



# The Tri-Cities Edifier

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## *Unprofitable Questioning*

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Rewind the clock 27 years. I am in the first grade sitting in Mrs. Kaiser's classroom. Mrs. Kaiser arranged the seats this year in groups of about six, so the kids in each group were very close in proximity. I remember only one specific student besides myself in this group, and the reason for this is sad. The groups had periods of downtime as the teacher went from group to group ensuring all the students were staying on track to master the material. It was during one of these occasions that I decided to draw a picture for my teacher to be presented to her the next time she approached my group. Once finished, I was very proud and fond of the artwork, though the time spent on my masterpiece did not rationally correlate with my strong feelings, of this, I am sure. I remember Mrs. Kaiser approaching our group; it was time for me to present the gift. I raised my hand, and after being called on, I told Mrs. Kaiser about the gift only to be disappointed by an unfortunate "no thank you, why don't you keep it or give it to one of your group mates?" I can remember being upset, but she had presented me with a solution that would still allow me the satisfaction of bringing joy to someone else via my artistic efforts. I turn and ask Robert if he would like my drawing, and he quickly accepts with a smile. Evidently, I had not yet mastered the nuance between the deviant and thankful smile because ten seconds had not gone by before he started to rip my gift into shreds before throwing the pieces onto his desk. I was crushed, which was only natural.

Jeremiah 18:1-11: "...So I went down to the potter's house, and there he was, making something on the wheel. But the vessel that he was making of clay was spoiled in the hand of the potter; so he remade it into another vessel, as it pleased the potter to make. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, "Am I not able, house of Israel, to deal with you as this potter does?" declares the Lord. "Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, house of Israel. At one moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to uproot it, to tear it down, or to destroy it; if that nation against which I have spoken turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I planned to bring on it. Or at another moment I might speak concerning a nation or concerning a kingdom to build up or to plant it; if it does evil in My sight by not obeying My voice, then I will relent of the good with which I said that I would bless it. So now, speak to the men of Judah and against the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, 'This is what the Lord says: "Behold, I am forming a disaster against you and devising a plan against you. Now turn back, each of you from his evil way, and correct your ways and your deeds!"'"

We reviewed this passage recently in the auditorium Bible class, and when we did, the above memory from my youth resurfaced. With God's message from the book of Jeremiah, I think we can draw some applications from my unhappy story. It is obviously not a perfect parallel, but it proves to be similar enough I believe.

God illustrates in Jeremiah that since the Potter owns both the materials and the vision of the final product, the Potter can tear down or build up whatever structure he so chooses. God then piggy backs off this known objective truth to say something about himself that has eternal consequences. Since God created the heavens and the earth and the people who inhabit the earth, he rightfully had ownership to decide the fates of the peoples. Ownership was, and still is today, the key. Did Robert B. not own my artwork after I freely gave it to him? Did I not relinquish all rights over what was to be done with the gift once I handed it over to him? Of course, yet I was devastated because Robert. B. didn't deal with his possession in a way that aligned with my judgement or pleasure. God blessed foreign nations by raising them up to enact judgement on both the nations of Israel and Judah. Many were shocked, perplexed, angered, disappointed, discouraged, dejected, and crushed. Certainly, there were those who naturally questioned God since their world just came crashing down. Did they have a right to question? No. Why not? Because God was the authority, meaning he owned the people and the vision for their future, both immediate and long-term.

Thanks be to God that His long-term plan involved sacrificing his own son Jesus to save us from our sins. He could have looked upon us and determined we were too spoiled to save. We must remember that God promises followers of Jesus to save our soul rather than our physical body, cushy circumstances, free country, etc. If God chooses to take any of these away from us, or simply allows them to be removed, it is of no avail to question God. Though it will come naturally to question and to even be angry or discouraged for a time, we must not allow ourselves to question God's power or His love for us. We must ultimately remember that He is the Potter and we are the clay.

## What About Church Sponsored Activities For Young People?

by Keith Sharp

I do not question the fact that young people - and older folks, too - need some innocent recreation. When our children were young, I helped coach ball teams; worked as a scout leader; and took them fishing, hunting, camping, etc. My wife and I had parties, picnics, and outings for them. We did this, as parents, in meeting the needs of growing children (Lk. 2:52; Eph.6:4).

But parents cannot shove their parental responsibilities off on the church, nor can the church assume these obligations. We have individual, family obligations that are not the business of the local congregation (1 Tim.5:16).

A couple I once studied with complained that the church had nothing for their young people. I named the Bible classes that were available to them. Then they 'let the cat out of the bag' - there were no recreational activities provided by the church. When I asked what they were doing to provide recreation for their own children, they became angry.

We live in a selfish, "me first" society in which parents want to push their responsibilities to their children off on the government, the schools, and the church. It is time we refused to encourage this sinful behavior and taught parents to provide for their own (1 Tim. 5:8). At issue is the nature, mission and work of the church. It is clear that God has not designed, planned or authorized the local church to provide social and recreational activities.