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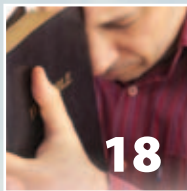
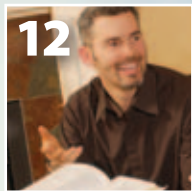
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FrontLine

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME

From
Truth
to Life
Application

From Truth to Life Application



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We would like to thank Dr. Steve Hankins for coordinating this issue of *FrontLine* magazine.

An Idea Central to What the Bible Teaches about Itself

Most would agree that, while by no means a complete list of important Christian ideas, the Biblical concepts of love, grace, and wisdom are primary, expansive, and magnificently intertwined ideas in Scripture. They capture in many respects the essence of the Faith, as the believer abides in Christ. *And they are all rooted in the concept of the application of Scripture to life—putting the Truth to work in us and through us.*

First, consider *the concept of love*. The believer is first called upon to love God with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength (Matt. 22:36–40; Luke 10:27). The second great command is to love one's neighbor as one's self. Love in a Biblical sense is unconditional, generous, selfless, sacrificial living and proclaiming for God's redemptive purposes in Christ, for His glory alone.

The submission of our will to His desires demonstrated by joyful obedience to His commands is the ideal expression of this love we are to demonstrate for God as we live and proclaim the gospel. John said, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). Doing what God says, acting upon His precepts is what obedience is. *It is Truth applied to life* in everyday circumstances by responding appropriately to His commands.

Second, think about *the concept of grace*. Grace is God's undeserved power administered by His Spirit on the merits of our Savior's work for us in our insufficiency. Without His grace we are insufficient to save ourselves, to serve Him, or to suffer in a manner that glorifies God (2 Cor. 12:7–10). By grace, however, we are remade and we are empowered as the "word of grace" flows into our hearts (Acts 20:32) so that we may accomplish the unimaginable for His glory. "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work," Paul said to the Corinthians (2 Cor. 9:8). How does that happen? *It is Truth applied to life that makes all this difference, as the believer faces ever-changing challenges daily.*

Third, reflect for a moment on *the concept of wisdom*. Wisdom is seeing life from God's perspective and making

right choices in your own spiritual best interest and for the glory of God. To be wise, in the Biblical sense, is an attainment for which we strive, a treasure for which we search, and a gift directly from God in answer to our prayers.

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7), Christ presented a well-known parable. The striking fact about this parable is that there was only one thing that distinguished the wise man in the parable who built his house on the rock and the foolish man who built his house on the sand. One's home survived the storm, and the other's collapsed. As Christ applied the parable, the wise man *hears* the Word and *does it*, while the foolish man hears the word and *does not* do it. What is the distinguishing characteristic between the two of them? *It is Truth applied to life by obedience*. One put the truth to work in his life and the other did not (Matt. 7:24–27).

Perhaps there is no person more foolish than the self-deceived man, who thinks his spiritual condition is far better than it really is. Wisdom is contrasted with this utter foolishness by our Lord's brother in his exhortation which says, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). There is a particularly powerful application in this context since James uses a metaphor of a mirror to describe the Word, which reveals what we are that needs to be changed. It is only the fool who turns away oblivious to what he has seen of his true nature that needs changing. The value of the Word, like the mirror, is in its use (James 1:23–25). *It is Truth applied to life that makes the difference between the life unchanged and the life transformed for the glory of God.*

From Genesis to Revelation, from Old Testament stories to her detailed laws, from the descriptions of our Master's life in the Gospels to the narrative of the bold advances of the gospel in the Acts, from the New Testament mandates that fill the Epistles to the visions of glory given to us by John—how do we put the Truth of the Word to work in our lives? God willing, what you read in this issue of *FrontLine* from the faculty at Bob Jones University Seminary will help you meet that challenge. Read on, and put the Truth to work in your life today for His glory!

Steve Hankins serves as the dean and professor of New Testament Interpretation and Preaching at Bob Jones University Seminary.



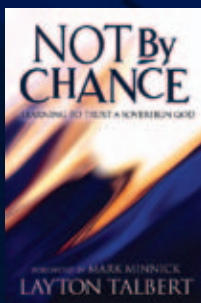
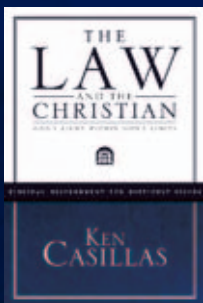
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We often have to remind ourselves as Christians that the pilgrim walk sometimes includes disappointments. Sometimes the greatest of those disappointments comes when those that we think are committed to the authority of Scripture demonstrate otherwise. When these writers/speakers are confronted with issues that are countercultural they present what seem to be “new insights” into Scripture. They give “Scriptural reasons” for changing their previously held, historically established Biblical position on issues. These “new” positions that they espouse are not only unscriptural, they are confusing and discouraging to the Lord’s people. When examined under the light of Scripture it becomes apparent that the position is based on faulty hermeneutics, not on sound Scriptural exegesis.

The November/December 2013 issue of *FrontLine* was a great encouragement for two reasons. (1) The authors were willing to give attention to very difficult current issues (feminism, homosexuality, parental discipline, creation) and Biblically refute those who have taken erroneous views as a result of faulty Biblical hermeneutics. (2) Most encouraging was the fact that the authors are young adults. They are not only academically and Scripturally trained and gifted writers, but most of all they are unwaveringly committed to searching the Scriptures and maintaining a Biblically uncompromising position on difficult current issues. Writers, pastors, and speakers of this persuasion are rare and desperately needed in this day. We were encouraged by several statements that represent all of those who contributed to this important issue: “At the end of the day . . . will we submit to the text or will we domesticate it?” “Let the Bible speak first, interpret it skillfully, then heed it well (James 1:22).” This issue of *FrontLine* is a great encouragement to the Lord’s people.

Virginia Arnold
Greenville, SC

As I have been reading the latest edition of *FrontLine* magazine I have been reminded of the kindness of Faith Baptist Church [Tylors, SC] in providing this wonderful resource for us. We are invariably challenged, encouraged, and edified through the various articles and themes that are treated. We look forward to each new issue. We are blessed to have a church that is concerned for us and knows one of the best helps that they could provide for us through this magazine. We are likewise grateful for the many folks associated with *FrontLine* who work so hard in providing top-quality Christian reading materials for families and especially for families involved in ministry.

Don Winch
Douala-Akwa, CAMEROON

Marie Christina Russell Henzler, wife of FBFI chaplain Dr. Fred Henzler, went to be with the Lord on Wednesday, November 13, 2013. Marie was born on March 7, 1930, and married F. D. (Doc) Henzler on August 14, 1953. Upon his graduation from Bob Jones University, they immediately entered the ministry. Marie was not only very supportive but active in all of his ministries as pastor, camp director, Bible college instructor, and church planter, but she was also known as a cheerful, loving woman and a dynamic Bible teacher for women and children. Dr. Henzler and Marie served together as a team at the Houston County Sheriff’s Office, Perry, Georgia.



Pastor Ken Endean has accepted the presidency of International Baptist College and Seminary in Chandler, Arizona. Ken has a breadth of practical and academic experience rarely seen in Baptist academic leaders. He has pastored Cornerstone Baptist Church in Scarborough, Maine, for the past seventeen years. He will assume his new responsibilities in May 2014.

Dr. Stephen Jones recently announced that he is stepping down after nearly nine years as president of Bob Jones University, citing health issues. His resignation as president will be effective at the university’s commencement, May 9, 2014.



The Board of Directors of Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary in Ankeny, Iowa, recently announced the appointment of **Dr. Ernie Schmidt** as the interim president of the institution. He assumed his new duties on January 1, 2014. He succeeds Dr. James D. Maxwell III who retired after more than six years as president of the school.



Amanda Baker has been appointed as a missionary by Baptist World Mission. She is busily preparing her materials and presentation to share and is eagerly anticipating partnering with BWM missionaries Jonathan and Angela Carl in planting churches in an area about fifty miles west of London.

A photograph of a person's hand holding a thick, orange leather-bound Bible. The person is wearing a dark jacket. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with green grass and trees under a bright sky.

Applying the Bible to Life

In discussions of Bible study and preaching, the topic of application often gets the short end of the stick.

No doubt this is due to the subjective element in application. The Bible itself acknowledges the complexities of application. Ephesians 5:10 speaks of “proving what is acceptable unto the Lord,” putting matters to the test in order to determine their moral quality. Application requires discernment. This is a skill we develop as God matures us generally (Rom. 12:2; Phil. 1:9–11) and as He illuminates us regarding specific passages (2 Tim. 2:7). In addition, the Lord grows us in discernment as we practice discernment (Heb. 5:14).

In application we are connecting two realms: Scripture and contemporary life. In this issue of *FrontLine* other articles concentrate on contemporary life, addressing specific issues in the light of Scripture. But first we need to consider our general approach to the Bible itself. Admittedly, no formula exists that can guarantee appropriate application of every passage of Scripture. Yet we can develop skill in application by following sound principles and procedures.

What God says to us through a passage is an extension of what He was saying to the original recipients of that passage. Consequently, *contemporary application must cohere with the original application of the text*. Several time-tested guidelines will help us stay on the right path in this regard. These guidelines concern various levels of context that surround a text: the canonical context, the historical context, and the literary context.

The Canonical Context

By canonical context I mean the broad message of the entire Bible. In essence, the Bible is the story of God’s kingdom—His rule on earth established at Creation, disrupted by sin, and restored through Jesus Christ. Each portion of Scripture fits into and contributes to this story in some

manner. Before we conclude that a passage applies to us in a certain way, we ought to ask how that passage relates to the kingdom concept.

The canonical context may or may not alter our initial suppositions. But it will help to keep personal applications in perspective. It will protect us from focusing so much on ourselves that we neglect a simple but profound reality: the Bible is fundamentally about God and His kingdom program. This is particularly important in dealing with Old Testament narrative, where we can easily moralize and “miss the forest for the trees.”

Yet the canonical context also motivates application. Since God never changes and has a unified plan, we would expect a significant degree of continuity in His dealings with His people. Underlying patterns and principles have a bearing upon the present. “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Cor. 10:11).

The Historical Context

The historical context of a passage influences its application. In the providence of God, each book of Scripture was

Today: Guidelines

penned by a specific writer aiming at a specific purpose with reference to a specific audience in a specific setting shaped by specific historical-cultural features and specific dispensational factors. That's a lot of specifics! And the more we ignore them, the more likely we are to misapply by reading the present into the past. In Old Testament narrative, for example, historical context can keep us from allegorizing, seeing symbols of Christ and the Church where they are not.

Historical context has considerable positive value as well. A few years ago I was preaching through Genesis, and I was struck by the original setting and purpose of this book. Moses presumably wrote Genesis during the wilderness wanderings in order to encourage the second generation of Israelites as they prepared to conquer Canaan. This background sheds light on the stories in the book. To give just one illustration, how would the Creation account have ministered to the Israelites as they faced their idol-worshipping enemies? And in what parallel ways does that account minister to us as we pursue our mission in a pluralistic world?

Historical background remains vital when we come to the New Testament. Take something as familiar as Paul's Epistle to the Romans. This letter is not an abstract theological treatise or even an evangelistic tract. One of its purposes—probably its main purpose—was to rally the Roman church to assist Paul in his mission to the Gentiles (see 15:15ff). As we read each section of the letter, we ought to ask how it contributes to this purpose. I keep asking that as I presently preach through Romans! And I have been impressed with how the book's various parts work together to unify diverse believers in support of global gospel outreach.

The Literary Context

The literary context of a passage stands as the most important because it is the most explicit. Picture a series of concentric circles surrounding a text: the book, section, and immediate contexts circumscribe the sentences and words of the passage. Contemporary applications are compelling when they are tied tightly to the original application of the passage as reflected in these circles of context.

How should we apply the story of Jesus' healing of a blind man in two stages (Mark 8:22–26)? Certainly the incident teaches the power and compassion of Christ and moves us to worship Him. But why in this case only

does He heal someone partially and then fully? Context provides the answer! This story is placed immediately before the major turning point in the plot of Mark: Peter's confession of Jesus' Messiahship, followed immediately by Peter's opposition to Jesus' predicted suffering (vv. 27–33). Christ's method with the blind man illustrates what our Lord does in response to Peter—and what He continues to do for the next two chapters (8:34–10:52). He gradually gives the disciples *spiritual* sight. Graciously but firmly, Jesus works to bring them to a right understanding of His mission and of their own place relative to that mission. Disciples today can expect the Lord to work similarly in our lives. And we need to learn humbly instead of insisting on our own vision for our lives and ministries!

Genre is an especially significant aspect of literary context. We intuitively appreciate the importance of genre from our general reading. A newspaper article doesn't read the same as a novel, nor does a daily devotional read the same as a computer manual. Similarly, the Bible abounds in genres, each having its own characteristics: narrative, law, poetry, prophecy, parable, epistle, and the list goes on.

Genre characteristics have everything to do with application. For instance, in a New Testament epistle often we can legitimately derive separate applications from individual sentences and even individual phrases. That's consistent with the dense, sequential character of the epistolary genre. Old Testament poems are structured differently,

however. They're rich with figurative language and are often repetitive. So an individual verse in a psalm may not yield a "point" different from the verse before it.

Conclusion

Perhaps these guidelines seem overwhelming. Why do all this hard work? For one, we don't want to claim God is saying something to us that He really isn't saying. But think about the positive side. How useful would your smartphone be without apps? Likewise, how profitable will the Bible ultimately be if we don't rightly relate it to our own lives? God gave us the Scriptures in order to transform us (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). Application enables us to experience this transforming ministry!

Ken Casillas, PhD, is professor of Old Testament Interpretation at Bob Jones University Seminary and senior pastor of Cleveland Park Bible Church in Spartanburg, South Carolina. He is the author of *The Law and the Christian: God's Law within God's Limits*.



... how profitable will the Bible ultimately be if we don't rightly relate it to our own lives?

How to Apply the New the World to Life Today:

Few readers of *FrontLine* magazine would fail to recognize Scripture's testimony to a thriving evil spiritual system that combines the power of Satan's headship, the depravity of the human race in its rebellion against God, and the evil inclinations of individual sinners. "The world, the flesh, and the Devil," this unholy trio is often called. Of those three, the first is the focus of our attention here. While space constraints preclude the presentation of a fully developed method of applying Scriptural teaching on the world to contemporary lifestyle issues, we can at least survey some important foundational considerations.

"The World" in the Old and New Testaments

The word "world" in this sense of humanity in its hostility toward God does not appear much in the Old Testament, but the concept is strongly present, primarily in the expression "the nations" (often "the heathen" in the KJV). The nations in the Old Testament are the mass of humanity outside God's covenant family of Israel. We might think that Israel would be so enamored with her gracious God and His holy laws (Deut. 4:7–8) that the ways and the gods of the nations would hold no attraction for her. The reality, though, is just the opposite: time and again Israel fell under the mesmerizing spell of the nations, disobeyed her sovereign Lord, and brought upon herself His mercifully chastening hand.

Surely, we might think, the beneficiaries of God's New Covenant in Christ would avoid that trap. Surely the horror of Israel's Babylonian captivity, combined with Calvary's testimony to the awfulness of sin as demonstrated by the terrible price required for cleansing and forgiveness, would purge us from any inclination to follow Israel's worldly ways. Fallen flesh, though, is fallen flesh in every dispensation. So the apostles warn, "Be not conformed to this world" (Rom. 12:2), and "Love not the world" (1 John 2:15).*

Perhaps the first challenge we face in applying these commands to contemporary life is defining "the world." The concept is not difficult to state in the abstract: the world is the mass of unregenerate humanity and the patterns of behavior by which, under the headship and energizing influence of Satan, they manifest their willful ignorance of God.

"The World" and Contemporary Culture

There is a further sense, though, in which we must define our term: by what criteria may we determine which elements of contemporary culture come under this heading and require our rejection and resistance? Not everything that unbelievers do is inappropriate for Christians: the basic functions of life as we interact with God's good creation are the common privilege of all, saved or not. Equally obvious, on the other hand, is the fact that believers who imitate ungodly culture in such matters as sexual immorality or ostentatious materialism are worldly. The right and wrong of such extremes is plain in Scripture. But what about the huge range of options that Scripture does not address so explicitly? Matters such as styles of dress and grooming, taste in music, forms of entertainment and amusement, and choices about such material things as homes and cars? How do we define "the world" in terms of categorizing the various options in such areas as worldly or not?

In such matters any attempt at formulaic definition is bound to fail, since Scripture's approach to identifying worldliness is not mechanical—indeed it cannot be. Cultures are too varied and complex to submit to simple, formulaic analysis and evaluation; the Scriptural model demands Biblically informed, Spirit-guided discernment. Philippians 1:9–11 is clear: a life that is a credit to God's name (v. 11) requires blamelessness before Christ (v. 10b), which in turn requires discriminating moral judgment (v. 10a), which in turn requires a love that abounds in accurate knowledge and discernment (v. 9).

Believers who have developed such maturity in Christ are able to set aside their own personal inclinations and preferences—especially those which they know arise from the old man rather than the new. They are able to perceive the origins and nature of various practices of their culture, and they judge accurately how these various practices function: whether as morally good expressions of human nature and activity as God intends it or as manifestations of ignorance of God and resistance to His will. When they read, for example, the list of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19–21 and find, at the end, "and such like," they are able to expand the list with specific vices prevalent in modern culture that share the same morally evil nature. Similarly in verses 22 and 23, where Paul delineates the

Testament Concept of Foundations for Discernment

fruit of the spirit, they know how to expand Paul's "such" to include other things that are morally good.

Are these mature Christians infallible in their judgment? No. Will all who have attained a comparable level of growth in grace agree on every controversial matter? Of course not. It does not follow, though, that for this reason we are at liberty to disregard the concerns of others and adopt whatever convictions most please ourselves. We are to be subject to one another (Eph. 5:21) and to seek to please our neighbor for his good to edification (Rom. 15:2). A self-pleasing spirit is the very antithesis of the abounding love of Philippians 1:9, so the believer who never rises above his flesh's insistence on pleasing itself fails even to reach square one of the journey to a Christian maturity that glorifies our Father.

... believers must set aside the old ways of the world, not just because they are evil, but because they are counterproductive to the positive virtues that glorify God our Father.

"The World" and Mature Christians

Mature Christians can profitably come together in discussion of their differences over matters of worldliness. With a teachable spirit, each can learn from others' insights and experiences, and all can grow together in grace. They can reach consensus on some matters while recognizing that our Father does not want a pack of cookie-cutter Christians, and so some of our differences will be legitimate and God-ordained as they impart to each the perspectives and personalities that will make us most effective in reaching and edifying the particular groups to which the Lord of the harvest has appointed us to minister. They will come to realize that it is rarely possible to draw perfect lines between worldliness and holiness, but they will come to realize equally the value of an imperfect line, especially when it is drawn with special effort to ward off danger and

defilement, without going so far as to produce an isolation that makes it impossible to function as salt and light among unbelievers.

As an illustration of the value of an imperfect line, consider such a simple matter as drinking water. No such thing on earth exists—at any reasonable price, if at all—as 100.000% pure water. Yet no sane person concludes from this fact either that we ought not to drink water at all or that we ought to drink water from every source indiscriminately, with no concern for purity. We do not know precisely where the line between safe and unsafe water lies, but we wisely do two things: we drink water that gives us no reason to question its purity, even though we are not absolutely certain that it is safe, and we refuse water whose purity is obviously questionable or worse. Our boundary lines are imperfect, but they are nevertheless beyond valuable—they are crucial for our health.

And positive spiritual health is the emphasis in the New Testament's teaching on the world. Ephesians 4:1–5:21 provides a great study in how believers must set aside the old ways of the world, not just because they are evil, but because they are counterproductive to the positive virtues that glorify God our Father. Though the New Testament does warn against grieving God by getting dirty, the note of emphasis falls on glorifying God by pursuing purity. If we will fixate on the imitation of our holy Lord Jesus and develop such a walk of constant communion with Him that our hearts remain full of His love, all conditioned by a full exposure to and embrace of the full Scriptural portrait of God's perfect character, worldly ways will become increasingly distasteful to us as we come to delight more and more deeply in the holy ways of Heaven.

Randy Leedy, author of *Love Not the World* (Bob Jones University Press, 2012), is professor of New Testament Interpretation at Bob Jones University Seminary, where he is the lead Greek professor. He is the author of the grammatical sentence diagramming program for the Greek New Testament for *BibleWorks*, a well-known software package for Biblical research.



* In the New Testament, the terminology shifts from "the nations" to "the world" because God's focus in salvation turns from the Jews to the nations, so that the nations become the beneficiaries of the gospel rather than aliens from God's grace.

How to Apply the Old



For over two thousand years Jewish rabbis and Christian preachers have approached the Old Testament books, realizing that it is their responsibility to apply these ancient stories, laws, and poetic texts to the lives of their contemporaries. But they have always faced certain obstacles in their task of making applications. (1) Foremost is the fact that the Bible contains various passages that are difficult to interpret. For example, there are alleged discrepancies such as 1 Samuel 15:10, 11 compared with verse 29. (Does God repent or not?) (2) Additionally, certain Old Testament passages contained details that did not seem to be doctrinally significant: for example, genealogical lists and the poetic descriptions of the human body in Song of Solomon. Because of the fact that God has sometimes used metaphorical language (such as parables) to communicate with mankind, interpreters have been tempted to use allegorical interpretation in order to extract practical theological truth for those who heard them preach and teach.

Recognizing that Paul teaches us that “all Scripture . . . is profitable for doctrine” (2 Tim. 3:16), contemporary Bible-believing preachers of the Word have acknowledged that it is not acceptable simply to ignore homiletically these difficult portions and even whole books like Leviticus and Ezra. They have, therefore, searched for a method to make the Old Testament doctrinally useful. Impressed by ancient, traditional techniques, some have even succumbed to allegorizing the text: usually they hide what they are really doing by calling their practice “typology.” Being wary of the subjective, allegorical handling of historical texts, some preachers teach those parts of the Bible by simply retelling the stories without making theological application. Others look for texts that can be moralized. Resorting to allegorizing, to simply retelling, or to moralizing, however, are not acceptable methods. Retelling does not actually accomplish the task of application but leaves it up to the hearer or reader to figure out for himself any doctrinal significance. Moralizing could be done with any non-Scriptural historical account or even a fairy tale.

Seeing the Big Picture

The solution for the neglect and mishandling of such large portions of Scripture lies in seeing the big picture. By understanding in Scripture (1) the historical background of a passage and (2) what the paragraph, the chapter, or even the whole book is saying, the Christian interpreter will be able to discern, with help from the illumination of the Holy Spirit, the general theological principles. The next step is

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simply to make applications to modern situations. These theological principles are basic truths taught in the Bible in numerous contexts. Some basic ones include the four following propositions: (1) God has spoken to mankind; (2) He has told us about our transgression; (3) He has informed us that there is punishment for sin; and (4) He has given us the good news that He has provided for us deliverance from this coming judgment. We can express these themes in four words: (1) revelation, (2) sin, (3) judgment, and (4) salvation. Of course, there are dozens of additional theological propositions indicated in the pages of the Bible, all of them with practical significance for humans as a group or individually.

One method for seeing the big picture is analyzing the message of an individual Old Testament book. We can call this a book theology. This approach involves studying a book as a single unit and seeking to uncover its theological themes. These themes in turn lead to general principles that are practical, profitable, and edifying for modern Christians and are easily applied to their lives. In certain cases, genuine typology (based on how Christ and the New Testament itself have interpreted certain Old Testament accounts) will be appropriate and even necessary. Once these theological ideas have been identified, it is really not difficult to see their application for Christians in modern situations. Preachers will find that these doctrinal themes preach well and are clearly significant and practical for their audiences.

Three Examples

To illustrate this the following discussion will examine three Old Testament books, one that easily yields an application and two that are more difficult to evaluate. The book of Amos is almost completely poetry. If we list each line of poetry and display the prose in short clauses or phrases, we will discover that just about every short expression touches on either the theme of God, of sin, or of judgment.¹ For example, “the LORD will roar from Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem” (1:2) tells us something about God, specifically that like a hungry lion God threatens with His wrath. The two clauses “the habitations of the shepherds shall mourn” and “the top of Carmel shall wither” (1:2) indicate the theme of judgment. In the next verse the phrase “for three transgressions of Damascus, and for four” (1:3) mentions the idea of sin. Clearly, this is applicable to our world, for just as Amos’s contemporaries faced the prospect of an angry God acting in judgment for sin, so do today’s people. This message has evangelistic significance.

It is more difficult to analyze a book like Leviticus. There we find ancient instructions that God gave to the Israelites about foods and leprosy. We know from Acts 10:15 and 1 Timothy 4:3, 4 that laws about clean and unclean animals are no longer relevant for church saints. By discerning the spiritual principles behind the specifics in Leviticus, however, we will readily recognize specifics relevant for us. Seven key themes appear in this book: (1) God’s spoken revelation, (2) God’s deliverance of His people from slavery, (3) His separation of His people from heathen nations, (4) God’s disclosure of His personal nature to His people, (5) God’s holiness, (6) His requirement of discernment, and (7) the need for regulations to insure holiness. Thus we recognize the pattern that God still uses in the world today. God desires to dwell with mankind; however, sin poses a problem. God’s present work, therefore, must involve these same principles. (1) First there must be God’s revelation. (2) Then He rescues sinners from the bondage of their sin. (3) Next He sets His people apart from the world. (4) In their state of separation God discloses to them His personal nature. (5) His holiness has the priority in this personal revelation of Himself. (6) For the saints to share this holiness there must be discernment concerning the distinction between purity and sin. (7) Finally, God’s customs and ordinances facilitate the saints’ progress toward this holiness.²

Ezra poses a problem for application because of its record of ancient letters and lists of names. Theological analysis of this book, however, yields four key principles: (1) the sin of God’s people, (2) God’s work of restoration, (3) opposition from enemies, and (4) renewal for the people. Each section of the book relates to one of six themes: (1) providence, (2) restoration, (3) continuity, (4) opposition, (5) confession, or (6) reformation. All of this is relevant to the present church of Jesus Christ.³

Dr. Robert Daniel Bell serves at Bob Jones University as professor of theology and Old Testament interpretation and languages and is the author of *The Theological Messages of the Old Testament Books* (Bob Jones University Press, 2010).



¹ See the chart in my article “The Theology of Amos,” *Biblical Viewpoint* 27, no. 2 (Nov. 1993), p. 51.

² For the verse references in Leviticus supporting these principles, see the sermon outline in my book, *The Theological Messages of the Old Testament Books* (Bob Jones University Press, 2010), pp. 491–94.

³ The details from Ezra and corresponding New Testament verses appear in the book mentioned in the previous note, pp. 169–75.

How to Apply the Bible to Change Your Life Today



The Fall in the garden seriously marred the image of God in man and made man an object of God's just wrath (Eph. 2:2, 3). But from eternity past God has had a mission. *He is on a mission to redeem and restore fallen people to the likeness of His Son to the praise of His glory.*

Everything God is doing in men and women targets this goal. Once He draws a sinner to Himself through the proclamation of the "good news" and the sinner repents of His sin and turns to Christ, a new life begins (2 Cor. 5:17). The Spirit of God then begins the process of progressive sanctification—leading the believer away from his flesh and empowering the believer to serve Christ and bear the fruit of His Spirit.

Protestant theology regarding sanctification has separated into several major streams—Lutheran, Reformed, Wesleyan, Pentecostal, Keswick, and Contemplative. Each because of its particular emphasis has minimized, ignored, or accentuated some element in the sanctification process such as the role of the Holy Spirit, the role of the Scriptures, the role of the believer, etc.¹ We will look briefly at the role of the Scriptures in sanctification.

Two Erroneous Views

First, we must note that the Scriptures are wrongly used in the contemplative view of sanctification. Drawing heavily from Catholic and Eastern mystics, many current "spiritual formation" teachers include "contemplative prayer" as a key discipline.² Contemplative prayer often uses the Word of God merely as the source of a "mantra"—a word or phrase—that can be repeated while in solitude to put the individual into a state of mind emptied of all content in order to receive truth directly from God. In stark contrast, the Scriptures teach that

sanctification comes not from emptying the mind but from filling the mind with specific content—the words of God (Ps. 1; Josh. 1:8; Rom. 12:1, 2).

All views of sanctification flowing from the Reformation emphasize the Word of God and see practical holiness as the Spirit's work in a Word-filled life (Col. 3:16, 17). God's Spirit uses the Word to teach, reprove, correct, and instruct in righteousness in order that the believer may be matured (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

Another current erroneous view (based upon a Lutheran tendency to nearly equate justification with sanctification) is that "worship is sanctification." The preacher needs only to get the people to adore Christ and "sanctification is done on the spot" as they worship.³

To a Lutheran, "sanctification is the art of getting used to justification. There is a kind of growth and progress, . . . but it is growth in grace . . . coming to be captivated more and more . . . by the totality, the unconditionality of the grace of God. . . . It is like lovers who just can't get over the miracle of the gift of love and so are constantly saying it over and over again as though it were completely new and previously unheard of!"⁴ In this view, Biblical change is equated with adoring Christ in worship.

Worship of Jesus Christ should certainly be the believer's *first* response to any revelation of His person and work in the Word, but adoring Christ without engaging in the spiritual battle against the flesh to emulate Him is not sanctification. Take note of this battle in Romans 6–8 and Galatians 5:16, 17.

The apostolic discussions of Biblical change (Rom. 6–8; Eph. 3–4; Col. 3; James 1, etc.) teach that sanctification involves a Spirit-enabled response to the Word that rejects the deceit of the flesh's lusts and by grace obeys the Word's commands and purposefully emulates Christ's virtues.



Aberrant Lives Must Be Corrected by the Word

Paul instructed Timothy to “preach the Word” using it to “reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2–4). The implication is that aberrant lives must be corrected by the Word. God’s people need more than adoration of Christ. Believers must patiently be rebuked when necessary and must be instructed to walk in Christ’s ways.

The apostles teach that we must “put off [the ways] . . . of the old man” which has been crucified with Christ, “be renewed in the spirit of [our] mind,” and “put on the [ways of] the new man” (Eph. 4:22–24). This is a deliberate process that requires the believer’s active, Spirit-enabled, God-dependent cooperation with the Word if progressive sanctification is to take place.

James 1:21–25 tells us how a believer applies the Bible to change his life today. With the Spirit’s aid he must deliberately turn away from the flesh’s propensities. He must simultaneously turn to the Word of God for direction, strength, comfort, grace, and wisdom. There is no substitute for the daily, systematic reading of God’s Word. Change begins with an open Bible and a humble heart.

James says he must “receive with meekness [humility] the engrafted word” (v. 21b). The believer must be humble enough to see that he cannot change without God’s Word, and he must humbly submit himself to it with the intent to obey it, which is the meaning of being a “hearer of the word.” Having his devotions to merely get it checked off so that he can get on with his day won’t cut it. He is “deceiving” himself (v. 22).

James says, “whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty . . .” (v. 25). “Looketh” means to peer intently into the Word with a purpose to discover something from God. This is the Proverbs 2 intense search for God and His ways in the Word. Sanctification thrives with this kind of intake of the Word.

But then James says the believer must “[continue] therein” (v. 25). Once he has determined what the Scriptures demand of him as a child of God as he meditates, he must then determine how his life must change as a result of his newfound knowledge of God and His ways.

Finally, he must keep up that activity for however many days or weeks it takes until he becomes a “doer of the work” (v. 25). Often this requires not only study and meditation upon the Scripture text but actual memorization of the passage as well. Unless the believer is thinking in Bible terms in the heat of the battle, he probably will make little change.

James warns that if the believer quits the process before he is seeing change, he is deceiving himself (vv. 22–24). The process is simple but demanding. Humble exposure to, meditation upon, and obedience to the Word of God are central to the process of sanctification.

Dr. Jim Berg served as the dean of students at Bob Jones University for thirty years before becoming a professor of Biblical Counseling at Bob Jones University Seminary. He is the author of many books on how to apply Scripture to life, including *Changed into His Image*, a perennial bestseller on Christian growth and discipleship. He is founder of Freedom That Lasts, a ministry to those suffering from life-enslaving addictions.



¹ For further study consult *Five Views of Sanctification* by Stanley N. Gundry, ed., Zondervan, 1987, and *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification* by Donald L. Alexander, ed., IVP Academic, 1988.

² Whenever the terms “spiritual formation” and “contemplative prayer” show up, the believer must be extremely cautious. Much error creeps into the church today under these terms.

³ Words of Tim Keller quoted in “‘Getting Sanctification Done’: The Primacy of Narrative in Tim Keller’s Exegetical Method” by Timothy F. Kauffman, *The Trinity Review*, May–June 2013.

⁴ “The Lutheran View” by Gerhard O. Forde in *Christian Spirituality*, pp. 27–28.

How to Apply the Bible to Bring

Wade Kuhlewind

Change. If any institution reflects this characteristic, it is the family. This does not mean that the *definition* of family ought to change but that families, by virtue of growth, *do* change. Growth implies movement toward maturity. As the Lord has programmed our DNA to lead our bodies' development toward physical maturity, He also has mapped a program for our spiritual maturity. Whereas the physical processes inexorably and involuntarily direct physical development toward physical maturity, spiritual maturity requires cooperation between the indwelling Holy Spirit and the believer's will and effort. The Christian agrees, submits, strives, and grows in his character and competency toward maturity, Christlikeness. This dynamic must be at work for this change to occur in any family for the glory of Christ.

Progressive sanctification is the synergistic change that can occur in your family. To succeed, such change must be intentional. Therefore, we ought to be asking what is the best pathway to take for this change to occur. How are my family and I to change for God? Applying the Bible to your life as a leader of your family is where this begins.

Like Father—Like Family

A pathway toward applying the Bible to bring change to your family begins with applying the Bible to yourself first, then leading your family on a parallel path of seeking God and godly change. So let's begin with *personal* change and then move toward *family* change.

Personal meditation on the Word brings personal change. What is meditation? It is carefully scrutinizing every feature of a verse or short passage. When I was a child I loved playing with plastic injection-molded toys. I especially loved passenger-style jets. I would take that toy into my hands, sit quietly, and study every side and feature of it. It had four engines—jet engines, not propeller-driven; it was made in Japan; it had markings on the wings for flaps and ailerons, etc. What I didn't understand about the plane, I took to my dad, who explained what it was and its use. Scrutinizing the Bible in the same way and then running for help when you do not fully understand is meditation. Bible study coupled with prayer is the place to begin to search for answers. Folks too quickly reach for the Bible dictionary or a commentary. Of course, solid reference books can help us understand facts relating to the times, customs, geography, and language. These shed light on the background and meaning of a passage. But use these helps only after you have been to the Lord first. Following this pattern, you will see the Lord amazingly bring other passages to mind, as well as applications to your own life.

As fathers change they can become intentional about the change that their families need to embrace. The inten-

tional change Dad wants to initiate and nurture is the change that the Lord prescribes for the others in his family.

A Family with a Mission

Dad will need to find out what his family should look like at the end of the process of maturity. To have a Biblical picture of "the end game," Dad must deduce the mission of the family from the Bible. This mission is to glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31). His family should reflect the relationship of Christ and His Church (Eph. 5:22–32). And his family is a proving ground for Dad's service to Christ through the local church (1 Tim. 3:4, 5, 12).

A mission statement for a family could read something like this: "The mission of our family is to glorify God, to know Him intimately, to develop Christlike character that is age-appropriate but always looking ahead to the next stage of development, to develop a heart for service to Christ, and to develop competencies for success in family, career, and service at church."

Where There Is a Plan There Is a Way

Where does one begin on working on this generation-long journey? Help is found in Peter's second epistle. He begins chapter 1 by reminding the believer of the objective results of justification: All things that pertain unto godliness and promises, that is, our sharing in the divine nature through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. These are all facts and states we enjoy because of our salvation. What follows (2 Pet. 1:5–7) is a staircase of character qualities toward maturity in Christlikeness, not perfection in the absolute sense. This is a key text that fathers can use toward instituting change in their families and working toward realizing a personal "vision" for each member as well as fulfilling the overarching mission of the family.

The first and vital step is salvation as indicated in the phrase "add to your faith." The weight of the staircase rests upon this ground. Although Peter assumes the salvation of his readers, a father cannot assume the salvation of his children. He and his wife pray for them and begin early to teach foundational truths of the Bible. Without this foundation, any work on character development will erect a life of moral virtue devoid of the life of Christ.

The addition to faith is "virtue." Virtue was the goal of the Greek philosophers—moral excellence. For the believer moral excellence begins with a putting off of the old life and



Change to Your Family Today



putting on the spiritual qualities (Col. 3:1–17). A key concept in this first step is *separation*: a child's break with and putting behind the old life and a separation to Christ with His character being formed in the child's life.

"Knowledge" is added to virtue or the moral excellence that comes from putting off the flesh and putting on Christ. Peter is not haphazard in ordering his list. He deliberately places virtue before knowledge.

Knowledge without virtue tends to inflate the ego (1 Cor. 8:1). However, while learning the content of his faith by the Word of God a child will train his conscience and fill his mind with truth that the Holy Spirit will remind him of in times of trial, temptation, or testing. Personally knowing God is the primary "knowledge" that will be a building block for the qualities that follow.

Knowledge now becomes the platform for "temperance," or self-control. A believer can unwisely allow his choices, attitudes, and behaviors to be controlled by trial, temptation, or testing. Rather than being tyrannized by these, a self-controlled believer is able to say no to these influences by saying yes to God based on what he knows about God. Joseph in Potiphar's house is the embodiment of this quality. He appeals to the seductress, Potiphar's wife, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen. 39:9). Knowledge of God provided him with the self-control or temperance he needed to experience victory.

Such self-control is hard to maintain unless one possesses "patience," or "endurance." Constant training develops endurance. Those who have it do not easily quit. Children as well as adults need this quality in their lives, if they are going to amount to anything for God. Neither quitting nor running away from difficult circumstances is an option. (Running from lusts, however, is wise Biblically, 2 Tim. 2:22.) Consider Joseph again; he endured Potiphar's wife's "day by day" temptation. Joseph *endured* and never succumbed to the continual assaults on his character. This quality is essential in the world that delights in having its own way.

Endurance finds its attitudinal expression in "godliness." Godliness tempers how a person faces difficulties and how he reacts to others whether friend or foe. Hiebert

expresses the essence of godliness by writing, "Godliness brings the sanctifying presence of God into all the experiences of life."¹ May we look once again to Joseph? His focus was on his God, yet he never excoriated, much less scolded, Potiphar's wife (Gen. 39:12).

From godliness the next step is toward "brotherly kindness." As godliness affects one's demeanor with a worshipful attitude that acknowledges God in all circumstances, so brotherly kindness affects a believer's attitude toward another brother. A pundit of the 1920s characterized President Woodrow Wilson as "hating men but loving all mankind."² That scathing judgment by a Washington insider is the antithesis of brotherly kindness, a disposition that acts in tenderness and warm-heartedness, especially toward other believers *even when undeserved*. In a family setting, children—and parents—can act as if they merit a pass on this quality. A license to be unkind and perturbed does not come stapled to a birth certificate. Kindness at home requires our digging wide channels for grace to flow into us and our children.

Brotherly kindness provides the launch point to the uppermost step: "love." Peter uses the word *agape* as the final step to Christian maturity. Ten thousand words can be marshaled to attempt to explain the vastness of the meaning of this word. It is the act of self-sacrifice typified by Jesus Himself. It is expected of husbands who are to love their wives in a self-sacrificing manner. It is the act of cool thinking, not hot emotion. It is the choosing of an object for its beneficence, not necessarily for its worthiness but for its neediness. It is the key word in John 3:16. It truly requires a *divine nature* to love in this manner.

In this quest to fulfill the mission of rearing a family to reflect Jesus Christ, the God-breathed Scriptures are indispensable (2 Tim. 3:15–17). They are profitable for dealing with all the bumps in the road toward leading your family to maturity. They offer *doctrine* (the basis of your teaching), but also *reproof* when the child makes wrong choices, but also for *correcting* thinking (behavior emanates from thinking), and for *instruction* (child-training) in righteousness.

Embrace change. Use the Word of God to steer your family's inevitable change in the direction that glorifies God.

Wade Kuhlewind, DPasTh, is associate professor of Church Ministries and coordinator of Professional Ministry Programs at Bob Jones University Seminary. Before he began his ministry at the seminary six years ago, he was a youth pastor and senior pastor for twenty-eight years in southern Pennsylvania.



¹ D. Edmond Heibert, *2 Peter and Jude* (Greenville, SC: Unusual Publications, 1989), 54.

² Anonymous (Clinton Wallace Gilbert), *Mirrors of Washington* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1921), 25.

How to Apply the Bible to Entertainment Choices Today

Entertainment is not our enemy, but our Enemy employs entertainment effectively.¹ Pretending, as some Christians do, that the Enemy is either incapable or unwilling to use entertainment to accomplish his agenda is naïve at best. It may amount to a spiritual dereliction of duty. But how can we navigate the treacherous waters of decision making in order to use entertainment wisely? After all, some Christians dismiss all entertainment as a “tool of the Devil” while others become complacent, permissive, and uncritical in their entertainment choices. Neither solution follows a Biblical pattern. God never intended for us to live any part of life on our own, so He gave us a proven moral compass—His Word.² So when we ask questions requiring discernment, our starting point should be a thorough knowledge of the Bible. And when we read we should be asking, “What does God want me to do?” rather than, “What do I like to do?”

Scripture rarely refers to recreation directly. This fact doesn’t mean that God has left us to our own devices—to make decisions without His guidance. In His wisdom, God gave us many timeless principles. This use of principles makes His Word readily applicable to “new” situations. These principles give us confident answers to the question: How can I apply the Bible to my entertainment choices today?

Positive Principles

Two basic facts drive our study. (1) Sometimes entertainment is morally valuable. When it is such, we may use it as long as we do so in a Biblical fashion. (2) Sometimes entertainment is morally destructive. When it is such, we must avoid it. Distinguishing between these two situations can be difficult at times, but in many cases the correct application of relevant Biblical principles is entirely clear. Numerous positive principles urge those of us who are believers to conduct our lives by the grace of God in a specific fashion.

All our conduct must pursue a Scripturally-informed conformity to Christ (Rom. 8:29). Merely claiming that we are “following Christ” in our entertainment choices is not sufficient. Though we can deceive our friends and even ourselves in this regard, we cannot deceive God. He knows whether or not our conduct really conforms to the image of His Son. And it is well worth considering the question: Is our chosen entertainment making us more like Christ or more like the world?

We must approve of moral beauty and excellence (Phil. 4:8). Entertainment that follows certain industry standards of “excellence” while depicting sordid and immoral themes falls short of God’s standard for His children. Before we engage in leisure activities, we could well ask: Is our entertainment beautiful and true in God’s eyes?

We must strive to live contentedly (Phil. 4:11). Some entertainments urge us to chafe at our present situations. In particular, advertisements engage us with humor or riveting content in order to stir up our desire to possess a certain product. This can generate an unhealthy, unholy discontentment with God’s provision for our lives. The desire to model one’s clothing, appearance, and possessions after pop-culture stars exhibits the same discontentment that is inconsistent with the life of faith. We should thoughtfully consider: Does our entertainment stir up discontentment, or does it produce genuine satisfaction?

With Paul, we cannot allow ourselves to be brought into bondage to anything on this earth (1 Cor. 6:12). Entertainment can produce this bondage. When we push aside family, ministry, and important labor in order to watch our favorite shows, we are demonstrating an enslavement of our heart to something in this world. Believers ought to probe: Are we devoted to entertainment? Does it enslave us?

We must retain Scripturally-focused priorities (Matt. 22:37–40). Pleasure is typically more alluring than work. It encourages us to abandon the hardship, toil, and conflict of our day in favor of ease. While rest is clearly a part of God’s plan for us, the failure to stay focused on Biblical priorities may cause us to swerve away from God’s will for our lives. The realization of this should cause us to consider: Does our entertainment help us focus on that which is meaningful in God’s eyes?

Finally, we need to be careful that our entertainment choices help us to edify others (Rom. 14:19). As convenient as insulating ourselves from other people may be, it is not God’s plan for us. He does not intend for Christians to live as islands unto ourselves. Ministry takes effort. Raising children, interacting with spouses, and meeting the needs of others takes time, energy, mental and spiritual exertion, and self-denial. Many forms of entertainment call out, “Please yourself,” and when they do, we have ample Biblical warrant for rejecting that call.

Recurring Warnings

As we read Scripture, we notice recurring warnings. God frequently urges His people to avoid destructive

behaviors. While no one enjoys warnings, they are another demonstration of God's gracious leading of His people. Serious consequences often follow the failure to identify and avoid the threats of this world. When entertainment is morally destructive, we must avoid it. But how will we recognize it as destructive? The Bible points toward several important cues.

If our entertainment tends toward addiction or excess (1 Pet. 4:3, 4), it becomes a threat to spiritual life. Unfortunately, addiction is very hard for the addict to recognize and admit. Only a regular, careful examination of our lives against the standards of Scripture will expose entertainment addictions. These addictions may appear when we devote significant time, energy, money, and life focus toward entertainment. Addiction is evidence of worship. For instance, when the teen becomes angry at his parents' rules concerning music, television, and video games, he proves his worship of his entertainment. When a father pushes his children aside in order to watch yet another Saturday afternoon football game, he demonstrates an addiction to his game.

Entertainment should not be a means of escape that helps us retreat from reality when life becomes too hard, too stressful, or too painful. (Second Corinthians 4:2 is rather severely distorted if we think that entertainment ought to be our comfort in times of distress.) God does not intend

for His people to find their solace in the mind-numbing effects of entertainment but in Himself.

As we incline our hearts to wisdom (Prov. 2:2), we learn to evaluate our world, its opportunities and its threats discerningly. Used properly, some forms of entertainment bring rest and enjoyment of human creativity and skill. Used improperly, entertainment debases and ruins. Since God has the right to regulate all facets of our lives, we must apply the Bible to our entertainment choices today.

Dr. Brian R. Hand is a professor of New Testament Interpretation at Bob Jones University Seminary, where he has taught for eleven years, and the author of several books, including *Upright Downtime: Making Wise Choices about Entertainment* (2008) and *The Climax of Biblical Prophecy: A Guide to Interpreting the Book of Revelation* (2012).



¹ For a detailed Biblical investigation of entertainment see the author's book, *Upright Downtime: Making Wise Choices about Entertainment* (Greenville, SC: Bob Jones University Press, 2008).

² I assume that most readers of this article are Christians who understand that the goodness and power of God enable all spiritual life, growth, and health. We do not make wise choices apart from the grace of God, but through the grace of God. His Word is clear evidence of that grace, since it calls us from our sin and helps us understand how to imitate our Father's character.





Applying the Bible to the Problem of Suffering Today

Providence and the Book of Job

*God's providence is supreme, and therefore sovereign. . . . He is the sole arbiter of events and destinies. . . . So that it is as clear that God rules alone as that He rules at all, that He rules everywhere as that He rules anywhere; that He governs all agents, all causes, all events, as that He governs any of them. To surrender in whole or in part his control of the universe would be to admit that He was not God.**

Over the years my immediate family has confronted (among other things) cancer, divorce, and Alzheimer's disease. That's not unusual. That's typical. Most readers can instantly identify with at least one of those experiences, many with all of them and more. Suffering is endemic to life for sinners in a fallen and broken world. Whether everyone reading this will suffer is not the question. The question is how will we respond to it? How will we interpret it? What will we do with it?

The Bible is written by fallen people for fallen people living in a fallen world. Squeeze the Bible and it drips suffering—examples of suffering, explanations of suffering,

exhortations and encouragements to sufferers. Wealth, privilege, and even godliness cannot insulate people from suffering. Only the believer will completely escape suffering, and his only portal of escape is, ironically, death (Isa. 65:16–19; Rev. 21:1, 4).

How do we bring the Bible to bear on our suffering? Nearly every book of the Bible includes significant examples and insights that contribute to a correct understanding of this experience, though some books are more focused on it than others—books like 1 Peter, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and many of the Psalms. One book, however, rivets our attention on this topic from beginning to end: the Book of Job. While Job himself is consumed with the question that usually preoccupies us (“Why?”), God directs his attention to another question—a question with more reliable and helpful answers: “How do I respond to this?” And at the root of the answer to that question is a doctrine that is as pervasive in Scripture as suffering itself: the providence of a sovereign God in and over all of life. The Book of Job and the providence of God are the Bible's map and compass for navigating the troubled waters of suffering.

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A thorough presentation of how to apply the story of Job and the doctrine of providence to our personal experiences of suffering would take a whole book. Or two. All I can offer here is a bare outline of a few leading lines of thought that are elaborated more fully elsewhere.

God's Sovereignty over Suffering

God initiates the circumstances that lead to suffering. Have you ever noticed how all Job's suffering was set in motion? It didn't begin with the snide accusation and insolent wager from Satan in 1:9–11. It began with a challenge from God in 1:8—an omniscient God who knew exactly what would ensue. The point is not that all such suffering is initiated by just such a divine-demonic encounter. But the curtain is pulled back for us in this case to reveal a sovereign God who acts rather than reacts—a reality that is confirmed many times over in the Bible.

God controls the parameters of our suffering. To return to Satan's insolent wager, notice the language carefully: "Put forth thine hand now and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face" (1:11). God replies, "Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand" (1:12). The words "hand" and "power" in both verses are the same word in Hebrew. Satan says, "Put forth thine hand" and God replies, "Behold he is in thine hand." So whose hand is Job in, Satan's or God's? The complete answer is "Yes." He is in Satan's hand; God said so. But that is only by the permission of God. Job is in Satan's hand in God's hand. (A similar exchange recurs in 2:4–7.) Permission and parameters for suffering come from God alone.

God claims responsibility for all that happens. Job 2:3 is one of the most theologically crucial verses in the book. In it God makes a startling assertion. Speaking to Satan, He points out that Job has retained his integrity amid his suffering "although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause." This returns to the question raised in the previous section. Who "destroyed Job"? God did. He says so. And He admits that it was "without cause"—that is, nothing that happened to Job was Job's "fault." It was not punishment or chastisement, simply sovereign affliction. That might be disturbing were it not tempered by the character of a God who is not only indisputably sovereign and incomparably wise, but also unfailingly good.

God's Benevolence in Suffering

Whatever we may lose through suffering is only what was graciously given by God in the first place. It is always wise and appropriate in affliction to examine ourselves and ask the Lord if we are being chastened for some sin. We are reliably informed on several occasions, however, that this was not the case with Job. God Himself admits that Job had done nothing to "deserve" what happened to him in his affliction. But it is just as true that Job had done nothing to "deserve" anything that happened to him *before* his suffering either. His wealth, his children, his health, even his hunger for righteousness were all *gifts from God*. Satan puts his finger on this in 1:10. Job himself acknowledges it (1:21;

2:10). Unfortunately, what we concede in theory we may forget under the extended duress of inexplicable suffering.

God is not only righteous but always good in what He sends or allows. So far we have confined our attention to the prologue of Job in chapters 1 and 2. But a surprising strain creeps into the answer of God to Job (chs. 38–41). It surfaces most clearly in passages such as 38:39–39:4, which at first glance seems to be a continuation of God's interrogation of Job's knowledge (or lack of it). But God's emphasis on His intimate awareness of the needs of the animal creation and His compassionate provision for those needs conveys a subtle theology of its own. If He knows and cares so much about animals, is He not infinitely more aware and engaged in the needs of the one creature He fashioned in His own image?

God's Reward for Suffering

God's recompense to the saint who suffers perseveringly cannot begin to be comprehended or imagined. "So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning" (42:12). What God did for Job is only a faint shadow of the abundant entrance (2 Pet. 1:11) He has promised to His faithful children who patiently persevere (1 Cor. 2:9). If only we can learn to stop focusing all our hope on this passing earthly existence, as though our health and happiness in this fleeting world are what is important! This life is just the front porch into an endless life of glory in a resurrected body on a new earth in the presence of the God who governs all our affairs. The respective value of this life and the next defies comparison (2 Cor. 4:16–18). Too often the way we think and live belies our professed faith in that truth.

God's sovereignty, benevolence, and reward are the realities that empower the suffering saint. All three appear together in microcosm in the literal NASB rendering of James 5:11; "We count those blessed who endured. You have heard of the endurance of Job and have seen the outcome of the Lord's dealings, that the Lord is full of compassion and merciful." Perseverance in suffering ("endurance") is powered by a settled persuasion of God's sovereignty over all we experience (they are "the Lord's dealings"), God's goodness in all He allows us to experience (He is "full of compassion and is merciful"), and God's reward after all He graces us to endure ("the outcome").

When the Book of Job and the reality of God's providence shape our reaction to suffering, we can say with Samuel Rutherford, "Lord, all things are at thy disposal, and it delights me to leave them there."

Dr. Layton Talbert is professor of Theology and Exposition at Bob Jones University and a contributing editor for *FrontLine* magazine. His published works include *Not by Chance: Learning to Trust a Sovereign God* (BJU Press, 2001) and *Beyond Suffering: Discovering the Message of Job* (BJU Press, 2007).



* William Plumer, *Jehovah-Jireh: A Treatise on Providence*, first published in 1867. Plumer was a New Hampshire lawyer, state representative, and Baptist lay preacher.



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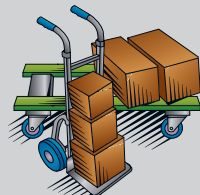
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SOUND WORDS

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

First Partaker

Do You Know How Martyrs Die?

There are certain facts in history which the world tries hard to forget and ignore (J. C. Ryle).

In a recent service I noticed that the hymn tune for “Alas! and Did My Saviour Bleed?” is entitled, “Martyrdom.” It turns out that the composer, Hugh Wilson, lived in the Scottish town of Fenwick. Fenwick was a significant Covenanter center in the seventeenth century and was repeatedly raided by the king’s dragoons. The parish churchyard still displays five tombstones which record the names and accounts of men from the town who suffered or were killed by the government for their steadfast adherence to their Christian convictions. Captain John Paton *suffered martyrdom*, and James White *was shot to death—his head cut off and kick’t . . . o’er the Green. . . . Thus was that head which was to wear a Crown a football made by a profane Dragoon.*

Peter Gemmel *was shot to death. . . . Bloodthirsty Redcoats cut his prayer short, and ev’n his dying groans were made their sport.* John Fergushill and George Woodburn *were shot.* Robert Buntine and James Blackwood *were executed.* William Guthrie *was worn out by labours and suffering.* James Howie and his son, John, *had their house and all their cattle robbed twelve times.*

I suppose that nearly every Christian wonders whether he would withstand the pressure if threatened with these kinds of sufferings. *Would I deny Christ? Would I bow down to an idol? How could I endure the agonies? Could I bear to see my wife or children tortured for*

Christ’s sake?

Undoubtedly, one of the best helps to answering such questions comes from triumphant accounts of how our brothers and sisters in Christ—who were made of flesh and blood as we are and who had loving families just as we do—have confronted persecution and submitted to martyrdom. There are such accounts in Scripture. There are thousands of additional ones in the annals of Church history. Have you read any of these? Have you prepared your family by acquainting them with how Christian martyrs die? You know how scores of football players run and block and tackle, how certain golfers hold their clubs. You’re enthralled with how some men make money, how others kill big game, and what some storied general did during the Civil War. But, do you know how martyrs die?

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

Faithful

It’s an allegorical account. But it portrays all the finest features of Christian martyrdom. It would make for a sobering but strengthening family devotional for beginning the new year. Two earnest pilgrims walking circumspectly through the wilderness of this world have publicly rejected the vanities of a great, worldly fair, chock full of fleshly delights and devious seductions. Oh, how they are hated!

Then were these two poor men brought before their examiners again, and there charged as being guilty of the late hubbub that had been in the fair. So they beat them pitifully, and hung irons upon them, and led them in chains up and down the fair, for an example and terror to others, lest any should speak in their behalf, or join themselves unto them. But Christian and Faithful behaved themselves yet more wisely, and received the ignominy and shame that were cast upon them with so much meekness and patience, that it won to their side (though but few in comparison of the rest) several of the men in the

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fair. This put the other part into a yet greater rage, insomuch that they concluded the death of these two men. Wherefore they threatened that neither cage nor irons should serve their turn, but that they should die for the abuse they had done, and for deluding the men of the fair.

When the time was come, they were brought before their enemies, and arraigned. The Judge's name was Lord Hate-Good: Their indictment was one and the same in substance. . . . *That they were Enemies to, and Disturbers of their Trade: That they had made Commotions and Divisions in the Town, and had won a Party to their own most dangerous Opinions, in contempt of the Law of their Prince.*

Then Faithful began to answer. . . .

Then proclamation was made, that they that had aught to say for their lord the king against the prisoner at the bar, should forthwith appear and give in their evidence.

Then went the jury out, whose names were Mr. Blindman, Mr. Nogood, Mr. Malice, Mr. Lovelust, Mr. Liveloose, Mr. Heady, Mr. Highmind, Mr. Enmity, Mr. Liar, Mr. Cruelty, Mr. Hatelight, and Mr. Implacable, who every one gave in his private verdict against him among themselves, and afterwards unanimously concluded to bring him in Guilty before the judge. And first among themselves, Mr. Blindman, the foreman, said, 'I see clearly that this man is a heretic.' Then said Mr. Nogood, 'Away with such a fellow, from the earth.' 'Ay,' said Mr. Malice, 'for I hate the very looks of him.' Then said Mr. Lovelust, 'I could never endure him.' 'Nor I,' said Mr. Liveloose, 'for he would always be condemning my way.' 'Hang him, hang him,' said Mr. Heady. 'A sorry scrub,' said Mr. Highmind. 'My heart riseth against him,' said Mr. Enmity. 'He is a rogue,' said Mr. Liar. 'Hanging is too good for him,' said Mr. Cruelty. 'Let us dispatch him out of the way,' said Mr. Hatelight. Then said Mr. Implacable, 'Might I have all the world given me, I could not be reconciled to him; therefore let us forthwith bring him in guilty of death.' And so they did; therefore he was presently condemned to be taken from the place where he was to the place from whence he came, and there to be put to the most cruel death that could be invented.

They therefore brought him out to do with him according to their law; and first they scourged him, then they buffeted him, then they lanced his flesh with knives; after that they stoned him with stones, then pricked him with their swords, and last of all they burned him to ashes at the stake. Thus came Faithful to his end.

Now I saw that there stood behind the multitude a chariot and a couple of horses waiting for Faithful, who, so soon as his adversaries had dispatched him, was taken up into it, and straitway was carried up through the clouds, with sound of trumpet, the nearest way to the celestial gate. As for Christian, he had some respite, and was remanded

back to prison; so he there remained for a space, but He that overrules all things, having the power of their rage in his own hand so brought it about that Christian for that time escaped them and went his way.

John Bunyan's imaginary account from *Pilgrim's Progress* has been the actual experience of many of the Lord's people. For instance, here is John Foxe's record of the first Christian to be burnt under the reign of Bloody Mary.

John Rogers (1500–55)

For there shall not a hair of our heads perish against his will, but with his will. . . . Let every true Christian say and pray (John Rogers, the week before his burning).

John Rogers, Roman Catholic priest, abandoned Catholicism under the influence of William Tyndale. The two met in Holland nearly ten years after Tyndale had published his English New Testament (1526). Tyndale asked Rogers's help in translating the Old Testament as well. It is not surprising that shortly Rogers announced to Tyndale, *I have found the true light of the Gospel. I now see the filthiness of Rome, and I cast from my shoulders the heavy yoke it has imposed upon me.*

When Tyndale was arrested in 1536, he seems to have entrusted his handwritten translations to Rogers. Determined to see Tyndale's labors brought to completion, Rogers combined it with additional work done by Miles Coverdale, as well as several thousand marginal notes. The year following Tyndale's execution, Rogers printed an English translation of the entire Bible. It was published under the pseudonym Thomas Matthews.

The Matthews Bible, as it came to be called, was so well received by Henry VIII's spiritual advisors (who evidently were unaware of its connection with Tyndale) that Henry authorized its printing. He announced on its title page in red letters, *Set forth with the king's most gracious license.* Thus was partially answered Tyndale's dying prayer, *Lord, open the king of England's eyes.*

When Henry died, he was succeeded by his Protestant son, Edward. Rogers returned to England and quickly came to the attention of Nicholas Ridley, Bishop of London. Ridley appointed him minister of St. Sepulchre as well as to a position at St. Paul's Cathedral. But in 1553, when Edward died, the entire English Reformation suffered violent reversal at the hands of the new queen, Mary, a radical Roman Catholic.

Scores of preachers, including Rogers, were quickly rounded up to be imprisoned. His expectant wife, Adriana, and their ten children were left literally destitute. For over a year he languished in Newgate Prison, penned up among hardened criminals and patiently awaiting a fair trial. But the day of his hearing was anything but just.

Rogers was made to kneel on a stone floor the entire time before the Lord Chancellor of England, Stephen Gardiner, and an intimidating bench of Roman Catholic clergy. Time and again he was curtly cut off

(He interrupted me. . . . Here arose a noise and a confusion. . . . There was a great noise. . . . I could not be heard for the noise.) or mocked (They nodded the head at me with laughter. . . . They looked and laughed one upon another.). The inquisition mainly concerned the extent of the pope's authority, Rogers's views on the mass, and his marriage in Holland subsequent to renouncing Catholicism. To any of these questions he was prepared to answer either orally or in writing. But at last his inquisitors' boorish treatment constrained him to conclude, *Alas! neither will these men hear me if I speak, neither yet will they suffer me to write. There is no remedy, but to let them alone, and commit the matter to God.*

Long before light on February 4, 1555, Rogers was hurried from his cell to be marched up the street to a spot in Smithfield market where he would be cruelly burned, not as Tyndale, who was first strangled, but fully alive and constrained to feel the entire agony of the unbearable flames. Despite the early hour, the street was thronged with people, many of them anguished supporters of their longsuffering pastor. Rogers's sorrowing wife, holding her newborn at her breast and surrounded by their ten children, was among the crowd, yearning for at least a moment or two with her husband. But the sheriff heartlessly refused them even an embrace.

Composed and unflinching, Rogers calmly walked through the sea of people. J. C. Ryle writes that when they saw him walking steadily and unflinchingly into a fiery grave, the enthusiasm of the crowd knew no bounds. They rent the air with thunders of applause. Count Noailles, the French Ambassador to the English court, later wrote home that a preaching doctor named Rogers was burned alive for being a Lutheran, but he died persisting in his opinion. At this conduct, the greatest part of the people took such pleasure, that they were not afraid to make him many exclamations to strengthen his courage. Even his children assisted at it, comforting him in such a manner that it seemed as if he had been led to a wedding.

John Foxe, the martyrologist, who knew both Rogers and his son, Daniel, records the astonishing facts of Rogers's behavior as he burned. *The fire was put unto him; and when it had taken hold both upon his legs and shoulders, he, as one feeling no smart, washed his hands in the flame, as though it had been in cold water. And, after lifting up his hands unto heaven, not removing the same until such time as the devouring fire had consumed them.**

Beyond all doubt, the Lord upheld His servant in the fire. The Holy Scriptures supported his heart and his mind. We know that among these Scriptures was the most searching and transparent of all the Psalter's penitential passages. It was this chapter, Psalm 51, that Rogers was repeating to himself as he walked calmly up Newgate Street through the parting sea of bystanders to the site of his fiery trial.

The Two Margarets (1685)

In 1708 the Church of Scotland commissioned one of its ministers, Robert Wodrow, to collect and record testimonies to the savage persecutions of Scottish

Covenanters under England's Stuart monarchs. His findings were subsequently published under the title *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland from the Restoration to the Revolution*.

Despite his acquaintance with hundreds of incomprehensible deeds of horror, Wodrow wrote of what took place at high tide just below Wigtown, Scotland, on May 11, 1685, that *History scarcely affords a parallel to this in all its circumstances*. Yet the despicable event was true. Wodrow had confirmed this by consulting with both Thomas Wilson, brother to one of the women murdered, and Rev. Robert Rowan, the minister later installed nearby at Penninghame. Rowan had taken pains to interview witnesses and to certify the accuracy of their accounts.

Composed and unflinching, Rogers calmly walked through the sea of people. J. C. Ryle writes that when they saw him walking steadily and unflinchingly into a fiery grave, the enthusiasm of the crowd knew no bounds. They rent the air with thunders of applause.

Wigtown is located on the northern shore of the Solway Firth, an ocean bay whose inlet terminates at the southwest border of England and Scotland. Gilbert Wilson, a farmer some miles away, was a strict adherent to Episcopacy. He and his wife had conformed to their times scrupulously. But it was a different story with their children, two girls and a boy. Margaret, the oldest, had somehow come into contact with the Covenanters. The details are unknown. But so sympathetic was she and her younger brother, Thomas (sixteen), and sister, Agnes (thirteen), that the three would sometimes slip away to attend forbidden meetings convened clandestinely by Covenanter preachers in barns and isolated cottages.

When it was reported to Robert Grierson of Castle Lagg, he dispatched soldiers to arrest them. But the young people were warned, fled, and for several months hid in the surrounding hills, out on the bogs, or in small caves. They subsisted through much of the winter on whatever they could forage or was smuggled to them by kindly sympathizers. Meanwhile Grierson attempted to bankrupt their father by quartering scores of troops on his farm.

At the death of Charles II in February the two girls may have assumed that more lenient policies might now prevail. Whether due to this or out of desperate need for shelter from the cold, they ventured into Wigtown to the home of an elderly widow, Margaret MacLachlan. This woman, a spiritually warm, devout Covenanter,

was known for assisting fellow believers. But while in Wigtown, the sisters encountered an acquaintance, a man named Patrick Stuart, whom they mistakenly trusted to be a friend. Stuart heartlessly betrayed them into the hands of a party of soldiers, and the girls' fate was as good as sealed. They were locked away in an infamous part of the town jail called the "thieves' hole." Margaret MacLachlan too was subsequently arrested while at family worship in her own home and thrown into another room of the jail, where she was denied either a fire for warmth or a bed in which to sleep.

Margaret Wilson began to pray, and it was while she was still doing so that the waves finally rose to break over her face. But when she was nearly gone the order went out to cut her bonds and bring her to shore. There she was roughly revived, only to be again charged to take the oath. . . . But her answer was unchanged, I will not. I am one of Christ's children. Let me go.

After lying for weeks in the cold and damp and filth, the three women were finally tried in April. The charges included attending forbidden Covenanter meetings and refusing to take an oath that amounted to assenting to the authority of the English king over the Scottish Church. The wretched prisoners were badgered and harangued viciously in an effort to secure the recanting of their convictions. But when they all, even young Agnes, proved immovable, the judges' bench, consisting of Grierson, Sheriff David Graham, a Major George Windram, and two others, sentenced the three poor women to be tied to stakes driven into the shore below Wigtown and drowned at high tide.

Gilbert was thrown into an agony. For a hundred pounds sterling the judges' cruel mercies condescended to allow him to purchase liberty for his thirteen-year-old, Agnes. But when no offer, no matter how extravagant, was accepted for Margaret, he set out frantically for Edinburgh, over a hundred miles away, to appeal to national officials. Though he eventually gained a reprieve, his return proved too late to prevent tragedy.

On May 11, truly a day of infamy in Scottish annals, the two Margarets, one sixty-three, the other just eighteen, were marched out of the Wigtown jail by a troop of dragoons under the command of Major Windram. A large crowd, including Margaret's mother,

trailed behind. When they reached the beach the sight that greeted them was heart stopping. Two posts had been driven into the sand at a distance from the shore where the incoming tide would eventually cover them entirely. Curiously, one of the posts was fixed a good distance out from the other. Margaret MacLachlan, the older woman, was bound to this furthest stake. Margaret Wilson was tied to the one nearest shore. The motive behind this arrangement seems to have been to intimidate the younger woman into submission at the sight of her companion's terrible struggles in the surf. But when the awful moments came and the tide crept so high that it finally engulfed Margaret MacLachlan's face, the younger woman remained resolute.


What do you think of that? a soldier cried to Wilson, pointing out into the tide toward the widow's death-struggles. *What do I think?* Margaret answered, *I think I see Christ in one of His members wrestling there. Think ye that we are the sufferers?* No, it is Christ in us, for He sends none a warfare upon their own charges.

Evidently her tormenters had left her hands free, for she was able to bring out from somewhere in her clothing a small Bible or New Testament. From this she began to read from the eighth chapter of Romans. Then, as the water rose to lap her feet, she began to sing the twenty-fifth Psalm, beginning with verse 7. Witnesses recalled later that there were some in the crowd who began to sing with her, only to cease when threatened by the soldiers.

Margaret Wilson began to pray, and it was while she was still doing so that the waves finally rose to break over her face. But when she was nearly gone the order went out to cut her bonds and bring her to shore. There she was roughly revived, only to be again charged to take the oath. The onlookers, including her mother, pled with her to do so. But her answer was unchanged, *I will not. I am one of Christ's children. Let me go.*

At that Grierson exploded, *Back to the sea with the hag!*, and two soldiers picked her up, waded out as far as they could, threw her headlong into the sea, and then with the butt end of their weapons shoved her head under until she drowned.

The wretched bodies of these two brave women were sorrowfully buried in the Wigtown churchyard.

As the writer of Hebrews laments, *time would fail me to tell* of even a tithe of all sufferers for Christ's sake and of all their brave deeds. Many are physically broken by hardship, deprivation, imprisonment, and torture this very day, even as I write. Of them, the world is not worthy. They are obtaining a good report through faith. In this new year we ought to acquaint ourselves with their situations and, insofar as possible, with their names and needs. *Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body* (Heb. 13:3). 

* Quotations from Foxe's original *Actes and Monuments of these latter and perilous dayes touching matters of the Church* (1563).

Mark Minnick serves as senior pastor of Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina.

Bring . . . the Books

Adolphe Monod, *Farewell*

Deathbed words often frame the life of a faithful saint, capturing in a sentence or two the heart and soul of an individual. Occasionally the treasured last moments consist of a halting charge to friends and family gathered lovingly around the bedside. Between the covers of this little volume, Adolphe Monod's *Farewell*, the reader finds such a treasure. In Monod's words one can find what many a dying saint would wish to say had he time and opportunity.

Farewell consists of twenty-five short addresses shared verbally and then transcribed from the deathbed of one of the greatest preachers and pastors the country of France has ever known. Their contents were then shared week by week with his congregation over a six-month period as Monod's life lingered seemingly for the purpose of prolonging this pen-pal pastorate.

Monod lived in a time of spiritual darkness in France, but God reached into his life through a dramatic revival spawned in Geneva—a city that had tasted deeply of the transformational truths taught during the Reformation of the sixteenth century but in later years succumbed to heresy.

Converted in early adulthood, Monod proved a memorable preacher, and some of his stirring sermons spanning thirty years of ministry are thankfully still in print today, richly repaying their readers. It has been observed that any sermon is the fruit of all that God has been doing in the life of the preacher up to its delivery. No observation could more aptly describe Monod's *Farewell*.

The heart of *Farewell* is five meditations recorded under the heading of "A Dying Man's Regrets." The first of those meditations is alone worth the price of the volume. Here are some excerpts.

A man is in a singular position indeed who, for quite a few months already and perhaps for quite a time yet—how long he knows not—is living constantly with the thought that his links with this life have been broken, that he is incurably and mortally stricken of God, and that he does not know at what moment the Father's voice will call him home. . . . He is brought to ask himself . . . "If my life was given back to me, what use would I make of it?" And reminding himself of the weakness and frailty of his resolutions, which a life-time has demonstrated to him, he would nevertheless hope that in the goodness of God such a visitation would not be lost on the second part of his life and ministry. . . .

I would make considerable changes in my life—I mean my inner life. . . . I regret having regulated my [inner] life too much by my own plans. I mean, by my plans of faithfulness and Christian sanctification and not more simply by the plan which the Lord unfolds before each of us. . . . We are inclined

to form for ourselves a certain ideal for the Christian life, Christian activity and the Christian ministry, and to attach to this ideal certain plans and certain methods, so much so that we are not satisfied unless we come to realize them. . . . All of this

is good, no doubt; but behind it all there is a fault: self—the hidden self, which has its roots in the depths of the heart, and which shows itself too clearly in our best and purest works; while what I should wish to do is to take the plan of my life and daily conduct from my own ideas and inclinations, but from the commandments of God, in His inward testimony, in the leading of His Spirit, and in the guidance He gives in the outward circumstances of life. . . . I add in passing that I have no thought of discouraging personal plans. We must seek to make them as good as possible, and I believe our human frailty needs them as a support, provided our personal plans are always subordinated to the general rule that we follow only the will of God. . . .

What is sin in essence? It is the seeking of self—self-confidence, self-will, self-righteousness, self-glory—and all that pertains to self. So the desire to do what is right and even to do the will of the Lord, founded upon plans and projects of our own making, partakes inevitably in some way or other of the root of sin; while, on the other hand, the very essence of holiness being the union of our will with the will of God, we shall only be in a state of true holiness when we have no other plan than God's plan and no other will than His will.

Well, then, let us seek only to do the work which the Father has given us to do, and commit ourselves into His hands. . . . God alone has the right to decide when the work He wants to do through us is finished. It may be very imperfect and incomplete in the eyes of man; but if we are upright before Him, He will not allow our life finally to end without leaving some traces upon earth.

Monod's most enduring and broadest ministry legacy—his *Farewell*—came from the painful season when God had seemingly limited his ministry. Perhaps that deathbed lesson alone will encourage many who live continually with limitations. His parting counsels impart spiritual wisdom that can stimulate us to weigh our lives now and so live in submission to the will of God that we can bear testimony on our deathbeds to what God has graciously taught us. ☞

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

Dr. Robert D. Vincent is assistant pastor at Mount Calvary Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina.

The New Testament Context. The word “conscience” (*suneidēsis*) occurs infrequently in the New Testament (NT). Paul is the dominant exponent of the word, using it in nineteen different passages in six of his books (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus). It appears five times in Hebrews. And Peter uses “conscience” three times in his first epistle. The word appears 30 times in 29 verses of the New Testament. Like an uncirculated coin, its rarity increases its value, both semantically and certainly theologically.

The word “conscience” carries significant weight in the broader field of meaning encompassed by the term “heart” (*kardia*), a far more frequent NT term for the immaterial part of man. “Conscience” moves in the same sphere of meaning as the NT terms “mind,” “soul,” and “spirit”; they too are narrower synonyms for “heart,” expressing special nuances of the broader term. “Conscience” is not identical in meaning to any of these other terms. It, along with each of these words, describes some special dimension or function of man’s immaterial nature. This immediately elevates the theological importance of the word because of God’s interest in the heart of man.

The definitions of the standard Greek-English lexicons give us a good beginning point in understanding what “conscience” means specifically as a function of the human heart. One describes it as “the consciousness man has of himself in his relation to God, manifesting itself in the form of self-testimony.”¹ Another calls it “innate discernment, self-judging consciousness.”² Still another helpfully notes that “conscience” refers to “the soul as distinguishing between what is morally good and bad, prompting to do the former and shun the latter, commending the one, condemning the other.”³

A Universal Human Reality. The Scriptures make clear that being created in the image of God as spiritual-moral beings (Gen. 1:27; James 3:9), all men are given an awareness of God whom they are obligated as creatures to worship and serve gratefully (Rom. 1:18–20). They are also given a knowledge of right and wrong evidenced by “the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness” (Rom. 2:14, 15). This awareness of God and knowledge of right and wrong, or moral consciousness, is the result of the conscience God has given every man in His mercy and common grace toward our rebellious race, in spite of its fallen condition.

Man is without excuse before God by virtue of the ministry of conscience as well as God’s provision of salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. By this grace, God draws men to Himself for salvation by His Spirit as He illumines their consciences, reproving them of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:7–11) and dispelling the darkness of their blindness by


“the light of the glorious gospel of Christ” (2 Cor. 4:4–6).

The Christian Conscience.

When a man repents and exercises faith in Christ for salvation from sin, his defiled conscience (deeply and permanently stained, Titus 1:15) is miraculously purified and made new by God. The blood of Christ, who offered Himself as a sacrifice through the power of the eternal Spirit, purges that man’s conscience of dead works to serve the living God, as Hebrews 9:14 triumphantly announces. Every man should fear that he not depart from hearing and believing the Faith by false teaching and hypocrisy, cauterizing his conscience as a hot iron cauterizes an open wound to staunch the flow of blood, killing the nerve endings and all sensitivity in the process (1 Tim. 4:1–5).

For the follower of Christ, a “good” conscience is both a gift from God and a goal toward which he continually strives. (“Good” is the most frequently used positive adjective to describe the healthy Christian conscience, either clearly implied or explicitly stated in twelve of the references in which *suneidēsis* occurs.) In regeneration, God renews his conscience (Heb. 9:14). Even more remarkably, the Spirit of God now dwells in his heart (*kardia*, 2 Cor. 1:22), which includes his conscience, to strengthen it and enable it to comprehend the Word of God and obey it (Eph. 3:16, 17; 1 Cor. 2:9–16). Through these means his conscience will be strong, not “weak” in the sense of either oversensitive or prone to give in to temptation (1 Cor. 8:7, 10) through ignorance of the Word.

Through grace and obedience, he can keep his conscience from being “wounded” by sinful violation of his sense of what is right (1 Cor. 8:12), no matter what liberties are exercised by other believers in their perception of right and wrong.

For the devoted servant of God, maintaining faith and a “good conscience” is like the rudder on the ship of his ministry-life that keeps him from shipwreck (1 Tim. 1:19). He listens closely to the Spirit which speaks through his conscience about true ministry burdens and obligations he bears (Rom. 9:1–3). Having “a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16) is his constant aim and effort, reflecting his wholehearted commitment to loving God and loving others with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength. 

**“Rightly
dividing
the Word
of Truth”
(2 Tim. 2:15)**

¹ Hermann Cremer, *Biblio-Theological Lexicon of New Testament Greek*, trans. D. W. Simon and William Urwick (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1872), 215.

² George Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937), 427.

³ Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, rev. ed. (orig. 1889; Wheaton, IL: Evangel Publishing Company, 1974), 602.

Windows

How Humans Respond to the Subject of Death

The following excerpt appears in *The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*.

Death is the greatest enemy of humans, a relentless Grim Reaper that shows no respect for age or wealth. It robs parents of a precious child, leaving them to mourn their loss for the rest of their lives. It deprives wives and children of their breadwinner and protector, leaving them vulnerable in a hostile world. It takes away an aging spouse, leaving a gray-haired senior citizen without a life-long companion and closest friend. Sometimes it arrives suddenly and unannounced; at other times it approaches slowly, as if stalking or taunting its helpless victim. Sometimes it hauls away its victims en masse; on other occasions it targets individuals. It uses a variety of methods and weapons, but only rarely does it capture its prey without inflicting pain and terror. Power, beauty and wealth can usually overcome any obstacle, but in death they meet their match. As the eighteenth-century poet Thomas Gray wrote in “Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard,”

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow’r,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e’er gave,
Awaits alike the inevitable hour;
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

In the ancient Near Eastern world in which the Bible originated, death was called “the land of no return” and was viewed as an inescapable underworld prison. The OT pictures the realm of death (or Sheol) as being under the earth, comparing its entrance to a deep pit (Ps 88:4–6). Those who descend into this subterranean region are cut off from God’s mighty deeds and from the worshipping community of faith (Ps 6:5; 30:9; 88:10–12; Is 38:18). With rare and only temporary exceptions (e.g., 1 Sam 28:12–15), a trip to the underworld is a one-way journey (2 Sam 12:23).

The Canaanite myths picture death as a god who greedily and continually demands human flesh to devour. One text depicts death as having “a lip to the earth, a lip to the heavens . . . and a tongue to the stars” (Gibson, 69). Death compares his appetite to that of lions and then boasts, “If it is in very truth my desire to consume ‘clay’ [human flesh], then in truth by the handfuls I must eat it, whether my seven portions [a full, complete amount] are already in the bowl or whether Nahar [the river god who transports victims from the land of the living to the underworld] has to mix the cup” (Gibson, 68–69).

The Bible does not deify death, but it does personify it as a hungry (Is 5:14; Hab 2:5) and

crafty enemy that uses snares to trap victims (Ps 18:4–5) and sneaks through windows to grab children (Jer 9:21). Death is “the last enemy” (1 Cor 15:28), whose fatal sting is sin (1 Cor 15:55–56; cf. Hos 13:14), an inescapable (Ps 89:48; Eccles 8:8), terrifying (Heb 2:15) and relentless (Song 8:6) foe with which no one can strike a lasting bargain (Is 28:15, 18).¹

There are numerous human responses to the subject of death. The following illustrations reflect some of these responses.

Cognitive Humanism

There’s a new watch that is becoming available. It is called the Tikker—it counts down how much longer you have left until you die. It counts the years, months, days, minutes and seconds that you are likely to have on this earth. How? You enter your age, weight, medical history, etc., and it calculates for you the likely time your body will assume room temperature. Morbid? The inventor of the watch, a Swedish man named Fredrik Colting, says the device is not morbid and it is designed to make people who own it happier and give them a better life.

He explained, “The occurrence of death is no surprise to anyone, but in our modern society we rarely talk about it. I think that if we were more aware of our own expiration I’m sure we’d make better choices while we are alive.” Mr. Colting devised the idea for the Tikker after his grandfather passed away because it made him realize how important it is to enjoy life. He said, “It made me think about death and the transience of life, and I realized that nothing matters when you are dead. Instead what matters is what we do when we are alive . . . and we’re building a watch that counts down your life, in order to make the world a better place.”

Colting sermonizes: “While death is nonnegotiable, life isn’t. The good news is that life is what you make of it—and oh boy . . . can it be beautiful! All we have to do is learn how to cherish the time and the life that we have been given, to honor it, suck the marrow from it, seize the day and follow our hearts. And the best way to do this is to realize that seconds, days and years are passing never to come again . . . and to make the right choices. Anger or forgiveness? Tic-toc. Wearing a frown or a smile? Tic-toc. Happy or upset? Tic-toc. That’s why we’ve created Tikker, the wrist watch that counts down your life, just so you can make every second count.”²

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

Charles Spurgeon

Agitated Resignation

Ray Stedman cites a graphic picture of death from Tom Howard, professor at Gordon College of Theology and Missions.

Like a hen before a cobra, we find ourselves incapable of doing anything at all in the presence of the very thing that seems to call for the most drastic and decisive action. The disquieting thought (that stares at us like a face with a freezing grin) is that there is in fact nothing we can do. Say what we will, dance how we will, we will soon enough be a heap of ruined feathers and bones, indistinguishable from the rest of the ruins that lie about. It will not appear to matter in the slightest whether we met the enemy with equanimity, shrieks, or a trumped-up gaiety—there we will be.³

Lighthearted Cynicism

Website www.thefamouspeople.com relates the following stories about the Greek philosopher Diogenes.

When Diogenes was questioned how he desired to be buried, he directed to be dumped outside the city wall so that wild animals could enjoy feast on his body. When asked that if he minded the same, he replied, “Not at all, as long as you provide me with a stick to chase the creatures away!” To this, the people were surprised and asked him that how could he use the stick when he lacked the awareness, he replied, “If I lack awareness, then why should I care what happens to me when I am dead?” Later, Diogenes made fun of people’s excessive concern with the “proper” treatment of the dead. The Corinthians erected to his memory a pillar on which rested a dog made of Parian marble. . . . Also in another story, Alexander [the Great] saw Diogenes looking at a pile of human bones with extreme concentration. Diogenes explained that “I am searching for the bones of your father but cannot distinguish them from those of a slave.”⁴

Morose Acquiescence

Close to the time of his death, Mark Twain wrote,


A myriad of men are born; they labor and sweat and struggle for bread; they squabble and scold and fight; they scramble for little mean advantages over each other. Age creeps upon them; infirmities follow; shames and humiliations bring down their prides and their vanities. Those they love are taken from them and the joy of life is turned to aching grief. The burden of pain, care, misery, grows heavier year by year. At length ambition is dead; pride is dead; vanity is dead; longing for release is in their place. It comes at last—the only unpoisoned gift ever had for them—and they

vanish from a world where they were of no consequence; where they achieved nothing; where they were a mistake and a failure and a foolishness; where they have left no sign that have existed—a world which will lament them a day and forget them forever. Then another myriad takes their place and copies all they did and goes along the same profitless road and vanishes as they vanished—to make room for another and another and a million other myriads to follow the same arid path through the same desert and accomplish what the first myriad and all the myriads that came after it accomplished—nothing!”⁵

Feeble Hope

A few individuals have the faint and feeble hope that modern science will bring them back to life someday, so they prepay a cryopreservation company that promises to do its best to retard the inevitable deterioration of the human body after death. When these individuals are diagnosed as being terminally ill and close to death, a cryopreservation team will wait nearby for a doctor to make the death pronouncement. When the pronouncement is made, the team will quickly attach a machine to the corpse to keep blood pumping while the body is cooled and the blood stream is infused with preservatives to protect the tissue. The team eventually cools the body to -196°C and places it in a vat of liquid nitrogen for storage at a cryogenic preservation facility where it will be stored until technology advances far enough to revive it. One company, Alcor Life Extension Foundation, based in Scottsdale, Arizona, has 117 patients in cryopreservation, along with 33 pets. The fee for this service is \$200,000.⁶

Quiet Confidence

A few days before his death, Dr. F. B. Meyer wrote a very dear friend these words: “I have just heard, to my great surprise, that I have but a few days to live. It may be that before this reaches you, I shall have entered the palace. Don’t trouble to write. We shall meet in the morning.”⁷ 

¹ L. Ryken, J. Wilhoit, and T. Longman, eds. *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

² www.mytikker.com

³ <http://www.raystedman.org/thematic-studies/christmas-and-easter/the-answer-to-death>

⁴ www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/diogenes-of-sinope-224.php.

⁵ <http://www.goodreads.com/quotes>

⁶ <http://www.firstpost.com/tech/why-3-oxford-academics-have-paid-to-be-frozen-after-death-857835.html>

⁷ Quoted in *Consolation* by Mrs. C. Cowman; see <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/d/death.htm>.

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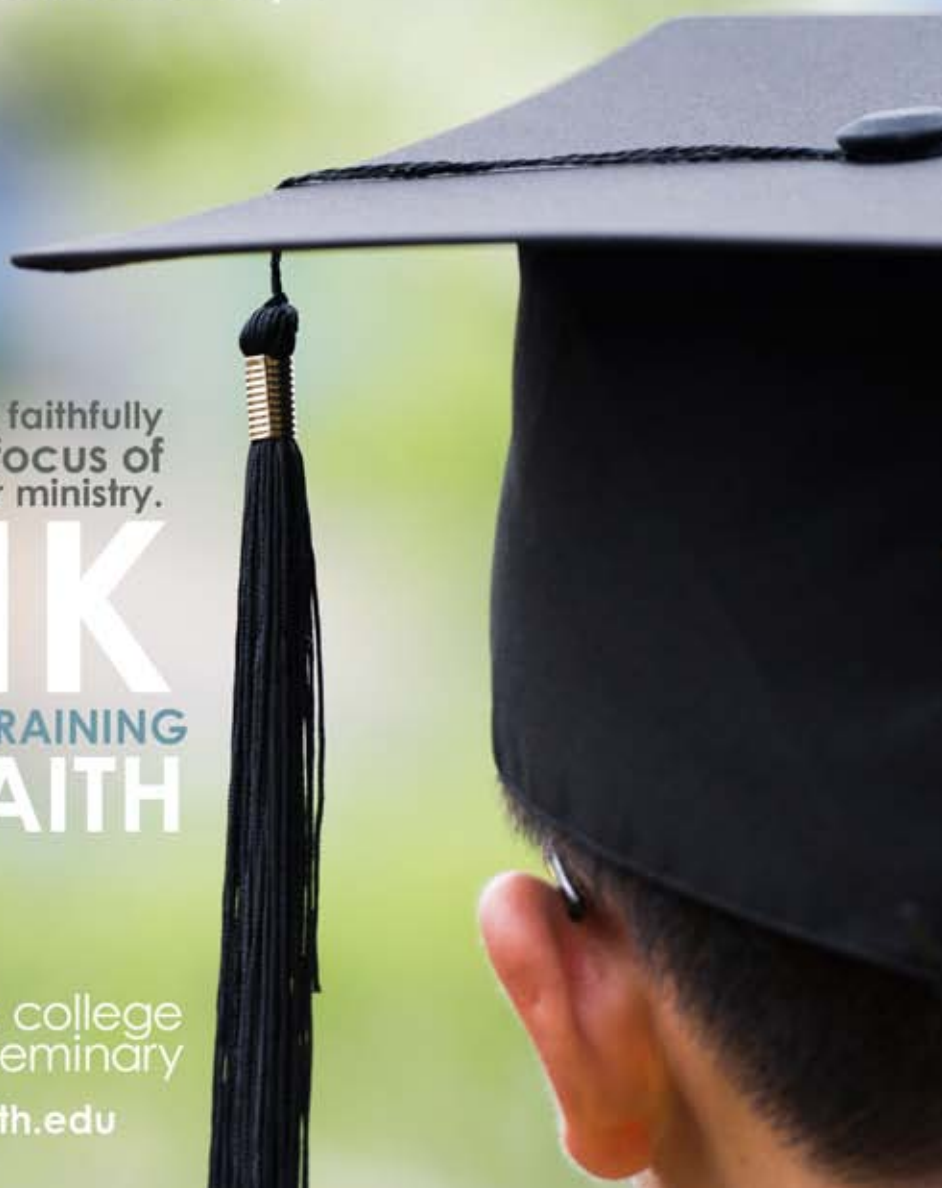
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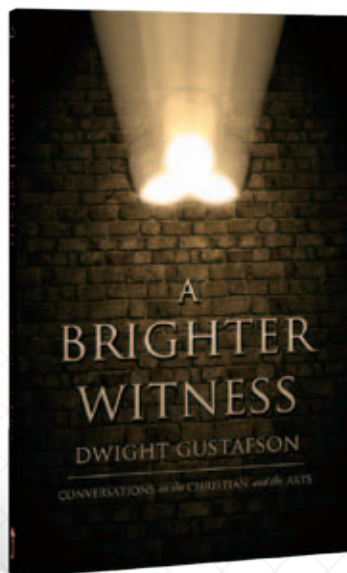
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Learning from Ecclesiastes

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It's Monday morning, and the alarm clock just went off at its unerringly precise time of 6:00 A.M. You must be out the door a bit early today in order to drop your car at the mechanic's shop so he can determine why the "check engine" light on your dashboard is glowing a menacing yellow. At 6:30 you realize that one of your kids isn't out of bed yet, so up the stairs you go to roust him out. Unfortunately, you forgot about the bread you put in the toaster, and now the smoke alarm in the kitchen is loudly reminding you about it. You know that today at the office you have a hopeless amount of work to accomplish. In the middle of your mental planning about which task you will tackle first, you find yourself wondering, "Why is life this frustrating?" Then you realize your retirement is only three years away. You revel in the prospect of sleeping as late as you wish and devoting as much time to your hobbies as you would like. Then you realize how fast your career has gone. "Why has my life passed so quickly?"

The Book of Ecclesiastes has the answer to your questions. This often neglected section of the Old Testament wisdom literature presents us with a divinely revealed philosophy for how to live in a world that sin has marred. Solomon's central thesis in the book involves the reality that everything is "vanity" (Eccles. 1:2; 12:8). By beginning and ending the book with the same phrase, "All is vanity," Solomon employs a literary device (*inclusio*) indicating that Ecclesiastes is all about how we should deal with the pervasive nature of vanity.

A Live Metaphor

If we will understand the message of Ecclesiastes, therefore, we must understand how the book uses the metaphor of vanity. The concrete meaning of the Hebrew word *hēbēl* that the KJV translators rendered "vanity" is "breath" or "vapor." A metaphor is a comparison of two things by direct assertion. There are two kinds of metaphors: static and live. A static metaphor means the same thing in any given context, but the significance of a live metaphor changes depending on the context in which the author uses it. Correct interpretation of Ecclesiastes is difficult because *hēbēl* is a live metaphor throughout the book. *Hēbēl* sometimes refers to what is frustrating, in other contexts to the transitory nature of life, and sometimes to emptiness.

Hēbēl pictures life as frustrating. Solomon declares, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit [or "striving after wind"]" (1:14). Life is so frustrating it is like chasing the wind in the hope of catching it! This is not the way God created the world originally. After the creation of Adam, God put him in the Garden of Eden to take care of this wonderful paradise. But Adam followed Eve in disobeying the only command God gave the first couple, and the Creator responded to their sin by driving them out of the garden. God told Adam that his work would now be much different from his labor in Eden. "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto



the Vanity of Life Today

dust shalt thou return” (Gen. 3:17–19). In a fallen world Adam would work diligently, only to see a frustratingly meager return for his efforts. Instead of living forever, now the prospect of an imminent grave was continually on his mind. This is the origin of frustration, and we have no one to blame but ourselves.

At other points in Ecclesiastes *hēbēl* refers to the transitory nature of life. Solomon solemnly warns us our lives don’t last very long: “For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain [i.e., “futile”] life which he spendeth as a shadow? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?” (6:12). The phrase “his futile life” is literally “his life of *hēbēl*.” I would translate the phrase “his transitory life,” especially in light of Solomon’s next assertion that he will spend his years like a shadow. We have all had the experience of watching our shadow disappear rapidly as the sun changes its position in the sky or a cloud passes overhead. The older a person gets, the more acutely aware he becomes of how fast his life has gone and how short a time he has left. When people are young they typically wish time would speed up. When I was ten years old, I could hardly wait for my eleventh birthday to arrive so I could join the Boy Scouts. A few years later I wanted to be sixteen so I could obtain my permit to begin learning how to drive. In college I wanted my four years of education to be over quickly. How foolish I was!

Pessimism or Biblical Realism?

Solomon adds one more aspect of *hēbēl* to round out the triad of bad news. In the final analysis *hēbēl* ensures that life is empty. “If a man beget an hundred children, and live many years, so that the days of his years be many,

and his soul be not filled with good, and also that he have no burial; I say, that an untimely birth is better than he. For he cometh in with vanity, and departeth in darkness, and his name shall be covered with darkness” (6:3, 4). Here some modern versions translate *hēbēl* as “futility.” A miscarriage or a stillbirth is heartbreaking for the parents. They were greatly anticipating the arrival of their new child. Perhaps they had done extensive work in preparing the child’s nursery. Now their hopes have been dashed and only a wretched emptiness survives. All the promise of a full life is gone.

It’s easy to see why some commentators think Solomon was a pessimist, but it would be much more accurate to say he was a Biblical realist. He balances the negative of a life of *hēbēl* with the positive imperative of enjoying life. Enjoyment and *hēbēl* seem irreconcilable and paradoxical, but Solomon commands us to enjoy life as God’s gift to us. We must enjoy our work and the simple necessities of life our labor enables us to purchase (5:18–20). We must likewise enjoy our family relationships, especially marriage (9:9). It is a thankful spirit for the goodness of God that enables us to deal with the *hēbēl* of everything. With patience we wait for the time when God delivers His creation from bondage to vanity at the Second Advent of our Savior (Rom. 8:20, 21).

Dr. Randy Jaeggli, PhD, Old Testament Interpretation, is a professor at Bob Jones Seminary, where he teaches courses in Old Testament books, theology, and Biblical Hebrew. He is the author of several books, including *More Like the Master*, a work showing the application of the character of God to life.



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The truth which makes men free is for the most part the truth which men prefer not to hear. —Herbert Agar

Truth must be spoken however it be taken. —John Trapp

Hell is truth seen too late. —Unknown

Some people handle the truth carelessly; others never touch it at all. —Anonymous

It contains a misleading impression, not a lie. It was being economical with the truth. —Sir Robert Armstrong

It is unfortunate, considering that enthusiasm moves the world, that so few enthusiasts can be trusted to speak the truth. —Arthur Balfour

Such is the immutability of truth, the patrons of it make it not greater, the opposers make it not less. —Thomas Adams

When men have orthodox judgments and heterodox hearts, there must be little love to truth. —William Gurnall

It must be Sunday; everybody's telling the truth. —Phoebe Snow

The truth of God is only revealed to us by obedience. —Oswald Chambers

Truth consists of having the same idea about something that God has. —Joseph Joubert

Truth hath a quiet breast. —William Shakespeare

Truth lies in character . . . for truth is a thing not of words but of life and being. —Frederick Robertson

Unused truth becomes as useless as an unused muscle. —A. W. Tozer

Jonathan Edwards' doctrine is all application and his application is all doctrine. —John Duncan

Truth reforms as well as informs. —William Jenkyn

Everyone has a consciousness that he needs something that he doesn't have naturally. —Bob Jones Sr.

It is surely astonishing that I, who have known the Christian faith since earliest childhood, should find it astonishing. —Blaise Pascal

Be willing to preach the truth when you think that it will ruin you. —Wayne Van Gelderen Sr.

Godliness is the child of truth, and it must be nursed by its own mother. —William Gurnall

Legalism and Antinomianism rise from a common root of error. —John Duncan

The sermons of Dr. So-and-So were magnificent, but his life was so inconsistent with his profession that, when he was in the pulpit, his congregation wished he would never leave it; and, when he was out of the pulpit, they wished he would never enter it again. —Unknown

Talking to yourself isn't always a sign of old age. In this day and time it may be the only way to be sure someone is listening. —Mature Living Magazine

Compiled by Dr. David Atkinson, pastor of Dyer Baptist Church, Dyer, Indiana.



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New York City Regional Fellowship

Pastors from New York City and Long Island gathered at Heritage Baptist Church in Manhattan on November 5, 2013. Pastor Matt Recker served as the host pastor and Evangelist Steve Pettit was the guest speaker. Brother Pettit, along with his team members, was a blessing to the fellowship. The team sang, and Brother Pettit spoke on "What Does the Future Hold." The second session focused on the importance of applying principles of Biblical separation to our ministries. The spirit and fellowship were excellent along with the delicious breakfast and an outstanding luncheon the Heritage Baptist Church family prepared for visiting pastors.



Southern California Regional Fellowship

Pastor Ron Smith and Victory Baptist Church in California City, California, served as hosts to the Southern California Regional Fellowship. On November 11 and 12, 2013, sixteen ministries and thirteen pastors

were represented. The theme was "The Purity of the Preacher." Mike Privett and Pastor Tim Sneed were the speakers. Mike is the director of Church Planting and Development at Gospel Fellowship Association in Greenville, South Carolina, and Tim Sneed is a church planter in San Diego. Along with the helpful teaching and preaching, the participants enjoyed fellowship around a lunch prepared and served by the people at Victory Baptist Church.



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David C. Innes

The Unique Character of That Which Is Fundamental

A source of much debate, misunderstanding, and division among those who identify themselves as Fundamentalists is the failure to make a distinction in our belief, teaching, and preaching between *very clear* Biblical truth and that which is *not so clear*.

Very clear Biblical truth is in a class all its own. Our belief in the *inspiration of Scripture* demands total acceptance of these truths without question or debate. To deny *very clear* Biblical truth is patently *heretical*. It is *heresy*! In contradistinction to this, a denial of someone's personal interpretation of Biblical truth may result in strong disagreement but never rises to the level of heresy. Both parties in the disagreement concerning interpretation are appealing in their disagreement to the Scriptures themselves. How can it be considered heresy to do such?

In declaring *very clear* truth we state unequivocally, "Thus says the Lord!" We cannot with honesty and integrity say the same about our own personal interpretations. The level of authority with which we teach and preach these matters cannot be equal. That which God clearly states must always bear greater authority than our own personal interpretations do.

Failing to make a difference between that which is *very clear* and that which is *not so clear* can be dangerous. Insisting that others must accept all of my *logical conclusions* even though they may be based on *very clear* Biblical truth is tantamount to elevating my own personal *interpretations* to the level of *divine inspiration* which characterizes the *clear teachings* of the Scripture. To do so must be regarded as totally unacceptable.

Tragically, most of the divisions among those professing to be Fundamentalists have little to do with the *very clear* statements of Scripture and almost always have to do with personal interpretations of Biblical statements that are *not so clear*. This is virtually opposite to the commands of Scripture concerning both *love and unity* and *separation*. Very few divisions among brethren are over *very clear* Biblical truth. Rarely does a church split over unambiguous fundamentals but rather over matters ranging all the way from what may be important Biblical interpretation to petty personal opinions. We acknowledge this to our own shame!

Almost all of the Biblical commands concerning separation deal directly with the denial of fundamental truth—*very clear* statements of Scripture. Love and unity are enjoined in the case of lesser issues. It is vitally important, now, to note the "watershed" nature of the *very clear Biblical teaching* on the subject of separation.

Beyond the Irreducible Minimums

We must come to grips with a very crucial question: *What really is essential or fundamental to Fundamentalism?* To accurately answer this question, we must ask another—*Fundamental to what—salvation, the Christian faith, or something else?*

Regrettably, many limit their concept of the essentials of fundamental belief to the context of the "irreducible minimums" for salvation: the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, the blood atonement, Christ's bodily resurrection, etc. And tragically to many, obedience to the commands of Scripture is not only nonessential but also irrelevant.

Should not the essentials of fundamental belief and practice rather go beyond these "irreducible minimums" for salvation and be defined in the context of the whole body of truth revealed in the Scriptures, the Word of God? Is not everything that is *clearly taught* in the Word of God *essential for belief*? Is not every *clear command* of Scripture *essential for obedience*?

Though there are many beliefs and conclusions drawn from the Scriptures over which good men disagree and which they passionately debate, many other matters are so clearly *taught* and so clearly *commanded* in Scripture that to deny them is to deny the inherent meaning of words and the integrity of language. How can any of those things that are so clearly *taught* or *commanded* in Scripture be considered *nonessential*? Or how can we say that clear teachings are *required* but clear commands are totally *optional*?

And how is it possible to exhibit due reverence for the Word of God without insisting on both *believing all* that it clearly teaches and *obeying all* that it clearly commands? Fundamentalists must be fully devoted and submitted to the authority of the Word of God pertaining both to what they *believe* and what they *practice*. To the Fundamentalist the only option in regard to *clearly stated truths* is to believe, propagate, and defend them as truths given by God. To the Fundamentalist the only option in regard to clearly stated commands is to obey and insist on obedience to them as commands given directly by God.

Authentic Fundamentalism indeed goes beyond merely believing the core of "irreducible minimums" for salvation. A truly Biblical faith demands that the scope both of *belief* and *practice* be governed by the whole of God's revelation to man.

All that is *clearly taught* and all that is *clearly commanded* are essential to Biblical Fundamentalism because both are *fundamental*!

Dr. David C. Innes has served as senior pastor of Hamilton Square Baptist Church in San Francisco, California, since January of 1977.



NT Vocabulary of Worldliness

In the NT “worldliness” is expressed through the use of three primary terms. Each word has meanings that have nothing to do with “worldliness.” However, each also conveys nuances that lie at the heart of this concept.

Kosmos designates the realm of fallen humanity as opposed to God and, by extension, to God’s people and purposes. John is the chief proponent of this spiritual-theological sense of *kosmos*. Of all the NT writers, James seems to use *kosmos* in a way most closely resembling John’s distinctive nuance (1:27; 4:1ff.). By contrast, Paul rarely if ever uses *kosmos* in John’s theological sense. So, for example, John exhorts us to “love not the *world*, neither the things that are in the *world*” because such affections are antithetical to any claim to love the Father (1 John 2:15–17).

Aiōn designates the cultural manifestation and expression of that rebellion against God current at any given period in history, along with the Satanic presence and influence that energizes it (2 Cor. 4:4; Eph. 6:12). Paul is the chief proponent of this spiritual-theological sense of *aiōn*. By contrast, John never uses *aiōn* in Paul’s theological sense. So, for example, we are not to be “conformed to this world [*aiōn*]”—that is, shaped by the influences that govern the current age, which is under the blinding and deceptive influence of the “god of this age,” Satan (2 Cor. 4:4). All believers were once a part of both—the realm in rebellion (*kosmos*) and the cultural expression of that rebellion (*aiōn*) current when they were converted (Eph. 2:2). Salvation constitutes rescue and a calling out from our age (Gal. 1:4).

Ethnē normally means “nations” or “Gentiles,” but it sometimes functions as shorthand for the unbelieving world out of which we were delivered and from which we are commanded to be distinctive. Some of these passages make distinctive contributions to the concept of “worldliness.” For example, Christ teaches that anxiety over personal earthly needs such as food and clothing is completely out of character for the child of God, “for all these things the *nations* of the *world* seek after” but “your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things” (Luke 12:22–30). According to Jesus, anxiety over personal circumstances is a form of “worldliness.” Peter exhorts us “as strangers [sojourners] and pilgrims” to abandon “fleshly lusts” and to maintain a lifestyle that is “honest [honorable] among the *Gentiles*”—meaning, clearly, among

WHAT IN THE WORLD

our unbelieving neighbors and acquaintances (1 Pet. 2:11, 12; cf. 4:3, 4). Indeed, the very descriptors “sojourners” and “pilgrims” convey the concept of being unworldly. Paul likewise teaches that believers are no longer to walk like the rest of the Gentiles and then proceeds to contrast unbelievers with believers in terms of their mindset and behavior (Eph. 4:17–32).

In short, worldliness is world-likeness—living or thinking like the surrounding world (like we did before, or like we would be living if we were not believers) or conforming to the current expressions (Rom. 12:2; Eph. 2:2) of the world’s behavior, thinking, priorities, or values. It can be as blatant as immorality and as subtle as preoccupation with temporal needs and desires.

OT Expressions of Worldliness

But the concept of worldliness is not limited to the NT. The same phenomenon appears throughout the OT as well under two major descriptors: *being like the surrounding nations* and *spiritual adultery*.

Conformity to the surrounding nations—in lifestyle, beliefs, behaviors, or religious practices—is the most basic OT expression of worldliness. God repeatedly commanded His people not to walk according to the lifestyle of the nations around them, because God had separated them from all the nations to be uniquely His people called to reflect His character to the nations (Lev. 20:22–26; cf. 2 Kings 21:1–9). Later, Israel’s motive in demanding a king is unmasked: “that we . . . may be like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:5, 19, 20)—a gesture that God interpreted as a rejection of His rule over them (8:7). This passage is particularly revealing because it illustrates that it is possible to be motivated by a worldly spirit even in our desire for something that is not, in itself, wrong. (Other Scripture indicates that it was God’s will that they transition to a monarchy at some point.) Randy Leedy has done a superb job of expounding this OT expression of worldliness in his book *Love Not the World* (Bob Jones University Press, 2012).

Spiritual adultery is another OT expression—and, in fact, God’s primary metaphor—for worldliness. It starts as early as Exodus 34 where God describes Israel’s future following of the nations into idolatry as “whoring after other gods.” From there it regularly punctuates the historical books as well as the prophets. Two of the most graphic passages are Ezekiel 16 (where God describes Judah’s betrayal of Him and their frenetic plunge into the idolatry

Is “WORLDLINESS”?

of the surrounding nations in extremely graphic terms as adultery and prostitution) and Ezekiel 23 (where God tells a parable about Israel and Judah as two sisters who abandoned themselves to an infatuation with the influence and even the fashion of the up-and-coming world powers. It's important to note in these passages that God is not directly describing the physical sexual immorality of all the Israelites with their pagan neighbors but, rather, metaphorically. Adultery and prostitution are God's chosen metaphors for how He views their infatuation with the surrounding pagan culture—specifically, with their dress, their pomp, their style, their impressive appearance, their seeming security and “pride of life” (23:12–16). The fixation described here focuses on God's people seeing and longing after the *people*, the *clothing*, the *status*, the *culture* of these nations.

Neither of these OT expressions dies with the OT. Worldliness as conformity to the surrounding nations is echoed in the NT calls not to live like the “Gentiles” or “nations,” as well as its insistence on nonconformity to the “world” and the “age.” Worldliness as spiritual adultery is echoed in the NT as well, most notably in James 4 where “friendship [with] the world” is described as spiritual adultery that arouses the jealousy and enmity of God. Not only does James imply the world's animosity toward God, he asserts God's animosity toward worldliness. His point is vivid: *What are you doing siding with God's enemies?*

Worldliness Observed

Sometimes even a worldling can spot worldliness better than God's people can. While believers may think they're merely being relevant or exercising their liberty, unbelievers often see it for what it is—and rather than being drawn, they are turned off by it. Writing in *Slate* magazine (May 5, 2008), Hanna Rosin (a secular Jew) notes that evangelical Christians have a “deeply neurotic relationship with popular culture.” She even makes an explicit connection between many American evangelicals and Old Testament Israelites: “They are blending into the surrounding heathen culture, and having ever more trouble figuring out where it ends and they begin.” It's as if they've “created their own enormous ‘parallel universe.’ . . . Every American pop phenomenon has its Christian equivalent, no matter how improbable. . . . There are Christian raves and Christian rappers and Christian techno, which is somehow more Christian even though there are no words.” Rosin asks two penetrating questions of this parallel culture: “What does commercializing do to the substance of belief, and what

does an infusion of belief do to the product?” She notes, “When you make loving Christ sound just like loving your boyfriend, you can do damage to both your faith and your ballad.” When you “sanitize” “Nirvana or . . . Jay-Z . . . you shoehorn a message that's essentially about obeying authority into a genre that's rebellious and nihilistic, and the result can be ugly, fake, or just limp.” And Rosin is allegedly the target audience that this brand of relevant, earthy Christianity hopes to impress and draw.

Concept of Worldliness

Worldliness is not an idea invented by paranoid puritanical Fundamentalists. It is not a new concept even in the NT. It was going on for centuries before that. The temptation of worldliness is as old as the people of God. Worldliness is siding and identifying with the world. But the “world” is not just people, it is a realm—a kingdom of subjects governed and influenced by a spirit who is in declared and hostile opposition to God, a kingdom deceived, ruled, and energized by Satan *vis-à-vis* the kingdom of God. Non-Christian culture is always an outgrowth and expression of its underlying religious belief; the two are unavoidably interwoven. All of life and culture are fundamentally religious, because all of reality (including man himself) is fundamentally religious and theological.

Is it possible to actually *be* worldly without necessarily meaning to be or even knowing that you are? Is your own conscience the sole indicator or determiner of whether something is characteristic of a world at enmity with God? What does worldliness look like? Though it has external symptoms, worldliness is not *just* about externals; it is a profoundly internal, religious, spiritual issue. But that doesn't mean worldliness has nothing to do with externals. If the Bible's prohibitions against worldliness have *nothing* to say about externals—clothing, entertainment, worship practices, appearance, social behavior, music, the use of your body, values and priorities, what you do with God's Word, how you use the gifts God pours out on you—if the OT prohibition against “being like the nations” and the NT prohibition against loving and being like the world has nothing to say to us about any of these, then what's left? What *does* worldliness mean?

James takes the application of worldliness one level higher: not only *being* worldly but even *befriending* the world—i.e., approving or defending or desiring the values and behaviors that characterize the world even without personally participating in them—attracts the Father's displeasure and the charge of spiritual adultery.

Book Review

Roger Duvall

Historical Theology In-Depth: Themes and Contexts of Doctrinal Development since the First Century by David Beale



*H*istorical Theology by Dr. David Beale is a newly published work by Bob Jones University Seminary. In this two-volume set, Dr. Beale has traced the formation of Christian doctrine and belief from an historical perspective. The stated aims of this in-depth study are to provide both doctrinal insights and “effective tools and weapons, both apologetical and polemical, against every essential form of false teaching.” The style of this work makes it very readable. Most of the chapters give an overview of the topic followed by concise examples illustrating the topic. Each chapter provides a select bibliography for additional reading on the topic. The chapters typically are brief, allowing the reader to consume the work in enjoyable bites.

Volume 1 begins with seven principles of Historical Theology. In this volume Dr. Beale gives an introduction to the early Church Fathers. He then introduces significant ancient philosophers and Greek apologists and examines the development of thought and influences on both Biblical and heretical belief, particularly through Gnosticism and Neo-Platonism. Following the apologists, he shows the contrasting impact on doctrinal belief from writings of Origen of the School of Alexandria, Tertullian of the School of Carthage, Cyprian, and others throughout the second and third centuries along with elements leading to the roots of the Roman Catholic Church. The importance of Confessions of Faith is emphasized in the middle of this volume, showing Biblical examples of confessional statements along with early creeds that were battlegrounds for truth.

The Seven Ecumenical Councils during the fourth through eighth centuries are presented. Each of the councils is reported within its historical context, and a clear overview of the council is given, together with a recap of the leaders within each era. The impact of each council is explained along with events leading to the various branches of the Orthodox Church. Throughout these chapters Dr. Beale provides insights into the impact of the teachings of ancient philosophers and apologists in the development of beliefs and church creeds. Significant emphasis is given to the Donatist Controversy, Pelagianism, and to Augustine’s influence on both Protestantism and the Roman Catholic Church. A review of the development of the Roman Catholic Church up to the Reformation is provided along with a brief synopsis of developments up to the modern era.

Volume 2 begins with the Reformation. A brief biographical sketch is given for each of Martin Luther, Joseph

Melanchthon, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin, along with their theological contributions to the Reformation. Continuing within the historical context, the remainder of the second volume is focused on doctrinal battlegrounds that were an outgrowth of the Reformation. Dr. Beale provides a focused summary of Classical Arminianism versus Dortian Calvinism and the Canons of the Synod of Dort, Amyraldianism, Molinism, and Covenant Theology, along with guidelines for studying the doctrines of grace. The historical views of the Sabbath Day and the Lord’s Day, from the first century through the modern era, are presented. An overview of the Biblical and historical teachings on the eternal generation of Christ is given.

Much of the second half of Volume 2 traces the development of various groups and their leaders, starting with the Anabaptists during the time of the Reformation, and includes their key doctrines or Confessions. The Baptist Landmark movement of the 1800s is recapped along with a brief overview of its leadership. A brief history of General and Peculiar Baptists, along with the Baptist movement in America, is provided with the Confessions, Covenants, and Statements of Faith of these groups, including the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International. Heretical teachings such as Unitarianism and Transcendentalism are traced. The historical decline of Harvard University from its Puritan roots is presented. A very interesting history of Yale University’s establishment at the request of the Congregational church and its relationships with Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and David Brainerd, is followed by tracing the men and events leading to the New Divinity Movement and the New Haven Theology. These movements are explained along with the resulting impact on Horace Bushnell, Charles Finney, D. L. Moody, and others. In keeping with the theme of the work, Dr. Beale concludes the historical development of Christianity with a discussion of Apologetics and Philosophy on Evangelicalism since 1800 and the implications of the Supreme Court abortion ruling in America requiring a response from twenty-first century Christians.

The conclusion of this work is that we have a history of thoughts and events impacting our theology. We can trace the influence of both Biblical and false teaching over the past two thousand years. We must take warning. We must avoid the dangerous and subtle steps toward apostasy. Every doctrine is a battleground and must be defended based on the truth of God’s Word. These two volumes are a must-read for anyone who desires to understand the doctrinal issues of today within their historical context and wants to study them in an interesting, clear, and concise format. They are very helpful for both personal study and as references for pastors and teachers desiring to give helpful teaching regarding the thinking that has affected doctrinal belief.

Roger Duvall is married to FBFI office manager Malinda Duvall and serves on the advisory board of the FBFI. He and his family are active members of Faith Baptist Church in Taylors, South Carolina.

Methodist Pastor Defrocked

Frank Schaeffer was a United Methodist Minister until he was recently defrocked for officiating in a gay "marriage" ceremony for his son. The United Methodist book of Discipline clearly forbids the officiating of a homosexual marriage. Schaeffer was found guilty of violating Methodist doctrine and was given thirty days to repent. Schaeffer declined.

Institute on Religion and Democracy spokesperson John Lomperis stated, regarding the defrocking, "The fact of the matter is that the source of so many of our problems in the United Methodist Church is all these people who get ordained, and when they are asked at their ordination do you believe in our doctrine they basically say yes while crossing their fingers behind their back."

Schaeffer has clearly crossed Scriptural demands but has remained resolutely defiant, apparently surprised that the Methodists still believe the Bible.

This article can be accessed at http://www.onenewsnow.com/church/2013/12/19/surprise-we-believe-the-bible-methodist-pastor-punished#.Usw3u_3lBHG.

A Dire Warning

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Lord Carey made this striking admission at the Shropshire Light Conference in Shrewsbury, England: Christianity is a generation away from extinction in Britain. According to a recent report placed before the Church of England's

General Synod, the Church of England is in danger of no longer possessing any national distinction if its general attendance is to drop any lower. Typical attendance patterns are half of what they were in 1970. Dr. John Sentamu, Archbishop of York, asserted that they must "envangelise or fossilise" [sic].

The Church of England appears to be marked by heaviness and defeatism. Carey stated that the public's interaction is not one of overt hostility. Rather, public opinion is dismissive. Carey opined, "The viewpoint could be expressed in a variety of nonverbal ways: the shrug of indifference, the rolled eyes of embarrassment, the yawn of boredom."

The synod's response to the warnings and report was to set up a committee to look into the issue.

This article can be accessed at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/10458380/Christianity-at-risk-of-dying-out-in-a-generation-warns-Lord-Carey.html>.

Atheist Churches

In November of this past year over four hundred people attended the inaugural service of Sunday Assembly, one of a growing movement of what have been dubbed as atheist "megachurches."

This meeting is not an isolated event. Similar meetings have sprung up in San Diego, Nashville, Baltimore, and New York.

The movement began in Britain early in 2013 as the brainchild of British comedians Sanderson Jones and Pippa Evans. Jones

came up with the idea after attending a Christmas caroling event. He liked everything about the event except the "God part." He stated in the report, "There was so much about it that I loved, but it's a shame because at the heart of it, it's something I don't believe in. . . . If you think about church, there's very little that's bad. It's singing awesome songs, hearing interesting talks, thinking about improving yourself and helping other people—and doing that in a community with wonderful relationships. What part of that is not to like?"

The movement seems to coincide with cultural trends discussed by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. Twenty percent of Americans claim to have no religious affiliation. This number is up fifteen percent over five years ago. Yet most of those who claimed not to have a religious affiliation still believed there was a God—considering themselves spiritual but not religious.

Sunday Assembly's motto is "Live Better, Help Often, Wonder More."

More on this movement can be read at http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/10/atheist-mega-church_n_4252360.tml?view=print&comm_ref=false.

Trail Life USA

May of 2013 witnessed a dramatic shift in the policies of the Boy Scouts of America. Originally formed in 1910 to "prepare young people to make moral and ethical choices over their lifetimes," the BSA now has bowed to political pressure

and has opened its doors to openly and avowed homosexual boys and teens. This contradicts the Boy Scout Oath of keeping themselves "morally straight."

To give those opposed to such a change another option, on September 6, 2013, before a sold-out convention hall, Trail Life USA was launched. The group's purpose statement reads, in part, "to guide generations of courageous young men to honor God, lead with integrity, serve others and experience outdoor adventure."

The group's website makes this claim: "Trail Life USA is a Christian adventure, character and leadership movement for young men. The K-12 program centers on outdoor experiences that build a young man's skills and allow him to grow on a personal level and as a role model and leader for his peers. Living the Trail Life is a journey established on timeless values derived from the Bible."

This article can be accessed at <http://www.theblaze.com/contributions/the-boy-scouts-of-america-is-a-sinking-ship-and-trail-life-usa-is-the-life-raft/>.

Abortion: A Sacred Gift?

Valerie Tarico, one of a four-hundred-member Planned Parenthood board, has gone on record with her disturbing views. While frequently she writes about the decline of Christian views and the triumph of science over Biblical views, she has gone now on record commending those who provide and seek

abortions as “doing God’s work.”

“An abortion when needed is a blessing” she wrote. “It is a gift, a grace, a mercy, a cause for gratitude, a new lease on life. Being able to choose when and whether to bring a child into the world enables us and our children to flourish.”

She believes women should be honored for terminating their pregnancies.

Read more at <http://www.religiontoday.com/blog/planned-parenthood-board-member-says-abortion-is-a-sacred-gift.html>.

Discriminatory Fees Returned

The Turlock Unified School District had been charging Child Evangelism Fellowship to use its school facilities for after-school programs. CEF had already paid in excess of \$6000 while other nonreligious groups had paid nothing. The US Supreme Court had already ruled in a similar case involving Good News Clubs that access could not be denied to an organization based upon its religious affiliation. So the school district had worked its policies toward a financial penalty instead.

Thankfully, the school system returned the money when the Liberty Counsel notified the school of impending action.

This article can be accessed at <http://www.onenewsnow.com/legal-courts/2014/01/06/christian-group-reimbursed-for-discriminatory-fees#.Usxtcv3IbHg>.

Mennonite Pastoral License Approved

Rhoda Good graduated with an MDiv degree from Eastern Mennonite University and began pastoral work by joining a team in Denver in 2012. The Mountain States Conference received Rhoda’s request for licensure and

NOTABLE QUOTES

It is the boss—the manager—the Master in people’s lives who makes the difference in their destiny. —Phillip Keller

A conviction involves personalizing the truth of God’s Word and allowing it to regulate tastes in all areas of life. Sometimes tastes and conviction can agree; sometimes they do not. Since tastes are not sanctified (and are subject to one’s whims), Christians must allow their tastes to be subject to Biblical convictions. This means that occasionally a Christian may refuse to do something, contradicting his personal desires, because God has given him a personal conviction about a thing. —Tim Fisher

Any church may have a mighty man of God for its pastor, if it is willing to pay the price, and that price is not a big salary, but great praying. —R. A. Torrey

Oh, here is the secret to becoming much like God, remaining long alone with God. If you won’t stay long with Him, you won’t be much like Him. —R. A. Torrey

Surely when he crosses our wishes it is always in his mercy, and because we short-sighted creatures often know not what to ask, nor what would be the consequence if our desires were granted. —John Newton

Paul acknowledged what we are to acknowledge if we are to trust God. God’s plans and His way of working out His plan are frequently beyond our ability to fathom and understand. We must learn to trust when we do not understand. —Jerry Bridges

Holiness is not exemption from conflict, but victory through conflict.

Holiness is not freedom from temptation, but power to overcome temptation.

Holiness is not the end of progress, but deliverance from standing still. —G. Campbell Morgan

Newsworthy is presented to inform believers. The people or sources mentioned do not necessarily carry the endorsement of FBFI.

granted that license. The MSC includes twenty-one different congregations in Texas, Colorado, and New Mexico.

The request came and was granted with full knowledge of her commitment to a homosexual relationship. The statement from the conference leadership is recorded: “It is the desire of the Leadership Board to function and communicate with a spirit of deep humility, joyfully acknowledging the work of God in our midst, and with a sense of sadness recognizing the pain that this causes some of the sisters and brothers that we love in Mennonite Church USA.”

While licensure does not demand ordination, it is the first step on that path for the Mennonite church to have its first openly homosexual pastor.

Read more at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/first-openly-gay-pastor-approved-by-mennonite-conference-as-license-approved-111778/>.

Anti-Religion Campaign

In August 2013 a bill called the Quebec Charter of Values was introduced in that province. The “values” proposed are driven by secularists and are decidedly antireligious. One example is that all religious expression worn as clothing is to be banned from the wardrobes of public employees. Banned items would include Sikh turbans, Muslim hijabs (head coverings), Christian cross necklaces, and nuns’ habits or priests’ collars. Reaction throughout other Canadian Provinces has been negative.

This article may be accessed at http://thechristians.com/?q=node/597&utm_source=The+Christians+Book+Buyers&utm_campaign=29246f57d5-TCH-Issue0106-BB&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_e2d8bf6d30-29246f57d5-57140221.

Compiled by Robert Condict, FBFI Executive Board member and pastor of Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church, Baldwin, Maryland.

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2801 Wade Hampton Blvd., Suite 115-165 • Taylors, SC 29687

(800) 376-6856 • (864) 268-0777

E-Mail: info@fbfi.org • www.fbfi.org

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WHAT ARE STUDENTS SAYING ABOUT LIFE AT BOB JONES UNIVERSITY?

Earlier this year our students grabbed their cameras and started recording. The resulting 13-minute documentary tells their story.

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In Good Times and in Bad

Jeremy Van Delinder



Each Christian is called to display and declare the Gospel to those around him. For a local church pastor, engaging in the community is an essential way to make contacts with nonbelievers and build redemptive relationships with them. It is imperative for those of us who are pastors to encourage our flock, both by word and action, to seek out the lost.

Furthermore, serving our communities demonstrates the love of Christ in practical ways. God inspired the prophet Jeremiah to look to the future day when His people would be captives in a pagan land and instruct them to “seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace” (Jer. 29:7). So ought we to make the place we live a better community for our having lived there.

Having a background in emergency services (EMT for fifteen years with stints in EMS and as a firefighter and

public safety officer) has afforded me the opportunity to serve my community and bear the light of the gospel through fire chaplaincy for the Round Rock, Texas, Fire Department, the second largest department in Central Texas. In addition to pastoring full-time, I assist our department of over 130 firefighters who staff three shifts and seven stations.

Fire chaplaincy includes ministering to firefighters through spiritual support, counseling, assistance in emergency situations, and ceremonial duties. Spending time in the trenches with our firefighters is a crucial way to build trust, which naturally leads to spiritual conversations. The firefighters themselves are my primary focus in the chaplaincy.

Like many fire chaplains I engage in another sphere: ministry to the community. This role is one of emotional and logistical support to those affected by unexpected tragedy. Whether assisting a widow who just witnessed



her husband killed or acting as a liaison with a family whose house is on fire, the fire chaplaincy is filled with times of sharing in the most tragic moments of people's lives. Coming alongside in times of grief grants me a unique and precious opportunity to offer stability and gospel hope.

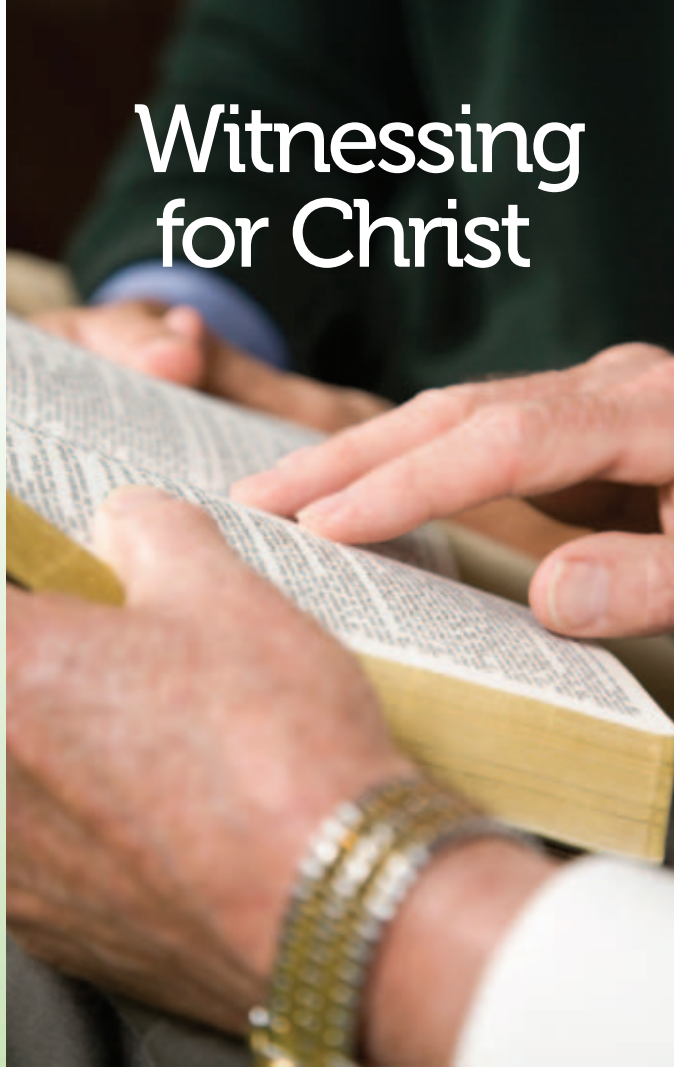
However, there are also the happy moments: a family reunited with their pet that was rescued from a home on fire, community events, and moments like the one captured in the picture on page 38. In October I responded to a house fire. As is my typical duty, I helped the family through the initial emotions and daunting logistics associated with this kind of tragedy. As our fire crews were cleaning up and returning their equipment to service, a little boy accompanied by his father rode up in a toy fire truck and watched intently, sporting a plastic fire hat given to him by our department. The moment was too precious to not capture. Evidently others thought it to

be meaningful as well as the picture soon went viral. As of this writing, over three-quarters of a million people have viewed this picture on Facebook.

There are many role models in our society—some of them good, most of them bad. Celebrities abound who have carved out fame through immorality and vice. When people see a child like this one admiring heroes for the right reasons—nobility, self-sacrifice, and bravery—it resonates with them. These men and women who offer themselves in service to others are deserving of our respect. At the same time, many of them desperately need a believer who is willing to help them face the challenges of their profession with Biblical answers. Indeed, it is a privilege to serve those who serve.

Jeremy Van Delinder pastors North Hills Baptist Church, which he and his team planted in Round Rock, Texas, in 2011. He lives in Round Rock with his wife, Jennifer, and two daughters.

Witnessing for Christ



Acts 1:8 says, “But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” Clearly, the Word of God teaches that all of us should be a witness for our Savior.

In John 4 we find the Lord Jesus Christ dealing with the Samaritan woman. He knew about her life in detail and exposed it when He said to her in verses 16–18, “Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.” This woman was shocked that Jesus knew her life, and she also recognized that He was the Messiah. Verses 28 and 29 describe how she left her waterpot, went back to the city and told her neighbors that she had just met the Messiah.

In Acts 8 we find the account of Philip witnessing to the Ethiopian eunuch when Philip overheard him reading the prophet Isaiah. Philip ran over to the eunuch and asked him, “Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him. . . . Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.”

Many other people in Scripture were open in their witness of our Lord. What has happened to so many of the Lord’s people today? Many Christians rarely witness for our Savior. I look back thirty or forty years ago and a large percentage of our churches had a vibrant evangelistic outreach in their communities. My own mother would go out weekly from the time she was forty up until she was eighty-five years old. The only times she missed

were because of sickness or bad weather. She would tell me of the opportunities she and her partner had in telling others about the Lord. She was a consistent witness—not just every week, but every time she had an opportunity! My father as well would go out with his soul-winning partner every week. I can

say something that most sons cannot—I had the privilege of witnessing for Christ with my mother or my father by my side. What precious memories I have of going out with them to tell others about Christ! Today, many churches have only a small percentage of their congregation that consistently share the gospel with the lost. We need to get back to the basics in our Christian walk in this area of witnessing. Second Timothy 1:7 says, “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” Many Christians are timid and are afraid they will mess up in telling others about Christ. I can relate to that because I, too, was afraid. I messed up and got everything backwards, but I kept working at it until I could give a clear presentation of the gospel.

Being a witness doesn’t mean that everyone will respond to Christ. But it does mean that the Lord will use your testimony and the power of His Word to plant the seed of the gospel in the heart of that individual. Let me encourage you to present the gospel to someone this week. Take the Word of God and let another person see for himself what Christ has done for him to have eternal life. Remember, God wants us to be a witness for Him. We read in Acts 5:42, “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”

Evangelist Jerry Sivnksty may be contacted at PO Box 141, Starr, SC 29684 or via e-mail at evangjsivn@aol.com.



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