

REPORT CARDS

On a regular periodic basis children bring home a report card from school. These report cards serve as a means of determining how a child is doing in their overall performance in school. Each subject is graded, usually with some kind of letter grade, from A to F. In the early years of school, even things like conduct and participation are graded. As parents and grandparents, we're always so proud when our child brings home a "good" report card, and a "bad" report card can result in some punishment or corrective measures being taken.

What if, as children of God, we received a periodic report card from God? Maybe we could have four letter grades, "A" for excellent, "B" for good, "C" for poor and "F" for dismal. Consider the "subjects" or categories that might be graded. One might get an "A" in benevolence and an "F" in attending worship. Or, maybe a "B" in prayer life and a "C" in giving. Of course, edification and evangelism would have to be graded as well.

Question--would you pass or fail if you were being graded? Some would certainly receive a "dismal" grade when it comes to attendance to the services of the church. Some come only occasionally, some only once a week, and of course some come every time the doors are open if at all possible. What would your grade be?

By the way, do you think your prayer life would receive a passing grade? Paul said to "Pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:17). Of course, insincere prayers or a lack of prayers altogether would certainly earn one a failing grade in that department.

God has commanded that we give upon the first day of the week, as we have purposed and as we have prospered (I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. 9:7). Do you reckon you have a passing grade or a failing grade? God requires munificent givers.

The fact is, we will not receive such a periodic "report card" from God, but when we stand before the judgment seat of the Lord, we will be judged according to what we have done in this life (II Cor. 5:10). It will be a pass or fail grade that is given us in that day (Matt. 25:31-46). We need to examine ourselves (II Cor. 13:5). Why not list your own subjects, the ones listed above and others, and then grade yourself. Now, be honest with yourself. When you have honestly done this, you will have a good idea if you are passing life's test or if you are failing. If you fail this test your punishment will be eternal!

Tilis

Buried Alive

On the Oregon Trail, at least some of the emigrants who died en route to Oregon were buried alive. The reason why was because the survivors were in a hurry.

For many years, cholera ravaged the emigrants along the Oregon Trail. Whoever caught it was dead—*no cure or treatment existed*. Usually, the infected emigrant died in 24 hours or less. If an entire wagon train stopped for an elaborate funeral, it would slow their progress. Too many delays meant the pioneers might not get to Oregon before winter—and then everyone might perish.

So, on most wagon trains, the burials became shorter and shorter as more and more people died. Some even abandoned the terminally sick by the side of the trail, where they would eventually die alone. The more humane wagon companies elected a “watcher” to wait with the person while the wagons forged ahead. It wouldn’t take long for the watcher to catch up.

Many watchers were in such a hurry that they started digging the grave long before their infected companion was dead. Needless to say, watching your own grave being dug was probably quite disturbing. If you happened to linger too long, well, no one is for sure, but evidence strongly suggests that some were accidentally buried before they took their final breath.

That is disturbing isn’t it? Yet, what is even more disturbing is that this very thing is happening today. There are many sick and diseased Christians that will soon wither away and die. They are spiritually diseased by the sins of the world (2 Pet. 2:20-21). Their only hope is that some other healthy Christian will have enough compassion to see them nursed back to health (Ja. 5:19,20).

Too often, sick Christians are left for their own burial. Their brothers and sisters in Christ are caring very little for their lost souls, they might assume that the church has already dug their grave. How does this happen? The same way it did on the Oregon Trail: we can become too busy to stop and help the sin-filled soul along the way.

Perhaps, this day, it would do us all well to think of some person who has fallen away from the faith and decide what kind of effort we can put forth to help them—and I certainly do not mean digging their grave for them. I’m talking about helping them out of Satan’s grasp and helping them catch up with the rest of the wagon train (Jude 23).

Borrowed and adapted