

Did Jesus Use Carnal Methods To Attract Crowds?

Many religious groups use a variety of carnal appeals to draw people to their assemblies. For instance, there are suppers and ice cream socials, ball games and entertainment events, etc. When asked to justify these activities they will commonly refer to the episodes where Jesus fed the multitudes. Some have said, 'If you first feed a man's body, then you'll have a chance to feed his soul.' Let's see if their reference to Jesus' activities will really support their practices.

There were two separate instances in which Jesus miraculously fed huge crowds of people with small quantities of food. One time there were 5000 men, plus women and children (Mt. 14:15-21; Mk. 6:30-44, Lk. 9:10-17; Jn. 6:1-14). On another occasion there were 4000 men, plus women and children (Mt. 15:32-38; Mk. 8:1-9).

In both instances, the people had followed Jesus to hear His marvelous teaching and to see His amazing miracles. There had never been a promise of food to

By Greg Gwin

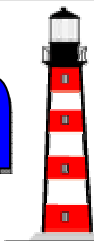
draw them. In fact, both episodes show the people following long distances and for a long time before they were offered food. For example, in **Matthew 15:32** we read "Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way." Do you see it? The people were not lured to follow by an offer of food. The food came AFTERWARDS, as an act of compassion. The people had NOT come in anticipation of being fed.

We have one reference where Jesus suspected that the people did, indeed, come with a desire of receiving food (**Jn. 6:22ff**). On that occasion He DID NOT feed them!

Those who would use the example of Jesus feeding the multitudes to justify their carnal practices today are simply wrong!



The Auburn Beacon



Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (**Matthew 5:16**)

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Overcoming Bitterness

By Lawrence Kelly



Thoughts to Ponder

looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled (**Hebrews 12:15**)

So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" So he cried out to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet (**Ex 15:22-25**).

God knows the hearts of His people better than they know their hearts themselves. Because our hearts are frequently not in the right place, He puts us in circumstances that reveal our shortcomings to us. When the new nation of Israel came out of Egypt their hearts were bitter and one of the first things God did for them was show them their fault. He did this by leading them for three days through a searing desert with no water only to bring them at last to an oasis with bitter water. God brought bitter people face to face with bitter water. This hard circumstance revealed the hearts of the people. After the people complained, God directed Moses to take a particular tree and cast it into the water which made the waters sweet.

First, bitterness differs from guilt in that guilt is how we feel when we realize we have wronged others, but bitterness is how we feel when we believe others have wronged us.

We tend to think that circumstances cause us to become bitter, but this is not the case. Bitterness is not something that happens to us, it is a characteristic we develop. This can be seen easy enough in the lives of two different people faced with similar circumstances. I've known people to go through a lot of trials and hardships and maintain a grateful and gracious spirit throughout. I've seen others face similar trials only to become angry and embittered souls. In both cases the hardship revealed the heart more than it formed the heart. If we are filled with sweetness and something jostles us, then sweetness spills out. If

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Classes This Week

Sunday PM College Devo and Singing at the Humphrey's, Julian Reid teaching!	Tuesday 8:00 PM Truth-seekers Campus Study in Room 2310 in Student Center	Tuesday 10:00 AM Ladies Class at Paula Davis' home
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March Birthdays			
Brad Marshall (Allie Hosey's Cousin)	Jesse Godwin (Troy's father and Mac's grandfather)	Frank Hand (Laura Humphrey's dad)	Louise Pack (Anna and Christopher's grandmother)
Gloria Detmer and Carol Dickerson (Toni Herd's Sisters)	Don Lanier (Father of Greg Lanier)	David Hartsell (Holly and Brad's Father)	Terri Sams (Erica's friend)
Terri Moore (Joey's aunt)	Audrey Barnett (Joanetta's sister-in-law)	Betty Bradford	Hazel Gilliland and Sherry Carroll (Toni's relatives)
Tom Davis (Walker Davis' Uncle)	Ermogene Laxson (Sara Lail's grandmother)	Danny Weldon (Rusty Weldon's brother)	William Smith (Ken Sullivan's brother)
Gerald White (Christopher, Anna and Wesley's Father)	Bernice Martin (Will Harris' great-grandmother)	Rebecca Davis (Chuck Hahn's Niece)	Eva Jean Cavender (Matt's grandmother)
John M. Rhodes and Bonnie Rhodes Kirkley (Toni Herd's family)	Joe Perkins (Scott Perkin's Dad)	Aubrey Meeks (Toni Herd's Nephew)	Virginia Box (Sarah Norman's grandmother)

News and Notes

- Lisa Carter, Luke's mom, continues with b-weekly chemo treatments in B'ham.
- Group meetings will be tonight.
- Brittany Bagent's great-grandmother, Dorothy Buck, passed away Tues night.
- Please continue to pray for Rebecca Davis, Chuck Hahn's niece, who is not doing well.
- Sarah Norman's grandmother, , is receiving therapy in a rehab center.
- Ken Sullivan's cardioversion was successful. It is great to have him back!
- Laura Humphrey's father, Frank Hand, is recovering from his surgery and improving.
- Mary Ann's grandfather, Howard, Vaughan, had successful hip surgery on Friday.
- Ryan Hasty is holding a meeting in Birmingham this week.
- Turner Stephens had a successful outpatient procedure on Monday in B'ham.

Elders

Walker Davis
(334) 703-0050

Larry Rouse
(334) 734-2133



SCHEDULE OF SERVICES Sunday

Bible Class9:30 AM
Worship10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Classes.....7:00 PM

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we are filled with bitterness and we get jostled then battery acid goes everywhere.

Sometimes when bitterness spills out, we still don't see it for what it is. So, it may be helpful to point out some of its identifying characteristics.

First, bitterness differs from guilt in that guilt is how we feel when we realize we have wronged others, but bitterness is how we feel when we believe others have wronged us. Israel believed God and Moses had done them wrong by leading them out into the wilderness to die of thirst. This means our bitter feelings can result from incorrect perceptions as well as real offenses. It also shows us that bitterness can be directed at God as well as man and frequently when we think it is all directed at man it is really directed at God. We need to recognize that God often leads us into very difficult circumstances, as He did with Israel, and that He does so for our good whether we can see the good in it or not.

Second, bitterness is personal. Great sins committed against humanity in Iraq or some other place might appall us but they do not make us bitter. However, small offenses, "he doesn't pick his socks up off the floor," make us bitter. It is the nearness to the enormity of the sin that makes us bitter. This is why bitterness is usually felt toward fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, husbands, wives, children, roommates, co-workers, business partners, neighbors and brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Third, bitterness is into details and it remembers everything. You have had thousands of conversations in your life, most of which you have forgotten. But this one took place years ago, and you remember every single word, his intonation the inflection of his voice. You know exactly what happened, which means, you are bitter. Why can we remember the details so vividly? Because repetition is the mother of learning. We Review, Review, Review. Then he said "...," so I said to him "...". These things stay with us because bitterness doesn't want to go away. It wants to hang around and dominate our thinking till it chokes the life out of us.

The only thing to be done with bitterness is to put it away (**Eph 4:31**). This is because bitterness festers over time. We may be able to suppress it

for a while, but sooner or latter an opportunity to bring up the past will arise and it will return with renewed vigor. Therefore, the Hebrew writer warns us to be aware lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble (**Heb 12:5**).

When once we recognize that bitterness has crept into our hearts, how can we go about getting rid of it? The first thing is to acknowledge that my bitterness is my sin. I own it. The other person's sin isn't the issue. We may not say, "I'll stop being bitter, when they say they're sorry." My repentance cannot be contingent upon the repentance of others.

I've known people who were so bitter, that when the other person apologized they still couldn't let it go. I've known people who remained bitter at people who were dead. The prisons are full of people who murdered the person at whom they were bitter and they are more bitter now than ever. A bitter person will stop being bitter, only when they confess it to God, repent of it and accept His pardon. When this happens it is often surprising how quickly the other person asks your forgiveness and, how easily you will be able to accept them.

The power to put away bitterness is just like the power to eliminate any other sin – it is a power that comes to us by the grace of God **Eph 4:32** And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. Here we are told to take what we have been given and extend it to others. We serve a God who doesn't ladle out forgiveness in a teaspoon, but pours it out in buckets. The true test of our standing in His grace is the measure of grace we extend to those who have wronged us. We don't ever want to be in the position of the unmerciful servant who having been forgiven an immense debt, couldn't forgive a trifle.

This means that if we get hit by a hard circumstance and bile begins to bubble up, the first thing we need to do is stop and thank God for revealing to us a reality that had previously escaped our notice. The next thing is to ask Him to cast a tree into our bitter water that will make it sweet. Of course, He has done just that. In the middle of history God placed a tree in the middle of the world and gave His Son to die on that tree in order to take away our bitterness and replace it with the sweetness of Christ who pled that His enemies might be pardoned.



You Can Tell!

By Dee Bowman

If he's truly a Christian, there will be signs of that fact in almost every area of his life. His every activity will be an under-lining of his faith, a manifestation of his devotion to God, a sure indication of his determination to let the light of his faith shine, no matter where he is.

Television has changed things. It used to be that you could recognize a person from the South by his dragging enunciation, or a person from the North by his clipped inflections. Television has made it so that we mostly sound alike. It is true, however, that we recognize people and their character because of what we see or observe about them. All persons have distinguishing characteristics. Some people are easily recognized by their voice, some by the way they dress, by their use of the language, by their physical characteristics. You can tell quite a lot about a person just by observation.

You can tell a lot about a man's religion by some of the things you observe when he's around. If he's truly a Christian, there will be signs of that fact in almost every area of his life. His every activity will be an under-lining of his faith, a manifestation of his devotion to God, a sure indication of his determination to let the light of his faith shine, no matter where he is. Fact is, it's easy to spot a Christian:

By his language. There is at once a noticeable difference between the language of a Christian and that of the worldly-minded person. The real Christian knows it to be sinful to take the name of the Lord in vain. He is not inclined to use terms and phrases intended to provoke toward lust or licentiousness. He knows that a person who professes to be a Christian and uses filthy language is showing the world that his religion really doesn't mean very much to him. It should be obvious to all concerned how foolish it is to "...bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God." And just how hypocritical it is when "out of the same mouth proceeds blessing and cursing." It is certainly so that "brethren, these things ought not to be." The true child of God will watch his language and "speak as the oracles of God" (**See James 3:9-10; 1 Peter 4:11**).

By his professions. The true Christian is in no way ashamed of His Lord nor of the gospel he follows. When asked about the course he follows and the hope he professes, he is always "ready to give an answer..." (**1 Peter 3:15**), for he has sanctified Christ as Lord in his heart. When he is asked by someone why

the church of Christ does what it does or teaches what it teaches, he is quick to point out that "the way of man is not in himself," that he is to "seek the old paths." He will defend the gospel, but with loving concern for the inquisitor. He will tell the whole truth and will in no way water down the message of the risen Savior. All this he does, considering himself, "let ye also be tempted," and remembering all the while that "love covers a multitude of sins" (**See Jeremiah 6:16; 10:23; Galatians 6:1**).

By the way he lives. The Christian's interests differ from those of his companions in the world. You won't find him continually parked in front of the computer screen, the iPhone or his television set day after day, night after night. He may be visiting the sick or teaching a class or helping someone in some other way. Now that is not to say all these things are considered by him to be wrong or sinful; it merely says he uses them in moderation. Facebook does not take the place of facing up to his responsibilities as a child of God. He is more interested in others than I-considerations. He is more interested in eternal life than e-mails. Bible study is part of who and what he is, for he knows his study is necessary to "be approved of God..." The good Christian attends funerals, helps elderly people with their needs, you may even see a tear in his eye when the little people sing Jesus Loves Me. This person will pay his bills, do his part even when it's inconvenient, stop at stop signs, obey the rules of the game, love his wife, teach his children, and "forsake not" the assemblies of the saints. He knows he's not perfect, but he will make periodic self-examinations in order that he might become better tomorrow than he was today. (**See Galatians 6:1-10**).

By where he's headed. He realizes full well that it's not what's here than is his goal, but what is there. He is constantly seeking "those things which are above," is working to present his body a living sacrifice while here, but is all the while realizing that his "citizenship is in heaven," from whence will come the Savior to change his "vile body, that it might be fashioned according to His glorious body..." (**See Colossians 3:1-3; Philippians 3:20-21**).

