

Dear Editor

Like Charlotte Prince (*ACT Now*, Autumn 2007, p5) and Alison Wilson (*ACT Now*, Autumn 2004, p6), I am a Christian educator who believes corporal (ie physical, pain-inducing) punishment is anachronistic, ineffectual and wrong. I am an evangelical Christian and I believe the Bible is God's Word. But I also believe the Church has a responsibility to be socially, politically and, dare I say, spiritually progressive.

Leviticus 19:37 says: 'Keep all my decrees and all my laws and follow them. I am the Lord.' Yet, like the overwhelming majority of Christians in the UK, I choose to ignore many of these rules and guidelines. I eat pork. I am clean-shaven and I cut the hair at the side of my head. I wear clothing woven from more than one fabric, I rarely dress entirely in white and I have never worn a prayer shawl with tassels. I tend to do quite a lot of planning and marking between dusk on Friday and sundown on Saturday and, if I am honest, I do school work on most term-time Sunday afternoons as well. I do not stand up every time an older person enters the room. Neither do I ask female colleagues whether they are menstruating so I can avoid sitting on certain chairs in the staffroom. I have never stoned an adulterer to death and I have never beaten a child with a rod. Finally, I do not have a tattoo, but I know of perfectly fine Christians who do.

By not doing (or doing) these things, am I sinning? I don't think so. Am I offending God? I think not. Am I devaluing God's Word? No. In fact, by putting my brain into gear, and considering Church history,

Christian doctrine, personal spiritual experience and the times in which I live, I believe I am honouring Scripture more than those who give the impression that they faithfully follow all of the (sometimes contradictory) 700 or so rules for living included in the Christian Bible.

Like Charlotte Prince and Alison Wilson, I draw my inspiration from the person of Christ Jesus. He is my model; my Lord and Saviour. He, and He alone, is The Way, The Truth and The Life. King Solomon was wise and witty for sure, but he was also a man of his age. Just because his proverbs – some of which have weathered less well than others – are included in the Bible does not mean they are the equal of the New Testament writings of Paul, let alone the teaching of Jesus cited in the four Gospels.

Charles Morris

Dear Editor

Charlotte Prince equates the physical correction of children with violence and suggests it is 'fundamentally incompatible with a Christian's calling to be Christ-like and Christ-centred' (*ACT Now*, Autumn 2007, p5). However, the use of a moderate physical sanction by a parent as a disciplinary tool in the context of a warm, caring relationship in which the child is valued and cherished, is no more a violent assault than an injection given by a medical practitioner.

In the Bible, physical correction is viewed as an expression of a parent's love (Proverbs 13:24); it is seen as a means of delivering a child from sinful folly (Proverbs 22:15); it is represented as having positive benefit to the soul (Proverbs 23:13-14); and of bringing wisdom to the child and peace and delight to the family circle (Proverbs 29:15,17).

The gracious teaching of the Old Testament on this subject is in perfect harmony with that of the New Testament. Hebrews 12:11 states: 'No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.' The writer has earlier quoted the book of Proverbs with approval and noted that the provision of such discipline by human parents reflects the way our heavenly Father corrects His children.

The nature of the human heart has not changed since the days of Solomon, and neither have the divinely-ordained remedies. The answer to the question, 'What would Jesus have us do?' is surely that he would have us conform our lives to his Word in every part, and not merely to those parts that we feel comfortable with or that chime with the spirit of the age.

Norman Wells

Subject: Big Brother
ACT Now issue: Spring 2008
 Item responded to: Dalwyn Attwell's article

Dear Editor

'Hello, hello!' I thought as I saw the photo of Shilpa Shetty on the front cover of the last issue of *ACT Now*. I was expecting to read a cursory critique of trash-culture. To my surprise, Dalwyn's article was both insightful and theologically sound. Congratulations!

Sandra Small

Subject: The Use and Misuse of Alcohol
ACT Now issue: Spring 2008
 Item responded to: Resource reviews

Dear Editor

I'd like to propose a toast to Richard Wilkins for drawing our collective attention to the fact that: 'Jesus drank wine, made it central to the Eucharist, and supplied 120 gallons of good wine to a wedding party already too drunk to appreciate it.' Cheers!

Sally Cox