

FRONTLINE

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME

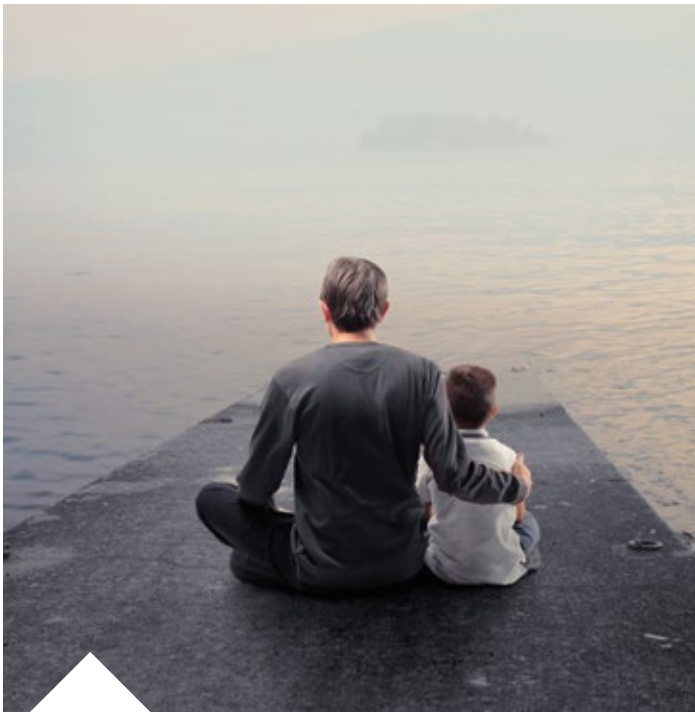
Growing Fathers



- ▶ 5 Things Kids Need to Hear Dad Say
- ▶ 31 Ways to Help Your Weary Wife
- ▶ Jesus' Guide to Praying for Your Children
- ▶ Sharing Your Faith with Your Grandchildren

FRONTLINE

Volume 35 • Number 4



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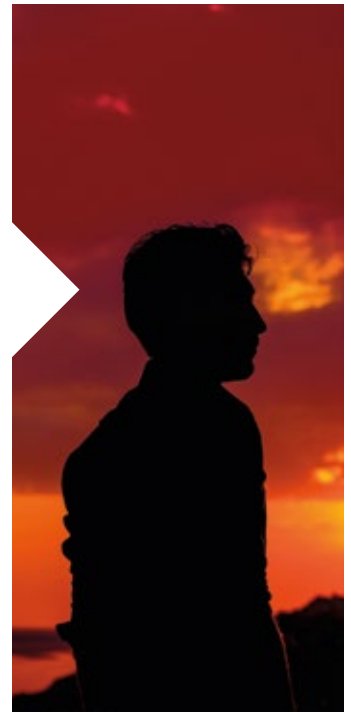
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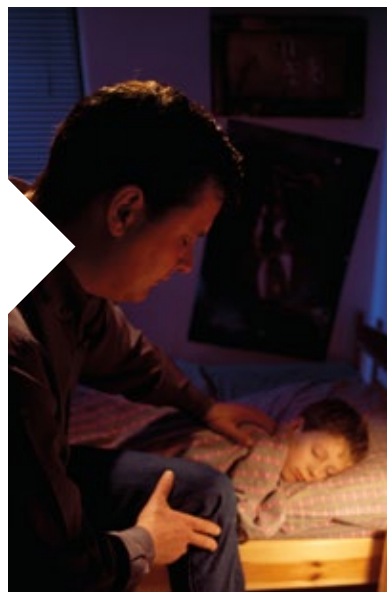
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Our sincere thanks to Kristopher Schaal for coordinating this issue of *FrontLine* magazine.

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It has often been noted that God is working in the world primarily through three institutions—the family, the church, and the government. These institutions are like concentric circles working outward from most personal to least personal. Any pastor knows that strong congregations are made up of healthy families, and God designed healthy families to be led by Christlike fathers.

With these truths in mind, a group of four pastor friends came together in 2020 to work on a project. We noticed that while mom blogs, secular dad podcasts, and more general parenting helps abound, Christian dads who want to develop their parenting skills face a lack of resources. Feeling the need to grow in this area ourselves, we started a blog to share the parenting lessons that God was teaching us. Our mission was simple: “Growing Fathers exists to help Christian dads become more like Jesus and apply the Bible to parenting for the strengthening of families and churches to the glory of God.” We wanted to provide an online resource for dads that was both expositional and practical. Our goal was not to replace the local church but to push dads back to their churches and strengthen churches by strengthening families.

Looking back five years later, we are thankful for what God has done. Each month, thousands of people interact with our articles. We have more than doubled our team, and we regularly feature guest authors, some of whom appear in this issue. In April, we launched *The Growing Fathers Podcast*, and we look forward to producing more resources in the future.

We are thankful for the opportunity to partner with the FBFI in producing this issue of *FrontLine*. Each article you read in this issue appeared first on our blog.

In the first article, Chris Pennington encourages dads to have biblical priorities as expressed through their words. Words are powerful! And simple, repeated phrases like “God loves you” and “Please forgive me” will ring in our children’s ears for a lifetime.

Next, Walt Brock (co-founder of Ironwood Christian Camp in Newberry Springs, California) addresses parenting priorities in each stage of child development. Walt suggests that there is a fundamental question to be answered in each stage and gives parents direction for tackling these questions.

Third, in one of our most practical and convicting articles, John Pate recommends “31 Ways to Help Your Weary Wife.” Many of our readers are young dads whose wives are in the throes of pregnancy, nursing, and parenting toddlers. We understand that one of the most important ways to be a godly father is to love your wife well (Eph. 5:25). And all of us dads need to grow in this area.

In the fourth article, John Dalrymple talks about how to pray for our children. John brings out six simple prayer principles for fathers from Luke 11, which includes the Lord’s Prayer.

Next, in a lighthearted yet important piece, Chris Lynch reminds us to have fun together as a family! He explains why fun time is valuable, but he also encourages us to keep it in its place and stay balanced.

Sixth, Caleb French warns of the dangers of being a “friendless father.” He tells the story of how he and I began meeting regularly for accountability, how we do it, and how it has changed our lives. This article provides a link to a resource on our website.

Finally, Paul Whitt, who pastors at Bethany Baptist Church in Brevard, North Carolina, gives warm-hearted, practical counsel on being a godly grandfather. I know that his words will uplift you.

Although the articles that appear in this issue were written for dads (or, in the case of Paul’s article, granddads), we trust that all our readers will be blessed by the rich, biblical content. May this issue of *FrontLine* help you to become more like Jesus.

Kristopher Schaal for the
Growing Fathers team

5 Things Kids Need to Hear Dad Say

Little ears are always listening. That reality has washed over me so many times, and yet I still forget it.

My most recent reminder came courtesy of a planned visit by my in-laws. I was driving while chatting on the phone and my four-year-old was happily playing with some toys in the backseat. I lowered my voice, “Yeah—so Megan’s folks are . . . you know . . . this week. Sorry, got kids in the car here.” Pretty subtle, no?

“Who’s coming!? Are we going somewhere? Vacation! Is it grandma? Dad . . . Dad! Is someone coming to our house?”

I tried!

Because our kids are always listening, dads need to speak intentionally. Your kids not only hear what you say, those words shape their little hearts. Here are five things your kids need to hear you say.



1. "GOD LOVES YOU!"

God is love and He showed His love definitively by sending Jesus Christ, the Son of God, for sinners who hated him.

"In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10).

Like all God's characteristics, love is not a standard God lives up to, but a word we use to describe the nature of God. He is the standard, the ruler, and the source of all his attributes. Simply put, God defines what love is, and every other expression of love is only a sampling of the source.

God loves your kids more than you do. Yes, it's true! Even when you're not loving, emphasize God's love. When you are loving, point your kids to the love of God, the ultimate loving Father. On beautiful days, remark upon God's kindness in sending the sun. On rainy days, point to His grace to all—even those who hate him. When you lie down, when you rise up, and when you walk by the way, point at God's love and exclaim, "Look how God loves you!"

2. "DEAR GOD . . ."

I live nearly 1800 miles from my dad, but I can tell you where to find him this morning. He has his patterns, and he's fairly predictable. I can tell you he's kneeling and praying, just like he was in 2010, 2000, and 1990.

Dads who pray teach their kids God is sovereign, powerful, loving, and involved. Make prayer a key quality of your home by modeling it. This week pray in front of your kids when you're . . .

- making a decision
- thankful for provision
- repentant and broken
- needy and dependent
- faced with an obstacle
- concerned and troubled
- overjoyed with God's character

3. "I'M SORRY. PLEASE FORGIVE ME."

Dads are sinners because dads are human. The Christian home, however, should be a place full of repentance, forgiveness, and grace. As dad, you have the privilege of modeling those characteristics from both sides.

Believe it or not, asking for forgiveness is one of your most powerful teaching tools as a dad. Have your kids ever heard you say . . .

- "What I said was sinful and angry and it hurt you and God. Will you please forgive me?"
- "I was being selfish and thinking only about what made me happy. That was wrong. Will you please forgive me?"

- "Your dad is a big sinner and that's why I need Jesus. I need Him to forgive me every day."

The more frequently you admit your failings, the more your kids will see the grace of Jesus, the power of forgiveness, the nature of godly grief, and the beauty of undeserved favor.

4. "YOUR MOM IS THE BEST!"

Proverbs 31:28 says of the virtuous woman, "Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her."

The stability of your home depends largely on your relationship with your wife. Your kids need to see your love on constant display. How can you praise your wife to your kids today?

I remember my dad constantly reinforcing how much he loved my mom. "Your mom is my best friend." "Isn't your mom beautiful!?" These are the building blocks of a happy home.

5. "WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO?"

In practice, adult friendships are often based on shared interests. It's easy to carry that thinking over to our kids.

It's tempting to think, "Out of the things I like, which would my kid like to do?" or "What can I get done this morning while the kids watch TV?" While it's

Continued on page 20



Growing Fathers

Helping Fathers Grow

Growing Fathers seeks to help dads become more like Jesus and apply the Bible to parenting for the strengthening of families and churches.

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6 Questions

Our Children Have that Demand Answers

One of the most important things my wife and I learned during our years of childrearing was that our children were going to ask questions, and we were responsible to God to answer those questions. Some study and wisdom are required to wisely answer our children's questions, but answer them we must. The alternative is that they will find wrong answers elsewhere.

Not all their questions will be verbalized, but they still must be answered! We found children will ask six foundational questions in the course of growing to maturity. They are, for the most part, sequential in nature. Regardless of age, these questions must be answered in order, for each one builds upon the answer to the previous question.

The answers to these six key questions will be the cement of their future lives' foundation. When children ask these questions, the answers they receive and accept will lead them to either a worldly philosophy of life or a biblical, God-honoring one.

1. WHO IS IN CONTROL?

This first question is best answered when the children are preschool age. When children disobey, they are really asking who is in control. They are saying, "I want to be in control here, and I'm testing you to see if you will let me have my own way."

Children must learn to obey their parents as their parents are in turn obeying God when they require their children to obey (Eph. 6:1-4). Children

will feel secure and loved when parents consistently and lovingly answer this question God's way. The right answer to this question is preparation for the children's yielding to the Lord's control of their lives. This makes their yielding to God in salvation more likely, and as they grow older, yielding to God's will.

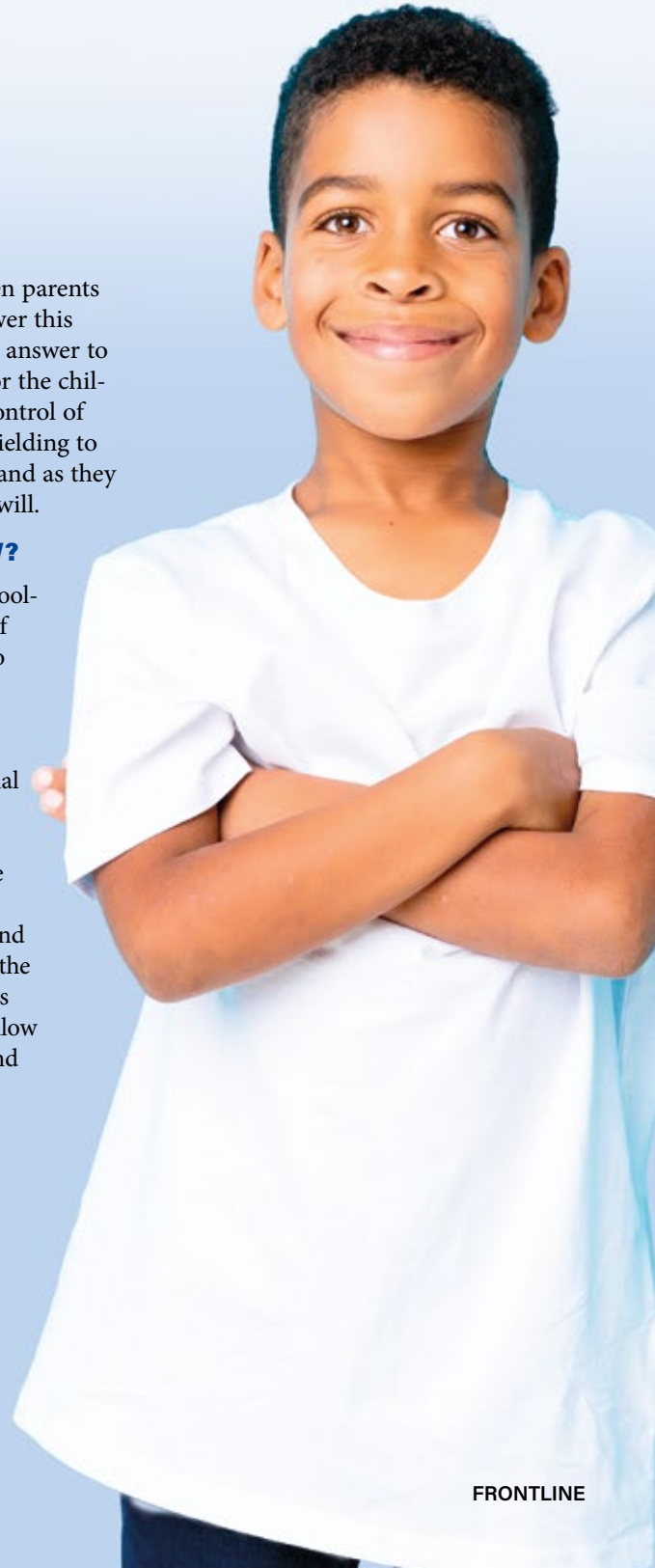
2. WHOM WILL I FOLLOW?

This next question is for school-age children up until the time of puberty. During this age of hero worship, parents are their main heroes. However, their world is slowly expanding, and they begin to see many more potential "heroes" to follow.

This is the time of teaching children about the heroes of the faith, the facts of Scripture, and the need to guard their hearts and minds from those who subvert the truth. The correct answer to this unspoken question is, "I will follow those who are following God and yielding to His control."

3. WHO AM I?

The third question is often asked by young people going through puberty as they are dealing with the physical, emotional, and mental changes in their bodies. The answer is not difficult: "You are who God made you to be, and He is not finished growing you



yet (Ps. 139). You are loved and precious to your parents and to God (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8).” Teach them to trust God as they grow into the person He wants them to be.

4. WHO IS RIGHT?

Teenagers often ask this question. When they were going through puberty, not only did their bodies change, but their thinking processes also changed. When they were younger, everything was just right or wrong, but now gray is between the two. They are suddenly thinking abstractly and asking all kinds of questions.

They will often doubt their salvation, ask how we know God exists, wonder how we know the Bible is right and true, and inquire about creation. In short, the foundations of their lives are being questioned. Parents must learn to be discerning, give good answers, and not be frustrated about having to teach the basics all over again. Parents must develop the biblical discernment necessary to answer their teenagers’ questions by correctly applying Scripture to everyday life situations.

5. WHO WILL I BE?

This question will not be answered by the parent, but by the young adults.

THEY WILL OFTEN DOUBT THEIR SALVATION, ASK HOW WE KNOW GOD EXISTS, WONDER HOW WE KNOW THE BIBLE IS RIGHT AND TRUE, AND INQUIRE ABOUT CREATION. IN SHORT, THE FOUNDATIONS OF THEIR LIVES ARE BEING QUESTIONED. PARENTS MUST LEARN TO BE DISCERNING, GIVE GOOD ANSWERS, AND NOT BE FRUSTRATED ABOUT HAVING TO TEACH THE BASICS ALL OVER AGAIN.

However, the parent has had eighteen years to prepare them for this inevitable question and life-directing answer, which is in reality a combination of all the previous answers.

6. WHO LOVES ME?

This last question is asked by children from the day they are born until the day they die. Parents must be continually answering, “Yes, son . . . Yes, daughter, I love you—unconditionally!”

Parents answer by word, by attitude, by action, by patience, and by obeying God in how they sacrifice to bring up their children in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). In the end, the real answer, of course, is “God Almighty, the Lord Jesus Christ, loves you!”

OUR PRAYER

Our prayer for our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren is that they will obey God, follow Jesus, know they are children of God, believe the Bible as their source of truth, be a discerner of both good and evil, be seeking God’s will, and “love Him, because He first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Walt Brock and his wife, Betty, have four children and twelve grandchildren. They co-founded Camp Ironwood in Newberry Springs, California, in 1973. For over fifty years, Walt’s vision of a camp ministry in the desert has led Ironwood to reach young people for Christ, strengthening families and serving local churches.



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31 Ways to Help Your Weary Wife

Between the newlywed and empty-nester phases of marriage are a few furious, breathtaking years. Raising children really is a delightful phase of life!

But when you're in the middle of that phase, it feels wearisome. You know you're a parent when your definition of a great evening is one in which you're in bed by 9:30 PM. Parents are perpetually tired people.

May I suggest, however, that your wife is possibly a little more tired than you? Whether she's a stay-at-home mom or not, she carries a massive load with 24/7 responsibilities. So, let's brainstorm together: How can you help your weary wife?

A COMMAND FOR HUSBANDS

In a letter written to weary Christians, the apostle Peter has a word for husbands: "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace

of life; that your prayers be not hindered." (1 Pet. 3:7).

The word translated "dwell with" is a practical word and literally means "house with." Peter's command concerns a husband's everyday life with his wife.

According to the verse these interactions should line up with a husband's "understanding" or "knowledge." Knowledge of what? The verse is probably referring to either the husband's knowledge of God or his knowledge of his wife—possibly both. In other words, your relationship with God and your relationship with your wife must impact your daily life, down to the most commonplace interactions. Peter calls you to seek to meet the daily needs of your wife.

When a husband does this, he honors and exalts his wife according to her Creator's design. Peter goes on to say that obedience to this command is actually going to impact the effectiveness of a husband's prayer life! Are you seeking to grow in your relationship with God? One huge

step in this process is learning to live with your wife "according to knowledge."

I'm not always sure how best to shoulder the load with my wife. So I enlisted the input of some family and friends and, with their help, compiled a list of thirty-one ideas below.

THIRTY-ONE IDEAS

Before you just plug and play someone else's ideas, make sure you know your wife. What delights her? What discourages her? What does she enjoy? If you have trouble feeling motivated to serve your wife, take some time to meditate on God's love and service toward you.

Also, don't be overwhelmed by the length of the list. It might help to take one or two ideas per week and implement those into your life. If those ideas truly help, consider making them a part of your regular routine.

Pray for her. This is a nonnegotiable. Take some time on a daily basis, maybe on your morning commute, to pray for your wife.

Keep praying for her throughout her day. (Consider setting an alarm for this.) Only God can give her the strength she needs.

Pray with her. Ask her what's on her plate and what burdens she is carrying, and pray through those things with her. Before you both drift off to sleep at the end of a long day, pray with her one more time. Even ten seconds of prayer every night is a good start.

Ask how you can help. What we may think is helpful sometimes isn't. Ask her what you can do to help shoulder her load.

Be aware. Before you pull out your guitar or turn on the football game, take a look around and make sure you're not missing something. If someone is screaming, chances are that you're needed.

Bring coffee to her first thing. That is, if she is a coffee drinker. Sometimes, the "night shift" is extra rough, and a good cup of coffee in her favorite mug can help jump start her day.

Consider taking the night shift. I know one dad who, because he worked away from home during the day, took on the task of getting up and feeding the bottle to the baby throughout the night.

Help her have the time she needs to spend with God. Your wife's relationship with God is the foundation for the rest of her life. Keep the kids occupied so she can have some uninterrupted time with God.

Give her an opportunity to sleep in once a week. Even a couple extra hours of sleep can pay big dividends toward your wife's daily routine.

Don't invite company without consulting her first.

Be careful with your own expectations. If your wife is a stay-at-home mom, don't forget that she has what is possibly the hardest job on the planet. (Don't think so? Watch the kids for a weekend while your wife is out of town, and you may reconsider.) Don't discourage your wife by placing unrealistic expectations on her on your way out the door.

Take the kids on a walk after dinner. Thirty minutes of quiet at the end of a long, noisy day is huge.

Give her space. Don't expect her to pivot from serving the kids all day to serving you the moment you arrive home.

Play with the kids. It will bless your weary wife immensely if you can send the kids squealing to their room and just play with them for an extended period of time. (Try to keep them from getting hurt, though. That has the opposite effect.)

Learn how to take certain "kid duties." If there are kid duties you don't typically do (such as giving the baby his bottle or prep-

ping the kids' school bags), ask if you can take some of those on.

Teach your kids to serve. Challenge your children to ask their mom "How can I help?" at least once in a given day. Then follow up with them to see how it went.

Help her around the house. Tackle a cleaning or home repair project. (Just make sure it's actually helpful. I have found that waxing my car doesn't have the same impact as unloading the dishwasher.)

Help her find ways she can still use her gifts outside the home. Some stay-at-home moms can start to feel trapped with their 24/7 obligations. They would love the opportunity to practice piano for church, make some headway on a project, or take another young mom out for coffee and Bible study. Help her make time for her hobbies, ministries, and goals.

Give her time away without the kids. Watch the kids so she can run errands, study at a coffee shop, or just walk around Target for a while. A free day means a lot, especially if your wife has her own business. Put her up in an Airbnb on a Friday night—she can leave after work Friday and return Saturday night.

Offer to pick up dinner on the way home. This is especially helpful if it's been a rough day due to the kids' behavior, sickness, or a tough work project. If she typically cooks

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dinner, consider having a weekly “Dad’s Meal” night. (Please try this only if you can actually cook.)

Be home when you say you’ll be home. Consider adding fifteen minutes to your ETA to ensure you keep your word to your wife.

Try to arrive home with the mindset to “jump right in.” Help her finish dinner prep, set the table, scoop up crying children. If you’re arriving home with a lot on your mind, keep your hand on the door handle for a few seconds, cast those cares on the Lord, and then head on in to serve. Make it a habit to turn off the radio for the last couple minutes of your commute home in order to pray for strength.

Be the first to handle discipline. If your wife is a stay-at-home mom, she may well have been dealing with crummy attitudes all day. When you arrive home, make sure you have the information you need to act wisely, and then take over.

Encourage other ladies in your church to take her out to dinner or coffee. Don’t forget to offer to pay.

Give her a shoulder massage while you watch a movie together.

Fill her car up with gas and take it through the car wash. Those tasks can be hard to do with a car full of kids or a screaming baby.

Plan a regularly scheduled date night. Hire a sitter and head to a restaurant (or pack a picnic supper). It doesn’t have to be expensive. When it comes to date nights, regularity is a key.

Try to get away with your wife for a weekend at least once a year. Or more. The point is, aim to get away.

Plan a regular “calendar party.” Every few weeks, after the kids are in bed, grab some snacks and work through your monthly calendar together. (This is peak adulthood.) Being on the same page about your schedule goes a long way toward helping to shoulder your wife’s load.

Be realistic about time. There may have been a time when you could get out the door with five minutes of advance notice. You have a family now. Plan well. Start early. Move slowly.

Listen to her. Men tend to be “fixers” and not great listeners. Don’t answer a matter before you hear it out completely (Prov. 18:13). As men, we often listen better when we’re not just staring at our conversation partner. Go on a walk with your wife. If you need to bring the kids, head to a local park and walk twenty to thirty feet away from the playground while the kids play. Make it your aim to listen well.

Affirm to her that what she does every day matters. No matter how mundane or repetitive, your wife’s daily work has eternal worth. You may be the only person who sees and knows the daily struggles she faces. Prioritize regular praise for your wife. When possible, praise her in front of your children.

“Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her.” (Prov. 31:28)

John Pate serves as a pastoral assistant at Beaumont Baptist Church in Beaumont, Alberta. John and his wife, Abbie, have four young children.



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Jesus' Guide to Praying

What is the most important gift you can give your child? A quality education? A healthy diet? A childhood full of fun memories? A large inheritance? A home filled with love? A box full of Legos? Each of these are wonderful gifts that can make a significant impact on a child, but one of the greatest gifts you can give your children is your prayers for them.

If God is our children's Creator (Ps. 139:13), and He is the only one who can save them (Acts 4:12) and effectively change them from the inside out (2 Cor. 3:18), what could be more important than faithfully bringing them to God in prayer? And yet, I'm sad to say that it has not always been a priority for me. Praying for my kids has sometimes been like my work-out routine—weak, sporadic, and aimless.

In Luke 11, Jesus gives guidance that can both strengthen and equip us as we pray for our kids. Here are six simple prayer principles to consider:

1. PLAN A TIME AND PLACE TO PRAY

And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray. (Luke 11:1)

Jesus' disciples came to Him after He finished praying "in a certain place." Repeatedly in Luke's gospel, Jesus makes a point of pulling away from the crowds to spend time with His Father in prayer. He prays before big decisions (6:12), all alone (9:18), and sometimes with others (9:28). Prioritize prayer for your children by scheduling a time slot in your schedule. In addition to personal morning prayer time, my wife and I take a few minutes every night to pray with our children in their bedrooms as we put them to sleep. We all plan for those things that are important to us, so plan a place and time to pray for your children.

"God, grant me the grace and wisdom to organize my daily schedule in such a way that prayer for my kids is demonstrated to be the priority that I know it is."

2. BRING YOUR CHILDREN TO THEIR FATHER

And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father . . . (Luke 11:2a)

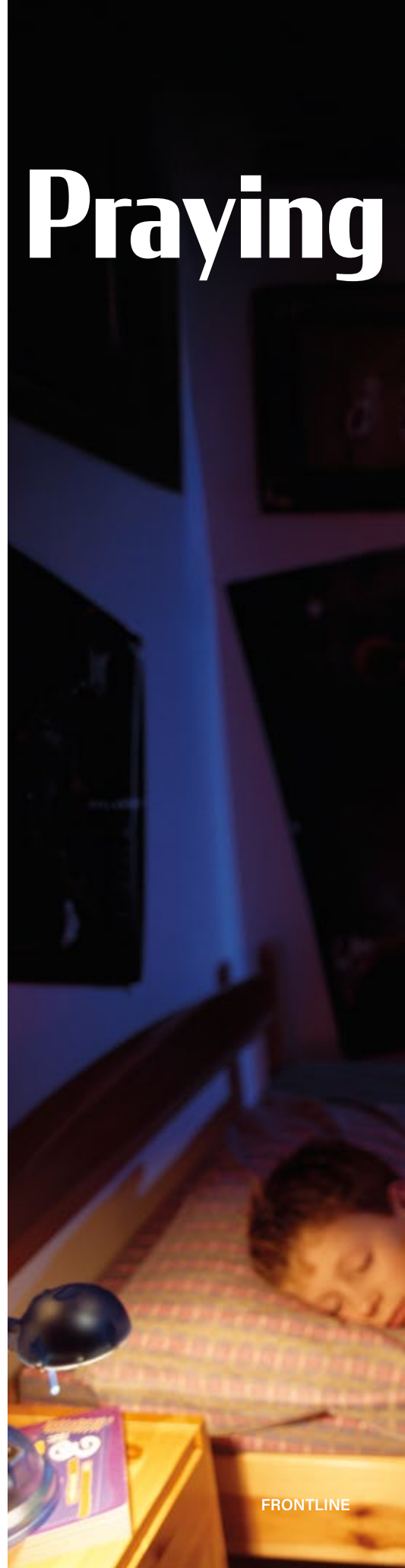
Jesus begins his model prayer by referring to God as His "Father." When we purposefully address God as our "Father" as we pray for our children, we are reminded that children are ultimately not ours, they are God's. If our children have been born again through repentance and faith in God's Son, Jesus Christ, they are children of God, and we are first and foremost their brothers and sisters in Christ. Begin your prayers by addressing God as Father and remembering that He loves your children more than you do.

"Father, I acknowledge the fact that the children who call me Daddy are not my own. As a steward of these precious gifts, I bring them to You to ask how You want me to parent them."

3. SUBMIT TO GOD'S SOVEREIGN PLAN

Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. (Luke 11:2b)

Jesus continues His prayer by calling for God's holy name to be revered and God's kingdom rule to be realized. As a dad, I'm often more concerned that my name is respected and my plans for the family are carried out. However, Jesus' prayer reminds me that our identity and mission as part of God's family is ultimately more primary than the reputation of the Dalrymple family. I have plans and hopes for my kids, but these must take a back seat to God's good and sovereign will. I must submit to God's plans because He is the King of my heart and our home.



for Your Children



“God, I submit to You as King and ask that You reign over my heart and home. Guide my planning for my children so that together we might serve Your kingdom purposes for Your glory.”

4. ASK FOR DAILY PROVISION AND PROTECTION

*Give us day by day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins; for we also
forgive every one that is indebted to us.
And lead us not into temptation.*
(Luke 11:3–4)

Jesus lists a few different examples of requests to make to our heavenly Father. It is very easy for me to default to praying for the urgent physical needs of my children—including their health and safety—but fail to prioritize their spiritual needs. They need not only provision of daily bread but also protection from sinful temptations. They need to grow healthy and strong, but also to grow in love, forgiving others who have wronged them. By God’s grace, we must care not only for what food goes into their bodies but also what attitudes come out of their hearts.

“God, I pray that You would cause my children to grow physically and spiritually every day, protected from the temptations of Satan, who desires to harm their souls and bodies.”

5. DON'T STOP PRAYING FOR YOUR CHILD

*And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall
be given you; seek, and ye shall find;
knock, and it shall be opened unto you.*
(Luke 11:9)

After Jesus’ model prayer, He gives a brief story about a dad who reluctantly helps out a friend who repeatedly knocks at his door and asks for help in the middle of the night. Jesus gives this illustration to teach about the power of persistence and determination in prayer. He concludes, “Ask [and keep on asking], and it shall be given you; seek [and keep on seeking], and ye shall find; knock [and keep on knocking], and it shall be opened unto you.” If you are a parent like me who wonders if your children will ever overcome certain sin struggles, don’t stop praying! There’s nothing impossible with God.

“God, please help me to faithfully labor in prayer for my children, knowing that You have invited me to persist in prayer and there is nothing too hard for You.”

6. PRAY WITH CONFIDENCE IN THE FATHER'S GOODNESS

*If ye then, being evil, know how to give
good gifts unto your children: how much
more shall your heavenly Father give the
Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*
(Luke 11:13)

Jesus concludes His teaching on prayer by using yet another fatherhood illustration. When our children ask us for good things (like a fish or an egg), we don’t respond with evil gifts (a serpent or a scorpion). How much more will our good Father in heaven give us (and our children) exactly what we need?

If God doesn’t give your children what you are praying for, you must trust that it is not truly good for them. In this gospel account, Jesus highlights our children’s greatest need and His greatest new covenant gift—the indwelling Holy Spirit.

“God, I trust that in Your perfect wisdom as a gracious Father You will always answer prayers by giving to my children only what is good for them. Above all, I pray that You would save them so they might have the Holy Spirit’s presence.”

I am thankful for godly parents and parents-in-law who have spent their lives walking with God and raising their children and grandchildren to do the same. But I strongly believe that it was their faithful prayers that have made the biggest difference as I’ve joyfully watched each of my siblings continue to love and serve the Lord with their lives.

Our parenting prayers demonstrate our dependence on God and our trust in Him as the One who gives His Holy Spirit and effects lasting change in our child. May God grant us the grace to be faithful parents who labor in prayer.

John Dalrymple serves as an associate pastor at Grace Bible Church in Murrieta, California. He and his wife, Suzanne, have one baby girl and five growing boys.



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Family Fun God's Way

Is your home fun? Does daily laughter characterize the relationships in your family? Is your home a place where enjoyment and recreation are a priority and are pursued together? Do you pursue regular out-of-routine recreation as a family unit? Conversely, could too much of an emphasis on fun be damaging? And are these questions even all that crucial for a father to consider?

The topic of whether a family has fun together seems relatively unimportant compared to many other topics we could consider. But we as husbands and fathers are called to lead in all areas of daily family life, and how your family prioritizes and pursues enjoyment and recreation matters! As we'll see, God's Word has valuable truths to communicate about this topic, so family fun provides us with a wonderful opportunity to lead *biblically*.

The Bible does give us some guidelines to consider about how important family fun nights, goofy traditions, and even silly moments at the dinner table are to the health of a family—even the *spiritual* health of a family. It also provides principles that can help us find appropriate moderation in our family fun. Our purpose in this article isn't to evaluate certain entertainment content or the merit of one activity or another but rather the value and priority of enjoyment, fun, and recreation as a family. Here are a few principles to consider.

ENJOYMENT AS RECREATION AND REST IS IMPORTANT

And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. (Mark 6:31)

Jesus Himself saw the need for rest for Himself and for those He was leading. The group Jesus led had many of the same purposes as a family (discipleship, growth, service, and training), and Jesus' role in their midst was one of spiritual leadership (not unlike our role as dads). It's good to prioritize refreshment!

Life is busy and full. A family with a schedule full of even the most spiritually healthy priorities faces burnout. Burnout can limit your family's effectiveness in service to God and can even produce impatience and frustration in the home.

Your family needs recreation in the purest sense of the word. "Re-create" your bodies and spirits through restful, refreshing times. And doing that together has the additional value of refreshing your *relationships* with one another!

ENJOYMENT IS GOOD

A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones. (Prov. 17:22)

Like a medicine, wholesome enjoyment heals, salves, and strengthens us. You may have heard another translation of this verse: “Laughter does good like a medicine.” It’s true! God has ordained personal benefits that come from enjoyment, both for individuals and families. Ecclesiastes 11:9 shares a similar truth specifically directed at young people—who likely exist in your family if you’re reading this article: “Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth.”

Inner joy and its external indicators are gifts from God. He desires enjoyment, and He intentionally gives it. (We’ll see this in another passage below.) As a father, I must initiate laughter and enjoyment in my home simply because it is *good* for my family.

Remember how God’s Word defines “good” for a family—unity, love, closeness, and mutual growth. Enjoyment can foster unity. It can be a part of the process of healing past lingering conflict. It can create opportunities for fellowship. It’s healthy!

ENJOYMENT OFFSETS THE TOIL OF LIFE IN GOD’S PLAN

Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun, than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry: for that shall abide with him of his labour the days of his life, which God giveth him under the sun.
(Ecc. 8:15)

The concept of joy here in this verse refers to the enjoyment of the good gifts God has given. Work is part of God’s plan for mankind, and the presence of sin has made that work toilsome. But God has not left us without things to enjoy; opportunities for recreation exist in the midst of toilsome life.

Teach your children to appreciate the enjoyable gifts of life, and model that enjoyment yourself through pursuing those gifts as you lead! A hike together escapes the routine but also reminds your children of the beauty God has made for our pleasure and His glory. Scheduling

meals out as a family (or a special meal at home!) reminds them of the God-intended enjoyment of eating and drinking. Enjoy God’s good gifts.

PURSUIING ENJOYMENT REQUIRES BALANCE

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven . . . a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.
(Ecc. 3:1, 4)

I recently heard a female friend (who is also a mom) retort that “the dad is always the fun parent,” and it wasn’t a compliment! Dads can tend to prioritize fun at the expense of other vital family priorities.

I like to have fun. But my lighthearted personality and nature tend to prioritize fun too much. I’ve been known to lead my children in goofiness at the dinner table to the point where standards of manners and decorum have been compromised!

Men, in addition to fun, family life includes important, lesson-packed times of sobriety and seriousness. My children are tempted to live from one fun activity to the next, loathing the God-ordained but less fun responsibilities in between. Dads, we must lead our families to pursue enjoyment and recreation in balance with all other family priorities.

CONCLUSION: REMEMBER THE ULTIMATE SOURCE OF ENJOYMENT

Take a moment to read Psalm 16:11, Psalm 126:2–3, and 1 Timothy 6:17. The principle that jumps off the page in all these passages is vitally important for us to remember. The source of gladness—for us individually or for our families—is not in the good gifts we are enjoying but rather in the Giver of those good gifts.

Teach and model for your family that a vibrant walk with God is the ultimate source of joy, refreshment, and fulfillment—not the next fun thing. As we prioritize Him, these other enjoyable gifts will serve as tools to honor Him. Truly, “the Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad” (Ps. 126:3).

Chris Lynch serves as an assistant pastor at Cornerstone Baptist Church in Greenville, South Carolina, with a particular emphasis on the youth and on churchwide edification. He and his wife, Laura, have two children—Patrick and Kinley.



The poster features the FBFI logo (a shield with an open book) and the text "CHAPLAIN ENDORSEMENT". Below this, it says "Recruiting Godly Chaplains to Serve" in large, bold letters. Underneath, it lists "US Military" (Active, Reserve, Guard) and "Local Community" (Police Department, Fire Department, Emergency Medical Services, Civil Air Patrol, Hospital). At the bottom, there are four circular logos representing different military branches: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, and Air Force. The contact information at the bottom is "For more information: info@fbfi.org • 864-268-0777 fbfi.org".

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The Fatally Friendless Father



Dads need friends. Not football buddies or golf partners or even “family friend” dads you chat with while your kids play in the yard—though all of those could be candidates. You see, we often use the word “friend” to describe our common-interest acquaintances when what we really need is “battle brothers” who know our worst and hope in Christ for our best. Christian fathers need the rare treasure of active, godly friendships. Hobbling along in your Christian life without them could be spiritually fatal.

But what’s the big deal? What could be so fatal about being a friendless father?

THAT KIND OF FRIENDSHIP

Before we go any further, let’s get a snapshot of the kind of purposeful friendship I am talking about. Recently, one of my friends and I simultaneously realized the danger of not being more transparent about our Christian lives, and we decided to do something about it.

For us, this meant upgrading our sporadic substantive interactions into a purposeful biweekly meet-up, when we ask each other a series of written-out questions that run the gamut of the current condition of our lives. (Scan the QR code to see the sheet we use to structure our conversation.)



We ask each other how many days we have missed having focused time with God, being specific about our prayer and Bible-reading habits. We share our current mental-emotional state as it relates to our energy for the coming week—what is encouraging us, what is discouraging us, and how we are feeling. We ask each other questions about our family relationships. How often and in what ways are we showing love to our wives? How much time have we been spending with our children for relationship-building and discipleship?

Then, of course, we engage in mutual confession of sin (James 5:16). Here’s where we ask the hard questions about harbored bitterness, anger, pride, and any expressions of sexual lust. We talk about our daily work, our recent discipleship encounters, and any evangelistic engagement we have had. We finish by sharing how we can pray for one another in the coming weeks.

Now, not everyone needs a handout to have a godly friendship, but I believe we all need to be asked these questions regularly.

That's why my friend and I started this habit. This is the kind of friendship I'm talking about—the kind we need as Christian dads.

What happens if we don't have these kinds of friends?

THE FATALITIES OF FRIENDLESS FATHERS

1. Friendless fathers easily excuse negligence in spiritual disciplines. We are naturally easy on ourselves, and our flesh brings with it a dose of self-deception. But when we share out loud with a brother that we skipped our time with God for that reason, we step back into the “light” of transparency (1 John 1:6).

Who of your friends knows where you're reading, how your prayer life is developing, and what you've been meditating on lately? Who of your friends knows if you're spending any private time with God?

2. Friendless fathers never “answer” for how they are leading their families.

You've noticed that what I am calling “friendship” is what we often speak of as “accountability.” But who is holding us accountable for how we are leading our families? By virtue of our leadership role in the home, God has not called our wives and children to hold us accountable for that leadership (though I should say the respectful words of a godly wife can be a blessed source of accountability).

So I ask you, who of your friends knows how you are treating your wife? Who of your friends knows how you are raising your children in the Lord?

3. Friendless fathers get stuck in mental-emotional funks. Sometimes we get “stuck in our head” as my (other) friend David often says. We need a brother to hear us spill the mess and then offer a “truth in love” perspective that can pull us back to the faith (fulness) and peace of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

I experienced this benefit recently in one biweekly chat with my friend. After what can only be described as “calm venting,” my friend held the mirror up to me. “Caleb, it seems like you are constantly falling back into this rut of frustration about _____. Here's what I think are your practical options. But one thing you must do is put a ‘Do not enter’ sign over those unbiblical patterns of thinking that lead to

your annoyances.” That was such a means of God's grace to me. But if I had not had a regular appointment, I'm not sure I would have gotten that kind of straightforward input from my friend. I'd probably still be in my faithless funk.

Who of your friends knows what regularly discourages you? Who of your friends knows enough of your mental-emotional state to know when and how you need to be pointed back to Christ?

4. Friendless fathers give sin room to grow in secrecy. Many Christian men could go for months without confessing a sin to another brother. This fact is more frightening when you consider how quickly sin habits can spiral out of control—how long we can “walk in darkness” before another believer knows it. Without habitually transparent friendships, a Christian dad allows certain sins the opportunity to grow in the shadows.

In 1 John 1, God makes an astounding connection between our transparent fellowship with one another and our confession of sin to Him. This means that without “walking-in-the-light” fellowship with other believers, we will be much more likely to “say we have no sin” and much less likely to “confess our sins” to God. The point? Not walking in open fellowship with other believers leads to greater sin, self-deception, and broken fellowship with God.

If you think you have Christian friendships, my question for you is this: who of your friends knows the struggles and sins you couldn't share in a public setting? Who of your friends knows the nature and frequency of your battle with lust? Who of your friends knows the sins you most easily slip back into?

WHAT ABOUT MY WIFE?

You may have thought of another question in this discussion: “What about my wife? Isn't she my friend?” Yes, she should be. Yes, she will know you best. And yes, you should be willing for her to hold the mirror up to you, respectfully, in a way that helps you better understand your strengths, weaknesses, patterns, and opportunities for growth.

Yet in the body of Christ, it is God's design that we have a multiplicity of relationships through which we

experience the transforming grace of God as we speak the truth to one another in love (Eph. 4:15). And while friendships with men in the faith are no substitute for the many-splendored intimacy and exclusivity of Christian marriage, neither has God wrapped up all of His relational graces in that single institution.

FRIENDSHIPS IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

This is why He established the church. And within that wonderful body are opportunities for multiple rich friendships, conduits of God's grace, channels through which we receive the “reproof, correction, and instruction” (2 Tim. 3:16) of His word of truth (Eph. 1:13; 2 Tim. 2:15; James 1:18) into the choices, patterns, and thoughts of your Christian life. Through these friendships we obey the many “one another” passages of the New Testament and honor this wisdom: “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend” (Prov. 27:17). We see a beautiful example of God-centered friendship between men in David and Jonathan, and in Paul's partnerships with men like Barnabas, Silas, and many others he names in his epistles.

ARE YOU A FRIENDLESS FATHER?

Are you a fatally friendless father? If you're like me, it's not that you don't have Christian friends. I'm probably not encouraging you to make friends you don't already have; I'm encouraging you to bring those friendships into deeper waters. So don't be a friendless father! Invite one or more of your brothers into a newly deliberate relationship of mutual transparency. You will be a better father, a better husband, a better disciple, and a better Christian because of it.

Caleb French serves as director of worship and leads the young adults ministry at Northwest Valley Baptist Church in the Phoenix metro area. He also heads the music department at Arrowhead Christian Academy, where he directs its graded choirs. He sings professionally as a baritone. He and his wife, Heidi, have two young daughters, Charlotte and Anna.



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News From All Over



Dave Huffstutler accepted the invitation to become the next senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Troy, Michigan. Dave served there from 2006 to 2013, so it is like coming back home for him.

He writes, "One of God's greatest gifts to me was to be the lead pastor of the First Baptist Church in Rockford, Illinois, for these past twelve years. This summer, my family and I will say goodbye to these dear friends to return to where I served as an assistant from 2006 to 2013, the First Baptist Church in Troy, Michigan, currently pastored by Dr. Michael Harding. Starting July 1, I have the privilege of serving as the church's new senior pastor while serving alongside Pastor Harding, who will become the pastor emeritus. To God be all the glory!"

The Bob Jones University Board of Trustees has elected **Dr. Bruce McAllister** the seventh president and CEO of the University, effective June 1, 2025. Dr. McAllister served forty-four years in various roles at the University including Vice President for Ministry, faculty member, Director of Ministerial and Outreach Ministries (where he was responsible for the ministerial class and its core courses), Director of Ministry Relations, and Director



of Pastor Relations. He also served four years as Director of Ministry Relations at GFA Missions. "I am humbled and grateful to lead the University I have loved since my first day as a student," said McAllister. "My initial priorities are putting together a strong executive team that will lead the University forward, further strengthening the total student experience, and improving our organizational and operational structure. I am excited to work with our incredible faculty, staff, and students as we move toward our 100th year."



Pastor Will Senn and his wife Allissa recently moved to Faith Baptist Bible College in Ankeny, Iowa, where Dr. Senn will lead the pastoral studies program. They have served at Tri-City Baptist Church in Westminster, Colorado, for twenty-three years

and at University Baptist Church in Clemson, South Carolina, for eighteen years. Though they will be missed by their Colorado church family, they're excited to mentor future church leaders at Faith. College ministry has been a focus of Dr. Senn's ministry from his conversion during his junior year at a secular college, to the establishment of Cross Impact Ministries to equip local churches to reach the secular campus, and now to his role at Faith.

Please send your news or updates to info@fbfi.org to be considered for publication.

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Five Things Kids Need to Hear Dad Say

Continued from page 5

not healthy for a home to revolve around the whims of a two-year-old, I fear too frequently they revolve around the selfishness of a thirty-two-year-old.

I've made an intentional practice of asking, "What do you want to do?" The result? You may find me braiding hair (don't ask how it turns out!), playing soccer, painting toes, reading books, playing with action figures, and much more. While it may be easier just to turn on the TV or buy my daughter a new toy, nearly

nothing communicates my love like kneeling on the ground and playing her way.

God Himself models this condescension when He counts the hairs on our head (Luke 12:7), gives the bread we eat (2 Cor. 9:10), governs our local weather (Matt. 5:45), and marks every time we sit or stand (Ps. 139). These intimacies fill God's tender, fatherly care and empower our imitation of the Father of fathers (Eph. 3:14-15).

BONUS: "I LOVE YOU!"

This should go without saying, but sadly, it often does. You may be tempted to simply show your kids love. "Of course I love my kids! Do they really need to hear it?" While actions of love are important and

necessary, words add a specificity to those actions. Think of it like a song. Without words, music can communicate only generally. So are your actions without words. The best you can hope for is that your kids get a general sense that you love them. There's almost nothing more securing for a kid, however, than to sense their dad loves them and then to hear those accompanying words, "I love you!"

Chris Pennington serves as a part-time associate pastor at Fellowship Bible Church in Liberty, Utah. He and his wife, Megan, have three young children.



SOUND WORDS

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

FIRST PARTAKER

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

Two Sermons by Andrew Fuller

Andrew Fuller, the first general secretary of the Baptist Missionary Society, founded in 1792, was also a faithful pastor. For thirty-three years he led a congregation in Kettering, England, that grew and prospered under his preaching and skillful shepherding. Accordingly, he was called upon frequently to preach ordination sermons¹ and to speak at fellowships of pastors.

On these occasions he distilled his understanding of the nature of ministerial work into pithy, memorable fundamentals. *You are aware that there are two main objects to be attained in the work of the Christian ministry—enlightening the minds and affecting the hearts of the people*, he reminded a young minister. *Cut off the reproach of “dry” doctrine, by preaching it feelingly*, he advised another. And preaching to another minister from 1 Timothy 4:15 (“Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them,”) he observed, *It is a shocking thing to be engaged in a work which is against the heart. It is not what we think “officially,” but “spontaneously” that proves what we are: not what we do at certain appointed seasons; but the bent of our minds in common, in our leisure hours, when we sit in the house or walk by the way.*

A sermon of his which gets at the very root of effectual preaching was delivered at an academy for ministerial students overseen by John Ryland. Fuller’s sermon was from 2 Corinthians 4:13: “We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore I have spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak.”

Fuller explained, *The words immediately preceding these are a quotation from the 116th Psalm. David, under his troubles, believed in God, and therefore spoke. And the*

apostles, under persecutions and reproaches, believed in the gospel, and therefore spoke. They spoke boldly in the name of Jesus, whatever might be the consequence.

He then proposed two points we should find to be strengthening to our own faith in whatever we preach: *the subject-matter of the Christian ministry, and the necessity of believing it.* The following is adapted from Fuller’s development of those points.²



Faith in the Gospel, A Necessary Prerequisite to Preaching It

A sermon to preachers in training

I. THE SUBJECT-MATTER OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY: IT IS THAT WHICH WE HAVE BELIEVED.

It is of the first importance to a messenger to know his errand. Without this, whatever be our talents, natural or acquired, we are unqualified for the Christian ministry. Without this, the most fascinating eloquence is in danger of becoming an engine of mischief.

The subject-matter of the apostle’s preaching is variously described: it is called “the faith,” “the truth,” “the truth as it is in Jesus,” “Christ crucified,” “the gospel,” and “the word of reconciliation.” In these descriptions, we see our work. Several important particulars follow.

1. That we must not deal in curious speculations which have no foundation in the Scriptures. Some have been turned aside by such an indulgence to false hypotheses, and have made shipwreck of

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faith and a good conscience. A large proportion of the objections to Divine truth are of this kind: "How can a man be born when he is old?" "How are the dead raised, and with what body?" "How can one be three, and three one?" "How could Christ be both God and man?" "How can the certain efficaciousness of grace consist with free agency and the accountableness of man?"

Paul would not answer such questions as these by opposing conjecture to conjecture, but in the spirit of the text—"We believe, and therefore speak."

2. That we must not deal in private impulses or impressions which have no foundation in the Scriptures. One [person] finds a doctrine on his own experience. But experience ought to be judged by the Bible, not the Bible by experience.

3. That the person and work of Christ must be the leading theme of our ministry. In this, if we be Christians, we have believed; and this we must preach to others. Every sermon, more or less, should have some relation to Christ, and bear on his person or work. This is the life of all *doctrine*, and it will be our own fault if it is dry.

Do not consider it as one subject among others, but as that which involves all others, and gives them an interest they could not otherwise possess. Preach not only the truth, but all truth, "as it is in Jesus." However ingenious our sermons may be, unless they bear on Christ, and lead the mind to Christ, we do not preach the faith of the gospel.

As all doctrinal religion meets here, so does all *practical*. The Scriptures draw everything from the dying love of Christ. "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood!"—"Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."—"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."—"Let this mind be in you which was in our Lord Jesus Christ."—"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."—"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church."

II. THE NECESSITY OF BELIEVING THE GOSPEL BEFORE WE PREACH IT: "WE BELIEVE, AND THEREFORE SPEAK."

1. This is the only motive that will render preaching a delight. How can we discourse on subjects which we do not believe? If we have not tasted

the grace of God, we shall feel no pleasure in proclaiming it to others. Is it any wonder that faithless preachers call preaching "doing duty"? or that they preach other men's sermons? and that in delivering them they are uninterested by them? But if we speak because we believe, our preaching will be the utterance of a full heart, and our work its own reward. We must taste of truth as Christians before we preach it. Studying it merely as ministers will never do. Believing belongs to us as Christians.

2. It affords ground to hope for usefulness to others. What effect will the sermons of those ministers have, who, by their frothy conversation, loose deportment, or avaricious spirit, are always counteracting them? The hearers will say, and say truly, "He does not believe his own doctrine." "He may talk of truth, or of holiness and practical religion; but all is vain." If, on the other hand, we feel and practice what we preach, this will at least recommend it to the conscience. And often it does more.

The one resembles a man persuading you to embark on board his vessel, assuring you it is safe, while he himself stands on the shore. The other has embarked himself and all he has. Like Moses to Hobab, he invites you to accompany him.

3. It will render the work of the ministry compatible with common honesty. The world has long accused ministers of being hypocrites. This is malicious. But while men engage in this work from indolence, avarice, pride, or any other worldly motive, rather than from the principle expressed in the text, they furnish a pretext for such reproaches. If we believe not when we speak, we only deceive, and the sooner we throw off the deception the better.

4. No other motive will bear the test. What an account will faithless ministers have to give when asked, "What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?" One may have to answer, *The vanity of my parents* led them to educate me for the ministry, and when I grew up I was fit for nothing else. Another may have to answer, *My own vanity* influenced me: having a taste for learning, and public speaking, and esteeming it a reputable and genteel mode of life, I took to it. Another may have to say, It was my own *conceit and arrogance*. Oh how different are these from the apostles!—"We have believed, and therefore speak."

You are likely, another day, to occupy stations of much greater importance than if each were a minister of state. Our churches look to you. Many aged ministers are gone. Those that remain will soon follow. God has begun a great work in our day. May

you take it up and carry it on. It is but the other day since we were youths, looking up to those who are now no more. Now the load lies on us. Soon it must lie on you. Should you prove yourselves unworthy, God will find others. Deliverance will arise from some other quarter. O men of God, "Flee youthful lusts, and follow after righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart!"

I ought not to conclude without recommending that Savior whom we have believed. We have found rest for our souls. We have worn his yoke, some of us for forty years, and it has never galled us. Take his yoke, and learn of him, and you shall find rest for your souls. His yoke is easy, and his burden is light.



Ministers Should Be Concerned Not to Be Despised

An ordination (?) sermon

There is no date and no occasion given for this sermon, but its content suggests that it was one of Fuller's ordination sermons. It is based upon Paul's admonition to Titus, "Let no man despise thee" (2:15). Fuller's development consists of three points: the minister *in the pulpit*, his behavior *in the church* (among his fellow Christians), and his general conduct *in the world*. The sermon is filled with unusually practical counsel, stemming, no doubt, from Fuller's own seasoned experience in the ministry, as well as his close observations of fellow ministers.³

My brother, I feel a pleasure in the work of this day, partly from the love that I bear to you, and partly from the love that I feel towards the church. I trust you will receive a word of advice on this solemn occasion with candor and attention.

You will observe that the passage is not an address to the people, not to despise their minister. It is [instead] to the minister, not to be despised by the people. If you ask how you are to prevent this, I answer, that contempt is not a voluntary feeling. It is not in the power of men to despise *some* persons. They may dislike them; they may affect to ridicule them; but they cannot in their hearts despise them. If a minister conducts himself in character, no man will be able to despise him. This, then, is the sentiment which I wish to impress upon you.

Your work as a pastor may be distinguished into three departments—the pulpit, the church, and the world. In each of these, I hope you will so conduct yourself that no man shall be able to despise you. Let me offer to your consideration a few particulars under each.

I. WHAT CONCERNS YOU IN THE PULPIT, OR IN THE WORK OF PREACHING THE GOSPEL.

1. Avoid all affectation in your manner. Do not affect the man of *learning* by useless criticisms. Many do this, only to display their knowledge. Nor yet the *orator*, by high-sounding words, or airs, or gestures. Useful learning and an impressive delivery should by no means be slighted. But they must not be affected, or men will be sure to despise you.

2. Avoid self-seeking in your ends. Preach not yourself, but Christ Jesus. Seek not the approbation of men for yourself, but for your doctrine. Study to commend the gospel to the consciences of your hearers, rather than your own orthodoxy, or ingenuity, or zeal, to their admiration. If, instead of endeavoring to secure their reception of the gospel message, you are concerned to recommend yourself to their applause, you will be sure to be despised.

3. Avoid vulgarity and low wit. Though the pulpit is not the place for affected pomposity, neither is it the place for mean and low language. Few men are more contemptible than those who study to introduce vulgar nonsense and silly anecdotes in order to make people laugh. Sound speech, sound sense, and the greatest seriousness adorn the pulpit. Without these, you will be despised.

4. Do not advance sentiments without being able to support them by Scripture evidence. Many content themselves with assertions without proof, and make vehemence supply the place of evidence. But this will cause you to be despised by men of understanding.

5. Beware that you do not preach an unfelt gospel. If you do, it will be seen, and you will be despised. It will be seen that, though you affect to be in earnest, you do not feel; and that you scarcely believe your own doctrine. We may get into a habit of talking for the truth, and pleading for holiness, and yet be dead ourselves. If so, we shall be sure to be despised.

6. Let not the fear of man deter you from declaring the whole counsel of God. Insist on every Divine truth and duty. Where interest or friendship stand in the way, it may be trying. But if you yield, the very parties to whom you yield will despise you. Speak but the truth in love, and speak the whole truth, and you will commend yourself to every man's conscience, when you can do no more.

7. Never degrade the pulpit by indulging in personalities. "Rebuke with all authority," but let your

personal rebukes be private. To introduce them in the pulpit is unmanly and would render you despicable.

[Now] let us apply the language [of the text],

II. TO YOUR BEHAVIOR IN THE CHURCH, AND AMONG YOUR FELLOW CHRISTIANS.

1. Do not lord it over God's heritage. You will have to preside in the church and direct its measures. But never assume the lordly priest. Expect your judgment, in some cases, to be overruled. Learn to yield with cheerfulness when the measures you wish to introduce appear to be opposed to the opinion and desires of the majority of your brethren. It is not with a minister of the gospel as with a minister of state—that he must have a majority, or he cannot stand his ground. If we “look on the things of others,” we may, in non-essentials, after speaking our minds, yield and be happy. But if we are determined to carry every point which appears to us desirable, in spite of the opinion of our brethren, though we may not always succeed, we shall invariably be despised for the attempt.

2. Yet have a judgment of your own. This will become you on every subject, and where it is of importance you ought to be firm and resolute. A minister must not be borne down by the capriciousness of a few. He who is easily turned aside from a good object, and will bear insult without a proper manifestation of his displeasure, will be despised as much as a lordly high priest. If a minister be not firm, discipline will, in many cases, be neglected. People have their friends, and relatives, and favorites. Very few, though the operation be bloodless, have sufficient regard for rectitude to act upon the principle of the sons of Levi (see Exod. 32:17–29). But you must, or you will be despised.

3. Do not affect the gentleman in your visits. Do not assume airs of consequence, and take liberties in families, as if, because you are a minister, you are therefore superior as a man. I do not say, do not be a gentleman; but do not *affect* the great man.

Real gentility and urbanity and politeness are no mean or despicable attainments. There was much Christian politeness in the apostle Paul. But the affectation of the fine gentleman is great folly. No men are more despised than those who strut about with lordly dignity and give themselves consequential airs. You had much better feel yourself a Christian, and consider that you are associating with your fellow Christians, or with those who expect you to exhibit a pattern for their imitation.

4. Yet preserve a dignity of manner and demeanor. There is no occasion for you, in order to avoid the affectation of gentility, to sink into low buffoonery, vulgarity, or drollery. My brother, the fear of God and a deep sense of religion will effectually

preserve you from these extremes and render you respectable, instead of contemptible.

5. Beware of being a loiterer. Do not acquire a habit of wandering about and doing nothing. Visit, and visit “from house to house.” But look well to your visits: “*preach* from house to house.” There is work enough in a congregation for a minister to do; but nothing renders him more contemptible and despised than a habit of religious gossiping.

[Finally], let us apply the text,

III. TO YOUR GENERAL DEPARTMENT IN THE WORLD.

1. Let your conduct correspond with your preaching. Men will watch you. You may put off [being] the preacher in mixed company [editor's note: He means, “among lost people”]. But you must never put off [being] the man of God, the Christian. Whatever you may be in the pulpit, if in the world you are frothy, vain, contentious, captious, unfeeling, unjust, or make engagements you cannot fulfill, you will be despised. On the contrary, consistency of character will wear, and live down opposition.

2. Never be ashamed of religion in any company. There is no need to introduce it on all occasions and in all companies. This would render you despised one way. But be not the subject of cowardly timidity. That would render you equally, if not more, despicable. There is nothing in true religion but that it admits of a rational defense. But if you are ashamed of the cause you have espoused, its opponents will heartily despise you.

Andrew Fuller set the bar for ministers only as high as does the Scripture. Yet he knew that he himself often fell far short. After one of his ordination sermons he wrote to a friend, *I have lately preached an ordination sermon or two, in which I have endeavoured to come as home to the heart and conscience of my brethren as I know how. But, oh, what shame covers my face when I turn my attention inward! I am the man who am too, too guilty of many of those things which I have cautioned them to avoid.*⁴ Blessed be the memory of such a humble preacher to his brethren.

¹ Nineteen of these are included in Michael A. G. Haykin and Brian Croft, *Being a Pastor: A Conversation with Andrew Fuller*.

² The entire sermon is in *The Complete Works of the Rev. Andrew Fuller*, vol. 1, 515–18.

³ The sermon is here in its entirety, though slightly edited. It is in *The Complete Works*, vol. 1, 489–91.

⁴ Quoted in Haykin and Croft, 86.

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More Books for a Deserted Island

It isn't likely that I'd get the opportunity to choose which books I'd have on a desert island. The long stay on the island would probably be precipitated by a tragedy at sea that I couldn't have planned for. My pessimistic side can't help but picture me waking up on the beach with only the clothes on my back and someone's romance novel by my head for company. Terrible! But if I did have the opportunity to choose books, here is what I'd select.

Before we get to the list, here are a couple of thoughts on criteria. First, for the sake of this article, let's assume that I already know how to live in the wild and don't need books on survival. This is clearly untrue, but if I assume it, I can focus on books for my needy soul, not my body. Second, I'll need books that repay lots of study, since I'll have so much time on my hands. Many books that I love warrant several reads, but not more than that. J. C. Ryle's *Holiness* is in this camp. I've read it several times, and I hope to read it again. But it doesn't quite meet the criterion of warranting continual absorption and study. So, with this in mind, let me introduce the five books I would choose in addition to my English Bible, a copy of *Pilgrim's Progress*, and a hymnal.

First, *The Fountain of Life* by John Flavel. This is my favorite Puritan book. I've read it three times, and I hope to read it many more times. It's a series of forty-two of the best sermons ever preached on the best of topics, Jesus Christ. It works chronologically through the “states” of Christ, starting with His preincarnate existence and His agreement with the Father about redeeming sinners, and then it proceeds to His incarnation, role as mediator, sufferings, death, burial, resurrection, ascension, intercession at God's right hand, and second coming. It's biblical, theological, heavily worshipful and applicational, and it is consistently good from the first of its roughly 500 pages all the way to its last.

Second, Calvin's *Institutes*. I've read this through once and dipped into it many times. It warrants as much study as you can give it. No matter how many times I read from this book, it always repays the effort. It simply must be on the island with me. I probably would opt for the one-volume Banner of Truth edition, which is a fresh English translation of Calvin's 1541 French edition. It is 882 pages and is supposed to be Calvin at his most pastoral.

Third, *Commentary on Psalms* by David Dickson. In the early 1600s, several Scottish Puritans wrote commentaries on books of the Bible. The best are David Dickson on Psalms, George

Hutcheson on John, and James Fergusson on Paul's shorter epistles. Banner of Truth reprinted all three of them. These commentaries rarely refer to Greek and Hebrew or argue extensively for their points. But it's very common for them to have eight to twelve paragraphs of theology and application on each verse of the book being discussed. If I had to choose one, I'd probably go with Dickson on Psalms. It is so rich! You could read a page every day for an hour, finding many scriptural marvels over which to pray and worship and resolve and repent, and it would take you years to finish the book (it is roughly 1000 pages). And when you finished, you could start all over again, as though it were brand new.

Fourth, *A Discourse of the Two Covenants* by William Strong, who was a member of the Westminster Assembly. Strong's tome is one of the most profound books written by English Puritans, but it has been out of print since 1678. (I have a facsimile edition.) I am currently working with Reformation Heritage Books to put this book into a modern edition. I've spent a lot of time reading it—many years in fact. It may be one of the truly great works of English theology. I've never read anything else that is as demanding and rich and absorbing and rewarding as this book. It has about half a million words, so if a modern edition ever comes out it will probably be a book of around 1000 pages. (If you think of it, please pray for me as I labor on putting this into print. Maybe going to a desert island would be the best way to finish the job!)

Fifth, and finally, a Greek and Hebrew Bible. I momentarily had trouble deciding whether I wanted a volume of modern theology or a Greek and Hebrew Bible. Then I realized that I would rather have the Bible in its original languages. That way, I can really check up on Flavel, Calvin, Dickson, and Strong as they teach me truth from Scripture. So, I saved the best for last.

With these books on a desert island, I would never be without the best book of all, and I would never be without the best sermons, the best of Bible commentary, and the best of Christian theology. Yes, I know, I'd be stuck without *Lord of the Rings*, or *Calvin and Hobbes*, which would be regrettable. Maybe I can toss my socks out of my luggage to make room for them.

Thomas Parr pastored in the Pacific Northwest for fifteen years and is a lead writer for BJU Press.

John 20:17—A Secret Ascension?

At the garden tomb, Jesus commanded Mary to stop touching him.¹ What was His reason? He had not ascended to His Father (John 20:17). This sequence has perplexed Bible readers and scholars alike.² Heightening the tension, only eight days later Jesus would invite Thomas to touch His hands and His side (John 20:27).³ This has led to a theory that Jesus must have ascended up to the Father between these two events. This theory postulates an ascension of Christ not recorded in the Bible nor witnessed by men as His public ascension was (Acts 1:9). Since the Scripture reveals only selected movements of Jesus in His glorified state, this hypothesis is possible, but it raises many questions. What would be the purpose of this secret ascension to the Father? Why did He not ascend to the Father immediately upon leaving the tomb before He appeared to Mary? Why would touching Him affect the purpose of this ascension? If touch affected the purpose, was it not already affected by Mary’s initial touch? Why would this ascension have no biblical documentation or theological explanation, as His public ascension does (Acts 2:33)? Yet because the Bible remains silent on this important event, any answers to these questions can only be speculation. When a biblical interpretation adds more uncertainty than it resolves, it often indicates that a solution should be sought elsewhere. This perplexing text may have a simpler explanation.

The verb *haptomai* that Jesus uses to direct Mary may point toward that explanation. This verb can indicate an intensity of touch such as to “hold on to” (NIV) or to “cling to” (NKJV, ESV, NASB). Mary was overcome with emotion at the disappearance of Jesus’ body, so she begged “the gardener” to disclose the location to which he had removed it. Yet when Jesus called her by name, she recognized the voice of her Shepherd (John 10:3–4). Mary turned toward the speaker and found much more than she had sought for: Jesus alive in His resurrected body. Bible readers can imagine her emotional swing from extreme sadness to impossible joy, and they can sympathize with Mary’s desire to embrace Jesus and never let Him go. Jesus asked her to stop clinging to Him for the simple reason that He wanted her to deliver an important message to the other disciples (“Touch me not . . . but go”).⁴

To understand why Jesus referenced His ascension to the Father at this moment, one must recognize the importance of the ascension in the Gospel of John. Jesus descended from heaven (John 6:33, 38, 50, 58) to give His life for the world (6:51) by

being lifted up on the cross (3:13–14; 12:32–33). Through His humiliating death, Jesus paradoxically would be lifted up (i.e., exalted) to His previous glory (17:5) at His ascension (6:62). The ascension marked the physical departure of Jesus from His people (7:33; 13:33; 17:11), but it also initiated the return of His presence through the power of the Spirit (7:38; 16:7; 14:23). Jesus demonstrated the enigma of life through death (12:24). His death would bring about His glorification (12:23) and the blessing of the Spirit (16:7; see 6:63). Jesus’ statement to Mary, therefore, assured her that He was not leaving her yet, but beyond that He pointed her and His disciples to the benefits of His departure by reminding them that it was an ascension to the Father. Jesus noted these benefits by calling His disciples “my brethren” for the first time in John’s Gospel (20:17). They would share in His unique relationship to God as sons to their Father. Jesus would later breathe on His disciples while saying “Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (John 20:22). The Spirit whom they would receive at Pentecost (Acts 2) would be the Spirit of Christ sent from and communicating His presence (Acts 2:33). Through His ascension, and the subsequent descent of the Spirit, believers now experience the intimacy of God’s love (Rom. 5:5) and cry out through the Spirit, “Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6).

The theological significance of Jesus’ interaction with Mary is that believers in this age experience Jesus’ presence not physically through touch but through the person of His Spirit. Jesus, therefore, was referring to His public ascension in John 20:17, which removes the need to postulate a prior secret ascension.

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¹ The present imperative indicates that Mary’s action was already in process. Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to John*, NICNT (Eerdmans, 1995), 742.

² D. A. Carson names this text one of the “most difficult passages in the New Testament.” *The Gospel according to John*, PNTC (Eerdmans, 1991), 641–42.

³ Jesus also does not rebuke the women who clutched his feet in Matthew 28:9.

⁴ Andreas J. Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Baker, 2004), 570.

Caring Enough to Confront: Giving and Receiving Correction

Biblical ministry involves caring enough to lovingly confront and correct. The New Testament letters abundantly evidence this necessity. Romans 15:14 says, “I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.” It helps greatly if all God’s people are humble, approachable, and teachable. Sooner or later, we will likely all be questioned, confronted, and corrected by someone. We should readily receive such communication. Because of our fallen nature and proneness to stray from the path of godliness, we should welcome our Christian friends, pastors, teachers, spouses, and leaders to speak into our lives with encouragement, caution, warning, and even correction. The inspired Word of God is “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16).

This communication should be filled with grace (Eph. 4:29; Col. 4:6) and meekness (Gal. 6:1). Admonishing should be brotherly (2 Thess. 3:15). Differing needs require differing approaches (1 Thess. 5:14). Correction should certainly come from a loving heart modeled after God’s loving chastening which compels change (Heb. 12:5–6). This rescue ministry brings wonderful results for both saints and sinners (James 5:19–20). Official church discipline should follow the biblical pattern which involves the church leadership structure and sequential steps (Matt. 18:15–17; 1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3:6–15).

Much wisdom is needed to apply the Scriptures wisely on a case-by-case basis. Most major problems could likely have been “nipped in the bud” with an *ounce* of early preventive personal concern rather than a *pound* of later complex cure. Practically, we should first build strong, trusting relationships. Then if a concern arises, ask questions to be sure our information is accurate, refrain from drawing quick conclusions or making accusations or judging motives, hear all sides of the matter, and consult with others. If warranted, we should prayerfully and wisely proceed with correction.

A LASTING MEMORY FROM COLLEGE

At the Christian college I attended, each Monday at 7:30 a.m. the college dormitory “monitors” met with the dean of men in the old upstairs administrative conference room. The dean would ask questions about how the dormitory men were doing, ask if we had any questions, and remind us about what he called “perennial problems.” I was a college senior very busy with classes, extracurricular activities, leadership roles, and having a

great year. One morning the dean asked me to stay back after the meeting and talk with him. I will never forget the experience. He was tactful and kind, but he questioned me about something in my attitude. I was surprised, humbled, and taken aback by his gentle correction. The event lasted for only a minute or two. I don’t remember exactly what he said, but whatever it was I must have needed it, and I have never forgotten those moments. I took his admonition with me through my senior year and beyond. I graduated in the spring, and the following fall I became a graduate assistant to the new director of ministerial training and extension. The school relocated the director’s new office to the very same location as the old administrative conference room, and it was in that office that I was then personally mentored by that director for the next fourteen years. *This was on the very spot where the dean of men had talked with me.* In 1991 the director retired, and I replaced him in the administration, working with ministerial students. His desk became my desk, and his office space became my office space for almost twenty years, on the very spot of my memorable moments with the dean of men. Over the years as I met with ministerial students and occasionally corrected them, the shadow of that dean remained in the office. I had been on the receiving end of correction as a student and now was on the other end of the conversations. He told us, “Let us be careful how we ‘carve’ and with what we ‘carve,’” speaking of careful, loving confrontation to carve Christlike character. The people we serve, encourage, confront, and correct will never forget the experiences of their personal interactions with us, so let us be both courageous and compassionate.

J. OSWALD SANDERS ON TACT AND DIPLOMACY

My favorite book outside the Bible is *Spiritual Leadership* by J. Oswald Sanders (Moody, 1967). My royal blue paperback edition does not leave my home. It is well-worn and fragile. I cherish this book which captured my heart for the ministry as a teenager. I highly recommend this book—you will return to its well-worded thoughts time and again.

In his chapter “Qualities Essential to Leadership II,” Sanders has a helpful section on “Tact and Diplomacy.” He writes: “*Tact* is defined as ‘intuitive perception, especially a quick and fine perception of what is fit and proper or right, a ready appreciation of the proper thing to do or say, especially a fine sense of how to avoid giving offense.’ *Diplomacy* is dexterity and skill in managing affairs of any kind. . . . Combining the two words, the idea emerges of skill in reconciling opposing viewpoints

without giving offense and without compromising principle.” Sanders goes on to illustrate tactfulness: “One shoe salesman said to his client, ‘I’m sorry, madam, but your foot is too large for this shoe.’ The other salesman said to his client who was in a similar situation, ‘I’m sorry, madam, but this shoe is too small for your foot.’ Each used almost the same words, but tact and diplomacy cause one to make a slight difference of phrasing and secured a loyal satisfied customer.” Sanders goes on to say, “William Carey was unconsciously a diplomat. . . . Tact and diplomacy are never more effective than when they are unconscious and unstudied” (pp. 66–67).

The biblical context of caring enough to confront and correct is that of a loving church or ministry setting in which we are all seeking to grow in grace as we pursue the fruit of the Spirit and become more like Christ.

ACCUSED OF BREAKING AND ENTERING

During my year as a graduate assistant to the director of ministerial training and extension, I went one night to the front entrance gate and asked the young security officer if I could go into the administration building to work in my office. The university let us use our nice typewriters after hours, and I needed to work on a paper for a class. The officer said he would have to check with senior administrators, and I asked him to please not bother them. Then I asked if I could go into the building with the student clean-up crew, around 10:45 p.m. He said that it was up to me, so I went in with the crew. Soon thereafter I received a request from the dean of administration to come to his office. He said that security had reported me *for breaking into and entering the administration building!* I explained the careful steps I had taken on that evening. The dean was up in years and not very mobile or emotional, so he just listened without much expression on his face. I thought that he would readily accept my explanation—I was not exactly the local campus criminal. He said that we would both need to meet with the officer, a fellow student. We soon met in the dean’s office, and I explained the situation once again. This time the dean seemed to accept my explanation, and he dismissed the officer. As I remained in this illustrious administrator’s office, he placed on the top of his desk a magazine. The page to which he opened showed an innocent young man’s face changing through a series of photos to become the face of a hardened criminal. I could hardly believe that he was implicitly warning me not to become the hardened criminal! Then he said I could go, and I assumed that he did not believe that I had unlawfully broken into the administration building.

One day, just for fun, I used my office key to see if it would unlock the outside door of the administration building. I jiggled the key just right, and the not-so-functional lock opened. I had a key to the building all along and did not know it! Why

did the Lord let me go through this humiliating experience? Was the administrator just playing a game with me? I still do not know the full answer, but I do know this: I have never forgotten the confrontation, the implicit correction, and the need to avoid becoming a hardened criminal! Now I can see that the administrator was just doing his job. He was a seasoned veteran college administrator and followed due process. He was trying to be reasonable to both parties, and he wanted the two students to interact with each other on what was apparently a genuine misunderstanding. He wanted us both to learn a lesson. He was being fair and thorough.

THE CONTEXT OF CARING, CONFRONTING, AND CORRECTING

The biblical context of caring enough to confront and correct is that of a loving church or ministry setting in which we are all seeking to grow in grace as we pursue the fruit of the Spirit and become more like Christ. The many “one another” verses of the New Testament remind us to love one another, judge not one another, prefer one another, and receive one another. Furthermore, we are to serve one another, greet one another, not devour one another, and not provoke one another. We bear one another’s burdens and forbear one another, as well as forgive one another. We are not to envy one another but rather comfort one another, edify one another, exhort one another, and consider one another to provoke unto love and good works. In other words, we are to be very patient and kind to each other with our faults, failures, and foibles. Certainly, we would want others to treat us with such respect, and this should compel us to treat others respectfully. Our interactions with family members should likewise reflect the same values as in the church, with an additional level of special love and care. With this perspective we will be more concerned about others, more careful with our necessary interactions, and more constructive in our approach in both giving and receiving correction.

FRIENDSHIPS AND RELATIONSHIPS

It is vitally important not to live the life of a loner. Loners can easily get into trouble and sin. We all need trusted friends in whom we can confide and from whom we can seek counsel. We need courageous friends who will step into our lives and express their caution or concern for wrong attitudes or actions that they see us developing. Pastors especially need mature men within and outside of their church ministries to provide godly wisdom and guidance through the myriads of challenges and perplexities of life and ministry. Stay in touch with your pastor friends, enjoy a breakfast or lunch together, attend pastors’ fellowships, pray for them as they pray for you, and occasionally just ask “Are you okay?” or “How are you doing?” Everyone at times has challenges, problems, temptations, and discouragements. You may find a golden opportunity to encourage someone in Christ, to offer them encouragement and hope, and even to provide a lifeline of genuine friendship.

Bruce McAllister is the newly appointed president and CEO of Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina.

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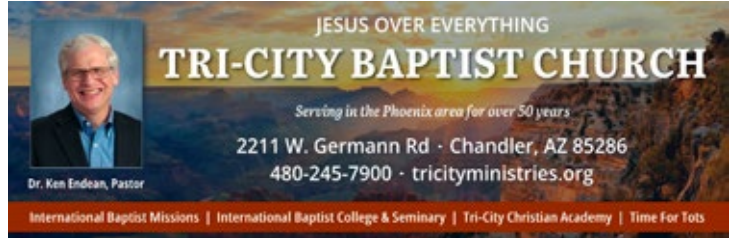
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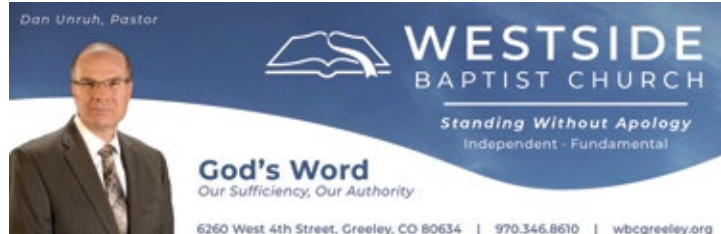
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On the Home Front

2025

August 8, 2025 Chesapeake Bay Regional Fellowship

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3200 Ridge Rd
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Coordinator: Kent Ramler

September 9, 2025 New York City Regional Fellowship

Bethel Baptist Fellowship
2304 Voorhies Ave
Brooklyn, NY 11235
Coordinator: Matt Recker

October 20-22, 2025

Central Regional Fellowship

Midland Baptist Church
4200 N Church Circle
Wichita, KS 67205
Coordinator: Marcus Heffernan

October 25, 2025

New England Regional Fellowship

Heritage Baptist Church
186 Dover Point Rd
Dover, NH 03820
Coordinator: Taigen Joos

2026

January 27, 2026 Rocky Mountain Regional Fellowship

Westside Baptist Church
6260 West 4th Street
Greeley, CO 80634
Coordinator: Dan Unruh

March 16-17, 2026

Northwest Regional Fellowship

Grace Baptist Church
114 4th Ave NW
Puyallup, WA 98371
Host pastor: Andy Oliver
Coordinator: Greg Kaminski

April 20-22, 2026

South Regional Fellowship

Faith Baptist Church
3600 Creighton Rd
Pensacola, FL 32504
Host pastor: Jeff Bailie
Coordinator: Tony Facenda



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- Sessions: 24,135 (up 16%)
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FEATURED FROM OUR MOST POPULAR ARTICLES:

When Puppies Replace People, by Ben Hicks

Living in a reasonably large city like Indianapolis, I can see the signs are everywhere. In fact, once you notice it, it becomes hard to unsee—dogs are the new kids. We take our kids to play on a playground with a small handful of other families and watch countless individuals and couples walking their dogs. We see Starbucks offering treats for dogs, but not having anything special for children. Then there are the dog parks. I had never really heard of a “dog park” before moving to Indy. In my first few years here, I drove by my first dog park and thought it was a little odd. That was about six years ago. Now they are popping up everywhere.

People today go so far as to call themselves “dog parents,” and some of them get real offended if you tell them being a dog parent is not the same thing as being a real parent . . .

<https://www.proclaimanddefend.org/2025/03/13/when-puppies-replace-people/>

An Easter Sunday Invite and Transformed Lives, by Kevin Schaal

Let me introduce you to Jay Jay and Alex.

God began to change their lives on Easter Sunday of 2024 when they attended church at the invitation of Alex’s parents.

Last Sunday, Jay Jay was baptized, and Alex rejoined our church. That day was the culmination of a year-long journey in their lives and years of prayer on the part of others. . . .

Last Easter Sunday Jay Jay and Alex attended services with Alex’s parents and the Holy Spirit began to get hold of Jay Jay’s heart. He told Alex that he wanted to come back, and while somewhat surprised, she agreed.

Read the whole stirring testimony here:

<https://www.proclaimanddefend.org/2025/04/13/the-power-of-god-to-transform-lives/>

Since our January/February *FrontLine* edition on *AI: Developing a Christian Perspective*, we’ve started experimenting with AI to turn the spoken words of sermons into the *Proclaim & Defend* article format. The speakers review and edit the articles before publication. We think it is a useful tool, allowing busy pastors to contribute on timely topics. Check out these articles:

- Taigen Joos: “Introducing the Four C’s of Doctrinal History” (<https://www.proclaimanddefend.org/2025/02/12/introducing-the-four-cs-of-doctrinal-history/>)
- Ken Endean: “The Supremacy of Christ in Repentance: Understanding True Sorrow vs. Worldly Regret” (<https://www.proclaimanddefend.org/2025/03/06/the-supremacy-of-christ-in-repentance-understanding-true-sorrow-vs-worldly-regret/>)
- Bob Jones III: “How Joash Fell: A Warning from Ancient Scripture” (<https://www.proclaimanddefend.org/2025/04/08/how-joash-fell-a-warning-from-ancient-scripture/>)
- Taigen Joos: “The Origins, Division, and Authority of the Four C’s of Doctrinal History” (<https://www.proclaimanddefend.org/2025/04/22/the-origins-division-and-authority-of-the-four-cs-of-doctrinal-history/>)

We have many more articles for your consideration, devotional, theological, and editorial. Be sure to subscribe to *Proclaim & Defend*.

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Sharing Your Faith with Your Grandchildren

I've had a lot of endearing titles in my nearly sixty years of life. From "Dad," to "Coach," to "Pastor," to my all-time favorite from my bride of nearly thirty-five years: "Hon." But five years ago I added a title to my resume that I have cherished and embraced with full force—"PaPa."

Our oldest son and his wife made us grandparents for the first time in 2020, and it's all that we had been promised and more! From hearing Walker call me PaPa with bright eyes of affection, to his stumbling into my arms for a seat on my lap, to his helping me make scrambled eggs together at family gatherings, being a grandfather has exceeded my expectations. We now have two grandchildren, with a third on the way in a few months.

But as with most things in life, this privilege comes with great responsibility. From the beginning of this new season my wife and I have constantly tried to clarify our roles as PaPa and MiMi.

While we desire to be grandparents who provide extras and make special memories for our grandchildren, *more than anything we want to help their parents make disciples of Jesus Christ*. So it's important for us to establish and remember some ways for this to happen as we have opportunity, all while honoring our son and daughter-in-law's primary responsibility to lead their own family. Here are a few goals we seek by God's grace to accomplish when we're together.

BE A FAITHFUL ROLE MODEL

The stereotypical grandparents are characterized as the ones who show up, break

all the family rules, spoil the children, and hit the road, leaving the parents to pick up the pieces. While there are humorous aspects to this idea, most new and young parents don't need more obstacles, especially coming from within the house!

Practically, we gain permission from the parents before providing a gift or special treat, to make sure it's not undoing an initiative they are working through in discipling the child. *After all, my greatest legacy is not what I leave for my grandchildren—but what I leave in them.* Therefore, the greatest gifts we can give are examples of living out our faith daily through prayer, kindness, and integrity.

It's important for us to let our grandchildren see us reading our Bibles, attending worship services together, and expressing a

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Regional Reports

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA FBFI REGIONAL FELLOWSHIP

Submitted by Dan Pelletier, Regional Coordinator

About fifty people attended the Northern California Regional Fellowship at Calvary Baptist Church in Marina on March 24–25. Pastor Tim Knauf was a wonderful host. His church invited Pastor Cary Schmidt, author of the book *Steady Strength*, as the keynote speaker. Pastor Schmidt's messages were honest assessments of the struggles that take place in ministry, offering ways that God has helped him through His Word. Another main speaker was Drew Gysi of Life Institute Financial Services. His messages dealt with pastoral retirement planning and the ministry of stewardship. Mrs. Debbie

Solberg of First Baptist Church in Pinole held a workshop for ladies, and Associate Pastor Michael Blythe of Calvary Baptist of Marina also held a workshop. Music was provided by a team from International Baptist College in Chandler, Arizona, led by Pastor Dave Stertzbach II. We enjoyed wonderful food and fellowship and look forward to future meetings of these faithful servants of the Lord.



NORTHWEST FBFI REGIONAL CONFERENCE

*Submitted by Don Johnson (host pastor),
Grace Baptist Church*

The Northwest Regional Fellowship held their conference on April 14–16. This was later in the year than normal, but since the fellowship was held at a tourist destination, Vancouver Island, the pastors of our fellowship enthusiastically turned out. Our regional representative, Greg Kaminski, reports:

Truly an amazing conference. This was our first Northwest Regional to be held in Canada on Vancouver Island. Pastor Don Johnson and the wonderful folks at Grace Baptist Church were welcoming and provided a warm atmosphere for those who attended. Most of the pastors brought their wives, as this was not only our regular meeting but also a time to enjoy the beautiful Butchart Gardens and the amazing island. The schedule gave us plenty of time to be refreshed and revitalized. We had some of the best fellowship ever, as others from Canada were able to come. Most of us from the

States were pleasantly surprised by the exchange rate, which helped make this a wonderful, refreshing experience!

On top of all this, we had a great speaker, Dr. Jim Tillotson, the president of Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary in Ankeny, Iowa. Dr. Tillotson is also a regular columnist in *FrontLine* magazine. The messages were so encouraging and helpful to those attending. We truly went away with our cups overflowing. This was a conference we did not

want to end. Thank you to Pastor Don and the folks at Grace.

The conference was a real blessing. We are looking forward to meeting again next year in Puyallup, Washington, on March 16–17, 2026. More information is available at <https://fbfi-northwest.org/>.

Please consider attending a fellowship in your region! These meetings are times of biblical encouragement, growth, and blessing for both men and women.



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You Don't Need to Know Yourself



Before social media, e-mail was our most frequently used tool for chatting with our friends outside of school. One of the common trends of that time was to send and fill out questionnaires to get to know friends (and yourself!) better. E-mail questionnaires phased out and were replaced with silly quizzes online to see what cartoon or movie character we most embodied. Online questionnaires and quizzes now come packaged as popular personality tests. Social media posts and in-person conversations alike are filled with references to being a “2,” “7” (Enneagram), INFP, ENFJ (Myers-Briggs), and all kinds of other possibilities. Socrates’ refrain to “know thyself” seems to be a timeless theme, repackaged in our current era as “finding our truest self.”

While these tests can be a useful tool to spark conversation with family and friends, we would do well to consider how the mentality behind personality tests may be influencing our thinking as believers. Do Christians need to “find ourselves”? When we are inundated by this kind of language, might it tempt us toward a strong self-focus? My five-year-old recently told me he needed some “me time.” While he did not hear this from me, such cultural messages still find their way into little hearts and minds! This inward looking can also lead us toward frustration with our weaknesses and failures, for when we look within, all we really find is righteousness that is “as filthy rags.” This mentality can even conflate our sinful tendencies with immutable personality traits. “This is just the way I am” or “I’ve always been like this” become excuses that leave us without hope and stuck in our sinful patterns. Is our fascination with personality tests and knowing ourselves actually a symptom of something else going on in our hearts?

THE DESIRE TO “FIGURE OURSELVES OUT”

Maybe our thinking isn’t as blatantly worldly in its verbiage. I remember a time in my life where I was wrestling within myself. I was very aware of my own selfish and proud heart, and it frustrated me to no end. I remember

the mental gymnastics I went through as I drove my minivan. I was striving to be the best mom possible, but I continually felt like a failure. I was striving to love those God had placed in my life, but I kept running up against my own proud and unkind heart. I was constantly overwhelmed by the tasks on my plate and often felt like I was drowning. I could feel the discontentment over daily annoyances growing in my heart, despite the strong desire to be a woman of God who exuded His joy no matter my circumstances. I identified with Paul when he noted the tendency in himself to desire to do right, yet to find evil was close at hand (Rom. 7). At the core, I was asking myself, “Why am I like this? Why do I feel so stuck? What is wrong with me?”

It was there, in my van, that the Lord impressed a very important truth on my heart. It is a truth I had been taught in my formative years as a teenager at camp and one reinforced through many years of walking with the Lord. It is a truth I have been trying to remind myself of since the Lord brought it to mind: I don’t need to figure myself out. I need to know God.

Hebrews 12:2 tells us that as we run our race of faith, we need to look to Jesus. Yes, we need to do the work of laying aside any weight or sin that may be hindering our race. But we don’t need to spend hours agonizing over why we are the way we are. Instead, we are to give Him anything that is too heavy for us to carry and that hinders us from enduring. As we look to Jesus, we remove our gaze from anything else. This means we take our eyes off ourselves and our frustrations with ourselves, and we look to Jesus. He is the author of our faith. The author knows the story. He has all the answers, for He is the originator. Not only did he author our faith, but He will complete it. He alone will enable us to run this race with endurance and grow in maturity with each step. We don’t need to figure it out. We simply need to look to Him.

This is reiterated in verse 3 where the author of Hebrews tells us how to continue on when we are growing

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The Church's View of Israel:

One's view of ecclesiology has everything to do with one's eschatology, and vice versa; the two are intertwined. The two major ecclesiological-eschatological views regarding Israel are defined by the degree of continuity or discontinuity seen between Israel and the church.

The predominant view throughout most of church history has seen the church primarily, in some sense or other, as the replacement of Israel. The more theological term for this view is *supersessionism*, meaning that the church has superseded—*succeeded, supplanted, displaced, replaced*—Israel. Although the English term *supersessionism* is only a couple of centuries old, the concept dates to the second century and finds its most definitive initial statement in Augustine. The concept has historically been fueled by varying motivations, from judgment for Israel's rejection of Messiah (*punitive supersessionism*) to Christ's fulfillment of Jewish prophecy and law (*economic supersessionism*). Stanley Porter and Alan Kurschner overview a concise history of supersessionist theology, from its punitive expressions among the early church fathers, to the Reformation's inheritance of its Augustinian expression, to its "ugly theological turn . . . in the early nineteenth century" when

it was thought that the Hebrew Scriptures and the New Testament possessed acute discontinuity. So much so that there was *no* relation between the God of Israel and the God of Jesus. The implication was that Israel had no covenant relation with the God of Jesus. By the 1930s supersessionism was conditioned well into the fabric of German Christianity. It was certainly not the only factor that led to the German worldview at that time, but the practical results of it led to Jewish expulsion, seizure of their property, and eventually extermination of millions in the concentration camps.¹

It must be emphatically stated that this by no means suggests that a supersessionist or replacement theology inevitably either produces or arises from anti-Semitism. It certainly does not mean that brothers in Christ today who hold to a supersessionist view of the church are inherently anti-Semitic or will become so. What it does suggest is that there has been a long historical linkage between supersessionism and anti-Semitism, in which the former at least catalytically facilitated the latter.

More recent adherents often expressly disavow any connection to the language of "replacement" theology. The preferred terminology has shifted from *replacement* to viewing the church as the *continuation* or *fruition* or *fulfillment* of Israel. Likewise, supersessionist theology has more recently self-identified as *fulfillment theology*, *inclusion theology*, or *transference theology*.² Whatever the nomenclature, the point remains that this view sees ethnic-national Israel as no longer a relevant entity in terms of God's covenantal relations or eschatological purposes, apart from a future conversion of ethnic Israel—a view held by an increasing number of supersessionists, but not by all.

HISTORY

First-century NT documents evidence the sharp and often rancorous division between Christianity and Judaism. The teaching of Hebrews regarding the obsolescence of the old covenant was graphically validated by the providential decimation of the temple and the consequent discontinuation of temple worship.

Despite the predominantly premillennial eschatology of the early church, a number of early church writings and fathers enunciated a replacement view of Israel. Ronald Diprose documents supersessionist theology in the Epistle of Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Tertullian.³

The shift to allegorical interpretation in the 3rd and 4th centuries (Origen, Augustine) bolstered this replacement view. Augustine's *Tract Against the Jews*

was one of the most influential anti-Judaic writings emanating from the centuries following Origen. Because of the almost canonical status enjoyed by Augustine's writings in medieval church history . . . "replacement theology and the consequent normativity of Jewish subservience to Christians were understood to be certain" even though "their eschatological conversion was envisaged."⁴

Chrysostom's sermons illustrate the early development of a darker anti-Semitism that would come to characterize much medieval church history. The "golden-tongued" orator "accused the Jews of murdering their offspring and of worshiping devils and not God," preached that "the Jews were hated by God" and cut off from repentance, and concluded that "since God hated them, Christians were duty-bound to hate them as well."⁵

Solidly supersessionistic, medieval church history is stained with a pattern of blatant anti-Semitism that was the outworking of a theology of divine rejection and replacement of Israel. In 325 the Council of Nicea—rightly famous for the first classic expression of orthodoxy, the Nicene Creed—also moved to restrict the political and religious rights of Jews. A century later Alexandria expelled Jews from its borders. Around the same time, Minorca (a Mediterranean island belonging to Spain) offered Jews the choice of conversion or banishment; Spain itself followed suit in 613. In the 500s, France likewise ordered Jews to convert or leave.

The pattern continued throughout European Christendom over next several centuries. The 12th century saw the (apparent) origination of the "blood libel" accusation that Jews killed Christian children to use their blood for Passover and other religious rituals; the accusation led to widespread violence against Jews over the next several centuries and is still perpetuated in some (Muslim) quarters to this day. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) required Jews to wear a special badge to identify themselves, and established transubstantiation (later leading to repeated rumors that Jews desecrated wafers to persecute Jesus again). The legend of the "Wandering Jew" emerged around 1220 when an Italian wrote of

A Historical-Theological Overview (Part 1)

meeting a Jew who had hit and insulted Jesus on the way to His crucifixion and was thus condemned to wander the world for all time and receive insults and beatings; the legend was popularized throughout Europe. In 1290 King Edward I expelled the Jews from England, where they remained banned for the next three and a half centuries. In 1321 French Jews were accused of encouraging lepers to poison wells used by Christians, leading to the death or expulsion of thousands of Jews. The Black Death riots (1348–1349) were caused by accusations that Jews were responsible for the bubonic plague by poisoning wells, leading to more violent persecutions. In 1391, Spanish Catholic rioters murdered thousands of Jews and compelled others to convert or face execution. Because many of the forced *conversos* were suspected of continuing to practice Judaism secretly, Queen Isabella agreed with papal authorities on the need for an Inquisition to root out false Jewish professors. From 1486 to 1490, thousands of Jewish *conversos* were tried, tortured and/or burned, their property confiscated and the proceeds used to finance exploratory voyages. The Spanish government confiscated Jewish property, plowed under Jewish cemeteries, and destroyed synagogues; many Jews moved to Portugal (where they were kicked out five years later) or to Muslim-controlled lands. Sixteenth-century Venice did not expel Jews but, instead, pioneered a new technique to restrict Jewish social interaction with the rest of the populace; they required Jews to live only in designated areas called *ghettos*—a practice that facilitated targeted taxes and expropriation of property. In fact, Pope Paul IV (1476–1559) advised cities everywhere within Christendom to establish ghettos for their resident Jewish population.

As Paul might say, these things were not done in a corner. As recently as 2022, the Church of England officially apologized to the Jewish community for the anti-Jewish laws passed 800 years ago by the Synod of Oxford—laws forbidding social interactions between Jews and Christians, forcing Jews to wear identifying badges, imposing church tithes on them, banning them from certain professions, and forbidding them from building new synagogues. Hundreds were arrested, hanged, or imprisoned in the aftermath.

DEGREES

Some theologians distinguish between different levels or degrees of supersessionism. “Hard supersessionism” refers to the view that Israel *qua* Israel has entirely forfeited any relationship to God, any expectation of God’s promises to them, and any distinctive eschatological role whatsoever. “Soft supersessionism” holds that the OT promises to Israel are fulfilled in the church with the result that national Israel has no distinctive eschatological role *except* for a future widescale conversion of ethnic Jews (Rom. 11:26).

NEW TESTAMENT EVIDENCES

Supersessionist proponents ground their view in passages such as Romans 2:28–29 and 9:6, Galatians 6:16, and

Philippians 3:3. Implications are also drawn from NT descriptions of even Gentile believers as the “seed of Abraham” (Rom. 4:16; Gal. 3:7, 29) and Peter’s description of the church as “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his peculiar people” (1 Pet. 2:9, author’s translation; cf. Exod. 19:6). Other passages are read through a covenantal lens in a way that corroborates what they believe these passages teach directly.⁶

As indicated earlier, proponents have come to reject the language of “replacement.” Michael Horton, for example, insists that covenant theology does not view the church as the *replacement* of Israel but as the *fruition* of Israel; that is, the church is the means through which God fulfills the promises made to Israel.⁷ Inasmuch as Israel *qua* Israel is viewed as discontinued in the purposes and promises of God, however, it is difficult to escape the concept of replacement. The image of a flower gradually becoming a fruit seems a pleasant and natural image, but the fact remains that there is no more flower. If pressed for an alternative image, I would suggest a cultivated olive tree (Rom. 11)—planted and sustained at its root by God’s gracious election, expressed through a series of covenantal promises to Abraham and his seed—with most of the natural branches (Jewish unbelievers) broken off, and multiple wild olive branches (Gentile believers) grafted in. Nevertheless, the promise remains that the natural branches (Jews) will be grafted back in when they believe and turn to the Lord, both individually and en masse when “all Israel shall be saved.” That strikes me as a much more biblically based image of the relationship between Israel and the church than either replacement or fruition. I would call it restorationism. More on that in the next issue.

¹ Stanley E. Porter and Alan E. Kurschner, eds., *The Future Restoration of Israel: A Response to Supersessionism*, McMaster Biblical Studies Series 10 (Pickwick, 2023), 6–9.

² Michael Brown, “The ‘Seed’ as Christ in Galatians 3:16 and the Wrong Deductions of Replacement Theology,” in Porter and Kurschner, *The Future Restoration of Israel*, 278–79.

³ Ronald E. Diprose, *Israel and the Church: The Origins and Effects of Replacement Theology* (IVP Academic, 2000), 72–81.

⁴ Diprose, 89.

⁵ Diprose, 89–90.

⁶ For a fuller list of alleged support texts and a critique of their supersessionist interpretation, see Diprose, *Israel and the Church*, chap. 2. See also Michael Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?* (B&H Academic, 2010), and Gerald R. McDermott, ed., *The New Christian Zionism: Fresh Perspectives on Israel and the Land* (IVP Academic, 2016).

⁷ Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Christians on the Way* (Zondervan Academic, 2011), 730.

Layton Talbert is professor of theology and biblical exposition at BJU Seminary in Greenville, South Carolina.



Speak What You Know

There are four Great Commission passages in the New Testament—conversations Jesus had with his disciples before His ascension. The first is John 20:19–23 and records what occurred behind closed doors on the evening of what we now call Easter Sunday. The second is Matthew 28:18–20, the one we know best. The third is Luke 24:44–49 and takes place in Jerusalem just hours before the ascension. The last one is Acts 1:1–8, spoken just minutes before Jesus’ ascension.

In each of these passages containing Jesus’ last words, the common theme is that the disciples were to be witnesses. We understand that Christ came to seek and to save those who are lost, so if we want to be like Christ, we too should be passionate about this. If we are disciples like we should be, then clearly we will be witnesses, as these passages indicate.

Many ministries look back and rejoice in what God has done in the past, and this is good. However, if we are always looking back, we will die. In a vehicle, the rearview mirror and the windshield are both important. In the ministry, we should keep those views in the right perspective, spending more time looking at where we are headed than at where we have been (Phil. 3:13).

I would like to focus on the Luke 24:44–49 passage in this article. We see in verse 44 that there was a prophecy that was to be fulfilled. Jesus explains two things to His disciples. The first was that from Old Testament times, the Scriptures said that the Messiah was to come, die, and rise again. The disciples had been thinking that was metaphorical; they thought Jesus would overthrow Rome, and in thinking this way, they misidentified the enemy. They saw the enemy as Rome when it actually was Satan. We sometimes misidentify the enemy and don’t understand that the enemy is Satan, not the government, circumstances, or people. Jesus explained to them that what the Old Testament Scriptures said was His plan all along.

The second thing Jesus explains is in verses 46–47, where we see a mission to be executed. The fulfillment of God’s plan would start at Jerusalem. Both Isaiah 2:2–3 and 49:6 tell us that God’s plan to reach the world would start at Jerusalem, but also that it is for all nations. It seems that a narrative of smallness has crept into many churches. Some are convinced that the church is going to get smaller and smaller until we are in a “holy huddle” in a church basement. The Bible is clear that things are going to get worse and worse the closer we get to the rapture. Things will get worse in the world, but they should get better in the church as we grow in salvation and sanctification, and as people continue to come to Christ.

To repent means to turn from our sin and turn to Christ. The gospel is good news that we can be who God originally created us to be. We can stop living according to the world’s philosophies. The gospel is about being forgiven and free, so a gospel that leaves you in your sin and confusion is not the gospel of the Bible.

Salvation causes us to be free from the penalty of sin immediately and free from the power of sin progressively. Verse 48 shows the vital role of being a witness. In the courtroom, there are several roles. One is the role of the accused. Another is that of the accuser, which is not the role that we are to have. If our mission is to search the internet so we can find Christians with questionable convictions and call them out them on social media, we are working on the side of Satan. He is the accuser of the brethren, and we are not to be on his team. The third courtroom role is the judge, and the Bible is clear that we are not to be in this role either. We do not get to decide who goes to heaven or hell. If it were up to us, we would mess it up. Some would let everyone into heaven; some would let only those into heaven who watch what they watch, sing what they sing, and wear what they wear. It’s just going to be them and Jesus. We are also not called to

play the role of the jury. We are simply to be the witnesses.

Being the witness is the easiest job in the whole process. All we must do is speak what we know and what we have seen. We simply need to tell other people what Jesus has done for us. This is what the woman at the well did. The disciples had gone into town and came back only with bread. The woman went into town, and though all she did was share was her testimony, many people trusted Christ as their Savior as a result. The man born blind could only share this testimony: “One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25). The maniac of Gadara was rescued from a legion of demons, and after he was saved, he was clothed and in his right mind. The demons went into the herd of pigs, who all ran off the cliff. When the townspeople saw their livelihood floating in the ocean, they asked Jesus to leave. The now-healed maniac begged Jesus to take him with Him, but Jesus told him, “Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you” (Luke 8:39, NKJV). He became a witness.

Christ will build His church. We are not in the results business; we are to be in the business of being faithful witnesses. If you become a witness by sharing your testimony, you will get to see God do the miracle of salvation in someone’s life. Have you recently shared with anyone your testimony or what God is doing in your life? If you take the opportunity to do so, you might be amazed at how God will use what you say to bring people to Himself. Being a witness was one of the last instructions Jesus left us before He ascended into Heaven. May God help us fulfill this command.

Jim Tillotson has served as the president of Faith Baptist Bible College and Theological Seminary in Ankeny, Iowa, since June 2015.





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Corey A. Pfaffe



Financial Stewardship by the Christian Family: The Temptation of Greed

Our current series turns into a head-on collision with the dark topic of greed. As God addresses stewardship matters in His Word, He instructs, but He also warns. As Solomon initiates his fatherly instruction in the book of Proverbs, he warns his son about greed: “So are the ways of everyone who is greedy of gain” (1:19, NKJV). The ways to the consequences of greed are marked by cautionary signs: Yield, No Passing Zone, and Wrong Way.

FAILING TO YIELD WHILE LOOKING OUT FOR NUMBER ONE

Aggressive drivers often cut off others rather than deferentially yielding. Solomon warns his son of an attitude that would lead him to pursue financial gain at others’ expense. His greed and that of his evil associates would lead them to pursue theft as a game: “Come with us. . . . We shall *find* all precious substance” (Prov. 1:11, 13). Gang members characterized by greed find one another (Prov. 12:11; 16:19; 28:19; 29:24).

Greed may lead you to abuse relationships, viewing financial interactions as win-lose propositions. Rather than exchanging value for value, you can succumb to pressure to look for an edge: more than you are due for less than you are obligated. This greed may show up in small-dollar ways, like not running a grocery item through the scanner, or it may manifest itself in extreme abuses like fraudulent, undisclosed defects when you go to sell your home.

CROSSING OVER THE YELLOW LINE WITH A LOTTERY MENTALITY

Solomon’s warnings continue: “There is desirable treasure, and oil in the dwelling of the wise, but a foolish man squanders it” (Prov. 21:20, NKJV). Greed leads to risky behavior. As God provides you money, He expects you to use it wisely. You trouble your own home when your greed leads you to accuse God of failing to meet your legitimate needs (Prov. 15:27).

There are many ways to take unreasonable financial risks. Taking on too much debt may be the most common. But gambling away God’s money against astronomical odds is like passing in a no-passing zone during rush hour. As long as ten years ago (2014), studies found that roughly sixty percent of US adults had gambled in the past year.¹

Sports betting may be the newest temptation. In 2018, the Supreme Court struck down the 1992 Professional and Amateur Sports Protection Act that outlawed sports betting nationwide.² In a testimony before a US Senate committee in December 2024, the Executive Director of the National Council on Problem Gambling reported that since 2018, thirty-eight states had legalized sports betting. It was reported to the senators that a study of 700,000 online gamblers found that ninety-six percent lost money. Research found that a “significant predictor” of risky gambling behavior was a belief, contrary to common sense, that gambling was a good way to make money.³ The studies cited here also concluded that

young people, especially men under the age of thirty-five, are increasingly in crisis due to gambling.⁴

Scripture drives instruction home to combat the temptation of greed, including the apostle Paul’s warnings against it (1 Tim. 6:9–10). Biblical warnings exposing the sin of gambling are also available from Christian sources.⁵

SPEEDING THE WRONG WAY UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF GREED

Solomon’s warning about greed should not influence you to live on the financial precipice. In today’s vernacular, he might have advised about financial independence: “These things take time.” The greedy make haste to be rich. Solomon’s counsel? “He who has a slack hand becomes poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich” (Prov. 10:4, NKJV).

Greed robs you of the drive required to patiently and persistently develop the very riches that you might so passionately covet. Very few people work harder because of greed: “The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want” (Prov. 21:5).

Greed makes you susceptible to marketing ploys that create a myth that labor is for the unsophisticated. This is not what Solomon told his son: “Wealth gained by dishonesty will be diminished, but he who gathers by labor will increase” (Prov. 13:11, NKJV).

AVOIDING THE CITATIONS OF GREED

How does biblical thinking help you safely navigate away from collisions with greed?

Learn contentment. It is not a surprise that discontentment comes naturally. The apostle Paul had to learn contentment (Phil. 4:11). I believe that a spirit of gratitude may offer you a course of training in contentment. Memorize Scripture passages and use them in your communications with God about your discontent (e.g., 1 Cor. 2:9; Deut. 8:18; James 1:17; John 10:10). Earnestly thank God in brief prayer before every meal He provides you. Read Christian authors who equip you to pursue contentment.⁶

Pursue Christian friendships with others who direct their priorities toward God.

Especially avoid those who put *things* before God—just as Solomon first warned his son. Comparing your possessions with others is not wise (2 Cor. 10:12).

Give generously. Hold loosely to your possessions. Invest with eternal values in view (1 Tim. 6:17–19; 2 Cor. 9:6–11).

Like Solomon, warn your family about the signs of greed. Like Solomon, encourage them on the road to financial integrity: “Whoever listens to me [wisdom] will dwell safely” (Prov. 1:33, NKJV).

Corey Pfaffe serves as the CEO of MinistryCPA, a certified public accounting firm based in Watertown, Wisconsin. The firm works with ministry clients in virtually every US state and every continent. He and his wife Laurie have served in various lay capacities as members of Calvary Baptist



Church of Watertown for more than thirty-five years.

¹ https://mn.gov/dhs/assets/2018-02-percentage-of-gambling-revenues-that-come-from-problem-gamblers-report_tcm1053-327238.pdf

² <https://naadgs.org/history-of-sports-betting-the-transition-from-illegal-to-mainstream/>

³ <https://www.ncpgambling.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/2024.12.17-Senate-Judiciary-Written-Testimony-of-Keith-Whyte-NCPG.pdf>

⁴ <https://naadgs.org/research-for-the-growing-crisis-of-americas-young-gamblers-is-it-time-for-regulatory-action/>

⁵ For example, see <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/family-qa/a-biblical-look-at-gambling/>

⁶ For example, see Andrew M. Davis, *The Power of Christian Contentment* (Baker, 2019)

You Don't Need to Know Yourself

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weary and fainting in our struggle against sin. Once again, the exhortation is to take a closer look at Jesus. He is the one who endured when He was faced with hostility at the hands of sinful man. He is familiar with the struggle with inward temptations we face, and yet He faced them without sin.

Even on your best days, any “gain” you have is loss compared to the

incomparable worth of knowing Jesus. All our righteousness is in Him (Phil. 3). When you question who you are, go to His Word and see who *He* says you are. His opinion is the only one that really matters. Spend some time meditating on Ephesians 1. Grab a notebook and make a list of all the spiritual blessings He promises. If you have placed your faith in Jesus, He calls you His chosen, redeemed, adopted daughter. He has lavished His grace on you. Think about that: you are rich in God's unmerited favor! He promises you a future

inheritance and has placed His seal of approval on you for all eternity.

So take the personality quiz. Glean a little bit of information about how you think and act. But then, dear sister, quickly lift your gaze. Open your Bible. Look to Jesus.

Jaimie Flack has been married to her husband, Randall, a Christian school Bible teacher and youth leader, for thirteen years. Jaimie serves as the church secretary at their local church and serves in ladies and children's ministries as well. They live near Buffalo, New York, with their four children.



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Sharing Your Faith with Your Grandchildren

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trust in God in all circumstances. I was diagnosed with cancer when Walker was one year old, so I cherished every moment I had to hold him and spend time with him. And while he had no way of understanding the weight of uncertainty in my mind during that part of my journey, I often expressed to him my love for God and trust in His care of me.

PRAY FOR AND WITH YOUR GRANDCHILDREN

Secondly, the greatest way I can serve our children in raising our grandchildren is to pray for them. This is not necessarily what comes to mind when I think of the most significant contribution to their lives, but because we live six hundred miles away, this has become the most practical and regular opportunity to serve them.

I pray daily for them, asking for God's guidance and protection over their lives. I pray that their minds and hearts would be open to the gospel at precisely the right time. I also try to let them know periodically through a brief video or through Facetime that I prayed for them and am thinking about them.

But on those special occasions two or three times a year when we are together, I take advantage of times to pray with them when possible. Before a special grandparent outing to Chick-fil-a, or an adventure to

the toy store, or even a fun snack that we are going to share together, it's important to express gratitude and dependence to our Creator and Sustainer through prayer. Among other things, it also encourages them to bring their worries and joys to God.

HELP THEM UNDERSTAND FAITH THROUGH STORIES AND RESOURCES

Grandparents have been known to tell stories about "the good ol' days" from time to time, and that's important. In reality, though, this is more beneficial and therapeutic for grandparents than for grandchildren.

However, telling them about how God has worked in your life is instructive and beneficial for both. *My role as a grandparent isn't just to tell stories of my past, but to share the greatest story ever told—the story of God's love and redemption.*

Use story time together to share testimonies of answered prayers, struggles you've overcome, and the importance of trusting God. Make Bible stories come alive by relating them to real-life experiences with proper application.

This past Christmas I was able to give Walker a couple of stones I picked up from the Elah Valley in Israel. As I relayed the abbreviated story of David's defeat of Goliath from the Old Testament, I was able to encourage him to let these stones remind him to trust in the promises of God.

I admit it's fun to be the provider of fun gifts at special occasions like Christmas and birthdays, but the most important

thing we can do along the way is to provide them with Christian books, devotionals, and resources suited for their age.

There's so much more than just being the fun, spoiling, rule-breaking, old adults in the room when it comes to being Christian grandparents. It's a great responsibility with lasting impact as we serve and share in this journey with their parents.

The best use of our time with them includes more than just making memories for our own benefit. It involves planting seeds of faith in their hearts, while trusting God to make them flourish. Being a Christian grandparent means guiding with wisdom, loving with grace, and pointing every step toward Jesus.

"We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done" (Ps. 78:4).

Paul Whitt has served as associate pastor at Bethany Baptist Church in Brevard, North Carolina, since 2015. He previously served on the administration of Northland International University and Northland Camp and then worked with Cross Impact. Paul and his wife, Christie, have been married for thirty-four years and have three grown children and two grandchildren (with one more on the way).



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FBFI Chaplain Highlights

On 4 April 2025, CH (CPT) **Mark Hanson** was promoted to the rank of Major. Mark is an FBFI Chaplain serving in the Wisconsin Army National Guard, where he holds two jobs. In his first job as the State Support Chaplain, Mark provides chaplain services and religious support to all the soldiers and airmen who serve full-time for the National Guard in Wisconsin. In this capacity he conducts regular Bible studies and chapel services, provides family counseling, and conducts hospital visits. He also coordinates operational support for both the full-time and the part-time forces to ensure continued religious support between the typical Guard drill weekends. In his second job he is Brigade Chaplain with the 157th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, typically drilling once a month with his unit.



Attending Mark's promotion were his wife Sarah and their four children, Mark's parents and some of his siblings, several general officers from the state headquarters, and many senior enlisted staff in the unit. Chaplain Willis was in attendance and spoke a few words on behalf of the FBFI and Mark's family. Pray for Mark and his family this upcoming summer, when Mark will be deployed to the Middle East for several months. Mark's comments about his job are very encouraging: "Life has been quite the adventure these last four years! It has been so wonderful to see God working and providing opportunities to present the gospel and speak God's truth into people's lives. Our motto in Wisconsin is 'Forward,' and I very much enjoy taking the gospel of Christ forward into the highways and byways of the military."



A few short months ago, 1st Lt. **Sam Jackson** was finishing up the last of his seminary classes at Pensacola Christian College and transitioning from the chaplain candidate program to become a fully qualified chaplain in the US Air Force Reserves.

Immediately afterward, he received activation orders assigning him to the 733rd Air Mobility Squadron (AMS) at Kadena Air Force Base in Okinawa, Japan. Sam hit the ground running and has been visiting air squadrons all over the Pacific. It has been a great challenge and a "baptism by fire" in some sense, but it has

helped him to grow and mature as a new Air Force chaplain. This mobilization has a special blessing attached because Sam is also from Japan, and his mother still resides there. His mother has been struggling with health issues, and this deployment allows him to also be there with her. Isn't God amazing in how He directs our steps?



Chaplain Don Karnes with Lt. Gov. Sears

On February 10, 2025, Chaplain **Don Karnes** provided the invocation at the opening of the Virginia Senate session in Richmond, Virginia. In attendance that day were Lt. Gov. Winsome Sears, Senator Christie New Craig (Don's senator and a retired sheriff's deputy herself), and all the other Virginia state senators. During the opening session, they introduced CH Karnes and presented him with a silver cup embossed with the Virginia crest for his thirty years of service to the Chesapeake Police Department. This time of prayer and his recognition award provided a great opportunity to give thanks to God for his many years of service and to share a word of Bible truth with many of the state officials. In addition to his work as a police department chaplain, Don is also the coordinator for the all-volunteer auxiliary police force of the Chesapeake Police Department and the senior pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Chesapeake.

In March, CH (LTC) **Matthew Sprecher** and his wife, Ginger, traveled to Japan as part of his US Army War College Fellowship at Notre Dame and their International Security Center Experiential Learning. The highlight of the trip was leading a Memorial Wreath Laying Ceremony at Hiroshima with the students. Matt and his wife will be moving back to Ft. Eisenhower, Georgia, in the summer to assume responsibilities as the Army Cyber Command Chaplain.





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