

Editor's mailbox

Dear Editor

I would like to take this opportunity to share a few thoughts about the media's handling of the recent court case concerning Lydia Playfoot, a 16 year old pupil at Millais School in Horsham, who was instructed to remove her 'chastity ring' in order to comply with the school's uniform policy. Lydia's lawyers claim the school breached her human rights by giving her an ultimatum to ditch the ring or face expulsion.

Lydia argues that, because the school permits Sikh and Muslim pupils to wear religious clothing and jewellery, she should be allowed to wear the ring as it reminds her of her solemn promise to Christ to abstain from sex until she is married. She is quoted on the BBC News website as saying: 'In the Bible it says you should remain sexually pure and I think this is a way I want to express my faith.'

Whilst some media outlets – such as the BBC – treated this case with sensitivity, others – especially national newspapers – had a field day branding Christians who promote sexual abstinence to teenagers as wild-eyed, right-wing, fundamentalists (in the most pejorative sense of the word). Some broadsheets soberly concluded that Lydia's supporters were out of touch with reality; were in denial about the best strategies for tackling sexually transmitted diseases (STDs); and clung to Victorian values.

Sadly, the media (collectively) missed the point! Firstly, they overlooked the fact that schools (and other workplaces) feel able to discriminate against Christians when they would not dare to single out adherents of another faith. Secondly, the media saw fit to find fault with a teenager, not because of her commendable counter-cultural stance with regard to sexual morality, but due to the fact that her stance flowed from a distinctive Christian worldview.

Joanne Seacroft

Subject: 'Arab-Islamic' slavery
ACT Now issue: Summer 2007
Item responded to: slavery letters and articles

Dear Editor

I note that when people write about enslaved Africans being transported to the Americas they refer to the 'transatlantic slave trade', but when they write about slaves trafficked to the Middle East it is an 'Arab-Islamic' trade. At the very least, this is editorially inconsistent. It may well be racist.

Jenny Murza

Subject: Corporal punishment
ACT Now issue: Summer 2007
Item responded to: John Steley's article

Dear Editor

Perhaps, as Christians, we should not sound quite so surprised (or relieved!) to find out that something the Bible endorses turns out to work. In any case, I found it reassuring to be told that God's Word is (still) as timeless, infallible, powerful and useful as I was taught it was – way back when I was a small boy.

Bob Childs

Dear Editor

I must admit that when I first read the contents page of the Summer 2007 edition of *ACT Now* and saw the title of John Steley's article, 'Should parents smack their children?', my heart sank. Sure enough, my deepest fears were confirmed. Here was an article that called on adults to 'smack' (as opposed to 'kick', 'punch', 'scratch' or 'bite') their own children.

I agree with the end of Mr Steley's conclusion: 'We need to have the humility to learn from each other and from God's Word; and we need to keep praying.' However, I take issue with his contention that 'we need to do more research' to find out whether or not smacking works.

Surely, research findings – interesting though they may be – should *not* guide Christians when it comes to matters of morality and ethics. Things are not 'right' or 'wrong' because research tells us so! Things are 'right' or 'wrong' because they are either consistent with Christ's message of justice, peace, love, hope, healing, forgiveness and salvation ... or they are not. I happen to believe that corporal punishment is fundamentally incompatible with a Christian's calling to be Christ-like and Christ-centred.

As a parent and a teacher, I do not need research to tell me whether or not I should use violence or the threat of violence to coerce others (of any age) to do what I want them to do. Instead, I picture my Saviour with me in the classroom or the home and then I ask myself 'What would Jesus do?' not 'What do researchers tell me to do?'

Charlotte Prince

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