

The *Banner* of Sovereign Grace Truth

IN THIS *Issue...*

Teaching Children about God

The Stone is Rolled Away!

A Wallet Full of the Wrong Money



A Periodical for Young and Old

**THE BANNER OF
SOVEREIGN GRACE TRUTH**

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BIBLICAL PARENTING ISSUE

Every God-fearing parent knows that he or she fails in child-rearing too many times to number. The only perfect parents I know are those who have not yet had children. Sometimes I think that one of the main reasons the Lord has given us children is to teach us our radical dependency upon Him and to draw us closer to Him. So often in the gospels, a parent brings a child to Jesus for physical healing, but Jesus first deals with the parent, granting spiritual healing (e.g., the Canaanitish woman, Matt. 15:21-28; the father of the demoniac, Mark 9:24).

As parents, we ought always to be interested in receiving sound, biblical advice on parenting. Some of the best advice comes to us from our forefathers. At times, a few of their thoughts may sound quaint to us, but by far the majority of their advice is fully applicable to our day.

In this issue, several articles written in former centuries provide profound and practical advice for contemporary parenting. Dear parents, let us all read these articles carefully and pray for strength and grace to put them into practice. May God grant you to see your "children's children, and peace upon Israel" (Ps. 128:6).

— JRB

“Have a Good One”

A GOOD FRIDAY MEDITATION — REV. DAVID LIPSY

It is an expression that is as void of meaning as it is common. You hear it often, spoken by friends and strangers alike. “Have a good one.” Perhaps you have wondered, as I have, “A good *what?*” Perhaps this expression is shorthand for “Have a good day.” What, I sometimes wonder, is a good day?

Imagine for a moment that you are a person of great wealth and power—perhaps a person of royalty who rules over a vast empire. What sort of life would you suppose a person of your rank and status typically lives? Luxury, comfort, indulgence? Imagine further that you, the monarch, step into the storyline of that childhood tale where the king or prince disguises himself and lives the life of a commoner, a pauper, for a brief time—just to see what such a life is like. An experiment such as this is meant to be short-lived, aimed simply at quenching one’s experiential curiosity.

Leaving the fanciful behind, there *was* a King of immeasurable power, dignity, and influence who took upon Himself a life of incomparable and incalculable condescension—not merely the masking of human royalty with human poverty but instead the incarnation of deity into humanity. A single day of perfection is beyond our grasp; for Him an eternal reality. The absence of sin, foreign to us; the presence of sin, foreign to Him. The world He entered, one He made, was a shadow of its former self. Every person, a sinner. Fauna, flora, the inanimate all bore

the disfigurement of sin. He who inhabited splendid glory traversed the streets of paradise lost.

The day had arrived—the Holy One scrutinized in two religious and three civil trials. Evidence was lacking, yet acquittal did not come. He saved others; Himself He *would* not save. Condemned, abused, maltreated, blasphemed—all the indignities a depraved heart could quickly conjure, were heaped upon Him. He made no plea, and did not protest. Nailed to the very symbol of God’s execration, He experienced that which would seem impossible for Him—divine abandonment.

A good day? Would you think so if *you* were this king? He did: “for the joy that was set before him, [he] endured the cross, despising the shame” (Heb. 12:2).

A good day is when God, knowing our utter lostness, Himself undertakes to save us.

A good day is when God bore our image so that we could bear His again.

A good day is when the just dies for the unjust so that He might bring us to God.

A good day is when God is forsaken of God so that we might never be forsaken of Him.

Have a good day, a Good Friday, dear friend.

Rev. David Lipsy is pastor of the Reformed Church of Pyatt, Arkansas.



The Stone Is Rolled Away!

REV. WADE KOENEN

When the stone rolled upon the door of the tomb late Friday evening, the disciples and followers of Jesus were filled with confusion and questions and dashed expectations (cf. Luke 24).

Their Messiah and King had been unjustly crucified before their eyes. When the stone rolled over the tomb, it was as though it had closed their dreams of any future kingdom.

This dreary background was the setting early Sunday morning when a group of weary, grieving women arrived at the tomb to give the body of Jesus a proper burial as a token of appreciation to their beloved Lord and Master. As they approached the tomb, they asked one another, “Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulcher?” (Mark 16:3). The stone was not simply symbolic; it presented a real obstacle for them. The stone would have been rolled before the doorway of the sepulcher on a narrow track and placed in such a way that, in order to open

the tomb, the stone would have to have been rolled back over a small wedge, or rolled up a steep incline. One writer estimates that it would have taken twenty people to uncover this tomb. It was a heavy stone and it was also sealed; additionally, there were Roman guards stationed beside it (cf. Matt. 27:66). The seal was a cord covered with clay or wax on which an official seal has been impressed. It was placed on the grave’s entrance. The seal would have made any tampering obvious. It would alert officials that someone was trying to get into the grave. And it sent a warning to those who would come to the grave: “We are watching.” The Roman guards who were guarding the tomb

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Matthew 5:33–48

DR. JOEL R. BEEKE

Be Ye Perfect

In Matthew 5:33–48, Jesus tells us how we are to fulfill the law—not legalistically, but in a spirit of Christ-like love. The goal is that we might strive to obey His final admonition in verse 48, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” This Christ-like perfection is nothing less than God’s purpose for us, that we “be conformed to the image of his Son” (Rom. 8:29).

In Swearing an Oath

When have you last heard someone casually say, “I swear,” or “I promise with all my heart”? Such words are illustrations of what Christ is warning against here. The Pharisees were flippantly swearing oaths but not keeping them. They also claimed to find loopholes in the Old Testament law concerning oaths. Christ seeks to restore the Old Testament provision for making promises to God, saying, “Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths” (Matt. 5:33; cf. Lev. 19:12, Num. 30:2, Deut. 23:21).

The Pharisees would swear by heaven, earth, the temple, the altar, even their own heads, but not by God. They would swear an oath for the smallest occasions, and that only lent an aura of uncertainty and mistrust to their oaths.

What are you doing when you give your word? Do you do so lightly, or is your speech that of a righteous man whose yes means yes, and whose no means no (James 5:12)? Much distrust and miscommunication today stems from people not living up to their promises. Christ calls us to be honest in our words to others and in our vows to Him. Such “sound speech...cannot be condemned” (Titus 2:8).

Jesus emphasizes truthfulness in our conversation, which comes from our inward parts, from the heart (Pss. 15:2; 24:4; 51:6). Truth in the heart comes out of a living, vital relationship with Christ, who is the Truth. Through His righteousness alone, we are enabled to live righteously in this world.



In Exacting Retribution

The second issue that Jesus addresses in Matthew 5:33–48 is retribution, or taking vengeance on others. Again he appeals to the Old Testament laws that the Pharisees had misapplied (Exod. 21:24–25; Lev. 24:20; Deut. 19:21). This law was not intended for the average Israelite but for the magistrates who were to deal justly in criminal matters, exacting punishment in proportion to the crime committed. We must not take the law into our own hands.

In our daily walk with the Lord and with others, do we turn the other cheek, exemplifying the law of kindness? Or do we demand vengeance, “rendering evil for evil” (1 Peter 3:9)? How do we relate to our spouses, children, parents, and friends? It is impossible for us to obey this law perfectly, but Christ provides the righteous example that we are to follow (1 Peter 2:11). He showed how to turn the cheek to those who plucked out His hair and to turn His back to those who scourged Him. He hid not His face from shame and spitting (Isa. 50), so that He

might free those who are captive to the bondage of the law and give them freedom in Himself.

In Loving Our Neighbor

The final misconception that Jesus corrects relates to the Old Testament concept of loving one's neighbor (Lev. 19:18). The phrase, "and hate thine enemy," was appended to this law in the interpretation given by the Pharisees. Jesus deleted this addition, and defined "thy neighbor" to include "thine enemy." Rather than hating those who abuse us or persecute us, we are to love them, bless them, do good to them, and pray for them. Why? Because that is what our Father does. Our Father makes the sun rise and rain fall upon the just and the unjust. In these natural cycles, God does not make a distinction between his neighbors and enemies but rather blesses them all. He doesn't operate in terms of "you love me and I'll love you back." Rather, the Father gave His Son, and the Son gave Himself for His enemies (Rom. 5:10). That is the wonder of the cross. Embracing and reflecting that wonder, we can love even our enemies. Through the Holy Spirit applying the righteousness of Christ to us, we are able to live before God and our neighbor as we should.

Comprehensive Holiness

Jesus does not just give us ethical standards by which to live; He graciously teaches us the true meaning of the law of God. Obedience to this law does not focus on petty rules, but on walking in Christ and abiding in His love and righteousness. Christ lived perfectly in this sinful world so

that He might present us perfect before the Father. That is why He told us, "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48).

Holiness, then, is not merely obeying a list of rules, but a lifestyle of being increasingly conformed to Jesus Christ in a life of obedience. This obedience, which manifests itself in how we swear our oaths, how we repay wrongs, and how we love our enemies, aims for comprehensive holiness. Such holiness must impact all our thoughts, words, and actions. Let us pray with Robert Murray M'Cheyne, "Lord, make me as holy on earth as a pardoned sinner can be."

Study Questions

1. In what ways are our entire lives to be an oath to God?
2. What results when Christians take the law into their own hands?
3. Why is it critical that we show a lifestyle of kindness?
4. Provide several ways in which we can concretely love our enemies. Why do we find it so difficult to implement these concrete actions?
5. Explain why holiness is more of a lifestyle than a list of rules. What implications does this have for our daily living?

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would have defended their post at all costs. If Roman soldiers broke a command or failed in their duty, they were at risk of losing their lives.

Great impossibilities stood before the women: a heavy, sealed, and guarded stone stood at the entrance of the tomb. Maybe there are stones of impossibility in your life: spiritual questions and riddles that you cannot solve, trials and pressures to which you have no answers. You have real stones and you ask, "Who will roll away the stone?"

The women's question was soon answered and their answer is ours as well. "When they looked, they saw that the stone was rolled away" (Mark 16:4). The stone was not rolled away by a band of thieving disciples who later would make up the story of the resurrection. A hoax of this magnitude would have been discovered. Furthermore, the five hundred who saw the resurrected Lord Jesus could testify that the disciples did not move the stone.

The stone was moved at the Lord's command by a messenger of heaven. Matthew tells us that an angel of the Lord came and rolled back the stone from the door and sat on it (cf. Matt. 28:2). The stone was rolled away. Their Savior had conquered death and Satan, and had sanctified the grave and made the passageway into heavenly mansions possible. The moved stone and Christ's empty tomb gave them—and all who believe in Jesus—a secure justification, victory over sin, a future resurrection, heavenly dwellings, and a living hope (cf. Rom. 4:24–25, Romans 6:9–11, 2 Cor. 4:14, John 14:1–4, 1 Pet. 1:3).

What is your stone? Dear believer, because Christ has risen from the grave as the victorious Savior, your stone is already rolled away, though you may not have seen the evidence yet. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Look into the empty tomb.

Rev. Wade Koenen is pastor of the Heritage Reformed Outreach of Fort Macleod, Alberta.

NEW TESTAMENT BIBLE STUDY

Profiting from the Parables (5)

by

DR. GERALD BILKES



a wallet full of the wrong money

Read: Luke 12:13–21



When I lived in the Middle East for about a year, I quickly learned that money changers are powerful people still today. Down the street from where I lived there was a small but busy place where lots of money traded hands. American currency was considered best of all. The owners didn't care for America, but they loved our currency! They might refuse to trade with currencies of nations in fiscal or political crisis, or give very little for it, but not so with America's green paper.

Heaven, however, doesn't accept any other currency than its own. The man with the biggest bank account on earth is as poor as the man in jail with the biggest debt, if neither has the right spiritual currency. Instead, Christ tells us we must be "rich toward God" (Luke 12:21).

The Man Who Wanted Jesus to Fill His Wallet

Jesus lived in the same world that we live in: a world of land and property rights; a world of seasons with harvests, which people claim for themselves; a world of conflict and disputes. As He taught the people about God and their souls and how to live in this world, He emphasized the need to live in dependence on God (Luke 12:1–12). He reminded them that God takes care of all those who love and fear Him. If God does not forget the sparrows, would He forget His disciples (v. 6)? He wouldn't forget them in their daily lives, nor would He leave them even in dire situations. If, for example, they might come

before magistrates, God would give His Holy Spirit to help them say what they need to say.

This last point triggered a thought in one man in the crowd who had a dispute with his brother. He latched on to the idea that Jesus might be able to help him in his situation. Jesus might take up his cause, and his brother would have to give up that part of the inheritance he was claiming as his own. So as he heard Jesus talk about courts and help in the courts, he blurted out: "Master, speak to my brother, that he divide the inheritance with me" (v. 13).

This man had not understood a word of what Jesus was really saying. True, he was content to listen to Jesus, but ultimately he only had use for Jesus when it came to his problems and his earthly grievances. This man is like the vast majority of Christians, who see that Jesus might be able to benefit them as they try to get ahead in this life.

This man is like the vast majority of Christians, who see that Jesus might be able to benefit them as they try to get ahead in this life.

With perfect wisdom, Jesus refused this man's request. Why did He refuse? For Him to accede to this man's request would be to depart from His appointment by His Father. He was not sent to solve earthly disputes. Indeed, He taught

people what to do when they have something against their brother (Matt. 18:15–20). He would also send His Spirit to enable His people to live in harmony (Rom. 14:10–21). Yet never did the Father appoint Him as an earthly judge in a Jewish probate court.

Moreover, the man's question showed a disposition that was the exact opposite of dependence of God. He might have seemed to be depending on Jesus by his request, but in truth, Jesus, and thus God, was a means to an end. His inheritance was his god, and, ironically, he felt he needed Jesus to get his god back.

Jesus Shows the Man How Empty His Wallet Really Is

In what is usually called the parable of the rich fool, Jesus poignantly unveiled the folly of a life lived for earthly goods. To illustrate His warning against covetousness in verse 15, Jesus first described the kind of person this world highly esteems. It's someone who has assets (land), receives a series of fiscal reports (harvest), and acts with business savvy (greater barns). His investment strategy will enable him to grow wealthier and wealthier. Note that this man does not acquire his goods by oppression or wrong-doing. There is nothing sinister about his gains in wealth except, of course, that he appears ungrateful and does not distribute to the poor.

Though there is no moral crime in this man's conduct, yet there is an existential crime of the highest sort. Christ pinpointed it forcibly in verse 21: this man's identity and plan for his life was wrapped up in his possessions. His life was bound up with goods which he had neither brought into the world nor would take from the world (1 Tim. 6:7). And this was

We live for things. Goods give us identity. We measure ourselves by our portfolios and our ability to acquire things this year that might have been outside our reach last year.

exactly the problem with Jesus' questioner (v. 13) and everyone else as they are born in this world. We live for things. Goods give us identity. We measure ourselves by our portfolios and our ability to acquire things this year that might have been outside our reach last year.

It's interesting that the fool is not unaware of his soul; he even addresses it (v. 19), something Christians can even learn a lesson from (see Ps. 42:5, 11; Ps. 103:1). But the catastrophic problem is that he comforts his soul with stuff (v. 19a). He placates his soul with pleasantries (v. 19b). How dreadful then is God's sentence in verse 20: "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Whereas this man was feeding

his soul with stuff, the God who created every soul in one moment disconnects this man's soul from his body and from all his goods. This man's poor soul travels in an instant from his farm, his crops, his land, and his life into an eternity where none of his riches can help him whatsoever. With all his business savvy, he had never learned the first lesson of life: "You have a soul that can never die."

Jesus Points to God's Riches at Christ's Expense

The man of our passage wanted Jesus to fill his wallet and give him his just due. When you read that, you can't help but think of the young brother, who said something very similar: "Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to me" (Luke 15:12). How blessed it is when Christ uncovers us to the worthlessness of accumulating the things of this world in light of an eternity that doesn't live by our currency. Jesus pointed the man in the direction he would need to go: he needed to become rich toward God (Luke 12:21). The miracle of the gospel is that God's riches come to needy sinners who look to Him for them. They come at Christ's expense. This currency is not corruptible like gold and silver. It is precious—the precious blood of Christ (1 Pet. 1:19). At the cross, Christ paid the price for sinners like this covetous man, in order that they may have an inheritance that fades not away, reserved in heaven for those who believe. What this man should have asked was: "Lord, I've been spending money for what does not satisfy. Canst Thou not give me water, wine, and milk without money and without price?"

Study Questions

1. Define covetousness (v. 15). What are some signs that covetousness is pervasive in a church? How can a church diagnose and turn back covetousness?
2. When is it wrong to "build bigger barns" and when is it not?
3. The Puritans had a quaint expression: "sitting loose from this world's goods." Compare this expression with Luke 12:15 and discuss ways in which you can reinforce that posture towards material goods.
4. Before God, the questioner (v. 13) was really no different from his brother. How does the parable prove that point? Is it true that mere poverty itself is no better than mere riches?
5. How should this rich man have talked to his soul and what should he have said (see v. 19)? For help, see Revelation 3:17–18.
6. Look up Ephesians 1:7, 18; 2:7; 4:8, 16, and Col. 1:27; 2:2, and discuss the relevance of these verses when compared to Luke 12:21.

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I very readily allow that no human endeavors, either of ministers or of parents, can ever be effectual to bring one soul to the saving knowledge of God in Christ without the transforming influences of the blessed Spirit. Yet you well know, and I hope you seriously consider, that this does not in the least weaken our obligation to the most diligent use of proper means. The great God has stated rules of operation in the world of grace as well as of nature. Though He is not limited to them, it is arrogant and may be destructive to expect that He should deviate from them in favor of us or ours.

TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT GOD

PHILIP DODDRIDGE

*The fear of the
Lord
is the beginning
of wisdom.*

—Psalm 110:10

We live not by bread alone, “but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matt. 4:4). Were He determined to continue your lives or the lives of your children, He could no doubt feed or support you by miracles. Yet you think yourselves obligated to a prudent care for your daily bread. You justly conclude that, were you to neglect to administer it to your infant offspring, you would be chargeable with their murder before God and man; nor could you think of pleading as any excuse that you referred them to miraculous, divine care while you left them destitute of any human supplies. Such a plea would only add impiety to cruelty and greatly aggravate the crime it attempted to palliate. As absurd would it be for us to flatter ourselves with a hope that our children should be taught of God, and regenerated and sanctified by the influences of His grace, if we neglect that prudent and religious care in their education which it is my business this day to describe and recommend....

1. Children should undoubtedly be trained up in the way of piety and devotion towards God.

This, as you well know, is the sum and foundation of everything truly good. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” (Ps. 110:10). The Psalmist therefore invites children to him with the promise of instructing them in it: “Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD” (Ps. 34:11). And, it is certain, some right notions of the Supreme Being must be implanted in the minds of children before there can be a reasonable foundation for teaching them those doctrines that peculiarly relate to Christ under the character of the Mediator. “For he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6).

The proof of the being of God and some of those attributes of the divine nature in which we are most concerned depends on such easy principles that I cannot but think the weakest mind might enter into it. A child will easily apprehend that as every house is built by someone and there can be no work without an author, so He that built all things is God. From this obvious idea of God as the Maker of all, we may naturally represent Him as very great and very good, that they may be taught at once to reverence and love Him.

It is of great importance that children early imbibe an awe of God and a humble veneration for His perfections and glories. He ought, therefore, to be represented to them as the great Lord of all. And, when we take occasion to mention to them other invisible agents, whether angels or devils, we should always represent them as entirely under the government and control of God....

There should be a peculiar caution that when we teach these infant tongues to pronounce that great and terrible name, the Lord our God, they may not learn to take it in vain, but may use it with a becoming solemnity, remembering that we and they are but dust and ashes before Him. When I hear the little creatures speaking of “the *great* God, the *blessed* God, the *glorious* God,” as I sometimes do, it gives me a sensible pleasure. I consider it as a probable proof of great wisdom and piety in those who have the charge of their education.

Yet, great care should be taken not to confine our discourses to these solemn views lest the dread of God should so fall upon them that His excellencies should make them afraid to approach Him. We should describe Him as not only the greatest, but the *best* of beings. We should teach them to know Him by the most encouraging name of “The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin” (Exod. 34:6–7). We should particularly represent His *goodness* to them: with what more than paternal tenderness He watched round their cradles, with what compassion He heard their feeble cries before their infant thoughts could form themselves into prayer. We should tell them that they live every moment on God and that all our affection for them is no more than He puts into our hearts and that all our power to help them is no more than He lodges in our hands.

We should also solemnly remind them that in a very little while their souls are to return to this God. As He is now always with them and knows everything they do, speak, or think, so He will bring every work into judgment and make them forever happy or miserable. Here the most lively and pathetic descriptions that the Scriptures give us of heaven and hell should be laid before them and urged on their consideration.

When such a foundation is laid in the belief of the being and providence of God and of a future state both of rewards and punishments, children should be instructed in the duty they owe to God. They should particularly be taught to pray to Him and to praise Him. It would be best of all if, from a deep sense of His perfections and their own necessities, they could be engaged to breathe out their souls before Him in words of their own, were they ever so weak and broken. Yet you will readily allow that, until this can be expected, it may be very proper to teach them some forms of prayer and thanksgiving, consisting of such plain Scriptures or other familiar expressions as may best suit their circumstances and understandings.

2. Children must be trained up in the way of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

You know, my friends, and I hope many of you know it to the daily joy of your souls, that Christ is “the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). By Him we have boldness and access with

confidence to a God, who might otherwise appear as a “consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29). It is, therefore, of great importance to lead children early into the knowledge of Christ, which is no doubt a considerable part of the “nurture and admonition” of the Lord, which the Apostle recommends and was perhaps what he principally intended by those words (Eph. 6:4). We should, therefore, teach them early that the first parents of the human race most ungratefully rebelled against God and subjected themselves and all their offspring to His wrath and curse (Gen. 1–3). The awful consequences of this should be opened at large, and we should labor to convince them that they have made themselves liable to the divine displeasure—that dreadful thing!—by their own personal guilt. Thus, by the knowledge of the law, should we make way for the gospel—the joyful news of deliverance by Christ.

In unfolding this, great care ought to be taken that we do not fill their minds with an aversion to one sacred person while we endeavor to attract their regards to another. The Father is not to be represented as severe and almost inexorable, hardly prevailed upon by the intercession of His compassionate Son to entertain thoughts of mercy and forgiveness. Far from that, we should speak of Him as the overflowing fountain of goodness, whose eye pitied us in our helpless distress, whose almighty arm was stretched out for our rescue, whose eternal counsels of wisdom and love formed that important scheme to which we owe all our hopes. Our children should be early taught what that scheme was, as far as their understanding can receive it and ours can explain it. We should often repeat to them that God is so holy and yet so gracious that, rather than He would on the one hand destroy man or on the other leave sin unpunished, He made His own Son a sacrifice for it, appointing Him to be humbled that we might be exalted, to die that we might live.

We should also represent to them—with holy wonder and joy—how readily the Lord Jesus Christ consented to procure our deliverance in so *expensive* a way. How cheerfully He said, “Lo, I come to do thy will, O God” (Heb. 10:7, 9)! To enhance the value of this amazing love, we should endeavor, according to our weak capacities, to teach them who this compassionate Redeemer is, to represent something of His glories as the eternal Son of God and the great Lord of angels and men. We should instruct them in His amazing condescension in laying aside these glories that He might become a little, weak, helpless child, and afterwards an afflicted, sorrowful man. We should lead them into the knowledge of those circumstances of the history of Jesus that may have the greatest tendency to strike their minds and to impress them with an early sense of gratitude and love to Him. We should tell them how poor He made Himself that He might enrich us, how diligently He went about doing good, how willingly He preached the gospel to the lowest of the people. We should especially tell them how kind He was to little children and how He chided His

(continued on page 105)



I suppose that most professing Christians are acquainted with Proverbs 22:6. The sound of it is probably familiar to your ears, like an old tune. It is likely you have heard it, read it, talked of it, or quoted it many a time. Is it not so? But after all, how little is the substance of this text regarded! The doctrine it contains appears scarcely known; the duty it puts before us seems fearfully seldom practiced. Reader, do I not speak the truth?

PRIMARY OBLIGATIONS OF PARENTS

J.C. RYLE

Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.

—Proverbs 22:6

It cannot be said that the subject is a new one. The world is old, and we have the experience of nearly six thousand years to help us. We live in days when there is a mighty zeal for education in every quarter. We hear of new schools rising on all sides. We are told of new systems and new books for the young of every sort and description. Still, for all this, the vast majority of children are manifestly not trained in the way they *should* go; for when they grow up, they do not walk with God.

How shall we account for this state of things? The plain truth is the Lord's commandment in our text is not regarded. Therefore, the Lord's promise in our text is not fulfilled.

Reader, these things may well give rise to great searching of heart. Suffer then a word of exhortation from a minister about the right training of children. Believe me, the subject is one that should come home to every conscience and make everyone ask himself the question, "Am I doing what I can in this matter?"

It is a subject that concerns almost all. There is hardly a household that it does not touch. Parents, nurses, teachers, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters—all have an interest in it. Few can be found, I think, who might not influence some parent in the management of his family or affect the training of some child by suggestion or advice. All of us, I suspect, can do something here, either directly or indirectly; and I wish to stir up all to bear this in remembrance....

First, then, if you would train your children rightly, train them in the way they should go, and not in the way that they would.

Remember children are born with a decided bias towards evil. Therefore, if you let them choose for themselves, they are certain to choose wrong.

The mother cannot tell what her tender infant may grow up to be—tall or short, weak or strong, wise or foolish. He may be any of these things or not; it is all uncertain. But one thing the mother *can* say with certainty: he will have a corrupt and sinful heart. It is natural to us to do wrong. "Foolishness," says Solomon, "is bound in the heart of a child" (Prov. 22:15). "A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Prov. 29:15). Our hearts are like the earth on which we tread: let it alone, and it is sure to bear weeds.

If, then, you would deal wisely with your child, you must not leave him to the guidance of his own will. Think for him, judge for him, act for him, just as you would for one who is weak and blind. But for pity's sake, give him not up to his own wayward tastes and inclinations. It must not be his likings and wishes that are

consulted. He knows not yet what is good for his mind and soul any more than what is good for his body. You do not let him decide what he will eat, what he will drink, and how he will be clothed. Be consistent and deal with his mind in like manner. Train him in the way that is scriptural and right and not in the way that he fancies.

If you cannot make up your mind to this first principle of Christian training, it is useless for you to read any further. Self-will is almost the first thing that appears in a child's mind. It must be your first step to resist it.

Train up your child with all tenderness, affection, and patience.

I do not mean that you are to spoil him, but I do mean that you should let him see that you love him. Love should be the silver thread that runs through all your conduct. Kindness, gentleness, long-suffering, forbearance, patience, sympathy, a willingness to enter into childish troubles, a readiness to take part in childish joys—these are the cords by which a child may be led most easily. These are the clues you must follow if you would find the way to his heart....

Now children's minds are cast in much the same mold as our own. Sternness and severity of manner chill them and throw them back. It shuts up their hearts, and you will weary yourself to find the door. But let them only see that you have an affectionate feeling towards them—that you really desire to make them happy and do them good—that if you punish them, it is intended for their profit, and that you would give your heart's blood to nourish their souls. Let them see this, I say, and they will soon be all your own. But they must be wooed with kindness if their attention is ever to be won.... Love is one grand secret of successful training. Anger and harshness may frighten, but they will not persuade the child that you are right. If he sees you often losing your temper, you will soon cease to have his respect. A father who speaks to his son as Saul did to Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:30) need not expect to retain his influence over that son's mind.

Try hard to retain your child's affections. It is a dangerous thing to make your children afraid of you. Anything is almost better than reserve and constraint between your child and yourself, and this will come in with fear. Fear puts an end to openness of manner. Fear leads to concealment; fear sows the seed of much hypocrisy and leads to many a lie. There is a mine of truth in the apostle's words to the Colossians: "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged" (Col. 3:21). Let not the advice it contains be overlooked.

Train with this thought continually before your eyes: that the soul of your child is the first thing to be considered.

Precious, no doubt, are these little ones in your eyes; but if you love them, think often of their souls. No interest should weigh with you so much as their eternal interests. No part of

them should be so dear to you as that part that will never die. The world with all its glory shall pass away; the hills shall melt; the heavens shall be wrapped together as a scroll; the sun shall cease to shine. But the spirit that dwells in those little creatures, whom you love so well, shall outlive them all, and whether in happiness or misery, humanly speaking, will depend on you.

This is the thought that should be uppermost on your mind in all you do for your children. In every step you take about them, in every plan and scheme and arrangement that concerns them, do not leave out that mighty question, "How will this affect their souls?"

Soul love is the soul of all love. To pet, pamper, and indulge your child, as if this world was all he had to look to and this life the only season for happiness—to do this is not true love, but cruelty. It is treating him like some beast of the earth that has but one world to look to and nothing after death. It is hiding from him that grand truth that he ought to be made to learn from his very infancy—that the chief end of his life is the salvation of his soul.

A true Christian must be no slave to trends if he would train his child for heaven. He must not be content to do things merely because they are the custom of the world; to teach them and instruct them in certain ways, merely because it is usual; to allow them to read books of a questionable sort, merely because everybody else reads them; to let them form habits of a doubtful tendency, merely because they are the habits of the day. He must train with an eye to his children's souls. He must not be ashamed to hear his training called singular and strange. What if it is? Time is short; the fashion of this world passes away. He that has trained his children for heaven rather than for earth—for God, rather than for man—is the parent that will be called wise at last.

Train your child in a knowledge of the Bible.

You cannot make your children love the Bible, I allow. None but the Holy Spirit can give us a heart to delight in the Word. But you can make your children acquainted with the Bible. Be sure they cannot be acquainted with that blessed book too soon or too well.

A thorough knowledge of the Bible is the foundation of all clear views of religion. He that is well grounded in it will not generally be found a waverer and carried about by every wind of new doctrine. Any system of training that does not make knowledge of Scripture the first thing is unsafe and unsound.

You need to be careful on this point just now, for the devil is abroad and error abounds. Some are to be found among us who give the church the honor due to Jesus Christ. Some are to be found who make the sacraments saviors and passports to eternal life. And some are to be found in like manner who honor a catechism more than the Bible or fill the minds of their children with miserable little storybooks instead of the Scripture of truth. But if you love your children, let the simple

Bible be everything in the training of their souls; and let all other books go down and take the second place.

- *See that your children read the Bible reverently.* Train them to look on it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, written by the Holy Spirit Himself—all true, all profitable, and able to make us wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.
- *See that they read it regularly.* Train them to regard it as their soul's daily food—as a thing essential to their soul's daily health. I know very well you cannot make this anything more than a form; but there is no telling the amount of sin that a mere form may indirectly restrain.
- *See that they read it all.* You need not shrink from bringing any doctrine before them. You need not fancy that the leading doctrines of Christianity are things that children cannot understand. Children understand far more of the Bible than we are apt to suppose.
- *Tell them of sin:* its guilt, its consequences, its power, its vileness. You will find they can comprehend something of this.
- *Tell them of the Lord Jesus Christ and His work for our salvation:* the atonement, the cross, the blood, the sacrifice, the intercession. You will discover there is something not beyond them in all this.
- *Tell them of the work of the Holy Spirit in man's heart:* how He changes, renews, sanctifies, and purifies. You will soon see they can go along with you in some measure in this. In short, I suspect we have no idea how much a little child can take in of the length and breadth of the glorious gospel. They see far more of these things than we suppose.
- *Fill their minds with Scripture.* Let the Word dwell in them richly. Give them the Bible, the whole Bible, even while they are young.

Train them to a habit of prayer.

Prayer is the very life-breath of true religion. It is one of the first evidences that a man is born again. "Behold," said the Lord of Saul in the day He sent Ananias to him; "Behold, he prayeth" (Acts 9:11). He had begun to pray, and that was proof enough.

- *Prayer was the distinguishing mark of the Lord's people in the day that there began to be a separation between them and the world.* "Then began men to call upon the name of the LORD" (Gen. 4:26).
- *Prayer is the peculiarity of all real Christians now.* They pray—for they tell God their wants, their feelings, their desires, their fears, and mean what they say. The nominal Christian may repeat prayers and good prayers, too, but he goes no further.
- *Prayer is the turning point in a man's soul.* Our ministry is

unprofitable, and our labor is vain until you are brought to your knees. Until then, we have no hope about you.


- *Prayer is one great secret of spiritual prosperity.* When there is much private communion with God, your soul will grow like the grass after rain. When there is little, all will be at a standstill; you will barely keep your soul alive. Show me a growing Christian, a going forward Christian, a strong Christian, a flourishing Christian, and sure am I, he is one that speaks often with his Lord. He asks much and he has much. He tells Jesus everything, and so he always knows how to act.

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You are invited to our 2009 commencement ceremonies celebrating God's faithfulness enabling us to complete another year in the training of men for sacred ministry.

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 Johnny Serafini **M.Div.**



speaker:
Dr. Sinclair Ferguson



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- *Prayer is the mightiest engine God has placed in our hands.* It is the best weapon to use in every difficulty and the surest remedy in every trouble. It is the key that unlocks the treasury of promises and the hand that draws forth grace and help in time of need. It is the silver trumpet God commands us to sound in all our necessity, and it is the cry He has promised always to attend to, even as a loving mother to the voice of her child.
- *Prayer is the simplest means that man can use in coming to God.* It is within reach of all—the sick, the aged, the infirm, the paralytic, the blind, the poor, the unlearned—all can pray. It avails you nothing to plead your lack of memory, lack of learning, lack of books, and lack of scholarship in this matter. So long as you have a tongue to tell your soul's state, you may and ought to pray. Those words, “Ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:2), will be a fearful condemnation to many in the Day of Judgment.
- *Parents, if you love your children, do all that lies in your power to train them up to a habit of prayer.* Show them how to begin. Tell them what to say. Encourage them to persevere. Remind them if they become careless and slack about it. Let it not be your fault, at any rate, if they never call on the name of the Lord.

This, remember, is the first step in religion which a child is able to take. Long before he can read, you can teach him to kneel by his mother's side and repeat the simple words of prayer and praise that she puts in his mouth. And as the first steps in any undertaking are always the most important, so is the manner in which your children's prayers are prayed—a point that deserves your closest attention. Few seem to know how much depends on this. You must beware lest they get into a way of saying them in a hasty, careless, and irreverent manner. You must beware...of trusting too much to your children doing it when left to themselves. I cannot praise that mother who never looks after this most important part of her child's daily life herself. Surely, if there be any habit which your own hand and eye should help in forming, it is the habit of prayer. Believe me; if you never hear your children pray yourself, *you* are much to blame.

- *Prayer is of all habits the one that we recollect the longest.* Many an older man could tell you how his mother used to make him pray in the days of his childhood. Other things have passed away from his mind perhaps. The church where he was taken to worship, the minister whom he heard preach, the companions who used to play with him—all these, it may be, have passed from his memory and left no mark behind. But you will often find it is far different with his first prayers. He will often be able to tell you where he knelt, what he was taught to say, and even how his mother looked all the while. It will come up as fresh before his mind's eye as if it was but yesterday.

Reader, if you love your children, I charge you, do not let the seedtime of a prayerful habit pass away unimproved. If you train your children to anything, train them at least to a habit of prayer.

J.C. Ryle (1816–1900) served as the Bishop of Liverpool and was a prolific writer of many classics, such as *Holiness* and *Old Paths*.

disciples when they would have hindered them from being brought to Him. It is expressly said that Jesus was much displeased and said, “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God” (Luke 18:16)—a tender circumstance that perhaps was recorded, in part at least, for this very reason: that children in succeeding ages might be impressed and affected with it.

Through these scenes of His life, we should lead them on to His death. We should show how easily He could have delivered Himself—of which He gave so sensible an evidence in striking down by one word those who came to apprehend Him (John 18:6)—and yet how patiently He submitted to the most cruel injuries: to be scourged and spit upon, to be crowned with thorns, and to bear His cross. We should show them how this innocent, holy, and divine Person was brought as a lamb to the slaughter; and, while they were piercing Him with nails, instead of loading them with curses, He prayed for them, saying, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

We should lead on their thoughts to the glorious views of Christ's resurrection and ascension and tell them with what adorable goodness He still remembers His people in the midst of His exaltation, pleading the cause of sinful creatures, and employing His interest in the court of heaven to procure life and glory for all that believe in Him and love Him.

We should then go on to instruct them in those particulars of obedience by which the sincerity of our faith and our love is to be approved. At the same time, we must remind them of their own weakness and tell them how God helps us by sending His Holy Spirit to dwell in our hearts to furnish us for every good word and work. An important lesson without attending to which our instruction will be vain and their hearing will likewise be vain!

Philip Doddridge (1702–1751) was an English Nonconformist minister and a prolific hymn writer and author, best known for his *The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul*.



BRINGING UP CHILDREN FOR GOD

EDWARD PAYSON

*Take this child and
nurse it for me,
and I will give thee
thy wages.*

—Exodus 2:9

These words were addressed by Pharaoh's daughter to the mother of Moses. Of the circumstances that occasioned them, it can scarcely be necessary to inform you. You need not be told that soon after the birth of this future leader of Israel his parents were compelled by the cruelty of the Egyptian king to expose him in an ark of bulrushes on the banks of the Nile. In this situation, he was found by the daughter of Pharaoh. So powerfully did his infant cries excite her compassion that she determined not only to rescue him from a watery grave, but to adopt and educate him as her own.

His sister Miriam, who at a distance had watched his fate unseen, now came forward like a person entirely unacquainted with the circumstances of his exposure and, on hearing of the princess' determination, offered to procure a Hebrew woman to take care of him until he should be of sufficient age to appear at her father's court. This offer being accepted, she immediately went and called the child's mother, to whose care he was committed by the princess in the words of our text: "Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages."

In similar language, my friends, does God address parents. To everyone on whom He bestows the blessing of children, He says in His Word and by the voice of His providence, "Take this child and educate it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." From this passage, therefore, we may take occasion to show what is implied in educating children for God.

The first thing implied in educating children for God is a realizing, heartfelt conviction that they are His property, His children, rather than ours. He commits them for a time to our care, merely for the purpose of education, as we place children under the care of human instructors for the same purpose. However carefully we may educate children, yet we cannot be said to educate them for God unless we believe that they are His; for if we believe that they are ours exclusively, we shall and must educate them for ourselves and not for Him. To know that they are His is to feel a cordial, operative conviction that He has a sovereign right to dispose of them as He pleases and to take them from us whenever He thinks fit. That they are His and that He possesses this right is evident from innumerable passages in the inspired writings. We are told that God is the former of our bodies and the Father of our spirits, that we are all His offspring, and that consequently we are not our own but His. We are also assured that as the soul of the parent, so also the souls of the children are His. God once and again severely reproves and threatens the Jews because they sacrificed *His* children in the fire to Moloch (Ezek. 16:20–21). Yet, plain and explicit as these passages are, how few parents appear to feel their force. How few appear to feel and act as if conscious that they and theirs were the absolute property of God, that they were merely the foster parents of their children, and that, in all which they do for them, they are or ought to be acting for God. But it is evident that they must feel this before they can bring up their children for Him; for how can they educate their children for a Being whose existence they do not realize, whose right to them they do not acknowledge, and whose character they do not love?

Nearly connected with this is a second thing implied in educating children for God—namely, a cordial and solemn dedication or surrender of them to Him to be His forever. We have already shown that they are His property and not ours. By dedicating them to Him, we mean nothing more than an explicit acknowledgment of this truth or an acknowledgment that we consider them as entirely His and that we unreservedly surrender them to Him for time and eternity.... If we refuse to give them to God, how can we be said to educate them for Him?

In the third place, if we would educate children for God, we must do all that we do for them from right motives. Almost the only motive that the Scriptures allow to be right is a regard for the glory of God and an unselfish desire to promote it; they consider nothing as really done for God that does not flow from this source. Without this, however exemplary we may be, we do but bring forth fruit to ourselves and are no better than empty vines. We must be governed therefore by this motive in the education of our children if we would educate them for God and not for ourselves. In all our cares, labors, and sufferings for them, a regard to the divine glory must be the main spring that moves us. If we act merely from parental affection, we act from no higher principle than the irrational animals around us; many of them evidently appear to love their offspring no less ardently and to be no less ready to encounter dangers, toils, and sufferings to promote their happiness than we are to promote the welfare of ours. But if parental affection can be sanctified by the grace of God and parental duties hallowed by a wish to promote His glory, then we rise above the irrational world to

our proper station and may be said to educate our children for God. Here, my friends, we may observe that true religion, when it prevails in the heart, sanctifies *everything*. It renders even the most common actions of life acceptable to God and gives them a dignity and importance, which of themselves they by no means deserve.... Thus, the care and education of children, however trifling it may be thought by some, ought to be attended to from a regard to the divine glory. When this is done, it becomes an important part of true religion.

In the fourth place, if we would educate our children for God, we must educate them for His service. The three preceding particulars that we have mentioned refer principally to ourselves and our motives. But this has more immediate relation to our children themselves....

In order to qualify yourselves for instructing and preparing your children for God's service, you must diligently study His Word to ascertain what He requires of them and frequently pray for the assistance of His Spirit, both for them and yourselves.... You will carefully guard against saying or doing anything which may, either directly or indirectly, lead them to consider religion as an object of secondary importance. On the contrary, you will constantly labor to impress upon their minds a conviction that you consider religion as the great business of life, the favor of God as the only proper object of pursuit, and the enjoyment of Him hereafter as the only happiness, while everything else is comparatively of no consequence, however important it may otherwise be.

Edward Payson (1783–1827) was an American Congregational preacher who served the Congregational Church of Portland, Maine.

CALVIN for the 21st Century
 aug.27-29
 PURITAN REFORMED CONFERENCE WWW.PURITANSEMINARY.COM

Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary will be hosting its first major conference August 27–29. This year's theme is "Calvin for the 21st Century." The conference will be held at the Calvin College Prince Center in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Speakers at this year's conference will include Joel Beeke, Jerry Bilkes, Ligon Duncan, Michael Haykin, Nelson Kloosterman, David Murray, Joseph Pipa, Neil Pronk, Donald Sinnema, Derek Thomas, and Cornel Venema. They will be addressing a variety of ways in which Calvin can assist us in understanding the Word of God, the love of God, the work of the Holy Spirit, redemption, reforming the church, ethics, the benefits of salvation, and reprobation.

Don't forget to bring your book allowance! Reformation Heritage Books will have a large selection of books on and by Calvin and a host of other subjects available at the conference, all at steeply discounted prices. Visit Reformation Heritage Books online at www.heritagebooks.org.

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Look for online registration availability beginning in March at www.puritanseminary.org. Conference accommodations at the Prince Center are limited to 450 attendees, so sign up early to avoid disappointment. Send all questions and/or comments related to the Puritan Reformed Conference to conference@puritanseminary.org or call Chris Hanna at 616.977.0599, ext. 138. You may write the seminary at 2965 Leonard Street, NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49525.

15 Marriage Admonitions

BY LEGH RICHMOND



Prior to his daughter's marriage, Pastor Legh Richmond (1772–1827) put into her hands a paper of directions for her future conduct, which, for simplicity, affection, and sound practical wisdom, may be considered one of the best dowries that a Christian parent could bestow on his child.

My much-loved daughter,

When your sister Mary left her paternal roof, I gave her a paper of admonitions, which I requested her to read often. I do the same for you, in the form of a friendly string of maxims, to regulate your conduct in your new and very responsible situation.

1. Aim at keeping a devoted heart for God in the least and most common transactions of every hour as well as in those events which may seem to call the loudest for manifestations of Christian prudence and principle.
2. Pray regularly and frequently, not seldom and occasionally, for grace to live by.
3. Remember the Christian principles and examples of your father's house, and everywhere endeavor to preserve its character, by consistency in conduct, conversation, and temper. Keep in constant recollection the wise, prudent, and conscientious example of your dear mother.
4. Form no hasty friendship; and none whatever, but such as may promote seriousness of heart, tongue, and life.
5. Beware of cheerfulness degenerating into levity. Let no natural vivacity of temper, no occasionally indulged sallies of humor and jocularly, throw a shadow over the exercise of solid principle. Little foolish things give a color to character, and are more easily imitated, than serious and good sentiments.
6. Guard against hasty judgments of character, and above all against uttering hasty opinions, and making remarks to the disparagement of others. Particularly avoid making the errors, failings, faults, or follies of others the subject of rash and unguarded remarks. Be known for charity, forbearance, and kindness. Be slow to judge rather than swift to speak.
7. Wherever you are, in the first place, remember that God's eye is upon you; and then imagine also that your husband and father are present. It may be fanciful but it is a profitable supposition.
8. Keep Christ's golden rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you," in perpetual remembrance. It is the panacea for most of the social evils of life.
9. Be conscientious towards all; friendly with few; confidential with fewer still; strictly intimate with fewest of all.
10. When you think of your father, bear with his infirmities and pardon his faults, but remember his principles and instructions, so far as they have been agreeable to the Word of God.
11. Do not be content with anything short of deep, sincere, diligent, and decided Christ-centered piety.
12. If you and your husband happen to differ in opinion or feeling on any point, remember whom you have promised to love, honor, and obey and this will settle all things.
13. Of your husband's warm affections towards you, I entertain no doubt. Strive to preserve them by daily elevation of character, and not so much by fondness as by prudence and dignity. May you both learn to raise a home of marital happiness by mutual wisdom and love.
14. Observe great simplicity and plainness in dress. You should be a pattern to others in this respect. There is a just complaint made of many females who profess to be pious that they are far too showy and mirthful in their outward apparel. Remember the apostle Peter's injunction, "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."
15. Christ has been made known to you fully and freely; let Christ be your all in all, both now and forever.

Receive my parting advice in love, and be assured, my beloved child, that it comes from the affectionate heart of your dear father.

— Legh Richmond

The Following Parent and Teacher

JAMES W. BEEKE

“And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldst keep his commandments, or no.”

— Deuteronomy 8:2



What sin did Adam commit in the Garden of Eden? What root sin caused mankind’s deep fall in Paradise? The sin of pride—the sin of wanting to be in God’s position. Satan tempted our first parents with the same sin that led to his downfall. Eat of the tree and “ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil” (Gen. 3:5b). Pride fostered disobedience. Ever since our fall in Adam, our sinful hearts desire the same thing. We, too, desire to be in God’s position, to determine right and wrong for ourselves. We crave the central position. We want everything to revolve around us. We struggle to ensure that everything goes the way we want it to go, and to have everyone honor us and treat us the way that we want. We want to lead and we expect others to follow us.

This sin of self-centeredness is the problematic source of a great deal of our worry, frustration, anxiety, resentment, and depression as individuals, parents, and teachers. As individuals, we naturally focus more on our desires that a certain person would love me, or that a particular job would open for me, or that I could purchase a specific home, car, or other item of interest than on spiritually wanting to grow more humble and content. As parents, we naturally dwell more on our children’s attitudes toward us than on spiritually developing more in trusting and following the Lord. As teachers, we naturally fixate more on a student’s words and actions toward us than on spiritually striving to become more Christ-like.

Parents and teachers, this sin of self-centered pride needs to be identified, repented of, and fought against. Pray to do so by the grace of God. Do you recognize the problem? Life is not primarily about me. Life does not revolve around my circumstances. History will not ultimately be about my story. It will be about God’s story—about His wonderful plan and its revelation in time. Life revolves around God Almighty, not me.

Parents, God is more interested in molding you to become more humble than whether or not the attitude of your daughter changes toward you. What is more important in your life: that her attitude changes or yours? The key to truthfully answering this question is who is most important, God or me? Whose desire means most, God’s or mine? Who is leading and who is following?

Teachers, God is more interested that you grow a gracious, caring, and charitable spirit than whether or not the actions of a particular student change toward you. On which do you focus more, on God’s will or your desires? Do you concentrate on receiving that which you want, or on God achieving the growth in your life that He wants?

Is it not this sin of pride and self-centeredness that poisons our prayer life? We want to be God, and we ask God to serve us. “Lord, change my daughter’s attitude.” “O God, cause this student’s behavior to improve.” Yes, we even tell God when we want our desires to be fulfilled. In essence, “Lord, do what I want, when, where, and how I want it.” And I become upset and even murmur, as the Israelites in our text, when the Lord does not follow me.

But who is to lead? And who is to follow? Are the sheep to follow the Shepherd, or are the shepherd and flock to follow one of the sheep? Sinful pride reverses the proper place of God and of me. I must learn that I am to follow; God is to lead. If I may have a small part in His story, in His plan, that is amazing. If He will use various trials, difficulties, and injustices in my life to mold me so that I can reveal fruits of grace that are part of His kingdom story, how wonderful! No, life does not revolve around my story, that the Lord must do this, prevent that, and ensure that I receive something else. My personal story needs to be swallowed up in His. I must grow in serving. I must mature in recognizing God as God in His leadings in my life. My will must be swallowed up by His.

Is it wrong then to pray that irritating thorns and thistles may be removed from my life? Is it wrong to pray that God would change our children’s or students’ sinful attitudes and actions? No, not necessarily. Not if our will is subservient to God’s. Paul prayed that a certain thorn would be removed in his life, but God’s answer was that it would be better for his spiritual growth, and for the part that God would have him fulfill in His story of redemption, that He not remove it. Jesus prayed that His cup of suffering could be removed, yet nevertheless, not His will but God’s be done. Our prayers need to reflect who God is, who is leading, and who is following.

If sinful pride has the upper hand, then when God does not serve me and does not immediately fulfill my will, I become increasingly anxious, upset, and rebellious. If grace has the upper hand, however, then I increasingly strive to submit, trust, and obey. Who is God in your life? Are you trying to teach and direct God, or to learn from Him? Are you attempting to lead the Lord or to follow Him?

Are you a following parent, a serving teacher?

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BATTLING OVER THE BIBLE

It is more than thirty years since Harold Lindsell coined the phrase “Battle for the Bible” in the title of a book about the inerrancy of Scripture. Leaving aside what he said for the moment, his choice of title captured the real sense of conflict within the evangelical community over how the Bible should be viewed.

That conflict was not a flash-in-the-pan skirmish between different shades of evangelical opinion at that time, but rather part of an ongoing debate of major proportions and with far-reaching implications. The debate continues right down to the present time and has recently intensified with the publication of two new books on Scripture—*Inspiration and Incarnation*, by Peter Enns of Westminster Seminary, and *The Divine Spiration of Scripture*, by Andrew McGowan of Highland Theological College. Both of these books raise major questions about the whole idea of inerrancy and both are coming from a Reformed and evangelical perspective. Many might be forgiven for thinking that this is just another debate between Christian academics, but that would be to overlook the enormity of its impact on the church generally.

The Bible is central to the Christian faith and every Christian needs to have at least a basic understanding of why we can place our full confidence in all that it says. Jesus makes a categorical pronouncement when He declares, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17) and we need to appreciate what that means in relation to God’s written Word, the Bible.

A little bit of history

The roots of this debate stretch back into the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century—a time that marked a seismic shift in the worldviews and life-perspectives that had prevailed up until that point. In large measure, it was a change in the philosophy of how we understand things, but it had an inevitable impact on the church and the way Christians understood the Bible. It was the time when human autonomy and human reason came of age. The starting point in the quest for knowledge was no longer outside the human mind; it was now firmly within the reach of human intellect and ability. The Age of Reason was born.

As far as the church was concerned, the first major impact of this new way of thinking was felt in Germany. Theologians there began to view Scripture more in terms of its human authorship than as a divinely given revelation. It was as though the Bible could be put on an operating table and dissected with the scalpels of the new philosophical and scientific insights.

This new approach came to be known as Higher Criticism—the “higher” pointing to the fact that reason was no longer subject to the Bible, but the Bible was subject to reason.

This in turn led to the spread of “liberal” or “modernist” theology which became a dominant influence in the church during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Liberalism found a soul-mate in Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution and a whole new era of optimism in humanity ensued.

Is the Bible reliable?

The First World War and the Great Depression dealt a major blow to this optimistic outlook, and liberal theology, in turn, began to be questioned. The most significant challenge came from Karl Barth and a new brand of theology that soon earned the epithet “neo-orthodoxy.” This was an attempt to restore a meaningful spirituality to the heart of Christianity. This is not the place to explore the strengths and weaknesses of Barth’s contribution to theology, but suffice it to say that his view of Scripture drove a wedge between God’s Word as it is written in the Bible and as it is experienced in life.

The crux issue in this debate, as far as Evangelicals were concerned, was whether or not the Bible is reliable. Or to put a finer point on it: is it reliable in *all* it says or only in matters that relate to faith and salvation?

Infallible or inerrant?

In many ways the argument has come to revolve around the words used to define the reliability of Scripture. Some favor “infallible” in the sense that the Bible provides a reliable guide for all we need to know for faith and life. Others have opted for “inerrant” to indicate that Scripture is free from error.

As with every debate that focuses on the meaning of words, the words themselves have not always been that easy to pin down. Many theologians have used the word “infallible” with the sense of “free from error” while others have used “inerrant” in a way that is naive in its understanding of the nature of Scripture. But it would, I think, be fair to say that these words are used today in such a way that “infallibility” means general reliability, whereas “inerrancy” means freedom from error.

There are all kind of nuances in this debate that a serious student of this issue cannot afford to overlook, but beneath them all there is one major theological issue: “Can the God of truth give us a Bible that contains elements that are not true?” The answer to that can only be “No!”—because God Himself has made it clear that He cannot lie (1 Sam. 15:29).

The humanness and divinity of Scripture

The tensions implicit in this debate can only be resolved if we recognize that the Bible is not only a book of divine origin (“All scripture is given by inspiration of God” [2 Tim. 3:16]) but that it has been given through human agency (“holy

men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” [2 Pet. 1:21]).

There is no question that all the men God used in giving us the Bible were sinful men—David and Peter being cases in point. But God by His Spirit overruled their sinfulness in this singular act of bringing His written Word into being. Recognizing the humanness of Scripture allows us to note that accuracy and uniformity are not the same thing. If two or three witnesses were to testify in court and their testimonies were identical, then the judge would throw out their evidence as having been fabricated. Different people reporting the same event which they have all witnessed will place their own particular angle and emphasis on what they have seen. That helps us to appreciate why, for example, there are variations in the gospels over particular incidents and teachings reported there. They are not errors or contradictions but different accounts by different eye-witnesses, each of whom single out or emphasize different details.

The crunch issue

The bottom line in this whole debate is the following question. If the Bible *does* contain errors, then how can we know whether or not the particular detail at any given point is error or truth?

The attempt by some to distinguish that which relates to faith and salvation from that which is merely historical, geographical, or scientific, is artificial, misleading, and doomed to failure. Salvation rests on what God did in history at specific times, in specific places, and in specific ways. A supernatural thread is woven through all these things and it will never sit comfortably with attempts to explain everything rationally.

It’s a question of where we start. Or, to put it more biblically, a question of where we put our faith. We either proceed from the belief that the Bible is really what it says it is—the Word of truth that has been given by the God who cannot lie—or else from the belief that human reason is the final arbiter of truth.

This, then, is anything but a debate between armchair theologians. Our hope of salvation hangs on it. So we need to know we have a Bible we can trust. And indeed we do have such a Bible!

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TRUE EDUCATION THROUGH PREACHING

John Calvin

This is one of forty-five selections taken from a new book, “The Soul of Life”: The Piety of John Calvin, edited and introduced by Joel R. Beeke (available from Reformation Heritage Books for \$7.50).

Paul writes that Christ, “that he might fill all things,” appointed some to be “apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph. 4:10–13). We see how God, who could in a moment perfect His own, nevertheless desires them to grow up into manhood solely under the education of the church. We see the way set for it: the preaching of the heavenly doctrine has been enjoined on the pastors. We see that all are brought under the same regulation, that with a gentle and teachable spirit they may allow themselves to be governed by teachers appointed to this function. From this it follows that all those who spurn the spiritual food, divinely extended to them through the hand of the church, deserve to perish in famine and hunger. God breathes faith into us only by the instrument of His gospel, as Paul points out that “faith comes from hearing” (Rom. 10:17). Likewise, the power to save rests with God (Rom. 1:16); but, as Paul again testifies, he displays and unfolds it in the preaching of the gospel.

By this plan He willed of old that holy assemblies be held at the sanctuary, in order that the doctrine taught by the mouth of the priest might foster agreement in faith. The temple is called God’s “resting place” (Ps. 132:14); the sanctuary, His “dwelling”

(Isa. 57:15), where He is said to sit among the cherubim (Ps. 80:1). Glorious titles, they are used solely to bring esteem, love, reverence, and dignity to the ministry of the heavenly doctrine. Otherwise, the appearance of a mortal and despised man would much detract from them. To make us aware, then, that an inestimable treasure is given us in earthen vessels (2 Cor. 4:7), God Himself appears in our midst, and, as Author of this order, would have men recognize Him as present in His institution.

Accordingly, after He forbade His people to devote themselves to auguries, divinations, magic arts, necromancy, and other superstitions (Deut. 18:10–11; Lev. 19:31), He added that He would give what ought to suffice for all: that they should never be destitute of prophets (cf. Deut. 18:15). But as He did not entrust the ancient folk to angels but raised up teachers from the earth truly to perform the angelic office, so also today it is His will to teach us through human means. As He was of old not content with the law alone, but added priests as interpreters from whose lips the people might ask its true meaning (cf. Mal. 2:7), so today He not only desires us to be attentive to its reading, but also appoints instructors to help us by their effort. This is doubly useful. On the one hand, He proves our obedience by a very good test when we hear His ministers speaking, just as if He Himself spoke. On the other, He also provides for our weakness in that He prefers to address us in human fashion through interpreters in order to draw us to Himself, rather than to thunder at us and drive us away. Indeed, from the dread with which God’s majesty justly overwhelms them, all the pious truly feel how much this familiar sort of teaching is needed.

— *Institutes* 4.1.5

Christian Contentment

Dr. Jack Sin

We live in a discontented world, and it is all too easy for the Christian to share its spirit of murmuring and complaint. The Bible is the best book for remedying this spiritual disease in practical and effective ways.

“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content,” writes Paul in Philippians 4:11. Here is a cordial to revive the drooping spirits of the saints in these depressing times. This gospel text encapsulates the life and soul of practical divinity. Contentment is the most powerful testimony to the truth of our Christian profession, for it expresses the glorious truth of the sovereignty of God—His rule over everything, including ourselves and our circumstances.

Genuine faith will lead to a life of contentment in the Lord lived out before your children, your family and friends, and the world at large. It is the strongest witness you could ever give of your trust in Christ.

Mother of all graces

Contentment seals our confession. Our attitude to our level of income, to our house and the things in it, and to our looks—the way we react to setbacks and disappointments—all these things and more tell others what we really believe.

Contentment demonstrates that we believe that we are in the hands of God and that we praise Him for it. It shows that we believe in His power, benevolence, and grace. To say “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” is to echo the words of Asaph in Psalm 73:25—“Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.” Having Christ we have everything we could desire. David agrees: “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” I lack nothing, he declares, for “Thou art my portion, O LORD” (Ps. 23:1; 119:57).

To be truly content in belonging to the living God is to be truly happy. Contentment is the mother of all graces, for out of her womb is born thankfulness, joyfulness, love, and usefulness in our Christian walk.

Do we possess the grace of Christian contentment—of peace and satisfaction in our soul? Do we believe that God will meet all our needs and *has* met our greatest need in Christ? That our heavenly Father works all things together for our good? Or do we live a life of discontentment? Are we dissatisfied with our income, our spouse, our single or married condition, our church or elders, our fellow believers, ourselves, or even with God?

Great gain

Contentment is an important word in Scripture. If depression is life in darkness, contentment is life in the sunshine of God’s countenance. Contentment is the crown of the Christian life. The word “contented” means “sufficient” or “full.” God Himself is the complete and sufficient One. Contentment, therefore, reflects the character of God and can be found only when, by His grace, we know the God of the Bible.

Philippians 4:11 says, “Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” We read in 1 Timothy 6:6–8 that “godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.” In Hebrews 13:5 we are exhorted to live “without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he [God] hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

We also find the same word (contentment) in the Scripture translated “sufficiency,” for instance, in 2 Corinthians 9:8: “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.” And again, 2 Corinthians 12:9, God’s word to the apostle Paul concerning his thorn in the flesh is this: “My grace is sufficient for thee.”

Contentment, then, is faith’s confidence in the sufficiency of God’s provision for *all* our needs—physical, material, psychological, and spiritual. It is confidence in the sufficiency of God’s grace for every circumstance. The fruit of this contentment is to experience the peace of God and be able to say, “Have Thine own way” the “perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2c)—not with resignation but with joy. The contented person has what the discontented are looking for and never find: satisfaction and rest for his soul in God.

Counterfeits

To know what Christian contentment is, we must distinguish it from its counterfeits. We must know what it is not. Christian contentment is placid, relaxed, and matter-of-fact. But we must not confuse an easy-going personality or temperament



with the grace of contentment. Contentment is not simply about our personal tolerance level.

Neither is Christian contentment the same as indifference or complacency. Those who are naturally easy-going over setbacks and complacent about problems may also be easy-going over sin and complacent about God. Contentment is a spiritual and transforming grace resulting from God's Spirit working in our hearts. When God gives us the grace of Christian contentment it does not mean that we stop striving to do our best.

Nor is contentment self-satisfaction — of the kind exhibited by the Pharisees who felt no guilt or sense of failure before the holy God. Such false equanimity is rooted in the conceit of self. It is blindness, spiritual ignorance, and folly before the thrice holy God, who calls us to be holy and to serve Him with wholehearted obedience.

Finally, Christian contentment is not inner repression, which occurs when all our desires and ambitions are firmly suppressed. It is a gracious work in the heart, a trustful handing-over of all things to God, believing that what He does, He does well.

A present possession

Contentment transcends the physical and the material. Paul said, "I am content in whatsoever state I am." That is the difference between being content *with* the world and being content *in* the world. We may be content in the world but our contentment is not due to our possessions or circumstances, but rather to what God gives us while we are in this world. Ultimately, of course, what gives us contentment is not the physical or material but God Himself.

Christian contentment is a present possession, not something based on hoped-for acquisitions. So often we say, "Well, when I get to this certain point and when I have this or that in my life, then I will be content." But that is present *discontentment*, covetousness in action. The Word of God teaches here-and-now contentment (1 Tim. 6:6). The Psalmist says, "I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety" (Ps. 4:8). It is present because we possess Christ *now*. It is the present understanding by faith that God rules over all. Contentment is a present possession, not just a future hope.

Resist obstacles

Be alert and fight against every obstacle to Christian contentment. There is always the temptation and danger of covetousness. The Lord warned, "Beware of covetousness. A man's life consists not in the abundance of the things that he possesses" (Luke 12:15). "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal" (Matt. 6:21–33).

Remember that it is harder for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of heaven. Let the grace of God transform our attitudes towards money and worldly possessions. We

must be aware of the "deceitfulness of riches" of which Christ speaks in the parable of the sower (Matt. 13). Happiness, personal worth, and success are not found in one's possessions or achievements. That is paganism in action. True religion is a complete trust in God. Covetousness dulls our spiritual senses, debases our thoughts, and turns our minds to physical pleasure and personal gain.

Joy and Satisfaction

Contentment involves sharing God's value-judgments concerning what constitutes true wealth, a clear conscience before God, and a joy in serving God with whatever He has given us (Acts 23:1; 24:16). True richness is to have fellowship with the living God through faith in Jesus Christ. True riches are the peace of God in my heart and the assurance that I am accepted in the beloved Son of God.

So learn to be content in the Lord. Avoid avarice or covetousness which is rebellion against the will of God. If we do not learn this, discontentment will do two things. It will make us blind to the many gifts that God *has* given us because we are too obsessed with what we do not have. And, secondly, it will make you unable to appreciate God Himself and you will complain against Him as Israel did in the wilderness (Num. 11:1–10).

Discontentment is ultimately discontentment with God — a failure to understand or embrace the truth of His sovereignty and gracious care. Contentment, on the other hand, gives us peace and strength and an eagerness to serve Christ. Having this inner calm by the grace of God, we become devoted workers together with Him. We become energetic unto every good work.

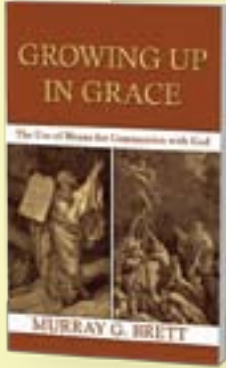
Moreover, the contented person has spiritual sensitivity. Believing that God is with him, he is content to persevere in obedience. Hear the Word of God: "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee" (Isa. 26:3). Let us trust in the Lord Jehovah, for in Him is everlasting strength.

Conclusion

Let us dare to believe and trust in the promises of God's Word. We are able to do all things in Him who gives us strength constantly. Our life does not consist in the abundance of things that we possess but in our vital union with Jesus Christ, who can cause us to be content always. Therefore, let us not be anxious over anything (Phil. 4:6). He is with us, and He will never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5). He will be with us, strengthening us, even in the hour of our death when we shall enter the very presence of God. He who has started His wonderful saving work in our souls will continue it until the very end and thereafter make us victorious and glorious at Christ's return. That is our glorious hope and greatest contentment.

The following titles are recently published or reprinted. The first price is retail, and the second is our discounted price. PB = paperback, HC = hard cover.

NEW RHB BOOKS



Growing up in Grace: The Use of Means for Communion with God — Murray G. Brett

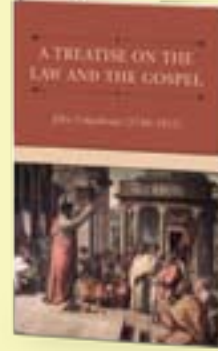
“The Christian life is an exciting and challenging life from beginning to end. There is no room for standing still and if we are tempted to do this we soon find that stagnation is the same as going backwards. We must grow spiritually and this means we must grow in the way the Bible lays down for us. Murray Brett seeks to show us this way by working through such things as humility, confession, repentance, prayer, etc. These and other basic truths are dealt with in a clear and biblical way with plenty of illustration and application. All believers will benefit from a careful and prayerful reading of this book.”

— Peter Jeffery

“Murray Brett’s book is an exhortation to full-orbed discipleship of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is pleading for experiential Calvinistic living. The book addresses our consciences about the character of our Christian way. Is there credible godliness? Is there a deepening relationship with our Lord? Is the love of Jesus Christ constraining our behavior—love so amazing, so divine, demanding our souls, our lives, and our all—and ourselves giving the Lord affectionate obedience in return? That is the formidable challenge of Murray’s book.”

— Geoff Thomas

(176 pages, PB) \$13.00/10.00



Law and Gospel

John Colquhoun

John Colquhoun (1748–1827) was a minister in the Church of Scotland whose sermons and writings reflect those of the Marrow brethren of the Secession church. Colquhoun’s writings are theologically astute and intensely practical. He wrote on the core doctrines of the gospel, particularly on experiential soteriology.

In this book, Colquhoun helps us understand the precise relationship between law and gospel. He also impresses us with the importance of knowing this relationship. Colquhoun especially excels in showing how important the law is as a believer’s rule of life without doing injury to the freeness and fullness of the gospel. By implication, he enables us to draw four practical conclusions: 1) the law shows us how to live, 2) the law as a rule of life combats both antinomianism and legalism, 3) the law shows us how to love, and 4) the law promotes true freedom. (340 pages, HB) \$25.00/19.00

OTHER NEW BOOKS

Commentary upon Second Peter — Thomas Adams

Not included in Adams’ works, is his magnum opus, *A Commentary on the Second Epistle General of St. Peter*, an extensive commentary first published in 1633. The work is exegetically reliable and stylistically adept with much useful theological knowledge conveyed in striking phrases. Spurgeon commented that this book was the best Puritan commentary printed under James Sherman’s editorship. Adams is unsurpassed on Second Peter. Though the print is small, the content is rich and is well worth patient perusal. Here is a feast for ministers and all serious Bible students! (HB, 900 pages, Solid Ground) \$90.00/\$49.95

Sabbath Scripture Readings II: Spiritual Meditations on Genesis 1 Through 2 Kings 11 — Thomas Chalmers

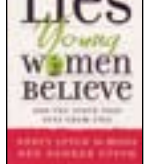


From October 1841–1847, Thomas Chalmers compiled these “Sabbath Readings” as he worked through each chapter from Genesis 1 through 2 Kings 11. Like Augustine’s *Confessions*, these meditations are primarily written in the form and language of prayer. This volume is the companion volume to Chalmers’ *Sabbath Scripture Readings on the New Testament*. Sadly, Chalmers died before he was able to complete the Old Testament, but

these 507 pages contain riches rarely found in such devotional works. (PB, 507 pages, Solid Ground) \$35.00/26.00

Lies Young Women Believe

Nancy Leigh DeMoss and Dannah Gresh



Through a nationwide survey and in-depth discussion groups, DeMoss and Gresh have listened carefully to the heart of this young generation. In this book, they expose twenty-five of the lies most commonly believed by young women. They share real-life accounts from some of the young women they interviewed, along with

honest stories about how they have overcome lies they believed themselves. They get right down in the trenches of the battle with you. Best of all, they will show you how to be set free by the truth. (PB, 201 pgs., Moody Publishers) \$13.99/\$10.50



Justification: Understanding the Classic Reformed Doctrine — John V. Fesko

This book applies the insights of biblical theology to present a comprehensive defense of justification by faith alone, the doctrine at the heart of the gospel. It treats several theological traditions and current exegetical, theological, and ecumenical debates. It includes discussion on the covenant of works, union with Christ, the

New Perspective on Paul, Eastern Orthodoxy, and Roman Catholicism. John V. Fesko’s work reflects a pastor-scholar’s sensitivity to these important issues. For those looking for a book that engages with both historical and contemporary concerns over the doctrine of justification, this is your book. (PB, 480 pages, P&R) \$30.00/\$21.00



From the Lips of Little Ones: A Study in the Catechism (for Very Little People) — Jeff Kingswood

Based upon the 1840 children’s version of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Pastor Jeff Kingswood has developed a program that takes young children through one or two questions every week. This study guide aids the parents’ duty to “train up a child in the way he should go” in order that the young child might be disciplined and shown the way of truth. (PB, approximately 150 pgs., Crown and Covenant) Ages: 2+ \$10.00/\$7.50



Noah's Ark: Thinking Outside the Box

Jim Lovett

Jim Lovett tackles a common question by those who oppose or are skeptical that Noah had the ability and technology to construct the ark as described in Genesis 6. Using extensive research and knowledge of ancient and modern shipbuilding, Lovett demonstrates that God's design was more than capable of housing the animals, withstanding the tumult of the worldwide flood, and that ancient man possessed the skills necessary to build such an outstanding vessel. The colorful illustrations and scale models presented on the pages of this book will mesmerize your children and instruct them in the truths regarding Noah's flood. (HB, 71 pgs., Master Books) Ages: 8-14 \$16.00/\$12.00

The Complete Works of Thomas Manton

Thomas Manton

Manton's *Complete Works* offers numerous treatises on scores of subjects, such as the life of faith and self-denial. Sermons provide detailed exposition of such passages as Matthew 25, John 17, Romans 6 and 8, 2 Corinthians 5, and Hebrews 11. Of his 190 sermons on Psalm 119, Spurgeon said, "There is not a poor discourse in the whole collection: he is evenly good, constantly excellent." (HB, 22 Vols., Solid Ground) \$1,000.00/\$320.00

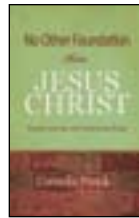
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- Brady, Gary.** *What the Bible Teaches about Being Born Again.* (PB) \$15.00/11.00
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- Ruvulo, Carol J.** *God with Us: Light from the Gospels.* (PB) \$9.00/7.50
- Sargent, Tony.** *Gems from Martyn Lloyd-Jones: An Anthology of Quotations.* (PB) \$25.00/19.00
- Spurgeon, Charles H.** *Devotional Thoughts on the Bible: Matthew and Mark.* (PB) \$19.00/14.00
- Whytock, Jack C.** *An Educated Clergy: Scottish Theological Education and Training in the Kirk and Secession, 1560-1850* (PB) \$60.00/44.50



John Calvin: A Heart for Devotion, Doctrine, and Doxology — *Burke Parsons, editor*

John Calvin is often reviled as a humorless doctrinarian who preached an austere theology that twisted Scripture. In *John Calvin: A Heart for Devotion, Doctrine, and Doxology*, Burk Parsons and a cadre of godly pastors and scholars (e.g., Derek W. H. Thomas, Sinclair B. Ferguson, W. Robert Godfrey, John MacArthur, Richard D. Phillips, Jay E. Adams, Philip Graham Ryken, Michael Horton, Jerry Bridges, and Joel R. Beeke) seek to set the record straight. The book's nineteen succinct chapters explore aspects of Calvin's life, ministry, and teachings, and establish his importance for the twenty-first-century church. (HB, 257 pages, Reformation Trust) \$19.00/13.00



No Other Foundation than Jesus Christ: Pastoral, Historical, and Contemporary Essays — *Cornelis Pronk*

Neil Pronk's ministry has focused on this central tenet: There is no other foundation than Jesus Christ. In Christ Jesus, God has laid the foundation for the salvation of hell-deserving sinners. The rest of the building will be properly erected only if it is in line with this foundation. How is the church to be built on and lived out on this foundation? Read and learn. (HB, 393 pages, Free Reformed Publications) \$21.00/\$17.00



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Jesus' Crucifixion

When Jesus entered the last week of His life, He did not stop His great work as Savior. Even when He was in great pain, He spoke words of mercy and love. It is very difficult to think about someone else's needs when you are in pain or when you are sick. Jesus, however, seemed to be thinking mostly of others. No human being could have endured the agony that Jesus experienced, but neither could any human being show so much concern for others while enduring so much anguish.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, He spoke to His disciples who could not stay awake to pray with Him during His intense agony. "And he said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation" (Luke 22:46). This warning was not lost on Peter. Years later, he wrote, "Be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (1 Peter 4:7b).

Judas led the soldiers to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane and betrayed Jesus with a kiss. What a terrible thing to do! Jesus did not respond to His former disciple in anger, however. Instead, He rebuked him gently, sadly: "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" (Matthew 26:50). "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?" (Luke 22:48). Tragically, Judas did not truly repent and return to the Savior.

Knowing He was about to be crucified, Jesus took the time to heal the ear of the high priest's servant. Peter had cut it off while trying to defend Jesus. Jesus told Peter that He did not need to be defended: "Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11). "And he touched [the servants'] ear, and healed him" (Luke 22:51b). What effect did this have on the nameless servant? We do not know, but for the rest of his life, he only needed to reach up and touch his ear to remember Jesus' compassion to him.

Jesus physically took the place of Barabbas (Luke 23:18-25). Did Barabbas understand what Jesus did for him? Did he make the connection between his release from prison and the work of salvation Jesus came to do? We do not know. Although the Bible does not mention Barabbas again, some historians think that the Holy Spirit showed Barabbas that the Lord Jesus died in his place to make atonement for his sins and that Barabbas was converted.

While Jesus was being questioned at the high priest's house, His concern was for Peter. Though He didn't say a word, Jesus gave Peter a look that pierced Peter's conscience and brought him to repentance. Peter had vowed that he would never forsake or deny his dear Master, yet he denied three times that he knew Jesus of Nazareth. "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how

he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:61-62). Jesus sought His wandering lamb even as He was paying the price for Peter's sin.

In the judgment hall of Pontius Pilate, the Savior talked with Pilate; after their talk, Pilate finally concluded, "I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23:3). On the way to Golgotha, He spoke to the weeping women. He did not want tears of pity; He wanted tears of repentance. "But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children" (Luke 23:28). Jesus was doing a glorious work, and He would rise victorious from the grave three days later. The people of Jerusalem, however, rejected their Messiah and would experience terrible sufferings and destruction by the Romans only forty years later. If we reject the Savior, we will have to face Him as our Judge. Staggering under the weight of the cross on His bleeding back, Jesus stopped to warn the weeping women of the coming judgment. *Now is the day of grace. Repent today!*

Jesus bore the jeers and taunts of the scornful crowd so patiently. He made no response to their rude, disrespectful remarks. When they nailed Him to the cross and watched Him die, however, He prayed for their salvation: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). Instead of responding in anger to the mocking thieves crucified on either side of Him, He granted salvation to one of them when this thief confessed his sin and asked Jesus to remember him in mercy. "And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). What abundant mercy! What undeserved grace!

Most people ignored the love of Jesus and went home without any remorse or pangs of conscience. They had cried, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and recklessly taken upon themselves the curse of their sin, shouting, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew 27:25). They thought they were only taking on a troublesome man's death. They wanted to be rid of a man who criticized the religion of the Jewish leaders. They did not realize that they were asking God to hold them responsible for the death of the Son of God. Yet, some of these same people found forgiveness only weeks later on the Day of Pentecost when they cried out to God and asked Him to wash them in the blood of this same Jesus. What unspeakable love God showed in forgiving these people! How powerful is the saving work of the Holy Spirit!

(continued on page 118)

(continued from page 116)

The centurion at the foot of the cross was another person who was saved because of what he observed. “Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God” (Matthew 27:54). Certainly, eternity will reveal many more people who were present at the events of the crucifixion and were saved, perhaps on the Day of Pentecost, or by means of the disciples’ preaching after Jesus’ ascension.

What effect does the Lord Jesus Christ have on you? Do you trust in Him for your salvation—or do you doubt His saving power? Have you ever wondered if God really wants to save you? Have you ever given in to Satan’s whispers that God is an angry God waiting impatiently to destroy you? Observe Jesus’ words to those who crucified Him. Look at the Savior suffering in the place of guilty sinners. The Son of God suffered more grief than any human being so that He could speak words of love and forgiveness to sinners on their way to destruction. Never question whether God is able or willing to save you. Think about His love and mercy to those who wanted to destroy Him. What more can He do to show you His love and compassion? “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31).

Here are the answers to last month’s quiz.

1. BAPTIZED
2. SOLITARY
3. ALONE
4. WILDERNESS
5. WHOMSOEVER
6. ALWAYS
7. TRANSFIGURED
8. PRAYING
9. TEMPTATION
10. NIGHT
11. ETERNAL
12. FORGIVE
13. SANCTIFY
14. FORCE
15. EXCEPT
16. GLORIFY
17. MOUNTAIN
18. DECLARED
19. “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30).

Thanks again to all who answered last month’s quiz!

Daniel Beeke
Tara Beeke
Leah Boerkoel
Neal Boerkoel
Colin Byl
Matthew den Hertog

Gladys Kalengo
Hailey Meerdink
Nick Meschke
Ashlyn Roos
Kimberly Roos
Jenna Sinke

Kaitlyn Stubbe
Leah VanBeek
Megan VanderStel
Olivia VanderStel
Christy VanVliet
Danique Veldhuizen

Erwin Veldhuizen
Wilena Velhuizen
Jamie Westrate

STORY FOR CHILDREN

DIANA KLEYN

The Little Missionary

In the outskirts of a large city lived a girl whose name was Barbara. She was small and slender, and had dark hair and large brown eyes. Everyone who knew her loved her. She was kind and gentle, but above all, she loved the Lord. She was fond of reading, especially books about missionaries. There was one book in particular, which was her favorite: it was a book about Henry Martyn,¹ a young scholar who left England for India to be a missionary. Barbara wished she could be a missionary too, but that was not God’s plan for her.

When she grew up, Barbara married. She and her husband, John, were very happy together in the Lord. Soon they were happier still, for God sent them a beautiful baby boy. Barbara’s heart overflowed with joy and thankfulness to God. A thought began to form in her mind, and every day she

laid this desire before the Lord. She spoke to John about it. After much prayer they decided to dedicate their son to God’s service; they purposed to train him to become a missionary. They named him Henry Martyn.

As the baby grew, Barbara and John noticed that something was wrong with little Henry. He should have been cooing and saying his first words; he should have been responding to his parents’ voices. But he never did: he was both deaf and dumb. He would look into his parents’ faces and smile, but he never said a word. He never turned to look when someone spoke or called his name. Barbara took little Henry to several doctors, but they could not do anything to heal Henry. Barbara and her husband were sad and confused. How could this be? They had been so certain that God wanted their son to be a missionary. Had they been mistaken? Had God turned His face away from them? Had He not heard their prayers after all? They did not understand God’s ways, but they submitted to His will without complaining.

When Henry was a baby, Barbara’s mother died. Her

¹ Henry Martyn (1781-1812) was born in Cornwall, England. Inspired by the selfless work of William Carey (missionary to India) and David Brainerd (missionary to the Native Americans), he became a missionary to the people of India and Persia. He translated the New Testament, the Psalms, and the Book of Common Prayer into the languages of the people there.



youngest brother, Reuben, was still living at home. Before she died, Barbara's mother said, "Barbara, watch over Reuben." Barbara did just that: she took her brother into her home and loved him just as she loved Henry and the other children that God gave them over the years. From the first day Reuben came into the home, Henry took to him. When Reuben came in from school, Henry ran to him with outstretched arms. When Reuben sat down, the little boy climbed into his lap. If Henry got a new toy or picture book, Reuben was the first to see it. And, when Henry was upset, he went to Reuben for comfort. Reuben loved the child as much as the child loved him.

Reuben, however, was a great worry to Barbara and John. He took no interest in the things of his soul. When he grew older, he stopped attending church and never opened his Bible. He lived like one who did not believe in God, or Jesus Christ, or heaven or hell. He found friends who scorned the Bible and the church of God. John and Barbara pled with him; they prayed for him; and in secret they shed tears over him. Especially for Barbara, this was a great sorrow.

The fact that Reuben was rejecting God and His Word was also very painful for Henry. He was deeply concerned for his uncle's soul. Henry had never been strong. Besides being deaf and dumb, he had other health problems. He had never been strong enough to attend a school for the deaf and dumb, so the only teaching Henry received was from his family. The family had learned sign language, and so Henry communicated with his loved ones. Henry's loved ones were able to communicate the basics of the gospel to him in this way, and by grace, Henry repented of his sins and believed the gospel. Jesus Christ became exceedingly precious to him. Tears of joy would often fill Henry's eyes as he laid hold of the gospel of salvation through Christ alone.

When he was about twelve, Henry's health began to deteriorate rapidly. During his illness, Henry yearned more than ever for Reuben's salvation. In the evenings, when Reuben came home from work, the boy's arms were stretched out for his best friend. Reuben would gently lift him from his bed and hold him on his lap. Reuben realized that Henry was growing weaker. Would this young boy die soon, he wondered? Instead of spending so much time with his ungodly friends,

Reuben stayed home more often with his nephew. He admitted to his friends that he felt Henry tugging at his heart. He came straight home every day after work, and took on the task of tending to Henry. And though Henry could not speak, God spoke through him to Reuben's heart. God was using the love that Reuben and Henry had for each other to soften Reuben's heart. Henry's needs led Reuben to pray for him. The boy's pain was sometimes so great that Reuben would cry out to God to relieve the boy's suffering.

It soon became clear that Henry would not live long. His face was white and thin; his brown eyes grew larger and larger and shone like lamps; his frail body was hot and weak. It was an autumn evening when Henry's sufferings finally came to an end. He had been restless during the day, but became quiet when Reuben came home and sat by his side. Reuben turned Henry's bed so he could see the beautiful sunset. The whole family gathered around Henry's bed. Around eight o'clock, Henry motioned for his favorite book that God used to speak to him about the fullness and beauty of the gospel. Reuben opened the book to Henry's favorite page. Henry looked at it and then pressed it to his breast. Then, looking straight into his mother's eyes, he died.

For many years Reuben was not able to speak about Henry without tears. The Holy Spirit used Henry to bring Reuben to the Savior. After Henry's death, Reuben began to seek the Lord. The world held no hope or joy for him anymore. He had seen what brings true joy: the love of Jesus in the midst of suffering. No earthly fun or pleasure could take the place of the love he had seen in Henry. Henry had loved Reuben with Christ-like love. Reuben wanted to be loved by Henry's God too.

God did not put Barbara and her husband to shame. He did not reject their desire that their firstborn son be given to God's service. It is true, Henry never traveled to distant lands to bring the gospel to heathen people, but God used this frail child to draw a wandering sinner to Himself. Even after his death, Henry's witness was blessed. Each of the other children in the family was drawn to God as well. They never forgot Henry, who loved and was loved so tenderly by the Lord Jesus. Their home became a place where God was honored and His work praised.

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

CHURCH NEWS

MINISTERIAL CALL

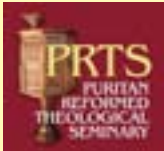
Rev. Jan Neels has declined the call to labor in the Plymouth, Wisconsin congregation.

MISSION WORK TRIP TO SOUTH AFRICA

The Dr. Miskin MLC is contemplating a youth mission work trip to South Africa in 2009 D.V. This venture promises to be a very worthwhile experience for mature youth. In 2009 we expect one or two small teams and in 2010 D.V. a larger team is a possibility. Work could include construction, medical aid, and other work of compassion. Please realize that this is not a holiday excursion! At this time we are looking at various dates and options. All interested individuals please contact Mr. Jake Sinke, MLC secretary at jakesinke@bellnet.ca or phone 905-262-4633. Further details will be shared as soon as they are confirmed.

MISSIONARY ASSISTANT NEEDED

The Sumba mission project has grown considerably over the past eight years. With God's help, Mr. and Mrs. Bill Sommer have been able to manage the work until now. However, as they are growing older, the time has come to begin searching for an assistant. For this work to continue, there is need of an assistant who eventually might be able to fully manage the project as well. We are looking for someone who is willing to commit, with God's direction, a number of years to this project. Since the Burgessville consistory exercises some spiritual oversight of this work and is involved intimately with this ministry, all applications can be forwarded to clerk@hnrc.ca or via mail at HNRC, 685 Main St. S., Burgessville, On. N0J 1C0.



PURITAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY is seeking a Professor of Theology at its Grand Rapids, Michigan, campus to begin instruction in August 2009 or August 2010. Areas of specialty should include one or more of the following:

Missions (especially church planting), Counseling, Church History, and Apologetics. Duties include teaching in the Seminary's Master of Divinity, Master of Arts in Religion, and Master of Theology programs, student advising, as well as performing normal duties expected of a faculty member.

The Applicant

1. Must possess a Master's of divinity or equivalent, a Master's of Theology, and preferably a doctorate in theology or ministry, or be working towards one.
2. Must have several years of experience as an instructor or professor of theology or as a pastor.
3. Must agree with the Seminary's formula of subscription with respect to matters of faith and doctrine, as summarized in the Three Forms of Unity and/or the Westminster Standards.

Salary will be commensurate with background and experience.

Applicants should send by mail a dossier, including statement of intent, a CV, evidence of teaching ability, and three references, to Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, 2965 Leonard Street NE, Grand Rapids, MI, 49525 - attention: Henk Kleyn (tel: 616-977-0599, x120, email: henk.kleyn@puritanseminary.org).

HERITAGE SPRING RETREAT

The first Heritage Spring Retreat, hosted by Burgessville HNRC, will take place from May 18, 2009 (5:00 p.m.) to May 21 (11:00 a.m.), D.V. at the Brantford Circle Square Ranch, just outside of Brantford, Ontario. All 18-30 year old singles and married couples are welcome. This year's theme is entitled "Unspotted" (James 1:27) and will include several topics and workshops that will challenge and assist you in living this theme out in the world today. Registration and further details will be provided. Visit www.HeritageRetreat.ca and submit your email address so that you can be notified via email.

2009 HNRC YOUTH CONFERENCE

The theme for the 2009 Youth Conference will be: "Relationships - How Do You Relate to God and Others?" The Bible text for the week will be: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Matt. 22: 37, 39). Speakers will include Mr. Dibbet, Pastor Kelderman, Pastor Koenen, Mr. Kuivenhoven, Pastor Lipsy, Pastor Overbeek, and Pastor VanderZwaag. Topics will include:

- Our Relationship to God
- Jesus' Relationship to God, His Father, and to others
- Our Relationship to the church
- Our Relationship to each other
- Our Relationship to society

The format will be similar to previous years with topics, workshops, discussion groups, and time for fellowship. Workshops will address the following topics:

- Our Relationship to the Muslim World
- Our Relationship to the End Times: How to study the book of Revelation
- Our Relationship with Work
- Our Relationship to Addictions
- Guy/Girl Relationships
- Our Relationship with Music and Modern Technology/Media

The conference will be held, the Lord willing, Tuesday, June 30 - Friday, July 3, at Camp Michawana in southwestern Michigan. All young people (grade 10 through age 25) are encouraged to attend. Registration forms are available through your local HRC churches.

The fee for the 3-day camp is \$160 (US funds only). This includes all meals and lodging. Full-time campers may deduct \$20 if registrations are postmarked by June 1, in which case the camp fee is \$140. (If possible, please submit your application by June 1. Late registrations require a significant amount of extra last-minute work for all people involved with providing transportation, lodging, activity supplies, and food.)

If you have any questions or need a registration form, you may contact: Mr. and Mrs. Henry Kamp (616-242-0528) or Mr. and Mrs. Doug Vandenberg (616-874-1648) or email: dvande1533@aol.com

TEACHERS NEEDED

The Heritage Reformed Christian School of the Hull, Iowa, HRC invites applications from qualified elementary, middle school, and high school teachers for the school year beginning August 2009. We currently offer grades K-10 in a multi-grade setting. Our plans are to add grade 11 in 2009, with the intent to have all 12 grades in two years, D.V. Please submit your resumé, statement of faith, and philosophy of education to Pete Van Beek, 48137 275th Street, Canton, SD 57013, phone 605-940-7444, or email: pevanbe@aol.com.

Jordan Christian School is receiving applications for the coming 2009-2010 school year. Situated in a rural setting near St. Catharines, JCS is a small school offering a Reformed academic K-12 education. As we prepare for the coming season, we are

NATIONAL NEWS....

Anti-faith language remains in Stimulus Package

The current economic stimulus bill has a provision that would force colleges and universities to dismiss religious clubs from campus if the schools receive federal funds. Objecting to this provision, Jay Sekulow of the American Center for Law and Justice indicated, “[The stimulus package] is discriminatory in its application (and) unconstitutional as it’s written.” Sekulow filed a lawsuit the day after President Obama signed the bill. (*OneNewsNow*)

Judge sentences pastor, a “decent” pro-lifer

California pro-life counselor and pastor Walter Hoye received a jail term for peaceful work outside an abortion clinic to try to save the lives of unborn babies. Hoye was found guilty of violating a local ordinance that dictates that he must stay at least eight feet away from anyone entering the clinic. He was found guilty, even though a video demonstrated that he did not violate the law. Dana Cody of Life Legal Defense Foundation says Hoye was ordered to jail for 30 days, fined \$1,130, and placed on probation for three years. “That meant Walter had to accept the terms of the probation, which was stay away from the clinic—and Walter refused to accept that term because he doesn’t think his free-speech rights should be impinged for three years,” the attorney explains. Cody is challenging the ordinance in federal court. (*OneNewsNow*)

Assisted suicide reaches the 49th parallel

Pro-lifers in British Columbia are worried that the prospect of legalized assisted suicide in neighboring Washington State will put added pressure on Canada to follow suit. On November 4, Washington residents voted 58 per cent in favor of a ballot initiative to make physician-assisted suicide available to patients diagnosed by two physicians as having only six months or less to live. The law went into effect on March 4, making Washington the second U.S. state to permit physician-assisted suicide.

Vancouver physician and surgeon Dr. Will Johnston, who co-chairs the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition of B.C., also predicts that if such a law were ever passed in Canada, it would just be “the first step towards legalized euthanasia.” “To the extent that the more fanatical extremists can disguise their ultimate objectives and hoodwink well-meaning people into some initial demands for suicide pills,” he told *Today’s Family News*, “they will cause trouble in Canada, as they have caused trouble in Oregon and Washington State.”

Apart from periods when the law was unsuccessfully challenged, physician-assisted suicide has been legal in Oregon since being approved in a similar ballot initiative in 1994. According to *American Medical News*, between 1998 and 2007, doctors “helped” 341 people in Oregon end their lives prematurely. (*TFN*)



Just 4 in 10 Americans believe in evolution

A Gallup poll released this week shows that 39 percent of Americans say they “believe in the theory of evolution,” while a quarter say they do not believe in the theory and another 36 percent don’t have an opinion either way, CNN reported. This follows an earlier Gallup poll on the issue, conducted in May 2008, that found 44 percent believe God created human beings within the past 10,000 years. “There

are certain features of the universe and of living things that are best explained by an intelligent cause, not an undirected process such as natural selection,” Michael Egnor, a professor of neurosurgery at the State University of New York, told CNN. Egnor is affiliated with the Discovery Institute. (*CitizenLink*)

Illinois lawmakers work to change the definition of marriage

Illinois Rep. Gregg Harris has introduced legislation in the state House that would sidestep voters and change the definition of marriage to include homosexual couples. Harris, who is openly gay, will handle the legislation as chairman of the brand-new Youth and Family Committee. Meanwhile, a bill to define marriage in the state’s constitution as the union between one man and one woman remains stuck in process, six years after it was first introduced.

“We’ve got 30 states that have had the opportunity to give the voters a voice on this issue,” said David E. Smith, executive director of the Illinois Family Institute. “And 30 states have decided to protect marriage as God defined it.” (*CitizenLink*)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS....

Pope lectures Representative Pelosi on abortion

Pope Benedict told visiting U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi that Roman Catholic politicians and legislators cannot back abortion rights. American Roman Catholic Bishops accused Pelosi, as well as Senator Joe Biden, of misrepresenting the Roman Catholic Church’s teaching on abortion. Both have said abortion is a personal decision. The Pope spoke of the requirements of the natural and moral law and the Roman Catholic Church’s consistent teaching on the dignity of human life from conception to natural death. Some Conservative Roman Catholics in the U.S. and other industrialized countries, including Italy, have called for Roman Catholic politicians who back abortion rights to be excommunicated and barred from receiving communion. Pelosi told a TV talk show in August that the question of exactly when life begins “shouldn’t have an impact on the woman’s right to choose.” She said when life began is still “an issue of controversy” in the Roman Catholic Church, and that “God has given us a free will and a responsibility to answer for our actions.” (*Reuters*)



truth (1):

tried, tested, and true

What is truth? This is the question that Pilate asked Jesus two thousand years ago as Jesus stood before Pilate's seat of judgment. Little did Pilate know that his question would be being asked by many today in our world. Many are making a quest for truth and trying to define what truth really is. They are asking whether truth can really be known; they are "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:7).

You might be wondering how that might be relevant to you as young people. It is relevant because you are heading into a world that largely denies truth. As you enter the workforce, college, or university, you will be faced with this question of truth. Many will tell you that truth, and especially truth according to the Bible, does not exist. They will undermine and try to remove your foundation of truth through the world's definition of truth which tells you that "what is true for you may not be true for me."

Can you detect the flaw in this statement? It is assuming that there is no standard of truth except the standard that you set for yourself. This means that truth is relative and eventually ceases to be truth. You might hold to biblical truth, but that might not necessarily be true for the person sitting beside you in the cafeteria. They might believe something else, which in turn might not be true for the person at the bus stop. It assumes that there are as many different definitions of truth as there are people on the planet. This is the system of thought that lies behind how much of the world operates. Education, politics, medicine, and even religion operate on this idea that truth is relative leading to tolerance, political correctness, the right to die, and a reshaping of biblical truth according to human imagination.

In a world that is constantly shifting in its opinions, humans crave stability, reliability, faithfulness, and firmness.

This is really the most basic definition of truth as used in Scripture—something or someone true will stand up under testing.¹ What is that something? The Word of God. Who is that someone? Jesus Christ. Both the living, written Word of God and the living, incarnate Word of God are tried, tested, and true.

We need to be clear about what truth is so that we can live to the glory of God, answer our critics, and be assured that what we believe is indeed true. The Bible teaches us that truth is not relative but is clearly defined and each person living in the world must subject himself to this truth in order to know God. Jesus says in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." People might look for truth, but as long as they depart from the Word of God as it reveals the truth in Jesus Christ, they will never find truth.

How important is truth to you? We need young people today who are passionate for Scripture's truth. We need young people who are firmly grounded in biblical truth so that the church can withstand the onslaughts of the devil to undermine its foundation of truth. Solomon in the Book of Proverbs counsels his son to buy the truth and sell it not (Prov. 23:23). As we move through the next few articles, I pray that you will have a love for truth ignited in your soul—not just truth that you can know with your mind, but the Truth that you can know with your heart, Jesus Christ. I pray that you will grow to love Him, to seek Him with all you have, and to protect His truth with your lives.

1. Paul J. Achtemeier, *Harper's Bible Dictionary* San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985), 1100.

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IF I GAINED THE WORLD, BUT LOST THE SAVIOR

If I gained the world, but lost the Savior,
Were my life worth living for a day?
Could my yearning heart find rest and comfort
In the things that soon must pass away?

If I gained the world, but lost the Savior,
Would my gain be worth the lifelong strife?
Are all earthly pleasures worth comparing
For a moment with a Christ-filled life?

Had I wealth and love in fullest measure,
And a name revered both far and near,
Yet no hope beyond, no harbor waiting,
Where my storm-tossed vessel I could steer;

If I gained the world, but lost the Savior,
Who endured the cross and died for me,
Could then all the world afford a refuge,
Whither, in my anguish, I might flee?

O what emptiness! —without the Savior
'Mid the sins and sorrows here below!
And eternity, how dark without Him!
Only night and tears and endless woe!

What, though I might live without the Savior,
When I come to die, how would it be?
O to face the valley's gloom without Him!
And without Him all eternity!

O the joy of having all in Jesus!
What a balm the broken heart to heal!
Ne'er a sin so great, but He'll forgive it,
Nor a sorrow that He does not feel!

If I have but Jesus, only Jesus,
Nothing else in all the world beside
O then everything is mine in Jesus;
For my needs and more He will provide.

— ANNA OLANDER

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