

Cybercolumn by John Duncan: Grace reigns

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CYBER COLUMN: Grace reigns

By John Duncan

I'm sitting here under the old oak tree, remembering Don Knotts in his passing at 81 years of age and Mayberry RFD. I must tell you that I did not spend much of my childhood watching programs like the *Andy Griffith Show* and the nostalgic town Mayberry. Later in life, I learned to watch cable TV's Nick at Night and see Don Knotts in his quirky role as Deputy Sheriff Barney Fife. Laughter reigned.

John Duncan

I find myself reflecting that we live in the dream of a Mayberry world that in actuality is an iPod world. I live in Granbury, Texas, a place where people once referred to our town very much like Mayberry. After all, we had a Dairy Queen, a drive-in-theater, a local radio station that aired high school sporting events, old roads where once in a while a tractor slowed traffic, and a lake where fishermen could fish on the grassy banks on a warm day. Mayberry reigned.

iPod has arrived now in the 21st century. Dairy Queen has been replaced

by Chili's. The drive-in theater is still open, but a newer theater with stadium seating airs the latest flicks. The local radio station has surrendered to the satellite radio in cars and on computers. Traffic is now slowed by sprawling roads and busy intersections and drive time takes longer than it used to, no matter the destination in our town. Fishing has even changed—high-powered boats and sophisticated technology that measures the depths of the lake and even tells you if fish school nearby. Just the other day, I saw young man jogging on the street with headphones in his ears and his iPod blasting the musical tunes of who knows, Lifehouse? Carrie Underwood singing Jesus Take the Wheel? Or maybe Coldplay? Or just maybe, Casting Crowns belting out Lifesong. iPod reigns.

I remind myself of the old quote: Three things in life remain constant—death, taxes, and change.

I sit here and ponder the church of the 21st century: Do we long for a Mayberry church in an iPod world? Anyone who lived in the fabulous '50s would probably answer a resounding yes. But what about a person born in 1990? They much prefer iPod, I am sure.

The landscape in Granbury changes daily: Home Depot, Loews, new roads, new construction, new schools, and traffic with drivers zipping about while talking on cell phones. The landscape of denominational life, church life, and the Christian life changes daily, too. Pity the poor pastor who faces the challenges of navigating the worship styles, the expectations, the challenges, the struggles, the shifting dynamic of stewardship (from giving tithes to giving to a cause), and the complex problems churches and people face. Or celebrate the fact that Christian leaders stand on the brink of the greatest opportunity to produce life change by the power of the Gospel.

God's truth remains. Jesus is our One constant. And the gospel speaks to an iPod world just like it did in a Mayberry world.

So here I am, sitting under the old oak tree, sipping lemonade. In a Mayberry, world lemonade was lemonade. In an iPod world, lemonade might be raspberry or strawberry or the pick of your choice. We live in the age of multiple choice. Yet one simple constant remains: Jesus Christ. I long for a Mayberry world, but I live in an iPod world, so all I can do is adapt in the complexity of the times, but cling to the glory of the gospel in its simplicity.

Augustine in his Confessions in the fourth century spoke of God's light, change in his own life, Jesus his anchor, and concluded that a thirst and hunger for God answered his deepest questions in the complexity of life: "In this way, O Lord, you create happiness and give it to us to ease our lives." In a Mayberry world where people often long to go back to remember happiness, Augustine invites us to live in the present moment and to look toward the future to discover our true happiness and ease in the light, strength, and humble mercy of God. May God's grace reach us to find happiness in him. Grace reigns!

John Duncan is pastor of Lakeside Baptist Church in Granbury, Texas, and the writer of numerous articles in various journals and magazines. You can respond to his column by e-mailing him at jduncan@lakesidebc.org.

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