

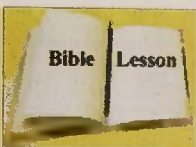
Religion

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2007

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Stepping is in the spotlight due to the success of the movie, "Stomp The Yard."



Likened to sheep

Today's lesson is one that repeats that Jesus (and the Bible) likens Christians to sheep. This is probably not a major concern unless you consider the fact that traditionally sheep are thought to be one of the dumbest animals alive. While they are rather highly dependent on human intervention for protection from predators, feeding, guidance, shearing, etc., it is amazing to learn that they are on the otherwise not so "dumb" after all.

It was interesting to learn that sheep also possess the following characteristics and behaviors: with other sheep they are very gregarious or sociable animals; they will follow one another anywhere considered safe; they willingly gravitate towards another sheep or other object that looks like them; due to instinct, they will maintain a slight distance between themselves and others that do not look like them; they naturally lack aggressive behavior; because of their dull teeth and heavy woolly bodies, they are nearly defenseless to predators like wolves and dogs; for the same reasons listed just previously, in water, they are sure to drown if their wool is saturated and becomes too heavy; they feel safe when in numbers; their tracks will never be found in a straight line because when they walk, they look with each eye behind them for predators; if turned over on their backs (cuddled) they are unable to right themselves without human help and will soon perish; they are easily frightened by loud noises like dog barks and fireworks; they have a wide angle of peripheral vision for detecting predators but cannot see immediately in front of their noses; they have good sense of smell and hearing; and finally, they have a high tolerance for pain.

While most of this is new and fascinating information to us, the fact remains that like sheep, Christians are open prey to the enemy without the protection, guidance, and overall spiritual shepherding of Jesus Christ. Although we have what we consider to be natural instincts for self-survival, we are no match for our spiritual predator without the intervention and salvation of Jesus. Thanks be to God that He gave believers a good Shepherd to provide us with our every need!

QUESTIONS

I. THE DOOR (John 10:1-5 and 7-10)

1. What was the metaphor Jesus used in teaching about His care for His own people? (John 10:1-3)

Jesus used the metaphor of a shepherd and his flock and the protective surroundings provided for them at the end of the day. A sheepfold (v. 1) was an enclosure, either round or square, with a high wall around it and sometimes a thorny vine

Please see JESUS/6B



"God, Can You Hear Me?" by Justine Simmons introduces children to prayer and teaches them how to have a relationship with God.

Author wants to bring children closer to God through interaction

By Cheris F. Hodges
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Children have questions about God. A new book by Justine Simmons seeks to answer them.

Simmons, the wife of the Rev. Run (Joseph Simmons) from the rap group Run-DMC, said their son inspired her to write the book, "God, Can You Hear Me?"

"One day my son Daniel, who is normally cheerful and outgoing, seemed burdened and sad," she writes. "Clearly something was weighing heavily on his heart, but when his father Joey and I went to talk to him, he didn't want to discuss the problem with us." That night, Simmons said her son wrote a letter to God and the next morning, he was feeling better.

Simmons said she and her husband taught their children to turn to God when they have problems.

"Though we do the best we can, sometimes our answers aren't good enough to calm our children's fear or steer them in the right direction," she said.

According to the "Companions in Christ" website, children are spiritual beings with an innate connection with God through their vulnerability and openness. "In our zeal to teach children about the Bible and the doctrines of the church, we have sometimes neglected nurturing their innate spiritual capacities."

Kidzplace.org is a website dedicated to helping churches create age appropriate ways for children to share their faith.

In order to create an effective children's ministry, the site suggests:

- Developing a purpose for the children's ministry.
- Evaluation of your current ministry to children. Assess each age group separately to determine if the current programs and activities fit within the purpose statement developed.
- Setting a goal for each age group within the ministry.
- Developing a strategy to achieve each goal set.

Black pastors go digital to make internet community a safer place

By Cheris F. Hodges
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African American pastors from across the country are on a "tech mission."

Hoping to change the way online social communities such as Myspace.com are run, faith leaders have banded together to form TechMission. As a part of the safe families program, the pastors are demanding for more accountability from people who run those sites.

"Urban communities are always the first to be preyed upon," said Bill Mooney-McCoy, a pastor from Dorchester, Mass., and director of

the SafeFamilies program. "When social networking sites create an online community without adequate concern with safety, they are the online equivalent of slum lords."

Last week, Chicago area police charged two women with pimping girls as young as 14 through the social networking site Craiglist.org. TechMission's SafeFamilies is the largest online safety program focused particularly urban communities. TechMission represents over 100 member organizations that are black churches/ministries and over 400 organizations in low income

communities through its association AC4. Last year, TechMission challenged cybersquatters that used hijacked domain names of civil rights leaders to target the urban community.

"Slumlords make a profit while fostering unsafe communities that become a haven for drugs, gangs and perpetrators; online slumlords create online communities that are havens for perpetrators," said Mooney-McCoy.

TechMission's goal is to empower people with tools and training to

Please see AFRICAN/8B

Exclusive health plan OK by judge

Christian-only program doesn't violate Ky. law

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOUISVILLE, Ky.—The Kentucky Department of Insurance has asked a judge to reconsider his decision to allow a Christian-only health care plan to continue operating in the state.

Other states recognize Medi-Share as insurance and subject it to stricter regulations, attorneys for the Insurance Department argued in a motion filed Friday in Franklin Circuit Court.

Franklin Circuit Judge Thomas Wingate ruled on Jan. 18 that the Medi-Share program isn't insurance and therefore doesn't violate the state's insurance laws.

The Medi-Share program serves nearly 20,000 churchgoers nationally by accepting contributions from participants. The program is based on the biblical belief that Christians should take care of one another's needs.

The program excludes non-Christians because, organizers say, their lifestyles can result in unnecessary medical care. Participants can't smoke, use illegal drugs or abuse alcohol. They're also not allowed to enroll if they have pre-existing conditions like heart disease, diabetes or cancer.

Medi-Share, based in Melbourne, Fla., publishes a disclaimer that says it doesn't guarantee the payment of medical bills and that it should never be considered a substitute for an insurance policy. The program has about 300 participants in Kentucky.

The Medi-Share program excludes non-Christians because, organizers say, their lifestyles can result in unnecessary medical care.

CHURCH NEWS

The deadline for announcements is noon on Fridays. Fax to (704) 342-2160 or e-mail your announcement to cheris.hodges@thecharlottepost.com. Please put "church news" in the subject line.

Ongoing

We Empower Women For Life At Women of The Harvest Bible Study Wednesdays at 6 p.m. at 6636 Suite L Hickory Grove Business Park.

Steele Creek AME Zion Church, 1500

Shopton Road, will have noon day Bible study from 12-1 p.m.

Join Scouting at Steele Creek AME Zion Church, 1500 Shopton Road, Charlotte, NC 28217. Boy Scout and Girl Scout troop meetings are held each Wednesday night at 6:30 p.m. Call 704-523-6552 to register or to obtain additional information.

Grace Bible College, 1185 Little Road in Newton, will hold its winter bible classes through February 12 beginning at 6:50 p.m.

For more information, call (828) 464-7055.

New Life Outreach is seeking donations for its residential training center in Concord. The program's services are provided at no cost and helps men with addiction problems. The residence is located at 2216 Kannapolis Highway. The home is in need of appliances, cooking utensils, linens, china, flatware, clothing and cash donations. Donations can be dropped off at Olive Branch Furniture, 2603 S. Cannon Blvd. For more information

call (704) 701-8783.

Restoration Apostolic Church of Jesus Christ has moved to 220 East Peterson St., off South Tryon Street. The Church's phone number is (704) 523-1441.

February 3

The New Bethlehem FBH Church of God, located at 421 E. 18th St. will host its 32nd annual Red and White Love Feast. The event begins at 4 p.m. For more information, call

Please see TICKETS/7B