

A PREZ RELEASE from AGTS

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

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SHIPS PASSING IN THE NIGHT

Several recent episodes of misdirected communication have dominated media news of late. The implosion of the Enron Corporation has provided a wonderful opportunity for executive doublespeak, a media feeding frenzy and another reminder that 21st century economic realities are volatile beyond our wildest dreams.

Even the untrained eye observing present-day economics can see that the Enron fiasco smells of a huge cover-up: a worst case scenario of a corporate shell game. The PR attempts of Enron executives being coached by high-profile lawyers while appearing on Larry King Live simply ends up as material for Leno and Letterman

The recent poll released by USA Today on the Islamic world's view of 9-11 has created a response of shock in the western world. Despite what we may view as overwhelming evidence, the Islamic world remains unconvinced that Arabs were involved in the attacks on the World Trade Center. Kuwait, who was spared the full brunt of Iraqi violence by U.S. intervention, still has 36% of its population who believed the terrorist goals on 9-11 were justified.

The shock that the Islamic world perceives a western media conspiracy in reporting the events of September 11 should come as no shock at all. For a nation that effectively markets Coca-Cola and Calvin Klein jeans to every inch of this planet, we have settled for two tin cans and a string when it comes to making a case for the validity of the American way of life to the Islamic world.

The result of both the Enron fiasco and the USA Today report is that we again realize how hard it is to communicate to be understood. Speaking to be understood is not the forte of U.S. culture these days. Jerry Springer and his offspring offer a picture of a culture where everyone is an expert and the goal is to out-diss, out-yell or out-shock your *dialogue partner* (i.e. opponent). **Communicating to entertain now rules the day!**

Whether between husband-wife/parent-child, Palestinians and Israelis, Muslims and Hindus or Republicans and Democrats, our increased technological capabilities to communicate information with speed and sophistication has not increased our dexterity to communicate to be understood. We live in a world of miscommunication eternally

impacted by the fact we are alienated from God. **Our present state of communicative mis-direction is just the current version of the results of the human condition.**

I'm not going to suggest what we need is a revival of civility or common courtesy, though that might effectively neutralize the likes of Springer and that class of media neanderthals. We may rant and rave and try to shock God with our latest dysfunction or threaten to run off with our new love interest. God's response is simply that **"nothing can separate us from the love of God"** that has been expressed in Christ Jesus. (Rom.8:35-39) The truth is that the coming of Jesus Christ makes quite clear that God will go to considerable lengths to make Himself understood. (John 1:14) That simple principle should not be lost on those who say they follow Christ.

Allow me a modest proposal. How about Christians, who want to really demonstrate they truly wish to live under the Kingdom rule of Jesus Christ (in real time) go on a campaign just to follow one of Jesus' simple commandments? Jesus said in Matthew 5:37, "Let your yes be yes and your no be no!" Simply put; communicate with respect for the person you are talking to. Don't involve yourself in double-speak, neither innuendo nor rhetoric offered simply to impress, entertain or deceive. Just let yes mean yes and no mean no. Speak clearly because you value the person you are talking with and because that attitude creates the likelihood that your communication can avoid becoming tainted, turned into destructive arrows that divide and squandered on self-centered expressions that you will regret for a long time.

By the way, the best place to start this little suggested revolution might be with the people you love the most, yet sometimes receive your worst and more destructive communication. The second place to start this revolution would be in the church you attend. Then maybe that revolution could spread as we interact with people who do not yet know Christ. Maybe our practice with our loved ones and our church would have some impact and we might actually be heard and understood when we make appeals on our Lord's behalf. (II Cor. 5:20)

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