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Thank you to the contributing editors and those who help make your magazine extraordinary. We enjoyed the attention you gave to church planting in Jan/Feb and would like to put out a call for a Scott and Becky who would be willing to lend a needful hand as we church plant in Canada.

*Dustin Falconer
Grande Prairie, Alberta,
Canada*

I enjoy your publication very much! I look forward to each issue and read it with much interest. Thank you for publishing such a quality, conservative magazine.

*Juli Ann Ormsby
Baltimore, Maryland*

I really appreciate the articles in *FrontLine* and look forward to receiving each copy. I read in a recent issue that the FBFI and *FrontLine* need additional funds to cover the

cost of publishing each issue. Please accept the additional [funds] for use toward that cost.

*Ruth Ann Doyle
Oswego, Illinois*

I have recently renewed my subscription to the *FrontLine* magazine. Thank you for your stand in these days and times.

*Dr. J. B. Godfrey
Chattanooga, Tennessee*

Last weekend I received your most welcomed letter with enclosures. I will be privileged to be a member of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International. Now, I will be more identified with this Biblical heritage and spiritually strengthened by the Fellowship, which is a broad family of fundamental believers around the world.

*Pastor Jan Tolwinski
Warszawa, Poland*

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Charting the Course: More Dangers We Must Guard Against

The FBFI must not get off course. We must continue to stand by our doctrinal statement with the right spirit. We need the right position and the right disposition. Both ends of the strings on a violin must be firmly fastened. If you tighten one end, it tightens both ends. Whenever you emphasize your position, someone will ask, "What about your disposition?" When you emphasize your disposition, someone will suggest you are neglecting your position. No, both are essential. Charting the course is a matter of direction—direction that involves both what we believe and how we behave.

While maintaining our doctrinal position, we must avoid the dangers that get us off balance. Fellowship meetings are not seminary extension courses. I'm thankful for all the conferences that have begun in recent years that offer instruction, for those that warm the heart and inform the head, but the FBFI is a *fellowship*. Whenever you see men in the crowd with arms folded and skeptical looks on their faces while a man with humble credentials is preaching his heart out to be a blessing, there is a pride problem.

If you had to choose, it's a thousand times better to have common sense without an education than to have an education without common sense. When the Lord chose His disciples He didn't go to the seminaries. He went to the seashore, to the carpenters' shops, to the farms, and He found some unlearned men who were willing to learn. He didn't choose them because they were hayseeds, but He wasn't looking for the stamp of academic approval either. Young men especially need to realize that the same spirit that

gave birth to New Evangelicalism is alive and well today.

It seemed innocent enough when young men who grew up in Fundamentalism were drawn more to the well-educated Fundamentalists than the raw boned preachers who built the schools where they were trained. The danger is becoming more obvious as those young men are now being drawn to the conferences of New Evangelicals with the attitude, "These men believe the truth; they are fundamental in doctrine." If you think a man who believes the "fundamentals" but scoffs at the doctrine of separation is a Fundamentalist you are already thinking like a New Evangelical.

Harold Ockenga, the father of New Evangelicalism, in his introduction to Harold Lindsell's 1976 book *The Battle for the Bible*, referred to the affirmation of the fundamentals and the "ringing call for a repudiation of separatism . . . [which] received a hearty response from many evangelicals." Look at the results. You can't pretend to be "fundamental" but not "separatist." This recent trend toward intellectualism among the younger Fundamentalists is history repeating itself. Ockenga said, "The first tenet of New Evangelicalism is tailored-intellectualism. We want to make the gospel more respectable, and more acceptable in the eyes of the intelligentsia." His stated objective was, "to win new respectability for orthodoxy in academic circles by producing scholars who defend the faith on intellectual grounds." You call us "Dr." and we'll call you "Brother."

When the Fundamentalists saw the danger and

separated from it, the cancer seemed to be in remission for a generation, but now it has come back and it is being fed by the same old pride that produces the shame of taking a stand as a separatist. There is another even more subtle danger we have got to see and guard against that concerns our seminaries, and that is competition between them at our fellowship meetings. I'm all for seminaries; I have one. In fact, I've started several others. One time I started three in one year and didn't even try. But being a separatist does not require you to have a chip on your shoulder.

Men must preach their convictions with passion, but we must not forget that "the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets." When we come together for fellowship meetings we must not get carried away promoting the agenda of our own ministries to the detriment of others. It is one thing to say, "This is what I believe." It is another thing to say, "This is what you must believe." We'd better save that statement for the doctrines we agree on and not the applications we have differences on.

If you have been greatly blessed at a seminary, you will naturally want others to get those blessings, but you have to give others some room on matters that good men disagree on. You love your church, but you shouldn't treat

people from other good churches as though they are not right with God unless they come to your church. The same goes for schools. The FBFI must guard against both the danger of intellectualism that leads to New Evangelicalism and partisanship that leads to carnal divisions.



DR. ROD BELL

I don't recall much from my seventh-grade music class. I do, however, recall one demonstration that fascinated me. One day the teacher, Mr. Burnett, held up two tuning forks, one in each hand. Striking one fork on the edge of his desk, he held it up so that we could hear the pure note it emitted. Then, after holding the humming fork parallel to the other one for a few moments, he silenced it with a touch to his shoulder. "Listen!" he said.

We students didn't move a muscle as we strained to hear something, anything—but all was silent.

"When the tuning forks represent different notes," Mr. Burnett explained, "nothing happens. But now watch what happens when I use two identical forks."

Exchanging one fork for another lying on the desktop, the teacher again struck one and held it as before, just a couple inches from its counterpart in his other hand. Once more, he silenced the one he had struck and whispered, "Listen *now!*"

We kids were amazed—the tuning fork that hadn't been struck at all was now emitting the exact same note as the first one!

"When both forks are of the same pitch," Mr. Burnett concluded, "the vibrations of the first one pass through the air as sound waves, setting up a duplicate vibration in the second fork."

The rest of that day's lesson escapes my memory, but over the years I've often recalled that one presentation. After all, isn't there a spiritual parallel? Think about it—God's nature resonates with pure love, compassion, beauty, holiness, righteousness, mercy, and all His other perfect attributes. Without being flippant, we could say that our Creator's nature serves as the perfect "tuning fork" for mankind: He establishes the ideal example to emulate.

Sadly, though, mankind's sin-tainted nature separates man from God. The fallen man's very nature is on a different spiritual wavelength, regardless of how many times he "turns over a new leaf." The Lord Himself points out this fact in Isaiah 55:8, 9: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Of course, in his fallen condition, man can hear about God and read about Him, but like a mismatched tuning fork, he simply cannot adopt the Lord's divine attributes on his own. Sure, a person living without God can muster

enough self-discipline to drop a few bad habits or do some good deeds. But he can't become a truly godly person on his own. Alone, man simply can't get in tune with the perfect pitch established by God.

But, praise God, Jesus makes it possible! When God's Spirit indwells a man or woman, that person is transformed from within. Whereas before he was spiritually "flat," God's presence in his life makes it possible for him to grow in God's grace, producing an ever-clearer, sweeter-sounding note. He can gain virtues that he never exhibited before. He can now become a living example of the formerly silent tuning fork that replicates the sound of the other.

God is looking for men and women whose hearts are in tune with His own. How about you? Are you letting the Lord adjust your heartstrings, or are you holding back?



Just as the sound of a tuning fork will be hampered if the fork is touching another object, the tune of a believer's life will remain sour and unlovely if that person clings to desires or pursuits that are contrary to God's will.

Christian friend, you may know nothing about music, and you may not play an instrument or sing in the choir. But by yielding to God, you can have a life and home that resonates with the perfect pitch that He desires for you. Will you yield to Him?

Rick Barry is the former Administrative Vice President of Russian Gospel Ministries. Currently he is a freelance writer and editor living in Bristol, Indiana.

Rick Barry

Perfect Pitch

We are seeing a renewed interest in character development today—even in the public sector. Some secular educators and even some public officials have taken up the cause of character education for the nation's youth. Former U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett penned a bestseller entitled *The Book of Virtues*, further fanning the flames of concern, and Stephen Covey's writings promote personal responsibility. In addition, some current non-Christian and Christian parenting curricula present a renewed emphasis upon rearing morally responsible children.

While Christians can be thankful for any effort that attempts to upgrade the moral fabric of our society, it is crucial that we realize that developing human virtue (i.e., "character," as the world uses the term) in our children and in ourselves is not the same as developing Christlikeness. It is important that we understand both the similarities and the differences between human virtue and Christlikeness. For the purpose of this discussion, I will use the terms "Christlikeness," "godliness," and "Christian character" synonymously.

Human Virtues (Character)

By human virtues I mean character qualities such as responsibility, honesty, loyalty, charity, generosity, courage, compassion, punctuality, cheerfulness, helpfulness, dependability, initiative, obedience, and fair-mindedness. These qualities are admirable in saved and unsaved alike.

Character, however, can be developed by anyone. An unsaved man can follow God's universal laws, whether scientific, social, or moral, and benefit from them. The capacity to develop virtue is one of the aspects of the

residual, marred image of God in man. A lost businessman can be honest. A lost employee can be loyal. A lost philanthropist can be charitable. A lost soldier can be courageous. A lost student can be punctual, etc.

The development of human virtue simply requires embracing standards of excellence and disciplining oneself toward those standards. Discipline is essentially making decisions that subordinate personal desires to those standards of excellence.

A person who will submit himself to the instruction and accountability of wise elders and will discipline himself—or allow himself to be disciplined by others—toward standards of excellence will with enough practice develop certain commendable qualities. This is how U.S. military academies develop men and women of character. This is how parents who are willing to take the time to discipline and train their children are rewarded with virtuous children.

While we rejoice at whatever good we see in man and his works around us—good art, good manners, good conduct, good music, good literature, just laws, and fair courts—we as believers cannot be content with moral virtue alone. And certainly *we must not confuse these human virtues with Christlikeness.*

Children can leave Christian homes and graduate from Christian high schools and colleges with certain commendable qualities and still not be godly. They can possess character without Christlikeness.

Christian Character (Christlikeness)

Unlike human virtues, *Christlikeness—the fruit of the Spirit—is produced only by the life of God at work in the believing and yielding soul.* There is something supernatural going on in the life—a *spiritual vitality*—that must permeate the standards of excellence and the discipline in the following ways:

Character Development Requires:

1. Standards of excellence
2. Discipline toward those standards



Jim Berg

Character or Christlikeness?

First of all, Paul tells us that we are changed into the image of Christ by a Spirit-enabled process of “beholding as in a glass [mirror] the glory [the unique excellencies] of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18).

The excellencies of Christ may be viewed first in another believ-

er, perhaps as a child sees Christ in his parents, a teacher, or his pastor (1 Cor. 11:1). Believers reflecting the true Light are to “shine before men” that when those around them see their “good works”—their Christlike life—their attention will be turned to the “Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

Leaders who show Christ will be attractive to those in whom the Spirit of God is working, because God’s “fruit” always “tastes” good to those with tender hearts. Christlikeness has an attractive warmth, but it also has a humility about it that uses opportunities of interaction (Deut. 6:7) to point the follower to the true Light (John 3:30). The Christlike leader will especially use his influence to point others to the Word, where they will see Christ far more clearly because there is no human influence to taint the vision. When viewed in the Person of Christ, every virtue is seen in its most potent form and is exceedingly attractive.

The believer seeking and seeing Christ in the Word is enamored with the beauty of Christ’s *holiness*, and the Spirit works in him a desire to be holy. He marvels at the unchanging *love* of his Lord, and the Spirit increases his desire to be loving himself. He is humbled by Christ’s *compassion* and *mercy* to him and wants by the Spirit’s work to demonstrate the same in his life. He is encouraged by the Savior’s *faithfulness*, and the Spirit quickens his desires for the same steadfastness in his own character. He sees the Master’s *humility*, and the Spirit teaches him that he has much to learn about humbly serving others. And so it goes with all the blessed qualities of the Lord Jesus. This spiritual vitality promotes a *Christ-centered vision* as the

Development of Christlikeness Requires Spiritual Vitality:

1. A Christ-centered vision of the standards of excellence
2. A Spirit-empowered self-denial for the discipline

source for standards of excellence.

Second, spiritual vitality empowers the discipline needed for Christlikeness. Self-discipline toward standards of excellence can produce human virtue and moralism, but alone it isn’t enough to produce Christ-

likeness. The believer who truly sees the excellencies of Christ is humbled and realizes he cannot produce these on his own. He knows he needs Spirit-empowered help to “row against the current” of his own sinful heart; he cannot merely discipline himself into Christlikeness.

At every crossroad where he must decide whether he will please himself or please Christ, the growing believer must die to himself (Luke 9:23, 24) in order to receive the divine help (i.e., the grace) to carry out the right choice (1 Pet. 5:5). This Spirit-enabled self-denial fuels the discipline of his life toward the Christlike excellencies he seeks to emulate.

Any time he refuses to deny himself for God or others, his leaders must not only insist that he choose to do the right thing—and perhaps administer appropriate chastening for failure to do so—but point out how his lack of discipline in that area is a rejection of the path to Christlikeness. He must be pointed back to Christ for forgiveness and for grace to do right as he seeks reconciliation, makes restitution, or endures some protective or corrective restriction as a result of his disobedience.

Spiritual vitality then is the personal relationship with Christ Himself that provides the divine *light* (the vision of Christ) and the divine *might* (the grace of God) to live the Christian life. Christlikeness cannot be formed without this living relationship with Christ any more than branches can bear fruit apart from the vine (John 15). Our discipleship efforts, therefore, must keep this relationship with Christ front and center, or we will produce followers who

may have character—human virtue—but not Christlike character.

Think of the necessity of spiritual vitality this way. A family on vacation might be able to build a lifelike sand sculpture of a dog at the beach, but it would take an act of God to make the sculpture live. It is the same with *Christian* character. A man can develop certain qualities that look like godliness, but only God can produce the fruit of His Spirit. The “sand sculpture” of character will come alive as Christlikeness only as the disciple is *beholding Christ and His ways* in the Word and in those around him and *responding with Spirit-enabled self-denial* in the daily choices of life.

One Last Thought

I hope you can see that it is possible to develop character without developing Christlikeness. I hope you can also see that it is not possible to develop Christlikeness while rejecting the main components of character: standards of excellence and discipline. They are essential to Christlikeness, but not enough. There must be a *spiritual vitality* that infuses both components with divine life as the believer interacts with God.

As parents, pastors, and school leaders, we have much work to do in this area. We cannot be content with high standards and discipline. They are important to the preservation of civility and morality, but they do not produce godliness on their own; only the Spirit of God can produce godliness.

The goal of our discipleship efforts is not merely to keep our children and students out of moral calamity or to help them become responsible citizens, caring spouses, and good parents. Any of those goals can be accomplished by unbelievers. Our goal must be to see those we disciple fellowshiping with the living God themselves so that He can form His own likeness in them.

This article was adapted from *Created for His Glory*, Jim Berg’s sequel to *Changed into His Image*, and is used with permission. *Created for His Glory*, its companion workbook, *Taking Time to Rejoice*, and its accompanying videos are available from BJU Press.

Dr. Jim Berg is Dean of Students at Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina.

This fall thousands of concerned parents will dress their first graders in new back-to-school-sale outfits, urge them to finish their Cheerios, place in their hands new, carefully packed lunch boxes, and drive, carpool, or bus them off to their first day of school—a Christian school. Then Mom and Dad will smile at each other and breathe a prayer of relief that Johnny or Susie is “in good hands now.”

I believe in Christian education. My husband and I considered it our responsibility to see that our son and daughter received a total Christian education from kindergarten through college. Twenty-five years of my life was spent teaching in Christian schools, both high school and college. In these years I saw immature children blossom into responsible, spiritually minded teenagers, and rebellious young people change into humble, dedicated servants of Christ. But I also saw the failures, the spiritual dropouts—casualties, you might call them, of Christian education. What caused these casualties? There can be, of course, many causes, but I would like to suggest one: the parent who considers the Christian school a panacea—a foolproof cure-all for the problems and responsibilities of child rearing.



Christian Schools:

A Support, Not a Substitute

Betty Mitchell

Christian parents, God gave us the supreme responsibility for teaching our children (Deut. 6:4–9). When we place our child in a Christian school, we are delegating, not abdicating this responsibility. And even this delegation is only partial. It doesn't relieve us of our God-given role in our child's education. Are you making the Christian school a substitute for a Christ-centered home?

1. Are you letting the school's Bible training substitute for Sunday school or other church activities?

Next to the home, the church must be the most important institution in the life of a Christian family. Before He left the earth, Christ gave the church the commission to teach all nations to observe everything that He commanded them (Matt. 28:19, 20). I have known parents who believed that because their children attended a Christian school, they did not need to take them regularly to Sunday school. After all, they reasoned, weren't they getting Bible training every day at school? While Christian schools must have a strong Biblical emphasis in the classroom,

their primary purpose is not to teach the Bible but to teach every subject from a true Biblical perspective, the Bible being the foundation for all knowledge. Spiritual training is certainly an important part of Christian school education. But to be effective, the school must work hand-in-hand with the church to bring the student to maturity. And it is our responsibility as parents to see that it does. Our children must learn by our example the importance of being a faithful member of a local church.

2. Are you letting the school set the standards for your child's spiritual growth?

If the Christian school is doing a good job, it is sometimes easy for Christian parents to become too complacent about their child's spiritual growth. They may not feel the urgency of being faithful with family devotions and encouraging their child to maintain a close personal relationship with the Lord. Or they may allow the school to set and enforce personal standards, which may or may not be the standards the parents have established for themselves. Consequently, if the school's standards

are higher than those of the parents, a conflict can develop. Either there will be a double standard—one set of rules at school and another at home—or the parent will use the school as a policing agency to avoid feeling the brunt of the child's rebellion against authority. If the school's standards are lower, the parent may feel forced to compromise.

It is we parents who should teach personal standards and convictions to our children from birth (Eph. 6:4). We must set and observe these standards regardless of any outside influences, including those of the school. If properly taught by word and example, these standards will eventually become the child's own convictions and he will learn to defend them using the Word of God. On the other hand, if certain rules set by the school seem too strict or picky, we should learn the reasons for these rules and teach our children the principle of giving up some of their liberty in order not to give offense to others. In other words, the attitude should *not* be, "You do this because the school says so," but "The Lord has put you under the authority of this school; therefore you please Him by obeying its rules, even if you don't agree with them."

3. Are you using the school to discipline a difficult child?

Too often, parents relegate to the school the burdensome task of disciplining their children. Christian schools can become a reform school for difficult children: "Well,

I've tried everything I know—see what you can do with him." Some Christian schools rightly refuse to take children on this basis. If a parent cannot control a child, it is doubtful that the school can perform that miracle, especially if the child has already reached his adolescent years. Only if parents will work together with the school can any permanent change be made, and this only with a right attitude and much prayer. Discipline, again, is the prerogative of the parent (Prov. 22:6). Discipline is training, not law enforcement, and as such it should be a privilege, not a burden. If we do not support and reinforce at home the discipline of the school, the result is at best, confusion, and at worst, rebellion.

Christian schools are not a sanctuary from the world. Human nature is the same in the Christian school as it is in the public school. Children can come under the influence of wrong attitudes and wrong ideas even in these sheltered surroundings. Consequently, we cannot blindly entrust our children to a Christian school, expecting everything to turn out all right. We must know exactly what the school believes and teaches, what the qualifications and convictions of the teachers are, what the rules are and why, who our children's friends are, and what goes on at school functions and outside activities. In short, Christian education, even in the best Christian school, is not a substitute for Christian parenthood. It can be a beautiful support, but only a support.

Betty Mitchell is a retired teacher and freelance writer living in Greer, South Carolina.

COMING SOON TO FrontLine

New Local Church Ad Listing Section

In response to numerous requests, we will be adding a new **Local Church Ad Listing** section to *FrontLine* soon. This section will give pastors associated with the FBFI an opportunity to advertise their church and will assist believers who travel or relocate in finding a local, independent Fundamental church domestically and internationally.

Layout and design services will be provided by the *FrontLine* staff, and all ads will be created from submitted specifications and materials. Ads must fit within a one-inch-by-four-inch horizontal space and will be in full color. Ads may include church logos and photographs and will be custom designed for each church.

The cost to advertise in this new **Local Church Ad Listing** is \$75 per issue or \$375 for an entire year. Ad layout is free for churches signing up for a full year; otherwise the ad layout cost is a one-time charge of \$50.

Contact the *FrontLine* Ad Office at (847) 352-4345 to reserve your space. Availability will be on a first-come first-served basis!

Most serious Christian dads will plan to guide their sons' lives, from the cradle on, in four realms. The first of those realms is a personal relationship with God and His Word. However, a wise dad will also assist his son in physical development, emotional well-being, and social relationships. Deuteronomy 6:6, 7 and Ephesians 6:4 reveal God's desire for dads to provide continual training for their children. Isaiah 28:9, 10 emphasizes God's pattern of teaching, "here a little, and there a little."

As a Christian dad, I sought to follow these verses. In addition, though, as my son reached his twelfth birthday, I took special opportunities to talk to him about the approaching teenage years and the development of character that would make him what he should be as an adult man. Some will say that by age twelve it is too late; character is set. Unfortunately, this is a psychological formula that even many Christians have accepted. The teen years form one of the most critical times in a young man's growth; at this stage he continues to develop his thinking and beliefs. Biblical truth and godly change must continue to play a role in these years.

Spiritual growth does not automatically result when a teenage boy attends church activities or comes into con-

tact with spiritual influences. A wise dad makes definite plans and arrangements to coach his boy in what becoming a man is all about. Unfortunately, we live in a time when fewer and fewer boys are being guided into mature manhood. More and more frequently they are becoming men only by experience (often sad) and observation (often filtered). This means they are exposed to the responsibilities and opportunities of manhood without preparation for the consequences of undiscerning choices. When we see a teen blow money recklessly, follow fools unknowingly, take jobs without having a work ethic, think shallow thoughts, and satisfy fleshly lust through the readily available media, all without knowing what self-discipline means for living profitably, then we are watching a boy "become a man" in a way that is open to self-destruction via worldly deceptions, without God's guidance.

As a first-generation Christian dad, I spent many months of my son's preteen development focusing on the book of Proverbs (which lends itself conveniently to a chapter per day). Those months included a "wisdom choices" study for daily life and school situations. Proverbs not only contains examples of a Biblical dad's approach to training his son but also touches upon virtually every type of social relationship a man will ever have. When my son first entered the teen years, I read Proverbs aloud with him to guide his development. This provided us with a ready source of discussions about real-life situations. It also provided a natural and comfortable context for us to discuss "the facts of life," allowing him an opportunity to ask questions without embarrassment.

Arthur Coats



One Family's Plan to Prepare a Grandson for Manhood

When my son had a boy of his own, he enhanced this pattern, developing a “wisdom principles” journal for daily life and school situations for my grandson. During the months and years that followed my grandson’s twelfth birthday, my son watched for, and made sure that he found, opportunities for mentoring. For instance, whenever he took a trip out of town, if possible, he invited his son along so they would have extended periods of private conversation, prayer, singing, and discussion that touched upon Biblical discipleship, daily priorities, local church involvement, social relationships, personal family relationships (with sisters and mother), and extended family relationships. Also, when my grandson participated in sports, his dad sought to keep his own schedule clear so he could observe his son in action, follow up gently, and encourage his boy’s good conduct. Of course, these discussions sometimes emphasized others’ negative behavior to help the boy recognize true godliness in contrast to the ungodly conduct of unsaved and unspiritual teens.

When my grandson’s sixteenth birthday approached, my son arranged for six men to challenge him, all in one special evening. Each of these men had had a part in his son’s life. The evening began in a library, where I reviewed the background of both sides of my grandson’s family and challenged him to be faithful to the godly heritage of three previous generations. (Note: A dad who comes from a non-Christian family might have a godly friend or might emphasize the boy’s mother’s heritage or the Biblical heritage he has in the Lord Jesus Christ.)

The second man was the assistant pastor of their church. He challenged my grandson concerning the foundational transparency necessary for Biblical maturity. He also reminded the boy of how honesty or dishonesty would affect all other realms of life. This meeting on openness took place in an office with a window open so those who passed by could see what was happening inside.

The third man was the senior pastor; he challenged the young man to develop the type of leadership role that

includes a servant spirit. The pastor met with him in the basement of a large building to emphasize what this servant leadership would look like in the home, church, and work place.

The fourth to challenge the nearly-sixteen-year-old was the youth pastor. He gave my grandson a brief message about leadership roles in the twenty-first century and how the world has reversed so much of what the Bible has blue-printed for life. The youth pastor did this in his own home, a setting where he could identify the challenge of being a courageous leader in the family and in the local church.

The fifth man addressed the issue of intimacy with God. He was a Bible college president who shared his personal testimony of how Bible memorization can be a great advantage for building such intimacy and how it affects the believer’s life. These two met in a small “prayer closet” in a men’s dormitory for the purpose of private closeness to God.

The final challenge came from the director of a Bible camp my grandson has attended for several years. This time the focus was on maintaining personal purity. They climbed to the roof of a tall building to accentuate the need to stay above the dangers in the moral realm.

Finally, all of the men met with my son and grandson in still another location to review the evening. Each man shared how well my grandson had responded to the challenges given. Then my son presented his boy with a special gift as a meaningful reminder of this event. The evening closed with my grandson kneeling while all of the men laid their hands on the lad and two of them prayed for him.

My grandson later told his dad how much the whole evening had affected him. As a grandfather, I look forward to watching my grandson grow into manhood and seeing how he responds to the discipleship influences these men and his father will continue to have on him.

Arthur Coats is a freelance writer and a staff member at Northland Baptist Bible College in Dunbar, Wisconsin.

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John L. Monroe

Twice Adopted

He was a baby born in adverse times—times so adverse that they threatened his very life. His mother, being sensitive to the impending danger and her own inability to protect him, gave him up to the sovereign hand of God to be placed in a “safer environment.”

In another time and place a beautiful baby girl was born. Not long after her birth, both her father and mother died. This tragic circumstance prompted her older cousin to adopt her and raise her as his own daughter. Later, in yet another time and place, a blue-eyed, blond-haired baby boy came into the world. He was immediately delivered to an adoption agency. The circumstances surrounding his adoption were never fully explained.

Any one of the above accounts could easily describe countless adoptions that occurred in the past century. However, the first two accounts come directly from the pages of Scripture. The first is a vignette of the early life of Moses as recorded in Exodus 2. The tenth verse of that chapter records, “And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh’s daughter, and he became her son.” The second account finds itself nestled amidst the dramatic events of the book of Esther:

And he [Mordecai] brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle’s daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter (2:7).

The third account mentioned above describes the nebulous beginnings of this author. Interestingly, the Bible records only two clear instances of physical adoption. But

it is equally interesting that, while the Bible is largely silent concerning physical adoption, it is replete with references to spiritual adoption. In both the physical and spiritual adoptions in the Word of God, the Scripture provides yet another display of the vastness of our great God.

A Beautiful Display of God’s Sovereignty:

Physical Adoption

Occasionally a physical adoption is regarded as an event marred by unfortunate circumstances that somehow falls outside of the will of God. However, in each recorded case of physical adoption in the Bible, God used those adopted ones. In fact, they were *strategically placed* to be used of God. Moses was sovereignly positioned, through the process of adoption, to be the deliverer of Israel. Esther, a Jewish orphan, was strategically placed through adoption to save her own people from wicked Haman. Clearly, adoption is not an event that slips through a crack in God’s will. Rather, it is a wonderful example of His sovereignty and ability to accomplish His will through even complicated (humanly speaking) circumstances. It is God who places and positions all things in His creation to fulfill a specific purpose. Therefore, the “placement” of every adopted person is inextricably linked to the sovereign plan of God in the grand scheme of creation.

Spiritual Adoption

The sovereignty of God in spiritual adoption is so vast that it surpasses full explanation. Ephesians 1:4–6 describes the transaction:

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy

and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

This sovereign plan of adoption began “before the foundation of the world.” It was by “the good pleasure of his will” that God established a parental relationship with His children in eternity past. In 2 Thessalonians 2:13 Paul gave thanks for this truth when he wrote, “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you.” In addition, Romans 8:29 says, “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” The Greek meaning behind the word “foreknow” signifies that before the beginning of time God entered into a loving relationship with His children. These truths underscore the fact that spiritual adoption was not an afterthought in God’s mind, but an integral component of His eternal, sovereign plan.

A Bountiful Display of God’s Blessings:

Physical Adoption

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom. 8:28). When the Bible says “all things,” obviously that would include physical adoption. Every adopted person must eventually embrace the truth of this verse. God intends physical adoption as a blessing in the life of the person. All the diverse circumstances surrounding every adoption have “worked together” to bring about “good.”

If a person fails to see any good in his adoption, then most likely he is not defining “good” the way God defines it. It is interesting to note that this word means “to make fit, capable, or useful.” In other words, all the circumstances surrounding an adoption are “working together” in the hands of a sovereign God to make a person fit, capable, or useful to serve the Lord as He desires. What a blessing to know that God is at work in the life of an adoptee, preparing him or her for present and future service!

Spiritual Adoption

Ephesians 1:3–6 wonderfully captures the blessings of spiritual adoption.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, where-

in he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

What a comfort and blessing to know that we, the adopted children of God, are the objects of His good pleasure, the products of His grace, and the possessors of His riches. The profoundness of this “choosing” is that He who is perfect literally chose us who are imperfect to be stewards of His manifold blessings! Romans 8:16, 17 emphasizes, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.” Galatians 4:7 reaffirms this blessing: “Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” This inheritance is not only intensely real, but eternally present.

From a Personal Perspective

He was somewhere between six and eight years old and playing in the backyard when his parents called him into the house and asked him to take a seat on the sofa. A newspaper lay open in their laps. As the child sat down beside them, his parents seemed nervous, hesitant, and awkward. They weren’t quite sure how to start, so they began reading a newspaper article about a young couple who had adopted a baby boy. A brief moment of silence followed the conclusion of the story. Each parent glanced at the other, and then both of them looked into the eyes of their son.

I vaguely recall that day when I learned that I had been adopted. At such a young age, I considered the information little more than a distraction to my playtime. However, looking back, I am confident that what I considered insignificant must have seemed monumental to my parents! Surely my parents put much thought into preparing for that moment.

That was twenty-five years ago. With the passing years, the issue of adoption for me has grown from a mere distraction to something much more complex. The questions that occasionally arise span from the trivial to the profound, from the practical to the theological, from the speculative to the suspicious. Many of these questions are prompted by the notion that adoption is “abnormal” or “out of the ordinary.” Usually anything that falls into these categories elicits a series of questions. But the most recurring question seems to be “Why did this happen to me?” The very question seems to intimate that adoption is a negative event. But I personally have chosen a different perspective.

Rather than regarding adoption as something that God has done *to* me, I view it as something God has done *for* me. Not knowing all the circumstances that surround my own adoption, I have to accept that God, in His sovereign goodness, provided *for* me an “abnormal” but superior plan. I have learned that unanswered questions are a part of all of our lives—spiritual and physical, adopted or not adopted. It is not my objective to figure them out. Rather, it is my delight to rest in His sovereignty and to rejoice in His blessings as a child twice adopted.

Have you ever heard any of the following statements? "The biggest losers in our Christian school are our church kids." "The new converts in our youth group are on fire, but our so-called Christian kids are carnal and worldly." "Half of the kids from Christian homes are probably not saved." These negative comments are understandable because so many of those who Grow Up Born Again (GUBAs) are immature Christians whose lives seem to bear little spiritual fruit in contrast to those who were saved later in life.

The GUBAs' passage to adult spiritual maturity often follows a predictable pattern. They were exposed to the gospel at an early age and made a profession of salvation. God used His Word to convince them of their sin and their need to receive Christ as their risen Savior in order to receive forgiveness through the blood of the Lamb. Childlike faith easily believes in the Deity of Christ, Heaven, Hell, the blood atonement, the Virgin Birth, the forgiveness of sin, and a loving God who offered and provided this great salvation by His grace. Skepticism, doubt, and pride tend to be adult sins. Childlike, unconditional faith is the model that Christ gives as an essential requirement for entering the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 18:2-4; Mark 10:15; Luke 18:17).

However, after a childhood conversion, most GUBAs grow *slowly*. Very young GUBAs cannot read the Bible

without help. Childlike minds are unable to grasp advanced theological concepts. Thus they are taught and retaught basic Bible stories that Paul, Peter, and the writer of Hebrews called the "milk" of the Word (1 Cor. 3:2; Heb. 5:12; 1 Pet. 2:2). The Scriptural milk diet is necessary because young GUBAs are inherently immature, not because there is anything spiritually wrong with them. That is, they are normal children who must grow before they can mentally digest strong meat. Even Jesus had to grow in "wisdom and stature" (Luke 2:52). Paul, in 1 Corinthians 13:11, differentiated between the understanding of a child and that of an adult. These natural causes of immaturity automatically limit spiritual growth as well. Second Peter 1:5-9 indicates that if a person has not incorporated into his life such advanced concepts of maturity as virtue, temperance, patience, and charity, then certain spiritual deficiencies are automatic. Those listed are as follows:

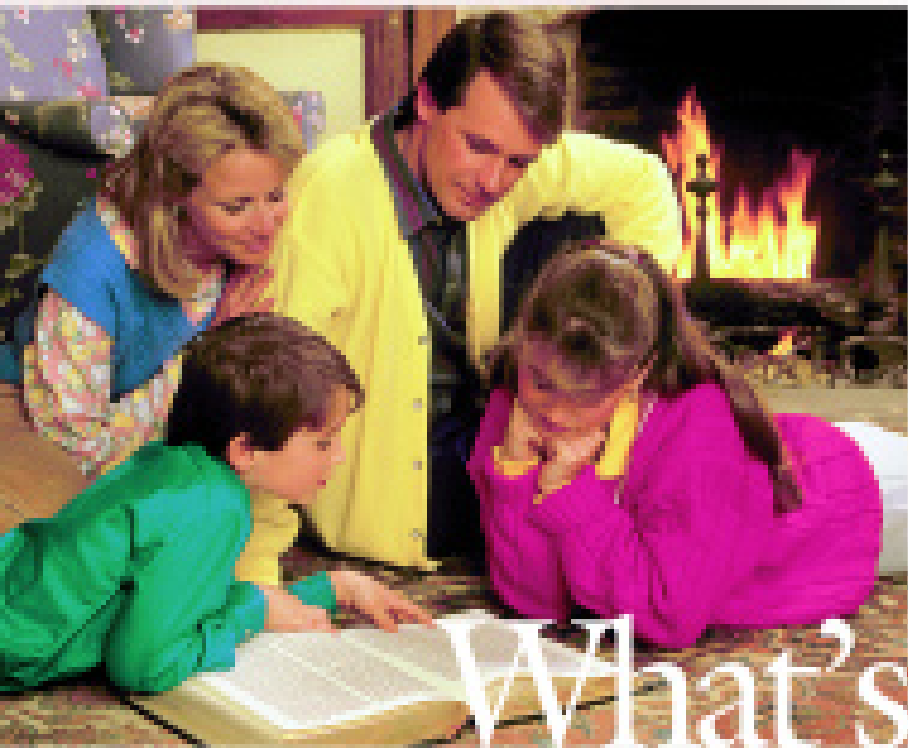
1. Unfruitful spiritual knowledge (v. 8)
2. Spiritual blindness or shortsightedness (v. 9)
3. Perceptual forgetfulness of our positional righteousness (v. 9)

The writer of Hebrews states that immature milk drinkers are "unskillful in the word" and that strong meat is for those who are of "full age." Full age is further described as one who has practiced skillful discernment regarding right and wrong. The mature, spiritual believer has acquired convictions through experience and spiritual analysis. This, of course, would be highly unlikely in a GUBA who is younger than age ten.

Limitations on Discipleship for Children

Not only are GUBAs limited in manifesting adult spiritual maturity as a consequence of a spiritual milk diet, but they are also limited in the natural abilities needed for discipleship. Christ in Luke 14:26-33 indicated that discipleship requires the following:

1. Loving Christ more than parents or one's own life (v. 26)



John Brock

What's the Matter with Those GUBAs?

2. Bearing one's cross and following after Christ (v. 27)
3. Rational cost-counting analogous to building a tower or going to war (vv. 28–32)
4. Forsaking all that one has for Christ (v. 33)

Clearly, Christ is teaching that if one cannot or will not do these things, then he cannot be a disciple. The abstract concepts of self-sacrifice and “cross-bearing” are advanced and beyond most children. Of course, children are unable to determine the number of troops needed for a battle or to calculate building costs accurately. By reason of mental immaturity they are unable to make such calculations, and hence, such commitments. In fact, Christ was teaching against mindless affirmation of fidelity, which is all too easy and child-like. Children's commitments and promises, while endearing and commendable, are not backed up by comprehension of consequences.

Ask any Sunday school class, “How many of you would follow Christ to the death?” and all the children will raise their hands, none having any notion of the true cost of such flippant decisions. In addition to lacking the mental ability to count the cost, such young believers have little autonomy. They cannot pastor, be a husband or wife, nor can they make and fulfill many spiritual decisions (what church to join, where to attend school, etc.).

Typical GUBA Development

After a child is genuinely saved, he often experiences limited growth for many years. During their teen years, GUBAs occasionally doubt their salvation. Because of slow growth, they have forgotten much about their positional salvation, often not even remembering their salvation experience clearly. They have been told, “old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17), but rather than understanding this positionally, they view their lives as much the same after salvation as before it. They have not experienced the autonomy to exercise convictions, so behavior is mandated and controlled rather than chosen. Because they have not lived through the transformed life of adult converts, they sometimes doubt their salvation.

As GUBAs reach adolescence, they begin to notice a great reservoir of unmade decisions relating to sex, worldly activities, and spiritual commitment. The maturation process has finally led them to realize their accountability for a host of spiritual issues and choices. As GUBAs realize their need for spiritual growth, these young people can now count the cost. They can make authentic choices of discipleship in response to the Holy Spirit's convicting and a rational yielding of areas of their lives where they now have autonomy.

Many will call this experience “making sure of their salvation” or “dedication.” Frankly, the semantics are not as important as is the exercising of adult autonomy by making personal choices to follow Christ fully—a process

we call progressive sanctification. The abstract concepts of a “living sacrifice” (Rom. 12:1) now gain meaning. At this point, genuine growth and outward change become the fruit of this passage to adult spiritual maturity.

Implications for Parents and Youth Workers


1. Do not discount the authenticity of the childhood salvation experience (Matt. 19:14).
2. Saturate children with the milk of the Word. But do not expect them to comprehend or digest strong meat when they are young (1 Pet. 2:2). Teach doctrine simply at first, then more fully as they mature.
3. By example, show them the expectations of adult maturity (1 Tim. 4:12).
4. Realize they are telling the truth when they “don't see anything wrong with it” related to questionable or worldly activities. This is predicted of immature believers in 2 Peter 1:9.
5. Give them evidence regarding “all things” and challenge them to exercise their senses to choose good things. Help them to develop convictions by forming your own based on solid evidence (1 Thess. 5:21).
6. Accept spiritual childhood without labeling GUBAs as “spiritual losers” or “unsaved.” Spiritual fruit or lack thereof will be validated or revealed as they develop behavioral and spiritual autonomy (Luke 13:7, 8).
7. One cause of immaturity is rebellion and foolishness. Parents must exercise firm discipline, including punishment that teaches sensitivity to sin and the need to repent (Prov. 22:15).
8. Be there when children struggle with increased spiritual sensitivity and accountability. Many will need assurance of salvation or help with counting the cost and totally yielding to the demands of discipleship (Gal. 6:2).
9. Send them to Fundamental Christian camps where they will be exposed to confrontational preaching related to salvation and discipleship. Camps have been blessed centers of spiritual decision-making because of trained workers and preachers knowledgeable in reaching teens with life-changing truths of God's Word (1 Cor. 1:21).
10. Encourage children and young teens with the truth that God can help them to develop into strong and spiritually mature adults and that, although they feel inadequate and unprepared now, as they follow Christ, they will grow into fit vessels that God can use (Phil. 1:6; 2 Tim. 2:21).

11. Dogmatic Don'ts! Don't let them work on Sundays or Wednesday nights or opt out of youth group meetings and activities (Heb. 10:25)!

Parents need not excuse sinful behavior in youthful believers, but they must realize that physical maturity is related to spiritual maturity. All indicators of mental capacity show an incredible difference between a six-year-old's and a twenty-year-old's ability to grasp abstract concepts (such as holiness, surrender, or discipleship). Elementary-age students' abilities to discern are often pathetic, and they are easily deceived into agreeing with the last well-structured argument they hear. Parents play a vital role in protecting and lovingly educating their children.

Discussions of the doctrine of progressive sanctification typically lack any acknowledgment of physical and mental limitations as they relate to spiritual growth in children. A ten-year-old convert who accepted Christ at age five simply cannot attain the same level of spiritual maturity that we might expect from a thirty-year-old who has been saved for five years. Immaturity is a sin only when one ought to be mature (Heb. 5:12).

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Should a Christian Teen Attend the Prom?

Taigen Joos

Having attended public schools throughout elementary, junior high and high school, I can empathize with Christian teens in the public school system today. Though today's public school system offers some activities in which Christian teens can participate without compromise, certain other activities deserve to be avoided. For instance, should a Christian attend the high school prom? This is an issue that today's Christian teenager needs to view from a Biblical perspective and respond to in a God-honoring way. Consider the following Biblical principles regarding proms.

The Christian Teen Should Listen to God-Honoring Music

God has much to say about the music a Christian should listen to and promote. One great passage on the subject is Psalm 40:1–3. In these verses the psalmist praises the Lord for his salvation and declares that God has put a “new song” in his mouth. This “new song” principle is explained more thoroughly in other writings, but it is clearly identified with the new life of the believer. Likewise, passages such as Ephesians 5:19, 20 and Colossians 3:16, 17 underscore that the Christian is to live his life in obedience to the Holy Spirit. True obedience involves all areas of life, including music. God is pleased with music that glorifies His character. The Christian teenager should strive to fill his mind (not to mention his CD racks) with this kind of music.

The Christian Teen Should Be Concerned with Modesty

Despite a society that encourages teenage girls to reveal more and more flesh, God expects them to dress differently. In 1 Timothy 2:9, Paul instructs the women of the church to dress themselves in “modest apparel.” The word “modest” means decently and well arranged. However, this word applies to more than mere dress standards. It also deals with an inner attitude of the heart. A woman's dress standards and lifestyle should reflect the submission and decency in her heart. The goal of her dress standards should not be to stay in step with the latest fashion trends, but to reflect a proper opinion of God and to guard her own body from being on display for lustful eyes.

Lest guys assume they are off the hook, this principle also applies to them. The word that is translated “modest” for women is the same one translated “of good behavior” for men in 1 Timothy 3:2. The context here speaks specifically of pastoral qualifications, but all men who would be godly should pursue these qualities. Paul emphasized that this mindset concerning modesty is valuable for both men and women.

Another application of modesty involves the issue of dancing. Even a quick glimpse provides abundant evidence that the style of dancing associated with rock music opposes the principle of modesty (as well as other principles). As Tim Fisher states in *The Battle for Christian Music*,

“Rock-related dancing stands in clear antipathy to biblical ideals of truth, humility, reverence, chastity, submission, self-control, holiness, and love. Therefore it would be more than mandated to expel this brand of bodily expression from any participation in Christian culture.” Rock-related dancing promotes lust, immoral thoughts, and easily leads to immoral acts. For both the Christian man and woman, modesty is the best policy, in both dress standards and behavior.

The Christian Teen Should Avoid Places of Temptation

In every Christian life, a battle rages between the flesh and the Spirit. Scripture commands us to not make any provision to fulfill the lusts of our flesh (Rom. 13:14) and to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation because, though our spirit is willing to do right, our flesh is weak (Matt. 26:41). We are also told to walk in the Spirit (i.e., obey Scripture) in order to starve our fleshly desires (Gal. 5:16–25). A Biblically wise person will not willfully visit places where he knows there will be fleshly temptations; he will instead allow the fear of the Lord to guide him on the right course (Prov. 14:16).

The tendency for Christian teens is to conclude that their willpower alone is enough to fend off any temptation. But the Bible warns of this kind of pride and gives the proper response to temptation—run! (See 1 Cor. 10:12, 13; 2 Tim. 2:22.) Christians should not play games with temptation.

The Christian Teen Should Be Concerned about His Testimony before Others

The Christian teen must be mindful of his testimony before his unsaved friends. Paul took care that the manner in which he ministered would not hinder the gospel message (1 Cor. 9:12). We should mirror that same attitude. Believers should strive to live in a way that will underscore the gospel message, not detract from it. The message of the gospel might be offensive, but the messenger of the gospel should not be.

The Christian Teen Should Try Not to Offend Fellow Christians.

Matthew 18:6, 7 reveals that God does not look favorably upon those who cause others to stumble into sin. Some people are constantly looking for leadership. Encouraging others to Christlikeness—not pulling them down in fleshly living—is the goal of Christian leadership. Every Christian teen should desire consistency in godliness in order to encourage godly living in those who follow him (Heb. 10:23–25).

The Christian Teen Should Practice Personal Holiness in His Lifestyle

Throughout the Scripture, the holiness of God is obvious. God is absolutely set apart from all sin and evil. Beginning at Adam and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden of Eden because of their sin (Gen. 3) and continuing to the eternal punishment of the Devil, his demons, and all unsaved in the Lake of Fire (Rev. 19–21), the Scripture continually reaffirms

God’s holiness. But holiness is not some irrelevant theological term. Rather, holiness applies very practically to Christians’ lives.

First Peter 1:15, 16 tells the believer to practice personal holiness in his entire lifestyle. Holiness is not an option; it’s a command from God. Second Corinthians 6:14–7:1 also commands us to separate from “unrighteousness,” “darkness,” and “the unclean thing.” We cannot ignore this command without seriously damaging our Christian life. Because of who God is and who we are as His children, we should strive to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”

The Christian Teen Should Seek to Glorify God with His Whole Life

Of all these principles, this one is the epitome. God created mankind for His own glory and pleasure (Rev. 4:11). However, man chose to rebel against God and glorify his own fleshly desires. This sin broke the relationship between God and man, making a way of reconciliation necessary. This reconciliation would be accomplished through the promised Messiah (Gen. 3:15), Jesus, the eternal Son of God (Matt. 1:21). When a person repents of his sin and trusts only and completely on Christ to save him from his sin, he has a right relationship with God and can fulfill his purpose for living: to glorify God.

Our purpose is to present a proper view of God and point others to Him. Life is not about elevating self; it is about elevating God. Therefore we should be concerned about what God says in His Word and His desires for us. As we do this, His Word will permeate our lives, and our thoughts and feelings will adjust to match God’s Word. Then we can say with the psalmist, “O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together” (Ps. 34:3).

Paul commanded the Corinthian believers to glorify God with their bodies (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). As believers, we do not belong to ourselves, but to God. Our bodies are the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit; therefore we should glorify God through our actions. Later, Paul says that this principle should govern every aspect of the Christian’s life, even the trivial, routine things like eating and drinking (1 Cor. 10:31).

All of these principles apply to the question of attending a prom. Does the prom promote God-honoring music? Does it encourage Biblical modesty in dress and behavior? Is it a place where you can be free from the snares of temptation? Would participating strengthen your testimony before saved and unsaved friends? Does it promote personal holiness? Does any element of a prom exalt God and give the right opinion of who He is? The objective answer to all of these questions is “no.”

God wants believers to “approve things that are excellent” (Phil. 1:10). Simply stated, the worldly practice of the prom is not one of those excellent things. Steer clear of the prom and plan better, God-honoring options for celebrating. You will never regret it.

Taigen Joos is associate pastor at Cornerstone Baptist Church in Scarborough, Maine.

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SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

First Partaker

Serious Self-Examination before Ordination

Search me, O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

London: May 9, 1687. The twenty-four-year-old son of Philip Henry, a suffering Nonconformist minister, kneels and accepts the weight of six pairs of pious hands laid earnestly upon his bowed head. Their hushed voices rise to heaven. Moving prayers beseech the Lord to place His own good hand upon this offered life. Surely it is a sacred scene.

There is no more hallowed hour in the life of any man of God than that in which beloved brethren lay hands upon his head, symbolizing their own obedient responsiveness to the Holy Spirit in separating out from among themselves this God-called instrument for the sacred work of gospel ministry. Looking back upon my own ordination, I cannot help feeling some sorrow that I didn't sufficiently magnify the moment. Regretfully, the majority of my personal preparation for ordination had been of my head. I wished later it had been of my heart.

Some years after, while reading the life of the legendary commentator Matthew Henry, I came across the paper he composed by which to examine himself before being examined by his brethren. It is so thoroughly searching, humble, and sincere that one can hardly imagine a more excellent document for directing serious self-examination before ordination, or one more suited to retune one's heart repeatedly through the years. Space doesn't permit printing it in entirety, but here, with some slight stylistic editing, is much of

Matthew Henry's "Serious Self-Examination."

*"The husbandman that laboreth must be first partaker of the fruits"
(2 Tim. 2:6)*

What Am I?

This is a needful question because in ordination I give up myself to God in a peculiar manner. Will God accept the torn and the blind and the lame? Surely no. The sacrifice must be searched before it was offered that it might be sure to fit its end. And therefore come, my soul, let us inquire what am I? And let the inquiry be strict and serious, for a mistake here is fatal.

1. Have I ever been inwardly convinced of the lost and undone condition in which I was born—that I was by nature a child of wrath, even as others? Did I ever see myself wallowing in my blood, in a forlorn, out-cast, helpless state, lost and ruined for ever without Christ?
2. Was I ever deeply humbled before the Lord for the original sin that I was born in and the numberless actual transgressions in heart and life that I have been guilty of? Hath sin been bitter to my soul, hath my heart been broken for it, and hath my sorrow been of the right kind; hath the sight of a broken Savior broken my heart?
3. Have I sincerely closed with the Lord Jesus Christ by a true and lively faith, taken him to be mine, and resigned up myself to him to be his? Have I accepted Christ upon gospel terms to be my Prince to rule and Saviour to save me? Have I renounced all others and resolved to cleave to the Lord Jesus Christ, let what will come? Is Christ precious to me? Is he dearer to me than any thing in the world besides? Could I be freely willing to part with all for Christ and count everything but loss that I may win Christ?
4. Have I a real hatred of every sin in myself as well

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as in others? Have I no beloved lust which I want spared, no darling corruption which I want to remain unmortified? Does sin appear sin in my eyes. Can I say with David that *I hate every false way*? Are the remainders of indwelling corruption a burden to me? Do I long to be rid of sin? Are my resolutions sincere and my endeavors serious against sin and all appearances of it, and that because it is against God?

5. Have I a real love to holiness? Do I press after it and earnestly desire to be more holy, using holy ordinances for this end, that I may be made thereby more and more holy? Am I fond of holy ordinances and holy people, and that because they are holy? Have I a real value for holiness wherever I see it? Do I delight in God's holy Word, and that because it is holy? Do I call the holy Sabbath a delight, and that because it is holy? Do I love the brethren because they are holy, and love them the better the more holy they are? Do I long to be made perfect in holiness in that other world?

Have I a real love to holiness? Do I press after it and earnestly desire to be more holy, using holy ordinances for this end, that I may be made thereby more and more holy? Am I fond of holy ordinances and holy people, and that because they are holy? Have I a real value for holiness wherever I see it?

To these weighty questions my poor soul (though compassed about with manifold weaknesses, wants, and corruptions) doth, as in the presence of God, the Searcher of hearts, give a comfortable answer. If these be the signs and characters of true grace, I trust my heart doth not deceive me when it tells me that I have some sparks of it, though swimming in a sea of corruption. *But who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? And yet as if this had been but a small thing, thou hast spoken concerning thy servant for a great while yet to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God!*

What Have I Done?

This is also a needful question in order that searching and examining what hath been amiss, I may repent of it and make even reckonings in the blood of Christ, that I may not come loaded with old guilt to put on a new character, especially such a character as this. Aaron and his sons must offer a sin-offering to make atonement before they were consecrated (Lev. 8:34). For he that

comes near to God under guilt of sin unrepented of, comes at his peril, and the nearer the more dangerous.

And therefore, O my soul, what have I done? My soul cannot but answer, "I have sinned. I have perverted that which is right and it hath not profited me." And in a serious reflection I cannot but observe,

1. What a great deal of precious time I have trifled away and misspent in folly and vanity and things that do not profit. Time is a precious talent which my Master hath entrusted me with and yet how long hath it been buried and how much hath it run waste?
2. How many precious opportunities (which are the cream of time) have I lost and not improved through my own carelessness. Golden seasons of grace which I have enjoyed but have let them slip and been little bettered by them; sabbaths, sermons, sacraments that have come and gone and left me as they found me. My fruit hath not been answerable to the soil I have been planted in. How often have I been ignorant under enlightening means; hard and cold under softening and warming ordinances; trifling and careless when I have been dealing with God about the concerns of my soul and eternity?
3. How often have I broken my covenants with God, broken my engagements, promises, and resolutions of new and better obedience, resolved against this and that sin, and yet fallen into it again; many a time returning to folly after God hath spoken peace to me and after I have spoken promises to God. Presently after a sacrament, how often have I returned to former vanity, folly, sensuality, frothiness, to former pride, passion, and worldliness; so soon have I forgotten the vows of God!
4. How unprofitable have I been in my converse with others; how few have been the better for me; how many the worse for me; how little good have I done; how little light have I cast in the sphere wherein God hath placed me; how little have I been concerned for the souls of others; and how little useful have I been to them. How vain and light have I been many times in my words and carriage, going down the stream of folly with others when my seriousness might have stemmed the tide. How seldom has my speech been with grace, but how often with corruption; not seasoned with salt?
5. In general, how forgetful have I been of God and his Word, of myself and my duty, and of the great concernments for my soul and eternity, living too much as if I had no God to serve and never a soul to save!

I might mention many particular miscarriages which I have been guilty of in heart and life and which are

known to God and my own heart. Yet after all, — *Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me, O God, from my secret sins; have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness, and according to the multitude of thy tender mercies, blot out all my transgressions for the sake of the Lord my righteousness.*

From What Principles Do I Act in This Undertaking?

This is also a very material enquiry in every action, to ask whence it comes, especially in so great a turn of life as this.

1. I hope I can say that it is of faith; and I am concerned it should be so, for *whatever is not of faith is sin*. It is good for every man that he be fully persuaded in his own mind. Now,
 - a. I am fully persuaded that Jesus Christ, as King of the church, hath appointed and established the office of the ministry to continue in a constant succession to the end of time for the edification of the church, and has promised to be with ministers always to the end of the world. The office of the ministry, therefore, is no human invention, but a divine institution.
 - b. I am fully persuaded that no man ought to thrust himself upon the work of the ministry without a clear call from God to it. Not that we are to expect such extraordinary calls as the apostles had, but the ordinary call by the mediation of ministers, who, as such, are authorized by Christ to try the abilities of those who offer themselves to the ministry. — And if they find them fit, then to set them apart to that work, in a solemn manner, by the imposition of hands, with fasting and prayer— and that the laying on of the hands of the presbytery is the most regular way of ordination and most agreeable to scripture.
 - c. I bless God that I am pretty well satisfied with the clearness of my call to the work, though I cannot but be sensible of great weakness and insufficiency for these things; yet I find that what abilities God has been pleased to give me, (and let him have all the glory) do evidently look towards this work, so that if I be in any measure qualified for any service, it is for this. I find also mine own inclination strongly bent towards it, and that it hath been so ever since I knew any thing, and especially I consider that I have been much excited and encouraged to it by divers (both ministers and others) able, skillful, and faithful, fit to judge, by whom my purposes have been much confirmed. All which goes a great way towards the clearing of my call.

2. I hope I can say I act herein from a principle of true zeal for the glory of God; that this great thing I do, as I should do everything to the glory of God, that my light may shine, that Christ's kingdom may be advanced, the power of godliness kept up, the Word of life held forth; by all which God is glorified. The desire of my soul is that *whether I live I may live to the Lord, or whether I did I may die to the Lord, and that living and dying I may be the Lord's*.
3. I hope I can say, that I act herein from a principle of real love to precious souls, for the good of which I would gladly spend and be spent. Methinks I love the precious souls of men so well that I would fain be an instrument of convincing the unconvinced, converting the unconverted, and building up saints in holiness and comfort. I hope I know so much of the worth of souls that I should think it a greater happiness to gain one soul to the Lord Jesus Christ than to gain mountains of silver and gold to myself.

What Are the Ends That I Aim at in This Great Undertaking?

It is a common saying, that the end specifies the action. Therefore it is of great consequence to fix that right that the eye may be single, for otherwise it is an evil eye. A base end will certainly spoil the acceptableness of the best actions that can be performed.

Now what is the mark I aim at in this great turn of my life? Let conscience be faithful herein, and let the Searcher of hearts make me known to myself.

1. I think I can say with confidence, that I do not design to take up the ministry as a trade to live by or to enrich myself by out of the greediness of filthy lucre. No! I hope I aim at nothing but souls; and if I gain those, though I should lose all my worldly comforts by it, I shall reckon myself to have made a good bargain.
2. I think I can say with as much assurance that my design is not to get myself a name amongst men, or to be talked of in the world as one that makes somewhat of a figure. No; that is a poor business. —If I have but a good name with God I think I have enough, though among men I be reviled and have my name trampled upon as mire in the streets. I prefer the good word of my Master far before the good word of my fellow-servants.
3. I can appeal to God, that I have no design in the least to maintain a party or to keep up any schismatical faction. My heart rises against the thoughts of it. I hate dividing principles and practices. Whatever others are, I am for peace and healing. If my blood would be sufficient balsam, I would gladly part with the last drop of it for the

closing up of the bleeding wounds of differences that are amongst true Christians. Peace is such a precious jewel that I would give anything for it but truth. Those who are hot and bitter in their contentings for or against little things and zealous in keeping up names of division and maintaining parties are of a spirit which I understand not. Let not my soul come into their secret.

My ends then are according to my principles, and I humbly appeal to God concerning the integrity of my heart in them.

- a. I am fully persuaded that Jesus Christ, as King of the church, hath appointed and established the office of the ministry to continue in a constant succession to the end of time for the edification of the church, and has promised to be with ministers always to the end of the world. The office of the ministry, therefore, is no human invention, but a divine institution.
- b. That I deliberately place the glory of God as my highest and ultimate end. If I can be but any ways instrumental to promote that I shall gain my end and have my desire. I do not design to preach myself, but as a faithful friend of the bridegroom to preach Christ Jesus my Lord, as the standard-bearer among ten thousands. And if I can but bring people better to know and love and honor Christ, I have what I design.
- c. That in order to the glory of God I do sincerely aim at the good of precious souls. God is glorified when souls are benefited. Gladly would I be instrumental in that blessed work. I would not be a barren tree in a vineyard, cumbering the ground; but by God's help, I would do some good in the world. I know no greater good I can be capable of than doing good to souls. I desire to be an instrument in God's hand of softening hard hearts, quickening dead hearts, humbling proud hearts, comforting sorrowful hearts; and if I may be enabled to do *this*, I have what I would have. If God denies me this, and suffers me to labor in vain (though I should get hundreds a year by my labor) it would be the constant grief and trouble of my soul; and if I do not gain souls, I shall enjoy all my other gains with very little satisfaction. Though even in that case it would be some comfort that the reward is not according to the success but according to the faithfulness. But I seriously profess it, if I could foresee that my ministry would be wholly unprofitable, and that I should be no instrument of good to souls, though in other respects I might get enough by it, I would rather beg my bread from door to door, than undertake this great work.

What Do I Want?

And what special things am I now to desire of God, the God of all grace? When I know whither to go for supplies. I am concerned to enquire what my necessities are. The requests I have to put to God are such as these.

1. That he would fix and confirm and establish my heart in my dedication of myself to the work of the ministry. My carnal heart is sometimes ready to suggest to me that I had better take some other way of living that would be less toilsome and perilous, and more pleasant and gainful. The Devil joins issue with my heart and sets before me the profits and preferments I might possibly have in another way, and the trouble and reproach I am likely to meet with in this way. Now, O that my God would restrain the tempter, and satisfy me in my choice and furnish me with suitable considerations with which to answer such suggestions; and in order thereunto, give me believing views of eternity; having deliberately devoted myself to the work of the Lord, keep it always in the imagination of the thoughts of my heart, and establish my way before him.
2. That he would in a special manner be present with me in the ordinance of dedication, filling my heart with such an experimental sense of the excellency of Christ, and the comforts of the Holy Ghost, as that I may have cause to remember it, by a good token, as long as I live; that he would manifest himself to me, mark me for himself, and leave some sign behind him in my soul, that may make it evident God was there of a truth; that he would give me a comfortable earnest of the success of my ministry, by a signal owning of me in my entrance upon it.
3. That he would fit and qualify me for this great work to which he is calling me. When Saul was anointed king, *God gave him another heart, an heart fit for kingship*. I would fain have another heart, a heart fit for ministerial work, filled with ministerial gifts and graces.
 - a. Ministerial gifts. Every good gift comes from above, and therefore I look upwards for gifts of knowledge in the mysteries of religion; gifts of utterance to explain and apply myself to others and to speak the Word with boldness. I have also need of prudence and discretion to order the affairs of my ministry.
 - b. Ministerial graces. Faith, love to God and souls, zeal for God's glory, and souls' good; patience to do, to suffer, and to wait; an inward sense of the weight of the things I speak of. Two graces I do more especially beg of God,
 - i. Sincerity. That I may be really as good as I seem to be; that inward impressions may always be answerable to outward expressions

in all my ministrations; that my eye may be single, my heart upright; and my ends fixed; that I may not cast the least glance at any low, base end.

- ii. Humility. That God would hide pride from me and clothe me with humility, that I may see that I have nothing (except my sins) but what I have received; that I may never please myself with the praises of men, but hand up all the praise to God; that the least workings of pride and conceitedness may be checked in me.
4. That God would open a door of opportunity to me, and make my way plain before me, that the call I have to my work may be clear and satisfying, and that God would bless and succeed my endeavors for the good of souls.


What Are My Purposes and Resolutions for the Future?

This is also a requisite enquiry, when I am to put on a new character, and one so honorable. What shall I do that I may *walk worthy of the vocation wherewith I am called?*

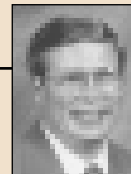
1. I purpose and resolve by the grace of God that I will have no more to do with the unfruitful works of darkness, seeing it will not only be my duty as a Christian, but my office as a minister to reprove them rather. *Pride, passion, worldliness, wantonness, vanity, are things the man of God must flee* (1 Tim. 6:11). What have I to do anymore with idols? What have I to do anymore with sin? By the grace of God it shall not have dominion over me. The ministerial character will add a great aggravation to every sin; and therefore, *O my soul! stand in awe and sin not.*
2. I purpose and resolve that, by the grace of God, I will abound more than ever in all manner of gospel obedience; that I will strive to be more humble, serious, and watchful, and self-denying, and live more above the world and the things of it; that I will pray with more life, and read the scriptures with more care, and not be slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; that I will abound in good discourse, as I have ability and opportunity with prudence; endeavoring as much as I can to *adorn the doctrine of God my Savior in all things.*
3. In particular, I resolve in the strength, spirit and grace of Jesus Christ my Lord, to consider well and perform my ordination vows; to hold fast the form of sound words which I have heard and received in *faith and love which is in Christ Jesus*; and never to let go any truth, whatever it cost me; ever owning the scripture as *the only rule of faith and practice.*

- a. That I will wholly give up myself to the work, and employ all my talents in the service of God and souls, with seriousness and sedulity: that I will not only preach, but to the utmost of my power defend, the truths of God against all opposers, and do all I can to convince or silence gainsayers.
- b. That I will endeavor to maintain not only truth, but peace and unity in the church of God; that I will patiently bear and thankfully accept of the admonitions of my brethren, and esteem such smittings as an excellent oil that shall not break my head.
- c. That if ever God shall call me to the charge of a family, I will walk before my house in a perfect way, with an upright heart, not doubting but that then God will come unto me; my house shall be a Bethel; wherever I have a tent, God shall have an altar; and Joshua's resolution shall be mine, *Whatever others do, I and my house will serve the Lord.*
- d. That if ever God calls me to the charge of a flock I resolve, by his grace, with all possible diligence to lay out myself for the spiritual good of those over whom God shall set me; and that in conversation I will endeavor to be an example to the flock going before them in the way to heaven, and will improve all the interest I have, and all the authority I may have, for the honor of God, the good of souls, and the edifying of the mystical body of Christ.

Whatever opposition I may meet with in my work, by the grace of God I will not be terrified with it, nor frightened by the winds and clouds from sowing and reaping, but in the strength of my God, go in the midst of discouragements; and if God shall call me to sufferings, which I promise to expect and count upon, I will, by the grace of God, suffer cheerfully and courageously for the truths and ways of Christ, *choosing rather, with Moses, to suffer afflictions with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season*; and I will esteem not only the crown of Christ, but the reproach of Christ, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, having respect to the recompence of reward.

This is the substance of what I promise in the strength of the Spirit in the grace of Christ, and having sworn by his strength, I will perform it, that I will keep his righteous judgments, and the Lord keep it always in the imagination of the thoughts of my heart, and establish my way before him. 

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Bring . . . the Books

Without Holiness No Man Shall See God —The Life and Message of J. C. Ryle

The older I grow the more I am convinced that real practical Holiness does not receive the attention it deserves, and that there is a most painfully low standard of living among many high professors of religion in the land. But, at the same time, I am increasingly convinced that the zealous efforts of some well-meaning persons to promote a higher standard of spiritual life are often not “according to knowledge,” and are really calculated to do more harm than good.

J. C. Ryle wrote these words over a century ago in *Holiness*, a work that provides clarification, correction, and Biblical instruction on a topic much debated among believers today. A new edition titled *Faithfulness and Holiness: The Witness of J. C. Ryle* (Crossway Books) contains the original text and an extended biography of his life and ministry. Ryle’s work is valuable for

restoring biblical breadth and depth to evangelical minds that had been swept away by fashionable holiness teaching that was actually extreme, shallow, biblically incorrect, and a hindrance to growth in grace. Ryle’s response was not to cross swords with its exponents, but to lay out afresh, biblically, systematically, and in practical terms, the true fundamentals of Christian sanctity.

Ryle laments the lack of personal holiness among the professing believers in his day:

[P]ractical holiness and entire self-consecration to God are not sufficiently attended to by modern Christians in this country. Politics, or controversy, or party-spirit, or worldliness have eaten out the heart of lively piety in too many of us. The subject of personal godliness has fallen sadly into the background. . . . The immense importance of “adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour” (Titus 2:10), and making it lovely and beautiful by our daily habits and tempers, has been far too much overlooked.

Ryle believed that right thinking on holiness begins with a Scriptural understanding of sin.

He that wishes to attain right views about Christian holiness, must begin by examining the vast and solemn subject of sin. . . . Wrong views about holiness are generally traceable to wrong views about human corruption. . . . The plain truth is that a right knowledge of sin lies at the root of all saving Christianity.

After asserting man’s total depravity, Ryle addresses the importance of sanctification in a believer’s life. He differentiated sanctification from justification and taught sanctification as a daily process beginning at the moment of salvation. Ryle’s comments are relevant to modern discussions concerning sanctification:

“ . . . when
thou comest,
bring with thee
. . . the books”
(2 Tim. 4:13)

Strange doctrines have risen up of late upon the whole subject of sanctification. Some appear to confound it with justification. Others fritter it away to nothing, under the pretence of zeal for free grace, and practically neglect it altogether. Others are so much afraid of “works” being made a part of justification, that they can hardly find any place at all for “works” in their religion. Others set up a wrong standard of sanctification before their eyes, and failing to attain it, waste their lives in repeated secessions from church to church . . . in vain hope that they will find what they want. In a day like this, a calm examination of the subject . . . may be of great use to our souls.

Ryle’s observations about “assurance” are most helpful. He distinguished between faith that saves because of its object no matter how frail that faith may be, and a strong and confident faith accompanied by assurance. One may be saved and have no assurance, but one can’t be saved apart from faith in spite of any false assurance he might possess. For Ryle, sanctification and growth in holiness are essential evidences that saving faith has happened and thereby produce assurance in the believer. This assurance is something to be heartily pursued by the believer. Ryle acknowledged that even the strongest believers would at times face doubts; but they should not be content for this to be their ongoing state.

Believe me, believe me, assurance is worth the seeking. . . . If it is good to be sure in earthly things, how much better to be sure in heavenly things! Your salvation is a fixed and certain thing. God knows it. Why should not you seek to know it too? There is nothing unscriptural in this. Paul never saw the Book of Life, and yet Paul says, “I know and am persuaded.”

Ryle’s message is challenging and refreshing, should be read slowly and repeatedly, and is as timely for us as it was for the original readers. His approach would do a great deal to restore a Biblical perspective regarding the need to live holy and consecrated lives before the world. ☞

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The term “disciple” is used consistently in the four Gospels to describe the relationship between Christ and His followers. That relationship involved the disciples in the day-to-day affairs of His lifestyle. Thus the Lord Jesus taught in Luke 6:40, “The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect [mature] shall be as his master.”

Two thousand years later, true discipleship involves us with our Lord, with His life and ministry, and relates us to the qualities of His life that He demonstrated while here on earth.

Peter Waldo, the leader of the Anabaptists known as Waldensians, was a rich merchant of Lyons, France. He was converted following the trauma of the death of a friend. He had the Scriptures translated by two scholars into his own tongue, and thereafter gave up all his wealth and followed his Lord. Everywhere he went he preached the claims of Christ, using the words “Look to Jesus! Listen to Jesus! Learn of Jesus!” (A. Naismith, *1200 Notes, Quotes and Anecdotes* [Basingstoke, England: Pickering & Inglis, 1985], p. 55.)

Let’s consider briefly a few of the areas of involvement with Christ that true discipleship demands.

Discipleship Involves Us with the Service of Christ

“The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord” (Matt. 10:24).

A young woman who had left home because of her drunken father later became a Christian. After her conversion she announced her intention of returning and doing what she could to win her father to Christ. “But what will you do when he finds fault with all your efforts to please him?” someone asked. “Try a little harder,” she answered. “Yes, but when he is unreasonable and unkind you will be tempted to lose your temper, and answer him angrily. What will you do then?” “Pray a little harder,” came the answer. The discourager had one more arrow: “Suppose he should strike you as he did before. What could you do but leave him again?” “Love him a little harder,” said the Christian. Her splendid perseverance conquered. Through love, prayer, and patient effort, her father experienced Christ’s power to save. (Quoted in *3000 Illustrations for Christian Service*, Knight [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1952], p. 431.)

When Catherine Booth, “Mother of the Salvation Army,” died in 1890 of cancer, her body lay in state in London. The poorest of the poor mingled with members of Parliament as they filed past the casket; all were eager for a last look upon the face they loved. Ruffians passed

her weeping. Prostitutes turned from her side and begged to be taken to some home where they could begin a new life. “That woman lived for me,” an alcoholic cried in anguish. They drew him aside, and down on his knees he accepted pardon and promised that her God should be his. Three men knelt together at the head of the coffin, repented of their sins, and left the hall saved. Another said, “I’ve come sixty miles to see her again. She was the means of saving my two boys.” What a thrilling testimony to one who had exemplified the qualities of true Christian discipleship (“The King’s Business”, quoted in *3000 Illustrations for Christian Service*, Knight [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956], p. 427).

Discipleship Involves Us with The Commands of Christ

“If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).

Two friends were out walking in the mountains. Following hard at the heels of his master was a faithful dog. The dog’s ears and eyes were listening and watching for words of command from his master. In conversation, the master began gesturing. He raised his arm in the direction of a precipice. The faithful dog, thinking that his master was giving a word of command to him, instantly leaped to his death over the precipice. Oh, that we were as quick to obey our Master’s commands, to have our ears “tuned to hear His slightest whisper,” and then to obey from the heart—even unto death (Stephen Olford, *Institutes for Biblical Preaching*, Volume 5).

Henry Martyn said, “Lord, let me have no will of my own, or consider my true happiness as depending in the smallest degree on anything that can befall me outwardly, but as consisting altogether in conformity to Thy will” (William MacDonald, “True Discipleship,” *Moody Monthly* [Chicago: January, 1965], p. 27).

Discipleship Involves Us with the Persecution of Christ.

“If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20).

John Wesley was riding along a road one day when it dawned on him that three whole days had passed in which he had suffered no persecution. Not a brick nor an egg had been thrown at him during the period. Alarmed,

“To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, ‘A window shalt thou make in the ark.’”

Charles Spurgeon

he stopped his horse and exclaimed, "Can it be that I have sinned, and am backslidden?" Slipping from his horse, Wesley went down on his knees and began interceding with God to show him where, if any, there had been a fault. Behind a nearby fence an unbeliever passing by had heard him pray and threw a brick at him, thankfully missing. Wesley later said he then knew that everything was right between him and his Lord (Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 15,000 Illustrations*.)

Adoniram Judson, the renowned missionary to Burma, endured untold hardships trying to reach the lost for Christ. For seven heartbreaking years he suffered hunger and privation. During this time he was thrown into Ava Prison, and for seventeen months was subjected to almost incredible mistreatment. As a result, for the rest of his life he carried the ugly marks made by the chains and iron shackles which had cruelly bound him. Undaunted, upon his release, he asked for permission to enter another province where he might resume preaching the gospel. The godless ruler angrily denied his request, saying, "My people are not fools enough to listen to anything a missionary might say, but I fear they might be impressed by your scars" (Stephen Olford, *Institutes for Biblical Preaching*, Volume 5).

When Raymond Edman was a missionary in Ecuador he knew a godly layman who felt called to the ministry; but his wife would not hear of it. She threatened all manner of reprisal if he should leave his employment to become a full-time minister of Jesus Christ. One evening he came to Brother Edman with a bundle under one arm and tears in his eyes. The missionary inquired what the man had in the bundle. "It contains my working clothes," he replied. "I left my employment today." He had counted the cost and had set himself to leave all and to face whatever persecutions might come, that he might be Jesus' disciple. Should it be a surprise to us that this dear man shortly thereafter won his wife to full allegiance to the Master, and that together they have become pillars in the work in Ecuador (V. Raymond Edman, "The Discipline of Discipleship," *The Disciplines of Life* [Wheaton: Van Kampen Press, 1948] pp. 12–13)?

Discipleship Involves Us with the Death of Christ.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24).

Robert E. Lee was a great Civil War general but an even greater Christian; he was also a man who loved his nation, his wife, his children, and his home. When the conflict between the states came to a head in 1861, he not only had no desire to go to war against the Union, but was actually offered the position as

head of the Union Army. After much soul searching, he followed the course that he felt was his duty and chose to fight for his home state, Virginia. That decision eventually led to the loss of most of that which he held dear. Douglas Southall Freeman wrote the classic work on Lee and ended the fourth and last volume of his great biography with a story about a woman who wanted Lee to say some words of blessing over her baby. "In Northern Virginia, probably on his last visit there, a young mother brought her baby to him. . . . He took the infant in his arms, looked at it and then at her, and slowly said, 'Teach him he must deny himself.' That is all."

Dawson Trotman passed away in the midst of the very area of his strength—he drowned. He was an expert swimmer. The last few moments he had in the water he lifted one girl out of the water. He went down and got the other girl and lifted her out of the water and then submerged and was not found again until the dragnet found him a few hours later. A man named Larsen was on that boat when Trotman died, and he said, "The entire United States Navy couldn't have saved Trotman that day—it was God's time." When *Time* magazine ran an article on Trotman's life the next week, the editors put a caption beneath his name that read, "Always Holding Somebody Up." In one sentence, that was Trotman's life—investment in people, in honesty and humility, holding them up (James S. Hewett, *Illustrations Unlimited* [Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc, 1988], p. 444).

Discipleship Involves Us with the Love of Christ

"This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

Agape love was the love of T. E. McCully, father of Ed McCully, one of the missionaries slain by Aucas Indians in Ecuador. One night shortly after that experience he prayed, "Lord, let me live long enough to see those fellows saved who killed our boys that I may throw my arms around them and tell them I love them because they love my Christ." That is the love of true discipleship. This reciprocal love became a reality, for many of the leaders of the Aucas came to Christ, and Mr. McCully had the opportunity to do just what he had said he desired—to love those Indians who had come to love his Jesus, too. *The Pastor's Story File*, no. 21 (Saratoga, Ca.: Saratoga Press, July, 1986), p. 5

To be a disciple of Jesus Christ ultimately results in the disciple becoming like Him. That process of change into His image is a work of the grace of God through the Word and Spirit of God as the believer is involved personally in fellowship with Jesus Christ. The manifestations of discipleship mentioned previously are merely the external testimony to the inner disciple becoming like His Lord. ☞

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Final Exams

There is nothing like final exams; whether High School college, or graduate school. There is an indescribable swirl of emotions of joy fear, exultation, terror. There are tears and trembling. There is extreme behaviour. Observe the student who decides to make no effort. There is the student who crams to the expense of health. There is the student who reviews and leaves the rest up to chance.

There is nothing quite like finals.

Old age is the final exam of life and there is nothing like it! There is the indescribable swirl of emotions. And like graduation day the emotions alternate between great joy and some trepidation.

There are wondrous joys in aging. Many pressures are gone. Who am I? Where do I go to college? Who do I marry? What will be my career choice? Will I be a good husband or wife, parent? In old age most of these questions are answered

Like the graduate there are many temptations and fears. What does life really hold after retirement? Will no longer working at my calling be bearable? Will I make a difference? Will anyone know I am alive? Or care? What will be the next health crisis? Can I handle it? I don't want to be just "grinning and bearing life". I want joy in life. Can I bear the inactivity and the inability to travel when caring for an invalid mate? Can I live -without anything to look forward to in this life except daily routine?

Will I finish my course with joy? Will I finish well? There are many

questions to be answered in life's final exams. How will I function as a widow . . . widower?"

When a teacher is preparing an exam the questions are carefully formed to cover all that has been learned in that course. Our Heavenly instructor, the Lord Jesus Christ, no doubt does the same. The final exam must test over the whole course . . . in this case the course of a long life.

There are many books on studying for final exams. There are study techniques. Perhaps we need to prepare for old age in the same way.

In reviewing one always starts with the textbook. The life text is the BIBLE.

The Word gives definite instructions for the old. There are verses that cover attitude, vocation and value. Job 11: 15, 17; Ps. 92:14; Isa. 54:14; Isa. 27:5; Ps. 37:28; Ps. 37:2Ps. 34:8,10;8; Jer. 31:25; II Chron. 15:7, Prov. 4:26, Isa. 46:3,4; Ps. 16:9.

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the attitude of praise. Do we bow to the choices an all-knowing God allows into our lives? Do we grit our teeth and wait for the next awful thing to happen? Do we ask to grow so that we have the grace to face the next challenge? There will always be a "next" challenge. That is not pessimism. That is reality.

Review the wondrous things that have happened in life. Most of the things we worried about never came to pass. Review the years one by one; childhood, school days, high school, college. Think of the opportunities, the love, the narrow escapes, the provisions, the home, the family, the children the protection.

When we review we are reminded of everything we've learned.

We've studied the textbook for the final exam. The Bible.

We've reviewed. the notes.

The next step is to be able to apply the facts and principles to the exam in order that the master teacher will know we can make

application to daily challenges.

So when a trial comes read the word. Review the many instances of His taking us out of or through trials in the past. Apply each of those to the present trial.

Is the trial financial? Review the text. Joel 2:26; Matt 6:31,32; Ps. 132:15; Ps. 105:40

Are you fearful? Mark 4:40; Isa. 41:13; Prov. 3:25,26;

Do you face physical trials? Ps. 84:11,12; Prov. 3:5,6;

In our review when a trial comes remember all that He has done for you during your lifetime.

When a trial comes apply what you've learned to it everyday. A final exam tests whether we can use what we've learned. Every experience has brought us closer to the Lord's goal for us. Christlikeness. May we pass the exam of old age with flying colors. After all, Heaven is the next chapter.

Doris Fisher Harris is a freelance writer and long time employee of Bob Jones University serving in the Speech Faculty.

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My mother is on speaking terms with God and spanking terms with me. —Unknown

Terror in the house does roar, but Pity stands before the door. —William Blake

It is a wise father that knows his own child. —William Shakespeare

As soon as we are born we begin to die, and the end depends on the beginning. —Manilius

All happy families resemble one another; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own fashion. —Leo Tolstoy

The vocation of every man and woman is to serve other people. —Leo Tolstoy

Family jokes, though rightly cursed by strangers, are the bond that keeps most families alive. —Herbert Wiley

The test of a man or woman's breeding is how they behave in a quarrel. —George Bernard Shaw

Mercy but murders, pardoning those that kill. —William Shakespeare

Victory will never be found by taking the path of least resistance. —Winston Churchill

A brave man is a man who dares to look the Devil in the face and tell him he is a Devil. —James A. Garfield

Truth alone can stand the guns of criticism. —Herbert Hoover

One sword keeps another in the sheath. —George Herbert

One may smile, and smile, and be a villain. —William Shakespeare

An appeaser is one who feeds a crocodile hoping it will eat him last. —Winston Churchill

I was brought up at the knees of a devoted mother and across the knees of a determined father. —Unknown

The flaw which is hidden is deemed greater than it is. —Martial

Moderation is best, and to avoid all extremes. —Plutarch

A happy family is but an earlier heaven. —Sir John Browning

A holy family, that make each meal a Supper of the Lord. —Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

God pardons like a mother who kisses the offense into everlasting forgetfulness. —Henry Ward Beecher

Maternal Love: a miraculous substance which God multiplies as He divides it. —Victor Hugo

God could not be everywhere, so He made mothers. —Jewish Proverb

No man is poor who has had a Godly mother. —Abraham Lincoln

The duties of home are discipline for the ministries of heaven. —Anonymous

Home—the nursery of the infinite. —William Ellery Channing

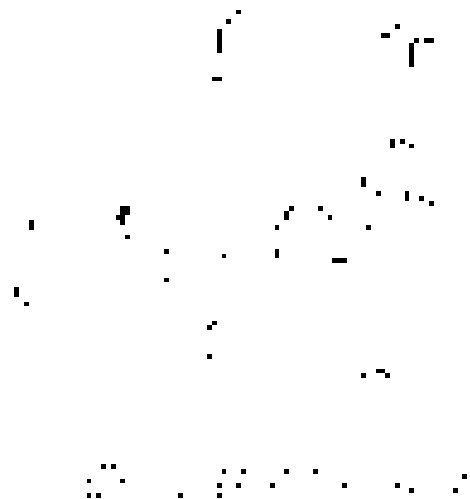
God oft hath a great share in a little house. —George Herbert

Marriage is love personified. —Anonymous

Usually he is most empty who is most full of himself. —A.G. Lawson

An angelic boyhood becomes a Satanic old age. —Erasmus

The sins of youth are paid for in old age. —Latin Proverb



Wit and Wisdom is taken from various sources.

Let Him Lead?

It's not always easy to respond graciously to authority. Have you ever found yourself in this situation? Your husband comes home and says, "Honey, I wish we could have supper on the table as soon as I get home from work," and you lose it. Maybe you don't lash out right then, but your spirit grumbles the whole evening, and you don't even try to make polite conversation. You may eventually concede that supper on the table would be a nice thing even though he definitely should have said it in a different way or at a better time.

Of course, there are good and bad times to approach certain conversations. Yes, the husband does have the responsibility to love his wife and to live with her according to knowledge. But let me ask this—is that what you focus on when you think about the topic of wives submitting to their husbands? Many women who write on the topic of submission do. They actually begin by saying everything that *the husband* should do and how he should do it. Later they move on to describe how women are not subservient but are, in fact, often more intelligent, more articulate, and more accomplished than their husbands. Somewhere, pages later, they do manage to pen the word "submit," but they do it with many clarifications, qualifications, exemptions, and near-apologies. Is this the attitude God had in mind when He commanded wives to submit to husbands?

In order to have a God-honoring attitude regarding submission, wives must "think God's thoughts" on the subject. Second Corinthians 10:5 says, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." We must cast down our feelings, opinions, and experiences and instead think on things that we know to be true from God's Word. Here are five truths that can shape our attitudes regarding the need to submit to our husbands:

1. *Submission is a good thing*, designed by God before the Fall. First Corinthians 11:8, 9 states, "For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man." Charles Hodge comments,

The subordination of the woman to the man is here proved from two facts recorded in the history of their creation. First, the woman was formed out of the man, and derived her

origin from him. He, and not she, was created first. Secondly, she was created on his account, and not he on hers.¹

So in the very way and timing in which God created woman, He established the role of the wife, and He said that it was all *very good*. The created beings and their places in the world were designed exactly as God wanted them.

2. *Submission is a command from God*. My decision not to submit is a choice to disobey God. It does not matter whether I like how my husband is leading or whether I think my way is better than his way. The fact is that, unless my husband asks me to sin, I'm disobeying God if I don't obey him. One contemporary writer, in defining femininity, states,

If you are married, you creatively and intelligently and sincerely support the leadership of your husband as deeply as obedience to Christ will allow.²

This attitude indicates not just a willingness to "put myself under," but even a desire to look for every opportunity I can find to follow my husband's leadership, knowing full well that this is an opportunity for me to follow Christ. Martyn Lloyd-Jones states that the desire of a woman to submit herself to God's will is the "grand motive" for submitting to her husband. He writes,

Unless we are moved by it [a desire to submit to God's will], and animated by it, no other argument will appeal to us. If we are not already submitted to the Lord Jesus Christ, and concerned about His Name and His honour above everything else, all other arguments will leave us untouched.³

Our focus should not be on whether or not submission "works" or whether or not we like to submit. Our focus should be on desiring to please and obey God. If I love Him, I will keep His commands, and His commands will not be grievous to me (1 John 5:3).

3. *Submission is a reflection of my choice to put my hope and trust in God*. Peter draws attention to the women of the Old Testament who put their trust in God. In the context of wives submitting to husbands (and specifically in regard to unsaved husbands), he writes, "For

Continued on next page

Ladies' Circle (continued)

after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement" (1 Pet. 3:5, 6). This passage is found right in the midst of situation after situation in which Peter encourages believers to submit themselves to their authorities—even when doing so involves suffering—and to entrust "the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator" (1 Pet. 4:19). Peter is not suggesting that a wife should remain in an abusive situation, but he is recognizing the fact that submission to an unsaved husband may be difficult. Certainly the only way that a wife can submit in difficult circumstances is by realizing that God is in control, that He loves her, and that she can trust Him in everything. This is how a wife may demonstrate the meek and quiet spirit that God says is of great value to Him (1 Pet. 3:4). She rests in Him rather than choosing to be a pushy, assertive woman who "seeketh . . . her own" (1 Cor. 13:5).

4. *Submission is manifest when I respect my husband.* Ephesians 5:33 states, "and the wife see that she reverence [respect] her husband." Respect can be seen in the way I talk to my husband. Sara called Abraham "lord." Esther made her requests to her husband, the king, saying, "If it seem good unto the king," and "if it please the king." Certainly there is an intimacy in marriage that allows for less formality in day-to-day conversations, but we cannot say that intimacy is an excuse for disrespect. My respect for my husband, *whether he deserves it or not*, should always be evident in the way I talk to him. I may have to tell him that I cannot participate in something if he is asking me to sin, but I can still do so with a respectful tone and manner. Respect can also be seen in the way I talk *about* my husband. Proverbs 31:11 states, "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her." Can your husband trust you? Would you ever be embarrassed if he overheard you talking about him? In her book *The Fruit of Her Hands: Respect and the Christian Woman*, Nancy Wilson uses the example of a woman's slip showing to demonstrate disrespectful conversation.

This seems an appropriate metaphor to use in describing certain kinds of unseemly conduct, which, just like your slip, you don't want publicly viewed. There you are with a group of women when you say something that betrays an un-submissive or disrespectful attitude toward your husband, or you just leak information that really should have remained private between you and

your husband. If it is only your good friend or your mother who has noticed, it's not so bad. You can "hitch up" your attitude, confessing your lack of discretion. But what if you are trooping about in full view of the church? The results can be humiliating.⁴

No matter what the circumstances, neither your husband nor anyone else should doubt that you respect him as the head of your family.

5. *Submission is modeled by Christ.* Consider Philippians 2:5–8:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Jesus, who had complete equality with the Father, did not consider His position one to be grappled for. He chose to submit to the Father even though He possessed the same perfection as the Father. Christ's submission brought Him into the most

humbling circumstances, but He endured the cross and its shame for the joy that was set before Him (Heb. 12:2).

What should our focus be regarding submission to husbands? First Peter 5:5–7 admonishes,

Be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

As we focus on God's truths and rest in His promises, He will give us the grace we need to have a joyful attitude regarding submission. In that way, we will give glory to Him.

Salena Cathcart is a graduate of Bob Jones University, wife, and mother of three. She lives in Columbus, Ohio.

¹ Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on I & II Corinthians* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), p. 210.

² John Piper, *What's the Difference? Manhood and Womanhood Defined According to the Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1990), p. 53.

³ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Life in the Spirit in Marriage, Home & Work* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1973), p. 103.

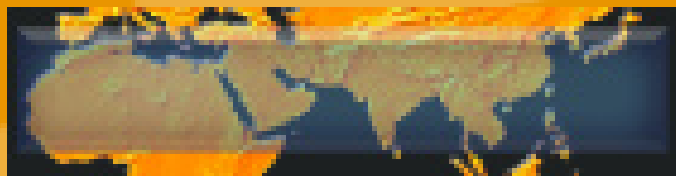
⁴ Nancy Wilson, *The Fruit of Her Hands: Respect and the Christian Woman* (Moscow, Idaho: Canon Press, 1997), p. 44.

Global Mission *The Challenge of the Unreached*

Pearson Johnson

Bombs, troops, war correspondents, darkness. America has been at war in the Middle East. Our minds have been filled with images and our hearts have overflowed with prayers. It has been an emotionally and psychologically exhausting time. We have been awakened to the needs of a different culture and to the realities of an oppressive regime. It is almost as if we were there, with the continuous coverage and live satellite images. There, feeling the sting of the sand on our cheeks; there, in the war-torn, rubble-strewn streets where children seek refuge and parents lift up their eyes and hands for help.

As a result of the war coverage, something has happened to us that we may not have expected. We have had the opportunity to make a virtual visit to one of the relatively unreached countries of a region that has come to be known by missionaries as the 10/40 window. This "window" is the area between the latitudes of 10 and 40 degrees north of the equator bounded by the Atlantic Ocean on the west and the Pacific on the east. Though it includes only about 35% of the world's geographical surface, it houses more than 65% of the world's population. One statistician has estimated that "Of the 6 billion people in the world in 2000, I reckon that 1.2 to 1.4 billion have never had the chance to hear the gospel, and over 95% of these individuals reside in the Window area."¹ The country of Iraq is near the center of this window.



As you have sat in your living room watching the war coverage on the television or listening to the radio, has the Holy Spirit prompted you to pray for the evangelization of those who sat under the sound of bombs but who have never sat under the preaching of the Good News of Jesus Christ? As you saw Baghdad cloaked in darkness, was your mind drawn to the spiritual darkness that blankets the entire crescent region? Not only the crescent region, but most of North Africa, Central

Asia, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia contains the majority of unevangelized people—people who have never had the opportunity to understand a complete oral or written presentation of the gospel.

Before ascending into heaven, Christ commissioned His disciples: "Ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). It is clear that Jesus' instructions included an ever-expanding gospel witness. It was not a gospel witness only to open countries or to countries with modern lifestyle accoutrements. He called for a proclamation that would be broadcast into lands where the gospel witness was non-existent. He commissioned His followers to shine a beam that would pierce the darkest parts of the globe. Certainly, this does not mean we ignore reached areas. A strengthened supply line is necessary for an advance to be made. However, our hearts should long to see the gospel brought to the unreached. To see trophies of grace claimed from a hopeless place surely brings great glory to our God!

We have taken a virtual trip to a spiritually darkened land through the war correspondence. Let's take the commission of Christ and use our experience to obey it. How can you do this? In future columns we hope to break down the regions we have mentioned into more digestible portions for prayer and information. At this point, though, you can pray for laborers among the unreached people of the world—both laborers from our country and laborers in those countries. You can promote awareness of needy fields. Read these articles and share them with your family and Sunday school classes. See the



Continued on next page

Obituary

We are saddened to report the death of FBFI board member Pastor Ken Stephens. Dr. Stephens pastored Front Range Baptist Church in Fort Collins, Colorado. Dr. Ed Nelson preached the funeral at Front Range on April 26th. Our deepest sympathies and prayers are offered for family and friends and the people of our dear brother's church.

Evangelist's Corner (Continued)

world through God's eyes. You can send laborers from your churches and families through sacrificial giving. You can reach the world at your doorstep—immigrants and students on secular campuses. Take them into your homes while they are here. Help train them and send them back to their homeland. Finally, you can pray about going yourself. Let it not be said it was because of ignorance that we did nothing. Let's have a global focus, learning about the world and its needs, committed to fulfilling the Great Commission for the sake of His Name!

¹ Patrick Johnstone, "Covering the Globe," in *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*, Ralph D. Winter and Steven C. Hawthorne, eds. (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 1999): p. 543.

Pearson Johnson is the Pastor of Missions and Evangelism at Inter-City Baptist Church (www.intercity.org) in Allen Park, MI



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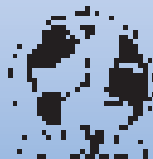
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This column has previously addressed the neglected stepchild of the New Testament, the diminutive but beautiful Book of Philemon. But to another volume belongs the dubious distinction of being perhaps the most misunderstood (and often abused) stepchild of the sacred library as a whole, both Old and New Testaments. To make the case, however, it is essential to begin by revisiting the basics of our view of the Bible.

Starting Point: Inspiration

All Fundamentalists affirm the plenary, verbal inspiration of the whole Bible. By that we mean that though each of the sacred authors brought to the task of writing his own unique and individual reservoir of understanding, experience, and vocabulary, what each penned was simultaneously being breathed out by the direction of the Holy Spirit. Consequently, it was not the writers themselves who were “inspired” but the written product; the words themselves—the vocabulary, grammar, and syntax—were those breathed out by God through a variety of human authors and in a variety of literary expressions.

Liberals have for many decades cast aspersions on the divine origin and reliability of the Bible as a whole and of specific statements and books in particular. Many admit that the Bible contains much elevated thought and beautiful literature; but it is, after all, a purely human book. An ancient book of man’s reasoning can hardly be expected to be “inerrant” in areas of science or history, let alone authoritative and absolute in theology. Thanks largely to the New Evangelical experiment of a half-century ago, this mentality has trickled into previously conservative institutions and often laces the thinking of previously reliable men.

How, then, do we react to these kinds of statements about any particular book within the inspired record of God’s revelation to man?

- “Inspiration sets down accurately what passes, but the conclusions and reasonings are, after all, just man’s.”
- This book “contains many of man’s most serious reflections. These are not necessarily God’s truth, but they stimulate the minds and hearts of men.”
- “The philosophy [this book] sets forth, which makes no claim to revelation but which inspiration records

for our instruction, represents the [author’s] world-view.”

- “No statement of this book should be considered the full truth of God unless it be confirmed by other Scripture.”

Such statements would be expected from those whose view of the Bible in general has been massaged by exposure to liberal thinking. Would we be shocked to discover, however, that these statements are made by indisputably orthodox sources? In this case, however, the cause is *not* capitulation to liberal thinking. Rather, it reflects a frustration with the book’s admittedly difficult passages, coupled with a serious misunderstanding of the nature and function of the book as a whole. Nevertheless, the end result is a viewpoint of an entire book of the Bible that is uncomfortably and incongruously—albeit unintentionally—close to the liberal viewpoint of the Bible as a whole.

Such statements about Romans, John, Genesis, or Isaiah would signify the death of a man’s orthodoxy and theological reliability. All of the above statements, however, were made by conservative, Bible-believing men regarding the Book of Ecclesiastes.¹ We would never tolerate any remotely similar comment about the Bible itself, or about any other Book in the Bible. Why Ecclesiastes? What is it about this *one* book that makes some people insist on treating it so differently from all other Scripture?

Major Objections

Here are the arguments most frequently marshaled against the inspired inerrancy, doctrinal authority, and theological reliability of Ecclesiastes.

Human Authorship

It is sometimes observed that Ecclesiastes itself claims to be only “the words of the Preacher” (1:1), not the words of God. This is a dangerous line of reasoning when you compare passages such as Proverbs 1:1 (“the proverbs of Solomon”), 30:1 (“the words of Agur”), or 31:1 (“the words of King Lemuel”). And surely no one would dismiss some of the remarkable statements by the third minor prophet simply because they are, after all, only “the words of Amos” (Amos 1:1).

STEPCHILD OF THE BIBLE

Questionable Activities

How could Solomon be giving an inspired account of revealed truth when he talks about doing things that are sinful (e.g., 2:3, 8)? This objection overlooks the fact that this book contains no commendation, explicit or implicit, of any of Solomon's activities. Solomon himself commends these activities to no one. In fact, his conclusions and observations urge exactly the opposite (e.g., 2:10).

Accurate Record of Error

Some argue that in the case of Ecclesiastes alone, inspiration guarantees only an *accurate record* of erroneous thinking. The Pilgrim Edition of the Bible notes that "often bad men, mistaken good men, or the devil are quoted accurately [in the Bible], but what they say may not be true." There are several oversights in this argument as well. *First*, on what objective basis can we make this assertion only about Ecclesiastes, and not about any other book of the Bible that appears to pose theological or exegetical difficulties? *Second*, this argument takes a valid observation of what is true in isolated instances within a larger, inspired Biblical narrative and applies it to an entire book of the Bible. *Third*, in cases where inspiration guarantees an accurate record of error on the part of some person, it is invariably the error of a third party. In other words, God (1st party) inspires a Biblical author (2nd party) to record accurately someone else's (3rd party) erroneous statement. (E.g., God inspired Moses to record Satan's lie.) God does not inspire a man to record as part of Scripture his own erroneous thoughts.² This is what guarantees the reliability and trustworthiness of all that the Scripture writers affirm. The point is, in Ecclesiastes *there is no third party*—it is the inspired author himself who does all the talking.

Cultic Abuse

To invalidate the heretical doctrines of certain cults that claim Biblical authority for their beliefs (sometimes citing verses from Ecclesiastes), some bluntly insist that Solomon was just wrong in some of his musings. Try this argument with a misused statement by Moses, Isaiah, Jesus, or Paul (as many liberals, in fact, do). Cults often cite other Bible passages to justify their erroneous beliefs. The abuse of the truth must not frighten us away from an honest and accurate assessment and proper use of the

truth. (Interestingly, Walter Martin's *Cults Reference Bible* provides sound, substantive explanations of cult-abused Ecclesiastes passages without sacrificing the integrity of Ecclesiastes as a whole.)

Difficult Passages

Probably the single most bothersome feature of Ecclesiastes that drives some to dismiss its contents as flawed is its apparent discrepancy with other Scriptures. Perhaps the most frequently cited example of Ecclesiastes' alleged doctrinal aberration is 9:10: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest"—a verse that seems to deny any conscious afterlife. Here are a few other potentially bothersome passages to consider:

- "For in death there is no remembrance of thee [God]; in the grave who shall give thee thanks?"
- "Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? Shall the dead arise and praise thee?"
- "The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence."

Do you have any hesitation about affirming the truth of these statements? Hopefully not, since they are located in Psalm 6:5, 88:10, and 115:17, respectively. Yet a contextual reading indicates that these statements are affirming *precisely* the same truth as Ecclesiastes 9:10. Simply put, death ends all of this life's opportunities, whether for labor, service, or praise to God. We would not hesitate to defend the revelatory truth of the trio of statements above. Why? Because they are in *Psalms*. Yet we want to throw out a verse like Ecclesiastes 9:10, which teaches *precisely* the same truth. Why? Because it is located a few pages later in Ecclesiastes—in the only book in our Bible presumed to be flawed throughout. Interchange the references and you would have people unwittingly accusing David of flawed human reasoning.

This is not to deny that there are genuinely difficult passages in Ecclesiastes. But it is to insist that there are better, more consistent, alternative ways of dealing with such problem passages without assigning them to human error. How? The same way we deal with difficult passages anywhere else in the Bible—*exegete, dissect, compare, and contextualize*. To surrender hard statements to

Continued on next page

At a Glance (Continued from page 31)

erroneous human reasoning opens a Pandora's box with serious ramifications for how we handle difficulties in any other book of the Bible.

Sound Warning?

"Don't take your doctrine from Ecclesiastes." But when we take this position regarding Ecclesiastes, we are applying the same reasoning that is behind the partial inspiration view of liberalism and neo-orthodoxy, and that has wormed its way into a defective evangelicalism. ("Don't take your science from Genesis or your history from Joshua.") The baby (doctrinal objectivity and theological certainty) is unceremoniously dumped out the window with the bathwater of "some things hard to be understood" (2 Peter 3:16; yet we don't dismiss Paul's statements when they are "hard to be understood.")

As long as unbelieving liberals and cults hold this book of our Bible hostage—like squatters on our territory—we allow ourselves to be robbed of one of the richest rewards, by one of the wisest of men, in God's revelatory treasury. Rather than, "Don't take your doctrine from Ecclesiastes," here's a better, more consistently Biblical admonition: "Labor to understand the doctrinal context and function of Ecclesiastes." That, after all, is how we treat all the rest of Scripture. And we have more theologically orthodox, exegetically sound resources at our disposal than ever to help us in that endeavor.

There is, however, one last best reason to approach Ecclesiastes with as much reverence for its revelation and as much conviction of its truthfulness as any other book of the Bible. That will be the subject of the next column. We will also explore its thorny problem passages as well as its themes

(which are arrestingly modern and relevant), as we focus on this stunning book of the Bible over the next few columns.

¹ The sources of these statements are, respectively, *The Scofield Reference Bible*, R. W. DeHaan in *The Art of Staying Off Dead End Streets*, *The New Scofield Reference Bible*, and *The Pilgrim Edition of the Bible*. No one should misconstrue any of the comments in this column as an attack on any of these fine resources. As a Christian, I grew up on the NSRB and still use it almost daily. The point is, ironically, that "the conclusions and reasonings" of such resources "make no claim to inspiration" and "are, after all, just man's."


² The only exception to this of which I am aware is Asaph's mistaken thinking reflected in Psalm 73:13; however, he immediately identifies the error of his own thinking in the verses that follow.


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Cross Burning

The U.S. Supreme Court justices ruled April 7 that a law barring cross burning "with the intent of intimidating any person or group" is not unconstitutional, thereby disagreeing with a ruling by a state Supreme Court. "The protections afforded by the First Amendment . . . are not absolute, and we have long recognized that the government may regulate certain categories of expression consistent with the Constitution," O'Connor wrote. In distinguishing between possible intentions in cross burning, the high court agreed with the Virginia Supreme Court's decision to overturn the conviction of Barry Black. Black led a 1998 Ku Klux Klan rally in Carroll County, Va., in which a 25-foot-tall cross was burned in an open field with the owner's permission. The U.S. Supreme Court vacated the lower court's decision to strike down the convictions of the two other men involved in a cross-burning incident. Richard Elliott and Jonathan O'Mara were convicted for partially burning a cross on the property of James Jubilee, an African American, in Virginia Beach. Part of the high court's opinion focused on a provision in the Virginia law that treats "any cross burning as prima facie evidence of intent to intimidate." The

justices ruled that provision, which was added to the law in 1968, is unconstitutional. (Baptist Press, 04/08/2003)

"Sexual Orientation" Bill Defeated

Nashville's "sexual orientation" anti-discrimination bill was defeated in metro council April 1, eliciting celebration from opponents but caution from those on both sides who say the issue will eventually resurface. The proposal to ban employment discrimination based on "sexual orientation" within the city government—thus covering all public schools—lost 19–18 in the council when Vice Mayor Howard Gentry Jr., who votes only in cases of ties, cast a "no" vote. The dramatic ending capped 60 minutes of debate in which opponents and proponents delivered passionate yet civil arguments before a packed gallery of citizens wearing "No" buttons and "Yes" stickers. The turnout favored opponents roughly two to one. (Baptist Press, 04/02/2003)

Baptized on the USS Harry S. Truman

In the middle of the hangar bay, Avionics Technician 2nd Class Sean Zahornacky, from San Jose, Calif., sits in a water-filled green tub. The large container actually is a joint direct attack munitions (JDAM) crate. What once

carried ordnance for destruction now serves as a vessel for an act of obedience that symbolizes the birth of a new creation and a walk in a new life. Today the JDAM crate is a baptism—first-ever, full-immersion baptism on board the USS *Harry S. Truman* (CVN 75). Many young men and women join the Navy searching for something and ultimately find God, the chaplains say. That's the case for Zahornacky, who has lived on the *Truman* as part of the ship's company since 1999. He didn't have any church background growing up, and said it was very hard for him to admit that he needed God. "If I don't see A and B, I don't believe C," the avionics technician said. But, after many months of prayer, asking questions, and studying the Bible, he accepted Jesus Christ. After the young sailor was baptized, he stood, wet and slightly shivering from the breeze blowing through the hangar, as fellow Christians congratulated him. "I walk inches off the ground after something like this," Chaplain Dunn said, smiling broadly. "It is such a joy to see a sailor make such a clear commitment in front of his shipmates." (Baptist Press, 03/31/2003)

Partial-Birth Abortions

Late in March the United States Senate

passed S.3, the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act of 2003, by a bipartisan vote of 64 to 33. This is the fourth time a ban on partial-birth abortion has made its way through Congress and the third time a bill has passed the Senate. The first two bills were vetoed by President Clinton, and last year's bill, passed by the House, never made it to a vote in the Senate. However, this bill is expected to be signed into law. As the Ban Act of 2003 stands right now, the partial-birth abortion procedure would be completely banned, but some want to see an exception made for cases where the health of the mother is threatened. It should be noted that "health of the mother" has come to include physical, psychological, emotional, familial, educational, or financial health. (*The Federalist*, 04/03/2003)

Bug Chasing

Thousands of people knowingly infect themselves with the HIV virus each year, according to *Rolling Stone* magazine—a practice commonly known as "bug chasing" and cited by those who participate in it as the ultimate form of erotic fulfillment. Of the 40,000 new HIV infections each year, as many as 10,000 may be due to bug chasing—a figure that represents a full 25 percent of all HIV cases. Bug chasing

is most commonly associated with homosexual men, *Rolling Stone* reports, and is propagated through a vast Internet network. So why would anyone knowingly infect himself with a fatal disease? One homosexual told *Rolling Stone* it's all about the freedom associated with having HIV. Once you have the most deadly disease on the market, he said, you can participate in any sexual activity without worrying about the consequences. (Baptist Press, 03/31/2003)

Missionary Volunteers Die from Fall

A missionary team from Glover Baptist Church in Norcross, Ga., and Grace Fellowship Church in Snellville traveled to Honduras to serve in a medical clinic. At the close of the trip, hoping to pose for a group photo, they filed onto a wooden swinging bridge, holding on to the cables that served as handrails. T. J. Lathe was the first on the bridge, followed by Amy Cruce. In the next moment the center of gravity apparently shifted as the members all stood on one side, and the bridge flipped and began tossing bodies into the ravine some thirty feet below. Some team members were immediately thrown from the bridge; others hung on and dropped minutes later. Two team members were able to hang on until they were rescued. Cruce was standing over the deepest part of the ravine, a nearly four-story drop, when the bridge flipped, her legs

NOTABLE QUOTES

Blessed are the men who have had praying mothers. The influence of that fact they cannot shake off. They may curse and swear, and go to the very boundary of the pit, and go into the pit, but I question whether through all their sufferings they can ever shake off the influence of having had a praying mother. The mother's devotion comes up in the boy's veneration, love of right, conscientiousness, magnanimous hope, gentle courage.—Joseph Parker

The foundations of national glory are set in the homes of the people. They will only remain unshaken while the family life of our nation is strong and simple and pure.—King George VI

A father and mother living together with their children, tender in their love, pure in their lives, strong in their convictions, simple and orderly in their habits, do infinitely more than presidents and governors, legislators and clergyman can do in making a strong nation.—S. D. Gordon

The Making of a Delinquent:

1. Give the child everything he wants. In this way he will grow up to believe the world owes him a living.
2. When he picks up bad words, laugh at them. That will make him think he is amusing.
3. Never give him any spiritual training. Wait until he's twenty-one and then let him decide for himself.
4. Pick up everything he leaves lying about—books, shoes, clothes; do everything for him so that he will be experienced in throwing all responsibility on to others.
5. Quarrel frequently in his presence. In this way he will not be too shocked when the home is broken later.
6. Give the child all the pocket-money he wants.
7. Never let him earn his own. Why should he have things as tough as you had them?
8. Satisfy his every craving for food, drink and comfort. Denial may lead to harmful frustration.
9. Take his side against neighbors, teachers, policemen. They are all prejudiced against your child.
10. When he gets into serious trouble, apologize for yourself by saying, "I could never do anything with him."
11. Prepare for a life of grief. You are bound to have it.

—Police Department, Houston, Texas

becoming entangled in the cables. She hung upside down for nearly ten minutes, watching as her friends fell one by one into the ravine. Her brother grabbed a bright yellow heavy-duty extension cord and tossed it to her, with instructions to tie it around herself. Just as she wrapped it around her midsection, the bridge shifted, dropping her into the air. Unable to pull her to safety, he lowered her into the ravine until others could ease their way down. T. J. Lathe and Church Brattain were killed in the incident. (Baptist Press, 03/14/2003)

High Court May Overturn Sodomy Law

The high court heard oral arguments in an appeal of a Texas court opinion sustaining a state law banning sexual relations between members of the same sex. The lawyer for two Houston homosexual men asked the court to overturn a seventeen-year-old ruling in which the justices upheld a Georgia law barring same-sex acts. Texas is one of only four states that have sodomy laws that apply only to homosexuals. Nine other states prohibit both homosexual and heterosexual sodomy. The Texas law has "all sorts of collateral effects," including the denial of visitation to a homosexual parent and loss of employment. In 1986 the Supreme Court ruled in the 5-4 *Bowers v. Hardwick* decision there is no fundamental right in the Constitution for homosexuals to participate in sodomy. Much has changed in

the high court and in the states since then, however. Only three justices from 1986—Chief Justice William Rehnquist and Associate Justices John Paul Stevens and Sandra Day O'Connor—remain on the high court. Since that ruling, the number of state sodomy laws has decreased from 28 to 13. In addition to Texas, the states that still have sodomy laws are Alabama, Florida, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Utah, and Virginia. (Baptist Press, 03/31/2003)

Attention Deficit

The 2003 Academy Awards were the lowest rated of any Oscar telecast since 1974, the year such data first became available. The biggest question of the evening was not who would win the major awards, but which presen-

ters or winners would use their platform to speak out against Operation Iraqi Freedom. As it turned out, the evening was a mixed bag. Host Steve Martin was both funny and respectful, mostly avoiding the topic and closing the evening with: "To our young men and women overseas, we hope you enjoyed the show. It's for you." Several others simply made generic appeals for peace. The most simultaneously obnoxious and heartening event of the evening came when Michael Moore accepted his Oscar for Best Documentary Feature. He pulled the rest of his category's nominees onstage with him and immediately launched into a tirade against President Bush: "They're here in solidarity with me because we like nonfiction . . . but we live in fictitious times. We live in a time where we have fictitious election results

that elect a fictitious president. We are against this war, Mr. Bush! Shame on you, Mr. Bush! Shame on you! And any time you've got the pope and Dixie Chicks against you, your time is up!" During Mr. Moore's speech the camera panned the floor-level audience (the stars), and saw most of them sitting unmoved, neither clapping nor booing. On the way backstage, Mr. Moore repeated the last line to reporters, afraid that it may have been drowned out by the chorus of boos that began midway through his rant. (*World* magazine, 04/05/2003)

Reality TV Marriage Show Pulled

The new reality show *Married by America* will no longer be aired by the Fox television affiliate in Raleigh, N.C., because station executives concluded that "the program did not

reflect prevailing standards of good taste and that the show was clearly demeaning to the institution of marriage." *Married by America* features five singles who, upon evaluations from family and the public, are paired with strangers. According to the Fox website, "Once face-to-face, these new couples will embark on a journey toward matrimony in hopes that they have indeed found their one true love." The couple chosen by America to be married will win \$1 million if they can stay married for 180 days. In comments to Baptist Press after the Raleigh affiliate's decision, Todd Brady said he thinks it's great that the affiliate realizes there are many in America who believe in the seriousness and the sacredness of marriage. (Baptist Press, 03/17/2003)

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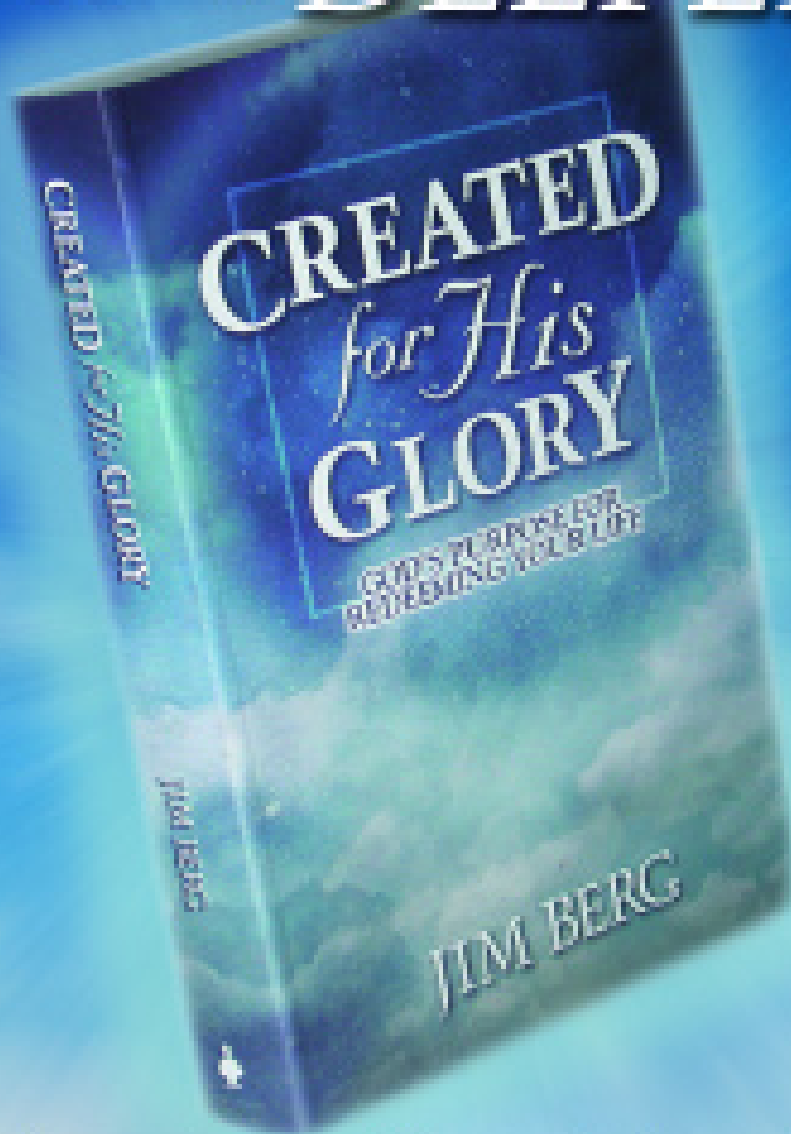


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God Setteth the Solitary in Families

God's people have taken refuge in the Psalms for centuries, and well they should. Psalm 68 is rich with promises and words of comfort. It has been used throughout history as a marching song by those who looked to God for victory. It has been pointed out that the Crusaders sang it on their way to the Holy Land; Savonarola and the monks sang it as they marched to their fiery trial; the Huguenots called it "the song of battles"; Cromwell's army sang it as they charged Leslie's army. During WWI it was sung more frequently than any other.

There is a phrase in the beginning of verse six of this wonderful Psalm. Near the end of the first stanza that honors God for His might, His majesty, and His mercy, we read the words, "God setteth the solitary in families." What a wonderful truth! No one needs to be alone. Whether orphan or widow, the single person or the lonely pastor or missionary laboring for the Lord in an isolated place, God has a family for those who need a family.

Pastors know that messages on the family can often bring sadness to those who are lonely. It may be that some single person has been reading this issue and felt that sadness again. But remember, "God setteth the solitary in families." God has a place where you can love and be loved. For some it is with friends and neighbors, or by helping another family with its needs. For all it should be a Fundamental, Bible-

believing local church. But even those in prison or the nursing home or otherwise unable to get to church are part of a great spiritual family if they truly know the Lord.

The sad reality is not just that there are so many who have never come into the spiritual family through the new birth, but that so many who have a place set at the table never come to eat. Sad indeed that there are some who must have their spiritual meals taken to their bedside or to the humiliation of a jail cell or the danger of a foxhole on

the battlefield; tragic indeed that a place at the table set with love should go empty for lack of interest or loyalty. Who can't understand the disappointment of a faithful mother who has prepared a nourishing meal for her family only to have them rush

through the house announcing that they don't have time to eat.

Or, consider the frustration of a lady who would arrange a lovely meal for the pastor only to have to call him after he failed to show up to see if there has been an emergency. Imagine that she should find him at home with the explanation, "Oh, I just wasn't able to make it today, but I'll come next time." And yet, that happens to pastors nearly every week. They have prayed for their "family" members and prepared a nourishing sermon, often with a particularly hungry member in

mind; then they stand to preach while looking out to see that many of the family just "weren't able to make it" that day.

Sure, there are legitimate reasons much of the time, but you have to wonder how many people really understand that their church is family. Not only do they need the preaching, the singing, the praying, and the fellowship, but others need the absent one as well. A helpful illustration is given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12, where he compares believers to a body. When a member of your body is hurting, you are not likely to rejoice at how much the other members don't hurt. I've often taught my church, "It hurts worse to have a toothache, than it feels good not to." It is doubtful that any one reading this has thought today, "My teeth really feel good!"

Just as many people put off going to the dentist because they will immediately experience sudden and perhaps severe pain to get their longstanding pain relieved, so do people live with the loneliness and stagnation of avoiding church because they don't want the embarrassment of explaining their absence or the pain of conviction involved. You need the fellowship of God's people, and they need you. You are not just hurting yourself;

you are hurting your family. No one needs to be alone that knows the Lord. If you are not a member or not attending a local church, you are missing more than you realize. You are missing the joy of belonging—the blessing of being in a "family."

*No one
needs to
be alone
that
knows the
Lord.*



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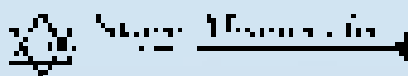


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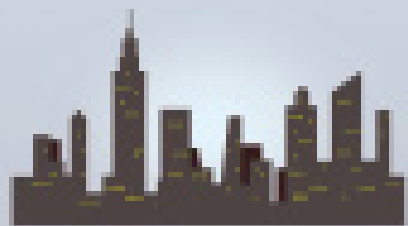
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