

## Column - Telephone

“Let me get this right, there is a charge for no service?” an acquaintance asked as he leaned over the counter at the local telephone exchange office.

“Yes sir, there is a \$3-a-month charge for not having a number listed in the telephone directory,” the young man of about 24 said as he filled out the request form.

My acquaintance had a very good reason for not wanting an unlisted number. He and his wife had two houses, one their residence, the other a rental/guest cottage. It was to avoid confusion. (This was long before smart phones had rendered landlines and paper phone books almost redundant.)

“Okay,” he said, “let’s list the second number like this . . . M.T. Head” The young man, more earnest than clever, tore up the first form and asked him to repeat the name which came out sounding “Empty Head.” Without the slightest change in expression, he wrote it down. For years Mr. Head’s listing appeared in the local telephone directory. As

far as my acquaintance, he avoided paying those additional charges and got a good chuckle over outfoxing the telephone company.

Not everyone can be brilliant in all areas. I must confess there are a great many things about which I am woefully uninformed. Even so, there are things that all Christians should seek to know, understand and do, principally those precepts taught in scripture which lead to vitality of soul and body and which enable us to be able witnesses in the world. An “empty-headed” Christian is an ineffectual Christian.

Rather we should follow the lead of believers in Berea, a small town in Asia Minor where Paul preached, who “searched the scriptures daily” (Acts 17:11). This practice might be compared to a paratrooper being prepared before being dropped behind enemy lines.

This preparation should come early and begin at home. A marquee in front of a rural church read, “Every home a school.” How true that is. Regardless of whether those within that home realize it or not, something is being taught. It may be good things

like civility, acceptance and truth, or it may be self-centeredness, rejection and falsehood, all negative and destructive.

Suzanna Wesley, the mother of the great 18<sup>th</sup>-century evangelists John and Charles Wesley, the latter a hymnwriter, took education at home seriously. She instilled in her 10 children such positive virtues as: self-control, forgiveness, respect for property, telling the truth and reading. Learning the scriptures and a proper observance of the Lord's Day were likewise a part of their instruction.

No doubt down the road there were other homes in which very different lessons were being taught. Children in these homes were observing and taking in cruelty and chaos and not being instructed in those things that lead to human flourishing and in the end everlasting life. These homes were likewise schools, but not very good ones.

Even when no children are present, every home should be a place of good learning. No Christian has arrived. We are all works in progress, marching upward to Zion but not there yet. Today's internet

has its pitfalls and dangers, but at the same time it has some great resources for turning ordinary homes into classrooms of good learning. Of late, I have been enjoying some excellent free courses offered by Hillsdale College in Michigan. No doubt there are many other resources out there as well. Why not take advantage of them?

No one is too old to learn. Instead of being empty-headed Christians, let us seek to be filled-up Christians, those who can think and clearly communicate the Faith. With hymn writer Judson W. Van DeVenter, let us cry out: “Fill me with Thy love and power, Let Thy blessing fall on me.”

*ALMIGHTY God, our Heavenly Father, who hast committed to thy Holy Church the care and nurture of thy children; Enlighten with thy wisdom those who teach and those who learn; that, rejoicing in the knowledge of thy truth, they may worship thee and serve thee from generation to generation; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

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