording as well. This takes the genre to a better place. It's not quite as repetitive and it's no more secular sounding than a lot of the gospel being played on urban stations these days.

New artist Antonio Neal produced and co-wrote all but two of the offerings. "Here I Am To Worship" isn't one of his compositions but it's a great song no less. Nirva Dorsaint puts an elegantly moving spin on the song. Her light, but earthy vocals are near perfection. "Heart Of Worship" - another standard of the genre - is handled nicely by Shanea Askew.

Neal may have his ear to secular radio because their are traces of Diddy, Nelly and the Neptunes throughout this recording. The lyrics are undeniably Christ-centered, however. Shonlock's "Lift Him Up" would play in a youth church service or a club comfortably. The same can be said for Damonsta's "Glory 2 U," which owes as much to Bad Boy productions as it does being overtly religious.

"Great Jehovah," "So Into You" and "Steppin'" by Soul, Jason Eskridge & M.O.C. and Neal respectively, are pure new and ol' skool r&b, sounding more Motown than much of what that once great label has produced lately.

This sampler is the perfect way to introduce yourself to these wonderful new artists and songs. You may not use it for church, but it's certain-

Ratings

Classic	★★★★★
Excellent	★★★★★
Good	★★★★
Fair	★★★
Why?	★★
No stars - A mess	★

CHURCH NEWS

The deadline to add announcements to the calendar is noon on Fridays. Fax to (704) 342-2160 or e-mail cheris.hodges@thecharlottepost.com.

Ongoing

Grace Bible College will host winter classes at Grace Baptist Church on 1185 Little Rock Road in Newton through March 13th. These classes maybe taken for credit. For more information contact (828) 464-7055.

The Millions More Movement-Charlotte, Inc will move to its new location at Little Rock AME Zion Church, 401 N. McDowell St. The

group will meet the second and fourth Monday nights of the month for six months. For more information, call (704) 333-1690.

February 11

Temple of Deliverance International Fellowship, 5521 Canton Drive, Suite 104 in Monroe, will host a singles gathering at 2 p.m.

• Plaza Baptist Church, 3321 The Plaza, will sponsor a Valentine's Banquet from 6-9 p.m. A catered meal will be provided and the cost is \$25 per couple and \$12.50 per individual. Free childcare will be provided by the Plaza Youth. To reserve a table, call the church at (704) 334-

3913 by Feb. 8.

February 12

All For One Youth Choir will resume practices at 3:30 p.m. at Western Avenue Baptist Church, 1206 Museum Road, Statesville. New members will be accepted through Feb. 19.

February 20

Grace Baptist Church, 1185 Little Road in Newton, will host its 27th annual King James Bible Jubilee through Thursday. Services begin nightly at 7 p.m. and morning services begin at 9 a.m. For more information, call (828) 464-7055.

• The 2006 Mecklenburg County Missionary Union Annual Institute will host study classes through Thursday at Greater Fellowship Baptist Church, 2300 McClintock Road. Devotion services will begin at 6:45 p.m. nightly and classes begin at 7 p.m. For more information, call (704) 376-2853.

March 12

The Inspiration Choir of China Grove will celebrate their fourth anniversary at 3 p.m. The church is located at 9401 Old Pineville Road.