

“Journeys and Destinations – Provoking Truth”  
Pastor Wally Contreras  
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“As we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination and brought her owners much gain by fortune-telling. She followed Paul and us, crying out, “These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation.” And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, “I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.” And it came out that very hour. But when her owners saw that their hope of gain was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the rulers. And when they had brought them to the magistrates, they said, “These men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.” The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.” (Acts 16:6-24)

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So, Paul and the gang are in Philippi, a Roman city, where there was no synagogue and they went “to the place of prayer”. When I travel for business or when on vacation, do I routinely seek out a “place of prayer” on Sunday mornings when I find myself away from home? If so, why so? If not, why not?

If I attend church services in-person and the service gets cancelled due to weather (or COVID) or the livestream isn't working properly for online viewing, do I treat it as a “snow day” and just do something else I enjoy doing like I did when I was a kid and school got cancelled or do I seek some way to still be able to worship Him on the Sabbath and why?

In Deuteronomy 18:9-10, God said that “When you come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not learn to follow the abominable practices of those nations” such as “...anyone who practices divination or tells fortunes or interprets omens, or a sorcerer or a charmer or a medium or a necromancer or one who inquires of the dead”. God said in Leviticus 19:31 “Do not turn to mediums or necromancers; do not seek them out, and so make yourselves unclean by them: I am the LORD your God.” Webster's 1828 Dictionary defines “abominable” to mean something that is “very hateful; detestable; loathsome; whatever is odious to the mind or offensive to the senses; unclean”. Pastor Wally spoke of the “Python spirit” and how it is grounded in Greek mythology. I was taught that Greek mythology consists of stories about “gods” that only people of the past believed in. Is that true or are there actually demonic spirits behind other religions and ancient belief systems—including Greek mythology that lends credence to God's warnings regarding such “abominable practices” for the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Explain.

In what ways has the secular world tried to make such things as astrology, fortune telling or the ability to speak to one's "dearly departed" entertaining and not an "abominable practice"...that it's OK to "dabble" in such practices "just for fun"?

Paul invoked the name of Jesus Christ ("in the name of Jesus Christ") to cast the demon out of the slave girl. Do I have such authority at my disposal? If so, how so? If not, why not?

Chris Donato with Ligionier.com wrote: "In Jesus' name we pray, Amen." Is this just habit, a formal closing in public prayer? Or, is it a powerful declaration that we who pray in that name are in Him to whom that name belongs? ...Praying in His name...means that we are privileged to implore the Father boldly through the authority of His Son. In the name of Christ, our Messiah, we confess our sins and ask for forgiveness. In the name of the Savior, our Shepherd and Overseer, we give thanks to God for His great goodness and profound love. In the name of the Son of Man, we petition God for ourselves and others, entreating Him to show mercy." What do I truly mean when I ask for something "in the name of Jesus Christ"? Explain.

Pastor Wally said that "in the name of Jesus" is not a magic incantation to get what I want. Erwin Lutzer cautions that "In Matthew 24, Jesus reminded us that false christs would come and they would deceive many. Then you have 2 Thessalonians 2, where it says antichrist is going to do signs and wonders and miracles. Those three words are used for the signs, and the wonders, and the miracles of Jesus that Satan will duplicate as he purports to be able to do everything that Jesus was able to do...[I]n 2 Corinthians 11 Paul says that false teachers have another Jesus. They do miracles in the name of a different Jesus. So they use the name of Jesus, but it's not the Jesus of Nazereth; it's Jesus the cosmic Christ, or Jesus the Santa Claus, or the Jesus who wants to heal everybody—not the Jesus of the New Testament who forces us, or at least who challenges us to deal with sin...There you have it, Satan working through false teachers doing all kinds of things, even miracles. We need to be wary, we need discernment, and we always need to ask which Jesus is being proclaimed." How does Satan attempt to deceive people? (hint: See Pastor Wally's exhortations)

How can I discern "which Jesus is being proclaimed"?

For many days the slave girl was proclaiming "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to you the way of salvation." So, what's wrong with getting a little free publicity from her...why do I think that Paul became "annoyed" with her proclamations?

Once the owners realized that their cash-cow was gone, they drug Paul and Silas before the magistrates alleging that “[t]hese men are Jews, and they are disturbing our city. They advocate customs that are not lawful for us as Romans to accept or practice.” (The introduction of new gods was forbidden by the laws without first gaining Senate approval.) Have I ever tried to substitute a strong emotion/feeling (e.g. anger or jealousy) with a rational, legalistic argument in order to add some element of “legitimacy” to explain why I’ve acted (or reacted) the way I have to some situation? If so, how did that work out for me?

We see that in the midst of the hearing, “the crowd joined in attacking them [Paul and Silas]” which pretty much assured their “conviction” and resulted in Paul and Silas being stripped, flogged, and put in prison. Do I, at times, allow “the crowd” to influence me and/or my decisions? If so, how so? If not, why not?

How can I minimize the impact that a “crowd mentality” may have on me?

Citing Luke 2:34 (“And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed...””) Pastor Wally said that “Jesus is provocative.” Webster’s 1828 Dictionary defines “provocative” to mean “tending to awaken or incite appetite or passion”. Do I agree with his assessment? If so, in what way(s) is Jesus provocative? If not, why not?

Pastor Wally pointed out in 2 Corinthians 2:14-17: “But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.” Is it possible to control a “fragrance” or an “aroma”? If so, how so? If not, what does that say about me being called “an aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing”?

In what way(s) have I been spreading “the fragrance of the knowledge of him” to my “Who’s Your One” in the last couple of weeks?