

Avoiding the Puffer Fish Syndrome

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Pastor Pete Kontra

Seminary was a good time for me to come to know who I am in Christ and what it is I believe. We were stretched in many ways, and that can be a good thing in really learning who you are.

But I know there were times in seminary that we students got a little excited in our theology discussions. There were times I saw us each talking and thinking as if we had the “golden truth”, that my knowledge finally broke through and became extra-enlightened, and if you didn't agree with me then somehow you were some lesser mortal.

I don't mean to come down too hard on us seminary students—after all, we were encouraged and needed to ponder those things. But it made it clear to me how easily we can experience the “puffer fish syndrome.”

You know the puffer fish? Of course, if you have seen the animated movie, “Finding Nemo,” you know what I am talking about. The puffer fish looks pretty normal in its calm state. Swimming around, a little on the pudgy side.

But when the puffer fish feels threatened or overly excited...Poof! It puffs way out like some spiky balloon-like creature. It's a protective device—pretending to be tougher and bigger than it really is.

Paul says “*Knowledge puffs up.*” We get in protective mode sometimes when we encounter someone with a different thought process or understanding from us. We feel threatened by it and...Poof! We puff out with all our knowledge so we don't get hurt or maybe have to admit that we are actually wrong.

I heard someone once say: We never stop being the children of God, we just stop acting like it at times.

But we are just the fish that have been caught by Jesus' net, swimming around together in our new world, needing each other for life and growth and strength.

It is the upside down kingdom that Jesus created and set us to live for. In Jesus' Kingdom: my first thought should be of my brother or sister. What is beneficial for him or her? What would help that person right now and build that person up?

The knowledge we have is to be used for building up the Body, just like any other gift God has given to us. It's the wonderful and unique truth of the church that makes it so beautiful—that we are one Body made up of diverse parts.

Sometimes we get in search of the “perfect church”, whatever that really means. Maybe it means we function perfectly as an organization. Maybe it means we never have disagreements. Maybe it means we meet all the needs of our community, or use the perfect worship format. Or perhaps it's that we have perfect theology and all the questions of faith worked out.

But the reality is that as long as the church is made up of living, breathing, thinking human beings, then it will always have a little messiness to it. Because every one of us in this place have a little messiness in ourselves. And that's okay.

In fact, that is what can make us strong, united together by God. Because in our messiness we have opportunity to exercise our freedom in Christ. And when we exercise, we become stronger. I'm trying to do more of that now with my physical body, as slow and painful as it is at times.

Exercise your freedom in Christ—waive your right to be right and offer to someone the gift of grace.

Yes, Jesus' familiar words can never become too familiar to us, that “Others will know we are His disciples by the love we have for one another.”

Not by all the great and fancy and exciting things we do. Not by having the best worship service in town. Not by having the most beautiful building. Not because we have all this completely figured out in a nice neat package.

No, Jesus said it will be by how we treat one another. When God weaves the notes of our lives into the beautiful music of His love for all to hear. Amen.

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Grains of Rice

Pastor Kent Rice

Pre

Strange title, I know: “Pre.”

What comes to mind when you hear that? PREmature? PREmeditated? PREmium? For me, stuck in my head for decades, is “Steve PREfontaine,” the gifted runner who narrowly missed the 1972 Olympics and then tragically died in a car accident before the 1976 Olympics. Everyone called him “Pre.”

But these days, it’s “PREmarital.” I am blessed to be officiating at a wedding this weekend: Blessed to be asked by the couple; blessed to get to know them better; blessed to serve the Lord in this way; and blessed to walk with them through PREmarital counseling.

I now understand why pastors’ spouses generally like it when pastors are doing premarital counseling—it forces the counselor to look at his own marriage and ask, “How am I doing at this stuff?”

Just as with a sermon, it’s so easy to get in the Word and express some thoughts to the congregation and then go home and do the exact opposite. Humbling, indeed. “Where the rubber meets the road,” as my father-in-law used to say. So as I tell this young couple what I understand to be God’s purposes for marriage, I get to go home and look in the mirror and think sometimes, “Well, I hope they do as I say, not as I do.”

Like today, for example. It’s Wednesday and yes, we’re in the middle of VBS, a wonderful but exhausting ministry. Yes, I am preparing for a wedding on Saturday, Youth Sunday the day after that, and Creation Festival two days after that. Yes, I am putting together a huge festival Sept 7 which is on my mind constantly.

But those are all good things! Things I love. And so in the midst of it all I am able to move quickly because I am not encumbered by Great Husband trophies.

So if you will excuse me, I am going to tell my wife that I love her—it’s 1:41 pm and I haven’t said it yet today. Time to follow my own great advice! In fact, I’m gonna run to her like “Pre” used to run (but without the trademark mustache).

Go Pre!

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. – Eph 5:25

Messages in July

July 7



Exercise Your Freedom: Waive Your Right to Be Right— *Joshua 1:6-11—Pastor Pete Kontra Preaching*

Sometimes we must use the freedom we have in Christ and waive our right to be right in order to help someone else grow in Christ. It's not always about what you know, but being known by God.

July 14



Keep Movin'—*Hebrews 6:1-3* *Pastor Kent Rice Preaching*

When a house is built, a foundation is first put into place. Does the contractor lay it a second time? No, the work must continue onward and upward or it will never get finished. Today's scripture reminds us that there is no time to continually lay a foundation--we must be "borne onwards to full maturity" in Christ.

July 21



Free to Be Me: Parts of One Body—*1 Corinthians 12:4-11* *Pastor Doug Hinton Preaching*

Many people wrestle with personal identity: i.e. Who am I? or What is my purpose? Too many people in our culture spend their lives trying to prove who they are or live up to a standard set by themselves or others. In writing to the Corinthian church, Paul reminds people that one's identity, though specific for that individual, can mutually feed and care for others in their church body. God made us with specific gifts to build others up in Christ; instead of *proving* who we are, we can *be* and *live* as God made us.

July 28



Become Like Little Children—*Matthew 18:1-6* *Pastor Geoff Davis*

Jesus teaches his disciples, "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." The Bible emphasizes that children are one of God's blessings. People love the voices, the curiosity and wonder, and the unconditional love and trust of little children. But then we're told to 'grow up' and 'act our age.' So what does Jesus mean when he says to 'become like little children?' What would it take for you and me to be able to follow this teaching? How would our lives be different if we did? How would this allow us to more powerfully share Christ with the world?

July Ministry Schedules

July 7
July 14
July 21
July 28

NURSERY—SS

Bob & Mary Ellen McEvoy
Carolyn Gingrich
Colette Root
Lois Killian

NURSERY—WORSHIP

Donna Schaidle, Betty Lull, Laura Myer, Morgan Rice
Marg Zurin, Emmy Schott, Dave Schott, Jaynelle Troxell
Sherry, Katie & Lauren Miller, Kensey Rice
Betty Cox, Lydia & Sarah Fisher, Hilary Hoffman



July 7
July 14
July 21
July 28

SOUND TECHNICIANS—8:00

Dick Caldwell
Rich & Jamie Bushong
Dave Schott
Matt Markey

SOUND TECHNICIANS—10:15

Blaine Garber & Jaynelle Troxell
Rich Bushong & Jaynelle Troxell
Rich & Jamie Bushong
Matt Markey & Rich Bushong



July 7
July 14
July 21
July 28

WORSHIP LEADERS—8:00

Kent Rice
Pete Cope
Cindy Harnish
Randy Ziegler

WORSHIP LEADERS—10:15

Janice Haldeman
Jayne Hutchison
TBA
TBA

SPECIAL MUSIC



July 7
July 14
July 21
July 28

CHOIRS/SPECIAL MUSIC

TBA
TBA
TBA
TBA

VIDEO TECHNICIANS—10:15

Doug Howard
Derek Witmer
Dave Bendit
Dave Bendit

July 7
July 14
July 21
July 28

DEACON GREETERS

Gladys Metzler
Paula Connelly
Pete Moore
Mary Ann Fisher

JNH GREETERS

Jerry & Jean Barger
Del & Mary Ann Kautz
Nicholas & Joanna Huacani
Richard & Carolyn Gingrich

OFFERING TABULATORS

Dave Dum, alternate, Rick Schaidle

SUNDAY SCHOOL SEC.

Doris Wright

Adult Summer Sunday School

The Summer Adult Sunday School Classes in July will continue the studies following the International Sunday School Lessons, focusing on the renewal of worship by the Israelites under the leadership of Ezra. Also there will be two special programs featuring (1) The Ministry of the Nigerian Church of the Brethren and (2) a report on this year's Annual Conference.

*The Special Programs will be presented in the sanctuary and the International Lessons will be in the Choir Room.

July's Theme: Worship in Jerusalem during the historical period of the priest Ezra.

- ✠ July 7th —* Special Program—Update on the Nigerian Church of the Brethren by Nigerian Pastors

- ✠ July 14th—International Lesson: Dedicating the Temple
 - Scripture: Ezra 6
 - Teacher: Ray Hutchison

- ✠ July 21st—International Lesson: Fasting and Praying
 - Scripture Ezra 7:1-8:23
 - Teacher: Dennis Bushong

- ✠ July 28th—* Special Program—Annual Conference Report—Delegates: Richard and Carolyn Gingrich

Youth News

Sr. High Missions Trip: July 28 - Aug 3 *Schoharie, New York Flood Recovery*

In August 2011, Hurricane Irene caused the worst flash flooding in memory along Schoharie Creek in the New York Catskills. In towns such as Schoharie and Prattsville, the creek rose far above flood stage in less than 12 hours, devastating the lives of residents, many of whom were uninsured and/or elderly.

In response to this disaster, Brethren Disaster Ministries began repairing homes in Prattsville in July 2012. When recovery in Prattsville was completed in May 2013, BDM moved the project's base to Schoharie. This town in particular was inundated as 8 feet of water rolled down Main Street, damaging or destroying over 270 of the 290 structures.

The youth and advisors are excited to help in this recovery effort! Thanks to Dave Dum for his help in coordinating with BDM.

Praying Attention



“Spiritual growth is impossible apart from the practice of prayer. Just as the key to quality relationships with other people is time spent in communication, so the key to a growing relationship with the personal God of heaven and earth is time invested in speaking to Him in prayer and listening to His voice in Scripture.”

--Ken Boa, *Introduction, Handbook to Prayer*,

HCOB Kids News



We are excited to report that VBS 2013 was a huge success! There were a total of 102 children registered. We had 47 adults helping on a regular basis. Our church family is such a huge blessing!

Hoping to get some family activities lined up for the summer. Keep your eyes open!

Please continue to pray for each of our children. The world is a tough place and growing up sure isn't easy. So thankful we have a loving God with us through each and every day.

ANE District News

The Harrisburg Senators are sponsoring ANE COB Night at the Ballgame. August 17—game at 7:00 PM—Metro Bank Park. \$1.50 from each ticket will be donated to the ANE district. For tickets, please contact Jessica Kauffman at 717-231-4444 ext 114 or jkauffman@senatorbaseball.com. Be sure to mention that you are with ANE.

Our Church Teams

This month we are highlighting the work of the Stewards of Finance Team

The Finance team continues to track and monitor giving versus the budget. Year-to-date giving is \$2k ahead of last year and (\$2k) behind 92% of budget. We typically spend 92% of our budget. Giving is typically higher in the 4th quarter and spending this year is tracking under 92% of budget, which has allowed us to cover expenses and meet our donation commitments. Giving this year to 21 other causes is \$14k versus \$21k last year through June. It is exciting to see so many members supportive of so many worthwhile causes. With many needs within our congregation, community, nation and worldwide, we encourage you to continue to personally budget for the Lord's work.

Ron Myer for the Finance Team—(717) 371-1900

HCOB Calendar

Keep up with what's happening at Hempfield COB by checking out our online calendar.

Please go to

<http://www.hempfieldcob.org/whatsup.html>

for a full calendar of events

**Toon of
The Month**



**Toon of
The Month**

Hempfield Church of the Brethren
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RETURN SERVICES REQUESTED

