

RELIGION

You can't hide from God

Sunday

School Lesson

Devotional Reading: 1 Peter 5:6-11

Lesson Scripture: Psalm 139

A father involved his son in a scheme to steal some apples from a neighbor. As they approached the orchard, the father told the boy to look north and east to see if anyone was watching. The father looked to the south and west. "Do you see anyone, Son?" asked the father. "No nobody in my direction," he replied.

"I don't see anyone in my direction, so let's sneak in."

"But, Dad," said the boy, "you didn't look in every direction."

"Sure we did," came the father's response. "You looked to the north and east and I looked to the south and west."

"But Dad, you forgot to look up."

The father stood silent for a moment and finally replied, "You're right son. Let's go home."

The son remembered what at all times we may forget. We may be clever enough to hide our deeds from our fellowman, but we cannot hide from God.

God knows our activities. He knows when we sit down for a meal or a rest, and when we rise up to engage in some other activity. He knows our thoughts even before we think them. After all, He created our brains and designed the way our minds function.

He watches over us when we travel, and no path is too obscure for Him to find. If we follow the path of righteousness, He certainly knows that; but just as certainly He knows when we choose the path of wickedness. The psalmist sums it up by saying, Thou...art acquainted with all my ways.

God's omniscience, His power to know everything is illustrated in another way. He knows every word the psalmist speaks. It is as if God has a vast cosmic recorder. No conversation, no matter how private, escapes his notice. He hears persons plotting crimes or other misdeeds. He hears offhanded remarks that often more accurately reveal our real character than our guarded statements. He even hears us when we talk to ourselves.

But there is a positive side. God also hears the things we say or the word of encouragement we give to others. He hears us when we share the gospel with those who so desperately need it. He know when we lift our voices in praise to Him.

God is not some far off king who only occasionally looks in on his subjects. Jehovah is involved with every aspect of our being. God does not play favorites: every human being receives his attention regardless of rank. He is actively involved in giving direction to our lives. In times past He has directly revealed himself to men, as when he called Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, or when he called Isaiah to become a prophet to his people. In most situations, however, God leads us providentially. Often we are not aware of His leading till long after the event. But even a belated knowledge of His presence is reassuring.

All knowing all seeing God, our Heavenly Father, we come to You with thanks that we have a God who is concerned about us as individuals. Search our hearts, O Lord, and cleanse us from any wicked thought or deed, and lead us in the way everlasting. In the name of Your Son Jesus we pray. Amen.

We can not get away from God, though we can ignore Him.

Balance spirituality versus religion

By Tammie Tolbert
THE CHARLOTTE POST

In theory, spirituality and religion should never be at odds. Yet around the globe, cultures seek to unite the two, hoping to create a religion that satisfies both the need for individual spiritual fulfillment and communion with others.

Different cultures recognize some form of religion and spirituality, but even in the practice of both, there is a curiosity as to their relation to one another.

Reverends Steve Carlton and Johnny Thompson have differing views about spirituality and religion, but they both agree that there is a difference between the two.

Carlton, pastor of Second Calvary Baptist Church said there is a distinct difference, "based on the fact that people

look at spirituality in so many ways."

"For people who live in the Western Hemisphere, the word spirit would represent the Holy Spirit, which in the religious circle is considered to be the intelligent part of man," he said.

"Also in the Western Hemisphere, for those who believe in Christianity, the word Holy Spirit has Biblical connotation and represents that a person has a relationship with Jesus, the deity of Christianity."

Carlton says everybody has a spirit.

"The spirit is the intelligent material and immortal part of man. Some would even say the spirit is the human soul after departing from the body. Again, spirit to many simply means "breath of life"

and that is based on the fact that when God breathed into man he became a living soul."

In terms of religion, Carlton, who has been an ordained minister for 13 years, said "everybody believes that the breath of life came from somebody, so the

religious part comes in as to who or what you believe in terms of where the breath came from.

Carlton believes that religion is the practice of a system of rules, conduct, and laws or actions based upon the recognition or belief and reverence for a superhuman power of supreme authority. "Christianity is a religion itself and Jesus was a religious man himself because he practiced Judaism, a religion," Carlton

said.

"If you go to the Eastern part of the world, like India, they also believe in a superhuman power or a supreme authority," he said. "Some Easterners practice Buddhism while other people like the Muslims practice Islam."

Carlton says technically these people are religious because they believe in and practice a system of rules.

"One other difference between the two is that spirituality deals with the intelligence of man," he said. "We know there is something in man that keeps him alive and we have to attribute that to a supreme being."

The belief of who gave us that breath is based upon where you were born, how you were raised, and what, if any, religion you

practiced.

"There are only three religions in the world that are recognized as monolithic religions and they are Christianity, Islam and Judaism. All of these practices of religion believe in one God," Carlton said. "In my belief, all

three of these religions are right, but the danger in saying that all of these religions are right brings up the question of "Who has the right to say whether one practice of religion is right or wrong or better than another?"

"I don't think that it is so much of if there is a better religion or whether you call him God, Allah, or Yahweh, it is how you live and how you treat people that He is concerned about," Carlton said. "All of us are born into sin,

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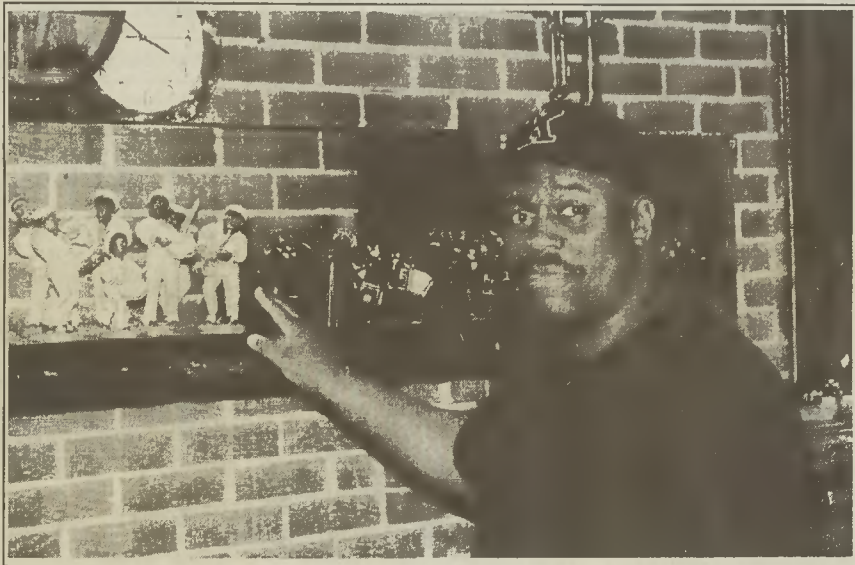


Carlton



Walker

Kee headlines gospel extravaganza



The recently-retired John P. Kee is one of America's leading gospel music talents. He will host his annual Music In Praise Convention July 28 in Charlotte.

PHOTO/CHARLES CLARKSON

Farrakhan defends Detroit Rep.

By Jennifer Loven
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

DETROIT - Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan urged thousands at an inner-city church Friday night to forgive U.S. Rep. Barbara-Rose Collins her mistakes and support her beleaguered re-election campaign with their money and votes.

"I have never known Barbara-Rose Collins to shrink from standing for principles that are in the best interests of our people," Farrakhan said to wild cheers.

Farrakhan capped his 1-hour, 40-minute speech in the New Bethel Missionary Baptist Church with a promise to Collins, D-Detroit, that he would mail a check for \$1,000 - the maximum an individual donor can give - to her re-election campaign the next day.

He then called on others in the audience of more than 3,000 - which included U.S. Rep. John Conyers, D-Detroit, state Rep. Ed Vaughn, D-Detroit, and other political and community leaders - to give what they could. Hundreds filled the aisles to bring checks and cash forward.

Farrakhan said Collins should not be blamed for her problems. Instead, he said, they are the fault of her constituents for not being aware of and grateful for Collins' many accomplishments and of a racist media out to bring down a powerful black leader.

"There isn't none of us in public life don't make mistakes," Farrakhan said. "If sister Barbara-Rose Collins has worked on our behalf and done a good job, then we ought to return her and encourage her to keep on doing good for us."

In addition to having the third-worst voting record in the U.S. House, Collins is being investigated by the Justice Department and House ethics committee after allegations she misused her office, campaign and scholarship funds.

Also, a House grievance board last year found that Collins fired an aide who is gay because she feared he had the virus that causes AIDS. In an unprecedented loss for a House member, the aide won back pay and reimbursement of legal fees.

Partly as a result of those problems, Collins faces six challengers from within her own party in next month's primary election as she seeks a fourth two-year term.

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By Tammie Tolbert
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Grammy Award nominated gospel recording artist John P. Kee is bringing the excitement of gospel music home.

Kee is bringing his "Victory In Praise" music and arts convention to Charlotte at the Adams Mark Hotel, July 28 - August 4.

Kee said this convention is to give the youth a chance to praise the Lord.

"We meet thousands of kids every weekend and its great to see them throwing up their hands, praising the Lord and having such a wonderful time," he said.

"This convention was designed so that people can understand that serving the Lord is more than a 30 or 45 minute experience," he said.

"At the convention, we can take our time and minister to people a little more without rushing."

Kee takes working with youth very seriously, "The people who are speakers and performers at this convention are people I can trust to deliver a positive message to the youth," he said.

"People can expect a lot from this convention because gospel artists like Yolanda Adams, Daryl Coley, Carlton Pearson, William Becton and the New Life community Choir are a part of the roster. I want people at the convention to see



Adams

that I and the people that I work with are focused on doing things at home."

Kee, who announced his retirement this year, believes the previous conventions and concerts have been successful. "People from other states like New Jersey, have really ignited and taken observation to some of the things that we are doing in Charlotte with our inner city youth," Kee said.

"Because of the music I create, my audience has been shifted from contemporary gospel one week to traditional gospel the next week, but overall my music is geared towards trying to grab every-



Coley

Simpson welcomed with open arms

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES - Members of a prominent African-American congregation showered O.J. Simpson with attention and applause when he showed up for services.

The Brooklins African Methodist Episcopal Church also made Simpson an honorary member in a presentation following Sunday's regular services.

"I'm not trying to restore an image. I'm not trying to get back what wealth that I lost," Simpson told the congregation. "I'm trying to do one thing. I'm trying to go to heaven."

Members of the congregation

Flock thinks 'he's wonderful'

gave Simpson several standing ovations and agreed with Pastor T. Larry Kirkland's decision to honor Simpson.

"I think he's wonderful," parishioner Irma Reed said. "I think it's about time some of the leaders in this city spoke out, and Rev. Kirkland has always been pro-O.J."

After the presentation, Simpson shook hands and spoke with churchgoers. He told reporters he goes to church often without fanfare. Simpson said he went to a West Covina, Calif. church this past week that had a "majority Caucasian"

congregation.

"I got the same response that I got here, very positive," he said, without elaborating what congregation it was.

In a statement, Kirkland said, "The Holy Spirit and all of God's children are welcome in our house of the Lord."

Before Sunday's event, congregation member Brad Pye Jr., who helped organize the ceremony, said the church wasn't worried about public reaction to Simpson's appearance.

"If they want to protest, they can protest," Pye said. "Kirkland was supportive of

O.J. during the trial, and O.J. just wanted to come and thank him for his support."

In the past, the church similarly honored former Simpson defense attorneys Johnnie Cochran and Carl Douglas.

Simpson was acquitted of the murders of his ex-wife, Nicole Brown Simpson, and her friend, Ronald Goldman, in October. He is being sued by the families of Nicole Simpson and relatives of Goldman.