

Nbr. 49 – February, 2023

A Contradiction?

Jesus warned against the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Matthew helpfully points out that our Lord was not concerned about physical yeast. Rather, Jesus used the term “leaven” figuratively in this case, referring to the *teaching* of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16:12).

However, Luke quotes Jesus directly as the Lord identified the leaven of the Pharisees, at least. He said it was their *hypocrisy* (Luke 12:1).

So, which is it – teaching or hypocrisy? Are the Gospels contradicting each other?

As is often the case with apparent biblical contradictions, this one requires just a little thought to sort out. The legalistic teaching of the Pharisees gave rise to hypocrisy. Consider, for example, Jesus’ parable contrasting the heartfelt confession of a tax collector with the hollow boasts of a Pharisee in the temple (Luke 18:9-14). If people are neither crushed upon hearing God’s Law nor turn outright rebellious against it, they will likely end up as proud hypocrites. (See Smalcald Articles, part III, article 2.)

So what? At least two things:

First, what one teaches and believes will affect the way one thinks and lives. So it was with the Pharisees, and the same goes for people today.

Second, the answer for hypocrisy lies in the full and free forgiveness of sins on account of Christ. When we are in Him by faith, we no longer need to play-act. We can be who we are: sinners, yet for His sake forgiven sinners.

See? **WOW!** The Good News of Jesus that we are privileged to bring to people enables them to come clean and to be clean in Christ.

A Dollar for Missions

CID’s 2022 convention asked congregations to begin gathering offerings of a dollar per member per week in January, 2023. These are to be monies given over and above usual offerings, tracked separately by congregations, and remitted to the District for defined mission projects. CID’s Board of Directors just established the 2023 project list:

1. \$30,000 - Immanuel, Springfield, half a year of funding for vicar working largely on a new church start in northwest Springfield
2. \$30,000 – St. John, Beardstown, half a year of funding for vicar doing outreach in Spanish
3. \$30,000 – Immanuel, Springfield, other half-year of funding for vicar working largely on a new church start in northwest Springfield
4. \$30,000 – St. John, Beardstown, other half-year of funding for vicar doing outreach in Spanish
5. \$35,000 – University, Champaign, for purchase of 12-passenger van
6. \$2,500 – Augment pay for Prison Ministry at Lincoln and Logan Correctional Centers
7. \$20,000 – Payments for pastors visiting four new prisons or county jails in 2024
8. \$200,000 – General support of budgeted CID mission efforts

Each project will be funded to the target dollar amount listed above before the District moves to the next project on the list.

Please lend a hand in reminding churches in your Circuit not only of the existence of the ongoing Dollar for Missions offering but also of its importance. Under the Lord’s blessing, A Dollar for Missions can enable mission support and expansion on an unprecedented scale in our District. For additional details on A Dollar for Missions, see <http://www.cidcms.org/ministry-a-dollar-for-missions.html>



Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers

Worth Considering:

2022 LCMS Youth Gathering Survey

For a long time now, LCMS triennial national youth gatherings have included a survey of youth and others who attend. The 2022 gathering proved to be no exception. Of the youth alone, 1,744 of them took the poll this latest time (almost 13% of youth gathering attendees). The results are statistically adequate, but of course they do not come from a random sample of LCMS youth. What we have here, instead, is a sample of those who attended the 2022 national youth gathering. Still, it proves quite revealing, especially when its results are compared with those of similar surveys from previous national youth gatherings.

Perhaps the most salient finding is that regular church attendance continued to be the greatest single factor that correlates with the respondents' alignment with the doctrinal position of the LCMS and their positive interactions with both their own churches and their families. Youth who attend church on a weekly basis are much more likely to say, "To be saved you must believe in Jesus Christ" than those who do not attend church so often (77% weekly vs. 56% non-weekly), for example, and less likely to say that "Many paths (faiths) lead to salvation" (10% weekly compared to 20% non-weekly).

However, please note that nearly a quarter of the youth respondents attending church each week did NOT say "To be saved you must believe in Jesus Christ." Perhaps they found some difficulty with the wording of the statement. Still, this result should be sobering for us. Overall, the 2022 survey indicated a greater degree of uncertainty among

our youth about a variety of spiritual and moral subjects than in the past.

Which topics do the youth want the church to talk about more? The top 5 responses were:

1. LGBTQ
2. Abortion
3. Mental Health Issues
4. Outreach/Apologetics
5. Sex/Dating

Reaching unbelievers/apologetics also appeared among the top five concerns of the various young adult volunteers surveyed at the youth gathering. Among them, it was number 3. For the adults who were surveyed there, it was the number 2 concern.

Evangelism and apologetics seem to be on the minds of people, also youth. Therefore, note:

- Do not "apologize" for evangelism and apologetics. The work you do as a C-WOW in encouraging this particular activity of the church remains as important as it ever was.
- CPH offers a free FaithCourse on Apologetics with Dr. Jan Lohmeyer. This course will be accessible exclusively on YouTube after Feb. 1. Only the video sessions will remain available, not the study guide materials that have until now also been carried by CPH on a website. Use this link for future access to the videos: <https://www.youtube.com/c/ConcordiaPublishing/playlists> (This point applies to all of CPH's FaithCourses, not only the Apologetics study.)
- I have apologetics presentations that I can make for you – three hours on each of these:
 - Christ and the Resurrection
 - Science Under the Microscope
 - 21st Century Religious Challenges

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