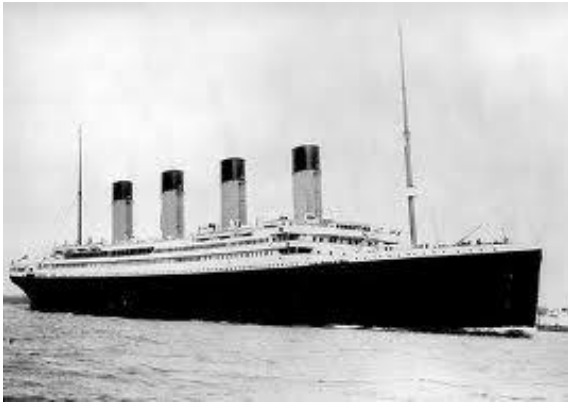


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Lessons from the Titanic's 100th Anniversary



On April 15, at approximately 2:40 AM, the *Titanic* slid beneath the cold, 31-degree ocean water 400 miles off the coast of Newfoundland, Canada. The *Titanic* had been on her voyage to New York City for four days when it struck an iceberg on the night of the 14th. The tragedy was that 61% of the passengers and 80% of the crew died. The reason such a high percentage died was simple: *the sin of pride*. Only 20% of the men, yet 74% of the women and 52% of the children survived. The reason so many women and children survived was also simple: *the principle of self-sacrifice*.

With the one hundredth anniversary of the sinking of the *Titanic*, television shows and re-runs of movies abound. Exhibits and museums are available for the public, but often the eternal lessons from such a disaster are eliminated in a politically correct world of fiction. After all, the *Titanic* was the biggest ship of its day, a whopping 885 feet long, but to get it in perspective, it is the length of *four* Boeing 747's! The *Titanic* could carry up to 3,500 people, but on this maiden voyage, only 2,228 were aboard, 860 of which were crew members. There were 16 sealed compartments in her hull so that she was thought of as unsinkable; in fact, someone said "*not even God could sink this ship!*"

On Sunday, April 14, 1912, Captain Smith received seven different warnings about icebergs within the *Titanic's* shipping lane. For some reason, the ship never slowed down – remaining at over 21 knots almost full speed, through a field of huge icebergs! At 11:40 P.M. Sunday night, the cry was heard "*iceberg dead ahead!*" Though attempting to put the engines in reverse and steer clear, it was too late, and the giant iceberg scraped the starboard side of the bow and opened her hull, puncturing holes in several compartments so that the water filled up to 14 feet in less than ten minutes! The iceberg was so large it sprayed ice on the top deck as the *Titanic* went by. By 2:40 A.M., April 15, the stern was high in the air (but eventually breaking off) as she slid beneath the water with lights temporarily burning, resting over two and a half miles at the bottom of the ocean!



Why didn't the *Titanic* slow down? Why didn't she heed the warnings? Why weren't more people put on lifeboats? After all, there was room for *all* the women and children (534) plus 550 men, yet only 705 were saved, and several lifeboats were only half-filled! Though the *Californian* was only a few miles away, slowing to a crawl due to ice, and had warned the *Titanic's* wireless operator, the warnings were ignored and downplayed. In addition, by the time *Titanic* did try to contact the *Californian*, her own wireless operator had gone to bed!

There can only be one explanation for these incredible set of circumstances, the odds of which they all could happen together appear impossible: *the sin of pride*. The Bible simply says, “*pride goes before destruction*” (Proverbs 16:18). It also says, “*the fear of the Lord is to hate evil, pride and arrogance*” (Proverbs 8:13). It was pride that blinded the passengers to the fact that the *Titanic* was unsinkable, and why many refused to get in lifeboats. Even nearby ships didn’t take distress signals from the *Titanic* seriously. In addition, a fire in the coal room had started as soon as they had left Ireland, and though they couldn’t put it out, no official report was to be given, and they were to press on. Why? Pride, for nothing should stop the *Titanic* from its maiden voyage in record time!

Yet, in contrast to this arrogant pride, there was an *example* of self-sacrifice in the midst of such a tragedy. This is what ought to be remembered, for the example of “good works” aboard the *Titanic* has endured through the stories of her survivors. As a result of Christianity sown into both Victorian Europe and America, families embraced cultural norms of self-sacrifice where love was defined as sacrificing for another even unto death (John 15:13). So, when the order was given “*women and children first*”, it was instinctively obeyed. Though there were men who tried to force their way into boats, crewmembers fought them (and shot them) to maintain order. They kissed their wives’ goodbye, gave exhortations to their children, and stood on the deck of the *Titanic* as it went down, waving. The Band played the hymn *Autumn* which depicts humility before God instead of pride.



Then there was the example of Pastor John Harper from Scotland. Having preached for three months at the historic Moody Church in Chicago, his revival preaching was so accompanied by the anointing of the Spirit of God, he was asked to return. A widower at 39 years of age, he was on the *Titanic* with his daughter Nana as well as his niece Jessie who would help take care of Nana. Immediately after hearing of the collision with the iceberg, Pastor Harper went to work, not blinded into complacency by the pride of invincibility.

Known for his compassion for the lost, his friends told of the physical shaking he went through in prayer for others. At the time of the collision, he was sharing Christ with someone on one of the decks. When warnings were given, he made sure his daughter and niece were in a lifeboat with jackets. He urged the women, children and *unsaved* men to get in the lifeboats. He gave his own lifejacket to a man who upon inquiry, said he was not saved. When the ship went down, he dove into the water without a lifejacket, staying afloat by holding on to a piece of wood and shouting out Acts 16:31 “*believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.*” A survivor testified years later that he was Harper’s “*last convert*”, having surrendered to Christ while in the water, but watching Harper drown a few yards away.

So, what can we learn from the *Titanic*? Our nation is in trouble with its arrogance and pride, its sense of invincibility, almost as if we are saying “not even God could sink this nation.” We must pray that our nation heeds the warnings being given to it! Our nation can return to God only with repentance, and like the *Californian*, help is close by – but unlike the *Californian*, God is not asleep!

The greatest lesson ought to be an inspiration to every believer, that their “power of example”, through good works and conduct amid difficulty, can cause many to glorify God and come to Christ (Matthew 5:16). The *Titanic* lies two and a half miles at the bottom of the ocean, having been discovered in 1985. It is a monumental lesson to repent of our pride and return to the way of the cross!

