

YOU CAN KNOW FOR SURE YOU ARE ON YOUR WAY TO HEAVEN.

REALIZE THAT GOD LOVES YOU.

The Bible says in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

UNDERSTAND EVERYONE IS A SINNER.

Romans 3:23 says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." No one is perfect. We have all broken God's commandments. This is called sin, and it separates us from God.

SIN HAS A PRICE THAT MUST BE PAID.

Romans 6:23 tells us, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord"

JESUS PAID THE PRICE FOR YOUR SIN.

Romans 5:8 says, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." If we choose to accept Christ, we do not have to pay the price of death and Hell for our sins because Jesus paid for our sins when He died on the Cross. Three days later He rose again!

FINALLY, PRAY. ASK JESUS TO BE YOUR SAVIOR, AND CLAIM HIS PROMISE OF ETERNAL LIFE.

Romans 10:9, 13 says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved... For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved..." This is a promise directly from God that if you will confess that you are a sinner and trust Him to be your Savior, He will save you and give you the gift of eternal life.

GRACE BAPTIST CHURCH

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The Earnest Contender



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The Earnest Contender

"...that ye should earnestly contend for the faith..." Jude 1:3

Facing the Storms of Life

Pastor Rick Bickelhaupt

Our current hurricane season has brought our country some very severe storms recently. First, Harvey in Texas, then Irma in the Caribbean and Florida—each bringing a deluge of rain and fierce winds. Many residents of those areas saw what was coming and made wise preparations, while others ignored the warnings and suffered great loss. Similarly, the same is true for every child of God. Whether it's physical or spiritual trials, we are all either coming out of a storm, in the middle of a storm, or heading into a storm; and we must choose to heed the biblical warnings or ignore them.

It is human nature to question God when the storms and trials of life arise. "Why did God allow this?" "If God knows all, and is all-powerful, why didn't He stop the storm?" The answers to these questions are found in God's Word. First— as for the "why's"—it's because we live in a sin-cursed world. All storms (spiritual and physical) are a part of God's curse upon this world. Because of sin, the Apostle Paul stated in Romans 8:22, "For we know that the whole

creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." What, then, are the purposes of these storms in our lives? First, God sends them as judgment (Ex. 9:23, I Sam. 7:10). Second, God sends them as a sign (I Sam. 12:18; Rev. 4:5, 16:18). Third, God sends them to change our direction (Jonah 1:4-7). Fourth, God sends them to encourage us (Matt. 14:24-27). Finally, God sends them to teach us (Acts 27:9-10).

Perhaps the biggest question though, is: "How can I make it safely through the storms of life?" In Acts, the Apostle Paul, en route to Rome, is caught in a terrible storm on the Mediterranean Sea (Acts 27). In this chapter, we find several things to remind us what the Christian should do when caught in life's storm.

First, seek Godly counsel. "And said unto them, Sirs, I perceive that this voyage will be with hurt and much damage, not only of the lading and ship but also of our lives. Nevertheless, the centurion believed the master and the owner of the ship, more than those things which were spoken by Paul (Acts 27:10-11)." Believers always get into trouble when they take advice from the wrong people. In my thirty-two years of pastoring, I can attest that marriages would have thrived, lives would have been blessed, souls would have been saved and even lives would have lengthened if they would have only listened to biblical counsel and the preaching of the Word of God. Instead, worldly counsel won them over and they suffered its destructive consequences as a result. Believer, when you find yourself in the midst of a storm, seek Godly counsel. Listen to your pastor as he directs you to the Word!

Next, beware of "soft breezes" that guide our lives (v. 13). Here in the Midwest United States, our soft southern breezes usually bring in storms, which is why

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The Christian School: Committing to Sacrifice

By Jeremy Bickelhaupt

There is seldom any “down time” for a Christian school administrator, especially the late winter months. This time of year is definitely an emotional roller coaster. With the end of the year quickly approaching, we look back on all the successes of the last ten months. Academic programs, fine arts competitions, educator’s conferences, legislative tasks, Christmas programs, Spirit Week, achievement testing, classroom activities, administrative accomplishments, student progress... the list could go on. We take joy in our teaching staff—a team of dedicated, hard-working, enthusiastic teachers who have sacrificed so much for such little monetary compensation. We review our students’ accomplishments academically and – I’d like to say—spiritually. There are so many positives... riding at the top of the hill.

All that said, what could possibly get us down? Well, the month of April—or as we administrators call—

commitment time. It’s the time of year when our current parents begin returning letters of intent for the next school year. Because of our feeble operating budget, we have to know early on how many students in which we should expect to invest. Will we need another teacher? Will we need additional staff to handle the number of students enrolled? Or, God forbid, will we be forced to let a teacher go because of lower enrollment? And for the record... There’s never enough quality staff on board in any Christian ministry, but in ministries like ours, decisions are often affected by financial outlooks. That is why we prepare. That is our due diligence.

Parents often look back at the sacrifice they have made each year and weigh out the positives and negatives of sending their students to our academy. Almost always, the positives outweigh the negatives and families recommit with no qualms. Most of those negatives have nothing to do with the quality of education or the spiritual stimulation offered. The most reasoning for leaving our school is financial hardships. For others, it’s

location— seeing many drive a good distance to bring in their children. For others, it may just be a difference of philosophy. All these reasons are mulled over by parents during the month we give them to pray and seek God’s wisdom about recommitting to another year.

That month of prayer is for them, but more importantly, *it is for the school.* I have no doubt that Christian education is essential for every believing, God-fearing family. But those parents who deem the sacrifice too big to send their students to our school and choose another path, I consider it a blessing to see them depart. I don’t say that cruelly. Yes, there is reason to be sad when families depart and say farewell to us. But God is in control and I am confident He will bless our school with the right families each and every year. We will minister to them as they come and we will pray for them as they go. And certainly, for those who leave... we will continue to love and help them as

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from “Storms” pg. 1

we must beware of them! They are deceptive. Notice the word *supposing* in verse 13. These gentle breezes deceived them into thinking everything was all right. Likewise, the gentle breezes of life allure us into a false sense of security instead of warning us of an approaching storm. When things seem to all be going extremely well, be careful not to allow apathy to creep into your life. Stay alert. Live for the Lord. Time is short, and Jesus is coming soon! Also, note that these gentle breezes have a tendency to direct our lives. If permitted, they will take us off course and misguide us. Paul’s crew was deceived, “...*supposing that they had obtained their purpose, loosing thence, they sailed close by Crete, (13b).*” The Bible says, “*loosing thence;*” in other words, they set off in a misguided direction because they had been deceived. So it is today, believers are deceived by the world, the flesh and the devil; and this deception changes the course of their lives. Beware, Christian, these soft, gentle breezes are precursors of a storm. Later in verse 14, we see a monster storm arise. “*But not long after there arose against it a tempestuous wind, called*

Euroclydon.” This storm brought destruction, delay, dark days and hopelessness. “*And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away (Acts 27:20.)*”

Third, we should lighten the ship – or eliminate the burdensome cargo– when faced with stormy waters (v. 18). What vices, habits or relationships are keeping you from fulfilling the will of God in your life? Identify them and toss them overboard! Whenever I am in a storm, the Lord reminds me of what is important and what is not! Let His Word and that aforementioned Godly counsel guide you in this area.

Fourth, if we want to survive the storm, remember that we are on a divine mission. Paul was on a mission sent by God to Rome (Acts 27:24). God also has a plan for us to spread the Gospel (Mark 16:15), and to be a witness for Jesus Christ (Acts 1:8). If you find yourself in the midst of a storm while fulfilling your God-given calling, then just patiently endure. God will see you through (Acts 27:23-25)! God’s will shall be accomplished!

Fifth, remember to feed and strengthen yourself during the storm (Acts 27:33-34). Ironically, most Christians do the exact opposite. Instead of drawing strength from the sincere milk of the Word during a storm, many will quit going to church, stop reading their Bible, and stop praying. Strengthen yourself to endure the storm by getting close to God! Do not withdraw from Him! He is your Life Preserver!

Finally, the Bible says that after Paul’s ship was battered and broken, all the men aboard escaped by clinging to broken pieces of the vessel (v. 44). Christian, if you are going through a storm, hang on! Continue living for the Lord and doing His will, and He will see you through! The voyage may not turn out the way *you* planned, but God knows best. *His* plan is better than ours! He does all things “*after the counsel of His own will (Eph. 1:11).*” When in a storm, we must remember what the Apostle Paul told the believers in Rome: “*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose (Rom. 8:28).*” □



September 30

Bowling

October 28

Harvest Fellowship/Corn Maze

November 11

“Set-a-Record” Night

Teen soul-winning will be each Wednesday at 4:45 p.m. Please contact Joe Henderson or follow our Facebook page (@Second/MileTeens) for more details regarding all teen activities.

The Earnest Contender

The Earnest Contender is printed quarterly as a ministry of Grace Baptist Church. All articles for The Earnest Contender should be submitted no later than the 20th of every odd month. All articles are subject to change and approval. All articles should be submitted to graceoh@juno.com in MS Word format. Donations are accepted to minimize printing and publishing costs. Please submit donations to Grace Baptist Church:

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A WORD ABOUT Revival

“Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?” ~ Ps. 85:6

“The only reason we don’t have revival is because we are willing to live without it.” ~ Leonard Ravenhill

“A Revival does two things. First, it returns the Church from her backsliding and second, it causes the conversion of men and women and it always includes the conviction of sin on the part of the church. What a spell the devil has cast over the Church today.”
~ Billy Sunday

“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.” ~ II Chron. 7:14

UPCOMING Events

OCTOBER 1-5

Revival Services
w/ The McBride Family
(Sun.) 10 & 11 a.m., 6 p.m.
(Mon.-Thurs.) 7 p.m.

OCTOBER 14-15

Oak Harbor Apple Festival

NOVEMBER 5

OCCA 1st Quarter
Parent-Teacher-Fellowship
6 p.m.

NOVEMBER 12

Matias Ladino
Missionary to Chile
11 a.m.

NOVEMBER 21

Annual Thanksgiving
Service & Dinner
6:30 p.m.

DECEMBER 8

OCCA Christmas Program
6 p.m.

DECEMBER 10

Eric Kreh
Missionary to the Netherlands
11 a.m.

DECEMBER 17

The Journey of Christmas
Christmas Cantata
6 p.m.

DECEMBER 24

Christmas Eve Services

DECEMBER 31

New Year's Eve Services

Ministry News

Apple Festival

This year, Grace Baptist Church and Ottawa County Christian Academy will host a vendor's tent at the Oak Harbor Apple Festival. The Festival will be held on Oct. 14-15. We will be passing out literature and gospel tracts. OCCA will also be selling cookies and will participate in Saturday's parade. Please make sure to come out and support our church and school!

Budget Process Meetings

The membership of GBC is invited to attend the annual budget process meetings. The first meeting will be held on Saturday, Nov. 25 at 7 p.m. This will be a time to formulate an operating budget for 2018. A second meeting to finalize the proposed budget will be Saturday, Dec. 9 at 7 p.m.

Thanksgiving Dinner

GBC will conduct its annual Thanksgiving Dinner & Service on Tuesday, Nov. 21 at 6 p.m. All members are encouraged to attend. Guests are welcome to attend as well. A short worship service will follow the meal. Those interested in bringing in a covered dish are encouraged to sign up on the bulletin board in the church foyer!

Christmas Cantata

The GBC choir and drama team will perform *The Journey of Christmas* on Sunday, Dec. 17 at 6 p.m. This cantata blends soul-stirring music and a dramatic performance that, together, tells the story of the nativity and the true meaning of Christmas. Please make plans to join us for this special service.

Academy News

Ottawa County Christian Academy set a new high for enrollment this year. A total

of 32 students in grades K-12 attend our academy! In fact, an expanded kindergarten program— one that will include K4 and K5— is in the works for next year! We take joy in how God has wonderfully provided the students as well as a great staff for our academy. Please be in prayer for OCCA throughout the year, and pray God will continue to bless this ministry.

Connect with us!

A vital component of sharing news and events at Grace Baptist Church comes via our website and social media accounts. Check them out! Our website (www.gracebaptistoakharbor.org) has an updated calendar of events and audio links to recent sermons. You can also like and follow our Facebook pages at @GBCohoh and @OCCAcrusaders and share the latest news! These are great tools to share what GBC is all about!

Get Plugged In!

We are always looking for people to help out in all our various ministries. The best way to grow spiritually is to become personally involved. Please see Pastor Bickelhaupt if you are willing to serve in these areas: Bus Ministry, Jail Ministry, Nursery/Toddlers, Visitation, Nursing Home, Choir, Sunday School, or The Young Lions' Club.



Sept. 20 – Crazy Hat Night Clubbers will receive 25 points for wearing crazy hats. Each participant will receive 25 bonus Pride Points!

Oct. 25 – Year-End Awards & Pizza Party - 7 p.m.

Club is for all children between 3-12 years old. The purpose of the club is to encourage spiritual growth on a personal level through Scripture Memorization and Character Building lessons.

Should We Raise Independent Children?

By Diana Johnson & Jeremy Bickelhaupt

“The devil did not tempt Adam and Eve to steal, to lie, to kill, or commit adultery; he tempted them to live *independent* of God.” ~ Dr. Bob Jones, Sr.

As Christian parents, we have the great task of raising our children to be *dependent* on God in all aspects of living. This dependence was really God's original intent when He created man. Unfortunately, most Christian parents have fallen for the humanistic ideology that our children must be able to live independently, relying on self to provide their every need.

This faulty ideology is dangerous for the Christian because it leads to death. James 1:14 says, *“But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth death.”* It's just like Eve succumbing to Satan's temptation to live *independently* from God (See Gen. 1:16-17). God gave man a simple command. Along came Satan, who *deceived* her to choose against obeying God's command. Satan promised she would attain a God-like status (Gen. 3:5) making her wise, which in essence would void her need of God, making her independent from Him. Ultimately, her

choice to seek this independence led to her spiritual and physical death.

Making our children understand our dependence on God is vital in the Christian life. We are commanded to put God first and to love him with all our hearts, minds and souls. If we tended our children the way we tend to God, where would they be? God gave us those children; He has entrusted us to raise them. Sadly though, the very thing we beg God for is often the very thing that we allow to come between ourselves and God... even after He so graciously answers our prayer.

Don't let Satan deceive you into thinking you can do things on your own, independent of God. He has provided all we need; He has given us victory over the power of sin. We must depend on Him to give us this victory. Romans 6:11-14 tells us that He has provided the armor we need to fight against our own deceitfulness. *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jer. 17:9)”* This deceitfulness wants to pull us away from God and give us the desires of our hearts.

And yet with all this provision (Eph. 6:13-17), we struggle. Paul reminds us in Romans 6:16, *“Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”* Our goal as parents should be to raise them to become *obedient* servants of God who are totally sold out and *dependent* on Him. This, my fellow parents and grandparents, is why it is so important that you teach your children to obey you. A parent's job is to raise their children to become servants of God, not rebels. You are not to have the goal of raising “independent” children, but children who are completely dependent on God for everything.

Parents, please realize the magnitude of your job... *your ministry*. Your children belong to God; He has chosen *you* to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This can be accomplished by evangelizing them. Raise them to understand sin and the love of God that provides their redemption. Implement God's Word as the standard in your home. Be consistent in your words and actions. Say what you mean, and mean what you say! God does! Doing this will lay a good foundation for how they view God. And then disciple them. Equip them to be useful to God (Gal. 6:4).

Once our view of mankind, ourselves, and our children match God's view, we should no longer be interested in raising happy children as the world equates happiness; but happy as the scripture equates it. Happiness will not come through living *independently* from God; rather, it will come as a result of depending on Him *for everything*. Understand the battle we are in every day. He has equipped us to win that battle. But we must depend on Him and the tools He has provided us to be victorious. It is so important that our children learn to depend on no one other than God himself. The question is, Parent, ‘Are you teaching your children to be dependent or independent?’



much as we are able. That said, I want to minister to families that God directs to us for that particular year. My prayer is and has been for the last few years, that God sends us the right families each year. And if that means we lose some, then I feel that is exactly the scenario God will bless. The Christian school will always see people come and go for whatever reason. God is in every decision and our Academy will have exactly who He wants there every year. We are always hopeful that His plan includes more and more students each year, but regardless of enrollment, we will pour ourselves into whomever God places with us.

When [parents] say, "We can't afford it," God hears, "My kids aren't worth that sacrifice." When [parents] say, "The drive is too long," God hears, "My kids aren't worth that sacrifice."

Truthfully though, as a Christian educator, I desire families who value what we do. Those who see the daily sacrifices our teachers and staff make on behalf of their students. Those who desire a staff that prays for and is truly concerned with each student's academic and spiritual growth. Yes, it saddens me, that even after all the prayers, financial aid, personal time and great effort that we invest into individual families each year, they choose to walk away—stating reasons that are illogical to me. When they say, "We can't afford it," God hears, "My kids aren't worth that sacrifice." When they say, "The drive is too long," God hears, "My kids aren't worth that sacrifice." You see... just about every reason the Christian uses to excuse himself from the obligation of Christian schooling comes down to the cost (not always money either). The sacrifice it takes to properly "train up a child in the way he should go" comes in various forms. The questions then, which begs to be asked is: "What kind of sacrifice are you willing to make to see your child receive an

education at the Christian school?" And... "Is it worth it?"

Before we answer those questions, let's venture into the realm of the "why's?" That is, reasons why families walk away from solid Christian schooling. So, here goes. Is there ever a good reason to leave a good Christian school? *Yes.*

First, (1) *those who desire to home school.* Home schooling done properly is the very best choice, even above the Christian school. But it is imperative that the home educator is capable and dedicated to seeing it done right. All too often we receive students who have come from failed

home-schooled settings where there is no structure or discipline in seeing out the completion of school work and managing student assignments. They are turned over to us for a year or two to repair the damage, and then they are ripped from our grasp to save a few dollars by resuming the home schooled method.

My wife and her siblings were products of home-schooling, but their mother did it right. They graduated with more education than I received in my public schooling. They were involved in home school groups and they had a structure in the home to make sure the children's school work was completed well each day. Were there shortcomings? Probably, as my mother-in-law would admit; but nonetheless, it was effective. So, if done effectively, I believe home education is the best option, as my wife and her family are living proof.

But in our time as Christian school educators, we have also seen our fair share of those students who have fallen victim to the home-school experiment. We have dealt with parents who were completely incapable of handling the task of home educating their kids. Often there were too many school-aged kids in

the home who were at different grade levels, and mom had to juggle the multi-grade instruction while also managing housework, and taking care of younger siblings not yet of school age. Not an impossible task, but daunting to say the least. There were others who offered their children no structure whatsoever. Mom would sleep in until ten or eleven in the morning and let the children make up their own schedule, just so long as the work got done. Often, quality of work was an afterthought... again, just so long as it was done. Another common trend we see comes when the parent may not be educated enough themselves to teach the more difficult subjects. They "wing it" resulting in a failure to properly translate the knowledge to the child. So from one end of the spectrum to the other, we have: Capable, dedicated families who succeed; families who make the attempt and drown in good intentions; and the families who do the bare minimum for the sake of getting by. If you choose the path of home schooling your children, be sure you fall into the first group. If you find home schooling easy, it's likely you are not doing it right.

Another acceptable scenario for parents to withdraw their students from a Christian school is (2) *when families relocate.* My hope is that parents would seek a similar learning environment when they leave us due to job relocation because consistency is

See "Sacrifice" pg. 5



a very important element in a child's education. I feel that when relocating and changing schools, only schools that are of like faith and practice are acceptable choices. If the place you've had to relocate to doesn't have said school, don't move there. Move to a place where there is a good, local church-based school. Maybe you have to travel to get to work or maybe you have to drive a long way to get your kids to a good Christian school, but either way... get your kids in that school! Make that sacrifice.

What is really troubling is when we see families move to areas just outside a comfortable driving distance from us and then enroll their kids into a public school. Many times it's because the public tax dollar is able to offer more in way of sports, clubs and more. Maybe the excuse is that they want more of a social atmosphere for their kids. We've heard it all. Then—without a doubt—parents justify it by saying, "They'll be fine. They had some great foundations at your school, and they'll use that to build upon in the public school." Unfortunately, that's not the

way it usually works. The liberal teaching philosophies in the public classroom are designed to *destroy* that Christian foundation, not build upon it. Of all the students who left our Academy during their high school years, only two stayed true to the faith we helped establish in them. So let's not kid ourselves. Your child probably isn't the exception. The comparison I always use is this: *when thrown into a bushel of rotten apples, the good apples don't preserve the rotten. They, too, succumb to the rottenness of the environment.*

Finally, (3) *having a difference of philosophy* is a reason to withdraw from the Christian school. Academically or in doctrine, *if the school is violating scripture or biblical principles*, then there is cause for exiting that institution. However, it would probably be wise to have a meeting with the headmaster or founding pastor and discuss the issues before jumping immediately to the side of being offended. Sit down with the school's authority and find out if the school is in the wrong or if you are in the wrong. Often times, **what we assume to be differences in philosophy is really just misunderstanding or miscommunication**

between parties. I know that our Academy takes great strides in seeing our academics and spiritual programs line up with scripture, but we are never too proud to hear out a parent who has taken up an issue with any doctrine we teach.

So.... Are there other good reasons to leave a solid, academically- and spiritually-sound Christian school? Perhaps... but they are few. It really all comes down to sacrifice. Having your children attend a Christian school is just that... a *sacrifice*. Remember, the whole concept of a sacrifice is that it is not easy or cheap and there is no such thing as commitment without sacrifice. **Those not willing to make the commitment are those who are not willing to make the necessary sacrifice.** Trust God, He will provide the appropriate strength and resources. He always does. The real question parents must ask is... "What kind of sacrifice am I willing to make for having my children involved in Christian schooling?" And then, "Are my kids worth that sacrifice?" I can't answer the first question for you, but as to the second query... My answer is, **"You better believe it!"**

CANS WITHOUT LABELS

By Pastor Bickelhaupt



Have you ever come across a can with no label? When I was a boy, I remember going to the grocery store with my mom. Once, as we entered, there was a grocery cart filled with canned goods, and on the cart, a sign that read: "10 cents each." My mom stopped and looked at them intently. Then she picked one of them up and began to put it in the cart. I asked her, "What's in it, Mom?" Her response was, "I don't know. I guess it will be a surprise."

When there's no label, it's had to tell what's inside! Years ago, when you drove by a church, you knew what the church was by the sign outside. If the church said "Lutheran" on the outside, you knew what you would get when you went to the service-- Lutheran doctrine. If you went to a Methodist church, a Pentecostal Church of God, a Baptist church, or some other kind of church, you knew what you were going to get by the "label" outside the building. Not all churches are the same! Some churches teach salvation through baptism (the doctrine of baptismal regeneration). Some teach that there are seven sacraments that must be kept as the means of eternal life. Others teach that salvation is based upon our good works. Some teach that you must speak in tongues in order to be saved. All of these teachings are false according to the Word of God!

The real problem is that churches are removing their "labels" and, consequently, no one knows what they really believe until the can is opened. I recently saw a church called "Intersection Church." The only thing one could tell from this label was that the "church" was located next to an intersection. What about the "The Drive Church," or "The Expectation Church?" What are they? What do they believe? Who knows? No label.

I am a Christian first and foremost. I have placed my personal faith and trust in the shed blood of Jesus Christ for the remission of my sins. I am a Christian by a new birth, but I am also a Baptist by choice. As Pastor of Grace Baptist Church, I refuse to take the name Baptist off of our church. It identifies us with what we believe and tells others who we are. Christian, beware of cans with no labels!