

A PREZ RELEASE

from AGTS

(Monthly commentary from the President of the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary)

August 2002

The National Past Time?

I grew up believing the conventional wisdom that baseball was the national past time. Wrigley Field in Chicago is where I watched my favorite stars play a game that I loved as a young boy. I saw Mays, Musial and Aaron hit home runs. I saw Koufax, Spahn and Gibson mow down the batters. I listened to Jack Brickhouse scream, "Hey! Hey!" as Ernie Banks would flick his wrists and send another shot onto Waveland Avenue.

I still love to listen to baseball on the radio. That's the way I listened to my beloved Cubs late at night when I should have been sleeping. But these days, I don't live near a major league baseball park. I live where pro baseball is played by a group of young hopefuls and older past-their-prime ballplayers (including ex-major leaguers) called the Ozark Mountain Ducks. They play at Price Cutter Park where several thousand fans gather regularly to watch the national past time. Fans don't have to get a second mortgage to buy season tickets and at the 7th inning stretch you can actually win door prizes like a free oil change.

I'm not trying to "pitch" you some retro or nostalgic view of baseball. The reality is that baseball has inevitably mirrored the values and attitudes of American culture. The good times and bad times in baseball mirror American history. I think a lot of people view baseball as sort of boring these days. No amount of instant replay or other scoreboard antics seems to impress folks anymore. X-treme sports have added adrenaline to the equation and we can get easily hooked on one more level of daredevil defiance.

A nation waiting to be entertained is partial to what fills the void in the necessary consumption of feel-good experiences. Tivo and Replay TV allow us to control our dosage of feel-good and, with new technology, we can even erase the commercials. The nation is arguably addicted to voyeurism as entertainment when MTV's Osbournes can be taunted as normal family life. E'Channel's recent attempt at following the pained existence of Guess! model Anna Nicole Smith reaches new lows in human tragedy marketed as entertainment.

When entertainment is measured in high doses of adrenalin and intentional close-ups into human dysfunction cheered on by the bored masses, we reveal our human limitations. Entertainment is increasingly the currency that measures our level of contentment and personal satisfaction. Our consumer-oriented culture seems to be addicted to bigger and bigger doses of personally satisfying and adrenaline laced entertainments. (That's why baseball games on the radio don't even measure on the Richter scale of entertainment value.)

God's idea of contentment is not focused on self-serving experiences. The Bible is quite clear that rejoicing at some other person's pain or dysfunction is not what God desires for optimum living (I Corinthians 13:4-8). Hebrews 4:1-11 clearly describes the fact that a search for fulfillment through self-serving "entertainment" will lead to a never-ending pursuit of thrills that produce no enduring contentment. Only God's creative genius can elicit human experience that produces completeness in a contentment with life. The words of Jesus to the woman at the well in John 4 describe well the pursuit of contentment that ends in never ending thirst. Jesus said, drink of this water and you will thirst again (but) whoever drinks of the water I give will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

[Byron D. Klaus, President](#)
[Assemblies of God Theological Seminary](#)

Put on your calendar

November 18-19, 2002, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Earn graduate credit at the Leadership Roundtable: Ministry on the Edge: The Mission to Post-Christian America, with Brian McLaren. For information and registration visit our website: www.agts.edu or call 1-800-467-AGTS and ask for Randy Walls.

P.S.S. I would also highly recommend your consideration of the Leadership Conference being sponsored by Timberline Church in Ft. Collins, CO November 3-5, 2002. This dynamic congregation is launching this conference offering as a way of networking with the goal of providing inspiration and resources for high-impact leadership. I'll be attending. I hope to meet you there. Register at www.timberlinechurch.org