

## Truancy (Chronic Absenteeism)

Joe Slater

You aren't supposed to call it truancy anymore. It's "chronic absenteeism." Most schools don't have truant officers anymore. Now they're "Professional Student Advocates." The new title supposedly helps parents to be less defensive when approached about their children's non-attendance at classes. I feel better already! 😊

I read that in Connecticut a student who misses 18 or more days out of 180 (ten percent or more) is considered chronically absent. Hmmm. What if we used that kind of standard for church attendance?

A typical year has 52 Sundays. How many of us miss fewer than five of them? I shouldn't have to re-state the obvious, but to prevent any hurt feelings let me make it clear: **this has nothing to do with absences due to health or other legitimate reasons.**

Absence by choice has been problematic for as long as I can remember and has only grown worse post-pandemic. In far too many cases absenteeism far exceeds ten percent, and that's if we count only the Sunday morning assembly. Add the Sunday evening service and Bible classes (as we should) and the picture is even more dismal.

"Professional student advocates" are focusing less on enforcement and more on determining why children are skipping school and then remedying the issues. I can only imagine the reasons they're hearing: Johnny doesn't like his teacher; Susie doesn't enjoy Biology; the cafeteria doesn't serve what my children like. Truth be told, they probably don't understand the importance of education. Maybe their parents don't either.

Why are some Christians chronically absent? I've heard a freight car load of excuses with abundant finger-pointing and blaming. But the bottom line remains the same: failure (or refusal) to see the importance of it. What about you?

## You Know Better Than That!

Did your mother ever tell you, after you had done something wrong, "Now you know better than that!"? Not to take credit away from our moms for such a wise statement, but the Lord has told people the same thing for a very long time.

Even though the Lord had given Israel the command to have no other gods than Himself (Exodus 20:3-4), and they knew better, we read in Judges 2:11 that they did evil and served other gods. "*They did not cease from their own doings nor from their stubborn way*" (Judges 2:19).

In the parable of the Faithful Steward, Jesus told of one servant "*who knew his master's will.*" However, he did not prepare himself or do the master's will, even though he knew better; and for that he would be beaten severely (Luke 12:47).

Most Christians have a pretty good idea of what God wants them to do and not do. But, like the Apostle Paul, those things we should do we don't do; and the things we shouldn't do, we do, even though we know better (Romans 7:19). Jesus told Peter, "*The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak*" (Mark 14:38). It just goes to show that we can't do it alone, but we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13).

Even now, after making a mistake or bad judgment, I can fondly hear my mother saying, "Now you know better than that!" We, too, must listen to the Lord's warning, "*Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin*" (James 4:17).

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)

## God Spoke To You

Does God communicate with people today? The answer may surprise some people but it is an emphatic YES! It is not a matter of IF but HOW. Most Bible readers know humans can pray to God. Certainly this is part of the communication process but it is only one half. When God answer prayers there is no verbal message. Answered prayer is not the other half of the communication between God and man.

So, how does God communicate to man today? The writer of Hebrews recorded, "*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son*" (Hebrews 1:1-2). In the Old Testament period God used prophets to convey His message to mankind. The New Testament message was initially transmitted to man by Jesus teaching in his earthly ministry. We have the words of Christ recorded in the scriptures so God can "speak" His word to us.

There are several examples in the New Testament where the writer affirms that God speaks through His word. Consider Matthew 22:31-32, "*But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?'*" The words Jesus quoted are written in the Old Testament, yet He affirms God spoke through them to the Sadducees of the first century. Another example is found in Hebrews 12:5 – "*And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: 'My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him.'*" In both cases God is pictured as speaking to people through His written word. Remember that the next time you read the Bible.

--Douglas Hoff (via *Bulletin Gold*)