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Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

Yes, I Am Passionate!

Roelf L. Ruffner

“Are you passionate about your child’s spiritual formation?” This was the opening sentence from an announcement for the “Children’s Spirituality Summit” hosted by Lipscomb University’s Institute for Christian Spirituality (ICS) June 27-29, 2018, in Nashville, Tennessee. Naturally as a Christian and a parent I was suspect of this conference because it was hosted by the super-liberal Lipscomb University (LU) in Nashville, Tennessee, and the Emerging Church Movement wannabes at ICS. LU, its College of Bible and the ICS left the Bible a long while back with their embrace of virtually every false doctrine and false teacher that comes along. **“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us”** (1 John 2:19).

What caught my eye was the continued ecumenical approach of LU. This Summit was cited as “a Christ-centered and cross-denominational organization of scholars” who “represent a broad range of Christian faith traditions.” Translated into English, “We fellowship everybody and anybody as long as they are not faithful members of the Lord’s church.” Of the list of “scholarly” speakers there was a Baptist, Methodist, Seventh Day Adventist, Anglican, Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Christian Reformed Church and an evangelical. I doubt if any of these “scholars” could answer from the Bible a simple question, “What must I do to be saved?” Would they say, “faith alone” or “baptism (sprinkling) alone”? This is one of the most important questions a child can ask. The answer has eternal consequences for a child’s “spiritual formation.” I doubt if ICS questioned them about their beliefs or “faith traditions” (What an overused phrase, Mat. 15:9). They, along with LU, fall into the religious con-

fusion that passes in our society for “Christian.”

I also noticed some of the topics to be discussed in the summit’s workshops:

- “Reimagine children’s church: Inviting young children to worship through spiritual practice.”
- “Spiritual disciplines with children.”

You may have heard of the unscriptural division of the worship assembly (Heb. 10:25) practiced by some congregations and many denominations known as “children’s church.” But what I noticed was the phrase “spiritual practice.” For the Emerging Church crowd this may mean chanting and vain repetition in prayer (Mat. 6:7). They draw heavily from Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox Church and even New Age use of mysticism and chanting.

Notice another workshop on “Spiritual disciplines with children.” Again, for these folks it means meditation or “centered prayer.” This is where you imagine what Jesus looked like or one of the parables and meditate on this image. But what did Jesus look like according to the Bible?

Another disturbing presentation was entitled “God is Saying Good Things: Young Children Listening to God’s Voice.” The following description of this presentation disturbed me:

This practice is about listening to God and the ‘good things’ He has to say to His Children. This exercise of ‘listening’ specifically gives young children an opportunity to practice recognizing the voice of God through impressions, pictures, and the still small voice in their hearts; to express the good things He is saying to those around them through words or pictures;

(Continued on Page 4)

IN THIS ISSUE.....

| | |
|---|---|
| YES, I AM PASSIONATE—ROELF RUFFNER..... | 1 |
| EDITORIAL—DAVID P. BROWN..... | 2 |
| PREACHING UNDERSTANDABLY—LEE MOSES..... | 4 |

| | |
|---|---|
| GOD LED US TO HOLD A DRUNKEN ASSEMBLY—SERIOUSLY!—MIKE DEMORY..... | 5 |
| WHAT ABOUT “NARROW” PREACHERS?..... | 6 |
| CHURCH DIRECTORY..... | 8 |

Contending FOR THE Faith™

David P. Brown, Editor and Publisher
dpbcftf@gmail.com

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Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
August 3, 1917-October 10, 2001

Editorial...

IN PERILS OF FALSE BRETHREN

Have you ever done all you know to do to help brethren and/or family members live as the Bible teaches? If you are a Christian, you have. Have you attempted to befriend them in every right way—as the Bible defines the right? Have you prayed for them, dealt kindly with them, attempted to teach (including reproof, rebuking, and exhorting) them to live as God’s Word teaches? At times, as the situation demanded, you have loved them enough to **“rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith”** (Tit. 1:13) and when the need arose, following Paul’s example, **“withstood them to the face”** for their sins as did the apostle Paul to Peter (Gal. 2:11ff). But, no matter what you did, or did not do, or how and when you did it, or what you said, or how you said it, etc., your efforts were rebuffed and rejected.

Further, some such folks are not content to simply ignore your efforts, giving you the “cold shoulder,” but they are openly hostile and aggressive toward you because you have sought to bring them to repentance. Indeed, they have the rebellious malicious spirit characterizing those who murdered Stephen because he told them the truth about themselves and their rejection of God (Acts 6:8-8:2). Thus, legally not being able to physically murder you, they have turned on you with verbal insults, slanderous charges, and to engage in character assassination. Their intention was and is to impugn your motives, explicitly declaring you to be dishonest and a hypocrite. These have become hardened in their sins and will do whatever they can to destroy you simply because you desire their repentance and want them to be in heaven. They hate you because you will tell them of their lost condition and what they must do to be saved. With false words they malign you with all sorts of vituperative terms and false accusations, slurring and slandering your motives and actions.

What is truly telling about them is this, when challenged to prove their accusations, they have a sudden attack of “lock jaw” and become as silent as the proverbial tomb. If you have experienced such treatment as the foregoing from some brethren/family members because you have attempted to aid them spiritually, then welcome to the world of Jesus Christ and how He was treated while on this earth.

In listing the “perils” he endured for the cause of Christ, one peril that must have hurt the apostle Paul more than some of the others were those perils into which he was plunged because of false brethren (2 Cor. 11:26). Christians have the scriptural right to expect their brothers and sisters in the Lord to be faithful to Jesus; to be teachable; to be studious; to be thankful; to be respectful; to respect and submit to proper authority; to repent of sins; to worship God acceptably; always laboring to teach alien sinners the gospel; to love their brethren; to be Godly husbands, wives, and parents; to be edifying and edified; to be prayerful; to be

liberal with their time, talents, and financial giving; being ready unto every good word and work as such is defined in the Bible. However, through the sacred volume and our own long experience as a gospel preacher, the foregoing is all too often not the case with some church members.

Although sadly, I have learned over the years (it did not take many) that some “church members” are members in the same way that many are members of denominational churches and other man-made religions; it is simply the church with which they are familiar and/or to which their family has been associated for a long time. Truth for truth’s sake is not their chief interest. Thus, Gospel truth is accepted only so long as some aspect of it does not run headlong into certain desires and actions in their and/or their family’s lives. This is the case because said desires and activities are their real focus in life and occupy their interest, time, and money no matter how trivial they are. Also, no matter how wicked morally and/or religiously these things are, from them they will not be turned.

The problems will begin with such brethren when anyone attempts to get them to see that at least some of their actions are sinful and, thus, spiritually detrimental to themselves, their families, the cause of Christ, and the church. Because some of these “brethren” are not really converted to Christ, or since their conversion they have returned to the ways of the world, or they are lukewarm, then it is the case that they are not going to be corrected by God’s Word, but they will attack the messenger who exposes and rebukes their sins. One’s tone of voice, volume level, facial expressions, gestures, and/or one’s overall demeanor is not going to make a difference to such characters when it comes to their receiving the truth they need to take to heart. This kind of “church/family member” is upset for one reason only—because you have brought to his/her attention that he/she is engaged in something that is sinful or is omitting something that God obligates one to do if heaven is to be their eternal home. It is at this point that faithful church members who seek the spiritual good of such church/family members must be ready for the perils that these worldly, conscience seared church/family members will inflict upon them.

When attacked by such evil characters, whether alien sinners, church, and/or family members, one must not compromise the truth. Neither ought the messenger of truth permit any emotional connections to the sinner to cause one to draw back from pressing the truth—sharply pressing it if necessary. Indeed, we should see such attacks as the apostle Paul did when he wrote, “**For a great door and effectual is opened unto me, and there are many adversaries**” (1 Cor. 16:9). Adversaries provide opportunities. Thus, let us advance with haste upon Satan’s servants. Whether they are in or out of the church, family members, or whomever they are, let us in full assurance of faith, knowing that if God be for us who can be against us, press the battle, for we are

more than conquerors through Jesus Christ our Lord (Heb. 10:22; Rom. 8:31, 37).

We must be willing to keep our emotional attachments under control with the truth and, if necessary, cease to have a thing in the world to do with those brethren/family in particular who attack us because we love them more than they love their own souls. We can and should always be ready to help them or anyone else upon their repentance as they reveal that they are willing to change and obey God. But, until they indicate their desire to cease their wicked ways, they must not be allowed by word or action to gnaw us as a dog does a bone.

Remember the grand ole anthem all of us have sung over the years—*Faith Is The Victory*.

Encamped along the hills of light,
Ye Christian soldiers, rise,
And press the battle ere the night
Shall veil the glowing skies.
Against the foe in vales below
Let all our strength be hurled;
Faith is the victory, we know,
That overcomes the world.

His banner over us is love,
Our sword the Word of God;
We tread the road the saints above
With shouts of triumph trod.
By faith, they like a whirlwind’s breath,
Swept on o’er every field;
The faith by which they conquered death
Is still our shining shield.

On every hand the foe we find
Drawn up in dread array;
Let tents of ease be left behind,
And onward to the fray.
Salvation’s helmet on each head,
With truth all girt about,
The earth shall tremble ’neath our tread,
And echo with our shout.

To him that overcomes the foe,
White raiment shall be giv’n;
Before the angels he shall know
His name confessed in heav’n.
Then onward from the hills of light,
Our hearts with love aflame,
We’ll vanquish all the hosts of night,
In Jesus’ conqu’ring name.

Refrain:

Faith is the victory!
Faith is the victory!
Oh, glorious victory,
That overcomes the world.

—David P. Brown, Editor

(Continued From Page 1)

and to receive encouragement from an adult who supports their journey of hearing God's voice. (www.childrenspirit.org as of June 28, 2018)

So now ICS is encouraging children to listen for a "still small voice." What's next, leading them in the un-biblical "sinner's prayer"? Faith does not come from some subjective exercise but from hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17), believing it and obeying it (Mat. 7:21; John 8:31-32).

As usual in ICS events the summit costs \$325 a pop. Our Lord never charged for any of his teachings. **"Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give"** (Mat. 10:8). But perhaps this cost alone kept away some of the naïve and the gullible.

I am passionate about the spiritual education of children.

They must not learn these mystical fallacies of false doctrine. Their minds must be taught the Truth from God's word that can save their souls (Pro. 22:6; 2 Tim. 3:15). Brother David Lipscomb for whom LU is named and brother N. B. Hardeman, co-founder and former president of F-HU, were also passionate about the spiritual education of youth. They would NEVER have allowed such a summit and would be weeping if they knew what was going on at LU. **"But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea"** (Mat. 18:6).

—2530 Moore Court
Columbia, TN 38401

PREACHING UNDERSTANDABLY

Lee Moses

A common prayer offered during worship services and Gospel meetings goes something like this: "May the preacher speak in a manner so that the hearers can understand." Needless to say, if a preacher preaches an incomprehensible sermon, it is far less productive than a sermon that is clear to all.

For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air (1 Cor. 14:8-9).

While acknowledging the importance of understandable preaching, one should be aware that there is both a godly manner and an ungodly manner of preaching understandably.

AN UNGODLY MANNER OF PREACHING UNDERSTANDABLY

Watered-Down Preaching. Preachers sometimes make use of illustrations, humor, and personal anecdotes to make their teachings clearer. Each of these is Biblical (Mat. 13:3-52; 1 Kin. 18:27; Acts 26:9-23). However, some "sermons" have become so watered down by illustrations, humor, and personal anecdotes that there is very little actual preaching in them. Sure, everyone might fully grasp the illustrations. They might laugh at the humor. They may enjoy the anecdotes. But, as one observant elderly lady once asked, "Where's the beef?!?" Where's the Scripture? (2 Tim. 3:15-4:2). Where's the doctrine? (2 Tim. 3:10; 4:2). Where's the call to godliness? (Acts 2:36-40; Tit. 2:15).

Shallow Preaching. One might simplify preaching by

refusing to examine the meaning of Biblical words, the context of a passage, or related passages. There are many churches whose congregates sit brain-numbed through every sermon, rarely hearing anything of any substance. How can a congregation **"grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"** with sermons that never add to their base of knowledge or cause them to see things in a new light? (2 Pet. 3:18). **"The things of God"** are **"deep things"** (1 Cor. 2:10). Shallow studies can hardly improve people's understanding of **"deep things."** New Testament Christianity was successfully restored in 19th century America in large part because preachers dug deeply in the Scriptures and eager listeners joined in mining the Scriptural mother lode. A prolonged diet of insipid, malnourished preaching, never challenging the hearer, will fail to provide spiritual satisfaction or growth to a congregation.

Less Than "Whole-Counsel" Preaching. Certain subjects tend to be more difficult than others. A sermon on humanism will likely require more mental focus from its hearers than a sermon on "Why We Should Love God." However, both subjects are essential. Humanism poses an existential threat to souls, and congregations must be warned against it **"lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices"** (2 Cor. 2:11). Christians must not remain ignorant on a crucial topic simply because it is difficult.

The desire for the spiritual preacher and hearer alike is understandable preaching. Indeed, this is the Lord's desire (cf. 1 Cor. 14:9, 15-20). However, in pursuit of "understandable" preaching, far too many have ended with ungodly preaching—watered-down preaching, shallow preaching,

and less than “whole counsel” preaching (cf. Acts 20:26-27). So how does one obtain godly yet understandable preaching?

A GODLY MANNER OF PREACHING UNDERSTANDABLY

Preaching Simply. Paul spoke of the need of speaking “words easy to be understood” (1 Cor. 14:9). A preacher’s mandate for precision may occasionally require him to utilize words above a sixth-grade reading level. He may need to use uncommon words to paint a properly vivid portrait. However, he should use such words sparingly. I recall one preacher proudly stating how he enjoyed finding and using obscure words that no one in the congregation understood. A preacher needs a good vocabulary, but that is primarily so he can choose the best words—and the best words are typically the simplest. As Jesus preached in the temple, “The common people heard him gladly” (Mark 12:37). Good, simple preaching will have the same effect on honest hearts today. Some preachers avoid stepping on toes at all costs. They seem more intent on heeding the admonition to “tiptoe through the tulips” than on heeding the Biblical admonition to “speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority” (Tit. 2:15). One supposed Gospel preacher appeared on a television talk show, and was asked the question, “What is going to happen to one who is not baptized?” The preacher’s answer was, “Well, to be honest, I don’t know.” This is a matter on which the Bible is very clear (cf. Mark 16:16) — why can this preacher not be as clear? How are hearers going to be brought to a proper understanding of any matter by a

preacher who never gets past beating around the bush? “Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech” (2 Cor. 3:12).

Preaching Logically. God designed the human brain to think logically. Christ and the apostles brought people to an understanding of spiritual matters by preaching logically. When Christ was confronted by the Sadducees and their denial of a future resurrection, He pointed out a logical impossibility in their hypothetical scenario (Mat. 22:23-30). He proceeded to prove the resurrection from an Old Testament passage that never mentions the resurrection, simply by drawing the necessary inferences implied by that passage (verses 31-32). Upon entering the synagogue at Thessalonica,

And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and... reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging [or ‘explaining and proving’], that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ (Acts 17:2-3).

Paul reasoned from the Old Testament Scriptures, and demonstrated certain facts about Jesus to be true through that reasoning process. Hearers today can be brought to an understanding of any spiritual truth by beginning with the Scriptures and drawing such conclusions from them as the evidence warrants

— 621 S Central High Rd
Rives, TN 38253

God Led Us to Hold a Drunken Assembly—Seriously?

Mike Demory

Some may be familiar with the denominational innovation known as “Theology on Tap” which was founded by two Catholic priests in 1981 in Arlington Heights, Illinois, as a method of reaching out to 20-30 year olds who gather in bars. They argue that it is “one way of bringing the faith to where people are.” Since 1981, denominations such as Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Anglican and Episcopalian have accepted this concept as acceptable evangelism. Not to be outdone, members of the Lord’s church are adding themselves to the list.

In 2013, the already erring congregation of Southern Hills, located in Abilene, Texas, decided it was time to delve deeper into ungodliness. On their site the following is stated:

Southern Hills is a church committed to the vision of being God’s Community Front Porch: Inviting, Including and Involving people in the life of Jesus. As we’ve grown into this vision, God has repeatedly led us to follow Jesus outside the

walls of our church building to serve and share life with people—many of whom are not connected to God or a church family.

They declare that God “led” them to form “Bar Church.” First and foremost, let it be known that God does not lead anyone into something that violates His will. Yet, that is exactly what the brethren at Southern Hills are accusing God of doing in order to justify their ungodly behavior.

Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts He any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed (Jam. 1:13-14).

Did Jesus go where sinners were gathered? Without a doubt (Mat. 2:15-17)! But the question is not whether Jesus reached out to sinners, it is whether He condoned sin. Some try rationalizing Bar Church with the marriage feast of Cana, but that dog just will not hunt (John 2:1-10). Jesus has been

unjustly accused of making the attendees more drunk than they already were (which is false on its face). The fact of the matter is even though the Greek word 'oinos' (wine) in the context is generic and can be used for either alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, the context of John 2 apprises the honest person that no alcohol was served at that feast.

There is a misconception among the “social drinking is scriptural” crowd, that one must be completely inebriated to be considered drunk, and that God only condemns drunkenness. While it is true that drunkenness is condemned in Scripture (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:21), the question to be asked is, when does God consider one to be ‘drunk?’ God calls His people to be “sober” (1 The. 5:8; 2 Tim. 4:5; 1 Pet. 1:13; 4:7; 5:8), meaning free from the influence of intoxicants. Drunkenness is a process starting with the very first drink. Therefore, imbibers are drunk (no longer sober) to the degree of what they consume. Not only does a person sin by consuming the first drink of alcohol, but so does anyone who supports it (Hab. 2:15).

The “Bar Church” logo says, “Grace/Acceptance/Jesus,” as if that is supposed to bestow credence to their profane attempt at spreading the good news. Like the cheap grace of denominationalism, Southern Hills has accepted the idea of an anything goes type of grace. As for acceptance, like Cowboy Church, Drive-In Church, and all other denominational gimmicks, Bar Church does not expect anything of its participants. They can continue as they have been and assume God is with their every step—NOT! You might ask, how do you know they even serve alcohol? If alcohol is not served, then why meet at the Memories Bar in Abilene? Are we not commanded to be children of light (Eph. 5:8, 17-18, 27)? God is not going to command one thing, and then al-

low the exact opposite. Paul, in Romans 12:1-2 says that to please God we are not to conform ourselves to this world, but are supposed to be transformed! Acceptance of souls the way they are does not teach them they need to change their way of life. There is no doubt that this milieu will not find Jesus pleased or in their midst. Jesus said the gospel is God’s power to save (Rom. 1:16), not gimmicks, entertainment, or acceptance of ungodly activities. When are we going to learn not to follow a multitude to do evil (Ex. 23:2)?

— 1020 Woodview Dr., Apt. 6
Pierre, South Dakota 57501



What About “Narrow” Preachers?

I do not know about you, but I get a little weary of hearing the word “narrow” used as a slur against preachers who adhere to the Bible in their preaching. Sure, they are “narrow,” but so are factory workers, surgeons, druggists and teachers.

The factory worker is so “narrow” that he uses micrometers and measures to the thousandth of an inch the bores and pistons of engines, electronic components, and balancing wheels in timepieces.

The surgeon is so “narrow” that he insists on ultra-technical laboratory analysis, meticulously sterilized instruments of special design. Why, he is so picky and narrow that he makes his assistants wear masks over their faces!

The druggist is so “narrow” that he just has to have a prescription before he will let you have certain drugs. He says he has to be narrow because government regulations are narrow, and he thinks it is for good!

As you think about it, it’s a blessing that somebody is narrow-minded. And however much we need to be “narrow” about vital material matters, we must be infinitely more careful and exact about spiritual laws. God will not be mocked.

—Author Unknown

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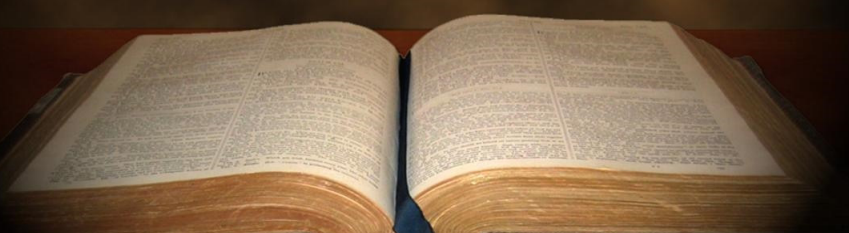
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Over the past half-century-plus, I have had the opportunity to write hundreds of articles and manuscripts. My late beloved wife, Lavonne, and our son, Andy, have written a considerable body of material as well. These documents treating various Bible and Bible-related subjects total several thousand pages.



Dub McClish



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Denver—Piedmont Church of Christ, 1602 S. Parker Rd. Ste. 109, Denver, CO 80231, Sunday: 9 a.m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. www.piedmontcoc.net, Lester Kamp, evangelist. (720) 989-8155.

-England-

Cambridgeshire—Cambridge City Church of Christ, meeting at The Manor Community College, Arbury Rd., Cambridge, CB4 2JF. Sun., Bible Study--10:30 a.m., Worship-- 11:30 a.m.; Tue. Bible Study--7:30 p.m. www.CambridgeCityCoC.org.uk. Contact: Inside the U.K.: Joan Moulton - 01223-210101; Postal/mailling Address - PO BOX 1, Ramsey Huntingdon, PE26 2YZ United Kingdom

-Florida-

Ocoee—Ocoee Church of Christ, 2 East Magnolia Street, Ocoee, FL 34761. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. Wed. 7:00 p.m. David Hartbarger, Evangelist, (407) 656-2516.

Pensacola—Bellview Church of Christ, 4850 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526, Sun. 9:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Michael Hatcher, evangelist, (850) 455-7595. <http://www.bellviewcoc.com/>

-Montana-

Helena—Mountain View Church of Christ, 1400 Joslyn Street, Helena, Mt. 59601, Sun.: 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Matt Bidmead (406) 461-9199.

-Oklahoma-

Porum—Church of Christ, 8 miles South of I-40 at Hwy 2, Warner exit. Sun. 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. Allen Lawson, evangelist, email: allenlawson@earth-comm.com.

-South Carolina-

Belvedere (Greater Augusta, Georgia Area)—Church of Christ, 535 Clearwater Road, Belvedere, SC 29841, www.belvederechurchofchrist.org; e-mail belvecoc@gmail.com, (803) 442-6388, Sun.: 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:00p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m.,

Texas

Denton area—Northpoint Church of Christ, 4224 N. I-35 (Greenway Plaza, just north of Cracker Barrel). Mailing address: 4224 N. I-35, Denton, TX 76207. E-mail: northpointcoc@hotmail.com. Website: www.northpointcoc.com. Sunday: 9:30, 10:30, 1:00; Wednesday 7:00. Contact: Dub McClish: (940) 218-2892; dubmclish@gmail.com.

Houston area—Spring Church of Christ, 1327 Spring Cypress, P.O. Box 39, Spring, TX 77383, (281) 353-2707. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m., David P. Brown, evangelist. Home of the Spring *Contending for the Faith* Lectures. www.churchesofchrist.com.

Huntsville—1380 Fish Hatchery Rd. Huntsville, TX 77320. Sun. 9 a. m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. (936) 438-8202.

Richwood—1600 Brazosport, Richwood, TX. Sun. 9:30; 10:30 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. (979) 265-4256.

San Antonio/Seguin Area—Nockenut Church of Christ, 2559 FM 1681, Stockdale, TX 78160, Sun. 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m., nktchurchofchrist.org