

*The Heartbeat of*   
**The Remnant**

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A ministry of   
**The Berean Voice**



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~ The Berean Voice Board

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Greetings of Christian love to each one. I trust that each of you are finding peace, joy, and contentment in the circumstances that God has allowed into your life.

This year, 2020, has been quite interesting to say the least. It could seem like there has not been a year like this in our memory. For many of us, there was a normal way of life that we had become accustomed to. When one or two things in our life changes to a new normal it may take some time to get used to it. But what about when most of our normal is no longer normal?

Many things have happened; many things have changed. There have been some major factors, from which there have been many negative ripple effects. One thing that we cannot ignore is that things will probably never return to that which we used to call normal.

One of the major factors has been the Covid-19 pandemic. It started coming to the attention on a global level in January of 2020 and has since spread its infection around the world. The last time I checked some of the online data there were over 38 million people worldwide affected by the virus, resulting in over 1 million deaths.

Many world leaders required their citizens to “stay at home” for varying periods of time in an effort to slow the spread of the virus. This in turn caused many negative ripple effects. Since people weren’t traveling, the oil supply outpaced the demand, causing multiple ocean-going tankers to sit fully loaded in various ports around the world, unable to unload their cargo. This caused the oil market to crash to \$38.00 below zero—a record low never heard of in recorded history.

Restaurants and retail stores were not able to utilize their normal flow of customers, due to the “stay at home” orders. Some retail establishments were able to hang on until business resumed once more, while others discovered unique ways to reach their customers within the new normal. However, many other businesses were not able to weather the storm and needed to sell out.

At an individual level many things changed as well. Many people lost their jobs or else had their hours cut back substantially. This again caused a ripple effect that was not good. Some homeowners were not able to make their payments, causing them to go into default. Some renters could not make their rent payments, resulting in them losing their homes.

In the middle of these day-to-day struggles, there were many who came through in very thoughtful ways to help the less fortunate. There were individuals, churches, and non-profit organizations that paid others’ bills and provided free food and clothing. There were businesses that provided discounts to their customers to help them out during this time of difficulty.

Here we could ask a question, “How have we as individual Christians, or as a local church responded during this time of hardship for those around us?” Have we been doing our part? Have we been a leader in our community in this situation? Or are we being put to shame by the selfless efforts of the world around us? I know that I have been challenged to do more as I observe what others are doing. Let’s not become discouraged and let’s not become isolated from the needs around us.

But the virus pandemic and the resulting problems aren’t the only challenges facing us in 2020. There has been a number of other unsettling events as well. Early in the year, one part of the government set out to try to unseat the President through an impeachment. Eventually this was unsuccessful, but the polarization in the government wasn’t settled, in fact it only got worse. Towards the end of the year one of the long-time sitting Supreme Court judges died, creating a vacancy to be filled, either by the Republicans or the Democrats, whoever finally has the last say. The list could go on of the many chaotic events between these two.

Also as the year has progressed there seems to have been a concerted effort by some to create as much chaos and confusion as possible in our country. There have been all-out efforts to politicize the virus pandemic, alleging that it has been purposefully caused by the Republicans, the Democrats, the military, the elite in the medical establishment, or by some other country. Depending who is talking will determine who they believe the culprit is. One thing is common though and that is everyone seems to be alleging that the purpose behind the virus is either to determine the outcome of the Presidential election or it is simply an effort to destroy this country for some vaguely-defined purpose.

Another area of chaos and confusion has to do with equal rights and race equality. It seems at though there was a simmering level of unrest just below the surface for many people. All it took was for a person of color to be killed by a police officer and for someone present to use social media

*...continued on page 34*

# Freedom in Christ

Barry Grant  
Titanyen, Haiti



A group of men quietly crept through the overgrown jungle, hearing only the sound of their own breathing. Their eyes scanned everything around them. Their ears strained to pick up any sound. They knew the enemy was there, somewhere.

Suddenly there was a crack, and everything changed. The jungle erupted with shouting and gunfire. The group of soldiers had identified their enemy and began to attack. They pushed forward, fighting with everything they had. They had trained long and hard for this moment. Now it was real... life, and death.

Then it was quiet; everything was still. They had won the battle; they had overcome the enemy.

When we think of a war, we think of men pursuing one another, fighting for victory. The apostle Paul compares his Christian walk to fighting a battle. He says, *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith* –2 Timothy 4:7.

The Bible has much to say about this. In fact, **overcoming** is mentioned twenty-eight times in the New Testament. There are many promises given to those who overcome. I will list several:

- *He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my*

*Father, and before his angels* –Revelation 3:5.

- *He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son* –Revelation 21:7.

Those who find themselves on the front lines in the middle of a gruesome battle know exactly where they are. They wouldn't think of taking a break or relaxing. They certainly would never lay down their weapons and enjoy the scenery. They know that this kind of behavior would mean certain death. It is the same for us in the spiritual battle that we are in.

There is a difference between overcoming and maintaining. To *overcome*, we will need to press into the battle and fight; we need to be active in the battle. However, to *maintain*, we just stay put; we stay where we are. Only when the enemy approaches do we become active as we try to defend ourselves.

In one of the many battles of the Civil War, the northern troops had defeated the southern army and were pursuing them as they retreated. After several days, the Union forces decided to take a break, hunker down, and recuperate. The soldiers from the South soon realized they were no longer being chased, so they turned around and headed back to see where their pursuers were. They found the army from the North resting—they were relaxed; some were gambling and drinking, while others played games and told stories. They

did not know they were being surrounded, until just at the right moment, the confederates attacked, killing thousands.

Throughout the Bible we see examples of godly men spending all their life engaging the enemy. These men were on the offense, not just the defense. When we get into the mode of simply maintaining the position that we have achieved, the devil is satisfied as he slowly picks us apart.

There is also a difference between winning and not losing. When we see something that we want, we go after it; we fight for it. It is hard to obtain victory by simply trying to not fall.

Freedom and victory are two closely related words, which are both promised to the born-again believer. The problem is that people are confused about what true freedom really is. I recently saw a man wearing a sweatshirt that said, 'freedom isn't free'. Doesn't that apply to us today as Christians? It seems that people throw off all forms of structure and discipline to obtain freedom. But remember, *freedom isn't free*.

*Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer –2 Thessalonians 1:5.* If God wants to give us freedom, then why do so many choose bondage? Remember how the serpent 'beguiled' (or tricked) Eve into trading all her freedom and victory for a life of bondage. He did it with cunning speech and trickery. Also remember that that same serpent is doing the same thing today with God's people. Listed below are some reasons that I feel explain why so many have said "No" to the freedom that God promises and in turn have given themselves to a life of bondage.

### 1. We don't understand what freedom is

We believe freedom is doing whatever we want, sitting back and living life to the fullest. But the freedom that God promises is freedom from the bondage of sin. We are also free from the law because we want to do all that the Bible says. We want to live for, and please God, with our entire being. You don't have to tell someone "Thou shalt not kill" when he already loves his enemies. The law is for the lawless. If you are not willing to obey and follow all of the New Testament teachings, then the law is for you. *But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster –Galatians 3:23-25.*

It's easy to see this attitude in rebellious children. They complain about all the rules and structure that mom and dad put on them. They might say they can't wait until their eighteenth birthday so they can move away from home, but in reality, it's the rebellion of their heart that is speaking. The structure that mom and dad put in place is actually to

help the young person obtain freedom—a freedom within. Unfortunately, there are many adults today in the church who struggle with this same thing.

### 2. We don't think we need freedom

The devil wants us to think we are fine. Once there was a man who had a pet snake, which he played with every day. A few years passed and the snake had become very large, over 20 feet in length. His friends often came to watch him handle the large serpent. One day he decided to build an arena and invited the public to come and watch him handle the snake on stage for a small admittance fee. Each night people would pack the place and watch the show. When the show was nearly over each night, he would have the snake wrap itself around him as if it was going to kill him. Then when he had all their attention, he would command the snake to release and the snake would unravel. The crowd would go crazy with cheers and shouts.

Then one evening it was different. The show was going well as usual, at the end the snake coiled around him. The man gave the command to release, but nothing happened. He again commanded the snake to release, but it's grip only grew tighter. Finally, some men seated near the front said that someone needed to intercede and kill the snake. The man, half strangled, quickly spoke up and rebuked the men for such talk. "But if we don't kill the snake, it will kill you!" they protested.

"No, you don't understand! If you kill my snake, you kill my business. I'll have no more money! I'll have no more friends and people will once more ignore me! Don't kill the snake!"

The people pleaded with the man, but to no avail. Moments later his head fell, the snake had killed its victim.

The devil wants us to think that if we give up our sin, we will lose out. But in reality, this is a lie, and the truth is exactly the opposite. If we remain in our sin, we will die. Remember, the wages of sin is death. Let's not allow the devil to blind us into thinking we are free, when clearly, we are not.

Many people think money brings freedom, but actually, the love of money brings certain bondage. This sin has bound many folks and will continue to do so until we can figure out true freedom in Christ.

### 3. We are not willing to forsake all, to obtain freedom

Jesus tells the parable of the man who found a treasure in a field. He wanted that treasure more than anything else. He knew that to obtain the treasure, he would need to buy the field. He didn't have enough money to buy the field, so he had to have a sale. He sold all that he had. He bought the

field. He possessed the treasure. Do you think he struggled with selling his possessions? No! He knew what he wanted and was very willing to give all that he had for it. I'm sure he was super excited as he sold his stuff. Why? Because he was anticipating something far greater than anything he had ever seen or ever possessed; he would never regret what he was doing. He wasn't thinking about his things; he was only thinking about the treasure. What if the man had only sold part of his possessions? The answer is simple. He would not have obtained the treasure.

Jesus says, *So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple* –Luke 14:33. We must also forsake all to receive the treasure, the Kingdom of God. It isn't something that we are required to do, but something we want to do, so we do it with joy! I have sat down with many people who say they are ready to give their life to Christ. I carefully ask them if they have counted the cost. Unfortunately, most of them change their mind before we are done talking. They thought being a Christian was this fun thing of 'having a good time'. When you start talking about crucifying the flesh, denying yourself, forsaking all that you have... only the ones that really want it will smile and accept.

I often share in Haiti about having a large box full of \$100 bills, I ask them who wouldn't go home and sell all that they have for this box? One young, unconverted man said, "Well that's easy! There may be a million dollars in that box and my measly possessions are worth very little. I will gladly trade you!"

Do we look at possessing the Kingdom like that? Or does the devil convince us that the true valuables in life are our possessions, our opinions, and our own will. So, we hang on to them, never obtaining the Kingdom. That is choosing bondage rather than freedom, defeat rather than victory.

#### 4. We love our sin

We need a great hatred for our sin before we will ever gain victory over it. Too often the devil tempts us with sin that seems enjoyable, if only for a season. Once we start enjoying the sin, we fall in love with it and bondage follows. We must fervently pray for a deep hatred for sin, knowing that its wages are death. When we hate our sin, we will hate ourselves when we are in sin, and we will plead with God to forgive us. If we do not hate our sin, then we will not be sorry for it. If we are not sorry for our sin, then we will never truly repent.

Imagine looking out the window of your house and seeing the neighbor boy throw a rock through your car's windshield. You run outside and ask the boy what he's thinking. He smiles

and walks away. You go to his house and ask to speak with the boy's parents. You tell them what happened, and they holler for the boy. He comes and gets a severe scolding and they tell him to apologize to you. Rolling his eyes, he muffles an apology... Do you accept? No! He's not sorry. He is only apologizing because he must! Is that how it is with us at times? We sin and we know that God knows. We know the Bible says we can't do that, so we repent, and say we're sorry. Are we? I believe if we really hated sin the way we ought, we would stay far away from it. And if we would fall into sin, we would immediately fall on our faces and plead with the God of our salvation for forgiveness.

#### 5. We think we can obtain freedom another way

Think of a person living in a third world country. They have no toilet, no running water, and no electricity. They eat the same thing almost every day. There is filth everywhere. It smells. The bugs, especially mosquitoes, are always there, biting. There's no relief. This is their life.

Now, if you can, imagine yourself as this person. Are you free? Do you have freedom?

Maybe we would think we were in bondage? Sometimes we believe we are bound or free, simply by observing our circumstances. When this is the case, then we also believe that if the circumstances were better, we would be more free. We then try to obtain as much as we physically can. We believe that the better the job, and the bigger or nicer the house, the more free we will be. Most poor people believe that money would end their misery and make them free. We all know that this is not true. Money does not bring freedom. Only the Lord Jesus can. There are numerous stories about rich people turning to drugs or even suicide in an attempt to solve their problems.

I have known some very rich people and some of the world's poorest inhabitants. I can honestly say that the poor people are more free and more happy. Could it be that the simpler our life, the more content we are with Christ?

When we realize that Jesus Christ is the only way to true freedom, then we will pursue Him as hard as many people pursue money. And we can quickly have that freedom that every soul desires.

When we are ready to put our all on the altar, when we are done with what this world offers, when the glamour of vanity fair no longer excites us, and when we can say with Paul "to live is Christ, to die is gain", then, and only then, can we obtain victory and enjoy true freedom—Freedom in Christ.



# Understanding the Times

Larry Zook  
Kalona, IA



## Unprecedented

—without previous instance; never before known or experienced; unexampled or unparalleled: *an unprecedented event*.

You may have heard this word used more frequently in 2020 than in any prior year of recent memory. It has been used, and I believe quite accurately, to describe many issues and situations that we have heard about or have experienced personally. My daughter suggested it should be designated the ‘word of the year’ for 2020. She observed, “You have used the word in your sermons, President Trump uses it in his speeches, and we read it frequently in the news.”

As the events of this year have unfolded before us, many of these events seem *unprecedented*, at least for us and for our generation. We are forced to make decisions about things that we have not faced before. There are perplexing questions that need answers. Sometimes relationships are stressed because our brother feels differently about the issue. When we wish to gather the facts for an informed decision, we have an *unprecedented* (there’s that word again) volume of information and opinions. But alas, is it fact or is it fiction?!

How have we done so far in the decisions we’ve made in these new realities? And how prepared are we in our hearts and minds to face the things that are yet to come? Do the things we choose to do, and say, honor the Lord?

When we talk about being prepared, a good illustration is the following story about preparing for a storm. On August

10 of this year, a derecho storm (a widespread, long-lived, straight-line windstorm) began in South Dakota and then traveled east, covering 700 miles in 14 hours. It left a wide swath of damage through multiple states, damaging trees, towns, and millions of acres of corn and beans. (Did we say *unprecedented*?) Not far from where I live is the city of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. This city suffered a lot of damage to buildings and trees from sustained wind speeds in excess of 120 mph. About two weeks after the storm, I was speaking with a homeowner in this city. We were standing in his back yard, which had been mostly cleared of storm debris. He was describing to me how his back yard was completely filled with downed trees, pointing to the damaged areas on his house that were struck by the falling trees. So I asked him, “And where were you during the storm?”

He said, “Oh, I was here at home. I work from home and was in my office just doing my normal routine of work. Then my wife came in and told me there was a warning about a storm approaching, possibly with hail and winds of 90 mph.” He continued, “So, I thought, well, I should probably do something, so I went out to the street where we had put the garbage cans and brought them back into the garage where they would be secure. After I had finished that, I thought ‘ok, I guess we’re ready now.’” He paused his story to chuckle, and we both had a little laugh to consider how insignificant that ‘preparation’ would later turn out to be. The story continued... After his return from the garage, they continued to observe the storm’s increasing intensity. Finally, they sought shelter in the basement, listening to the periodic crashing and banging as flying debris struck the house. After about an hour, the storm subsided, and they came out unhurt to view a devastated neighborhood.

The point in this story is to illustrate how easily we take the minimalist approach to preparation when we expect only that which to us seems normal. But we have seen a rise in *unprecedented* events, and there seems to be a growing sense of unease in our nation that things may not return to what we have thought of as ‘normal’. Should we be giving more thought in preparing for things to come? I believe so. That is my motivation for this exhortation. I am reminded of the words Jesus had for the Pharisees; ... *O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?* –Matthew 16:3. If we would discern the times we are living in, just like we discern the weather, I believe we could say (hypothetically) that the morning sky is red and lowering, and it will not be fair weather ahead. As the Scriptures have forewarned us, we should expect the following in the end times:

1. ...wars and rumours of wars ... nation [Gk. ethnos; ‘ethnic people groups’] shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom ... famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places – Matthew 24:6-7.
2. ...*signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;* –Luke 21:25.
3. ... *peace [will be taken] from the earth ... that they should kill one another...* –Revelation 6:4.
4. and for believers specifically, they shall be:
  - › hated of all men (Matthew 10:22; Mark 13:13; Luke 21:17)
  - › betrayed by their own family (Matthew 10:34-37; Mark 13:12; Luke 21:16)
  - › accounted as sheep for the slaughter (Psalm 44:22; Jeremiah 12:3; Romans 8:36)
  - › brought before rulers (Matthew 10:19; Mark 13:11; Luke 12:11)

These things are indeed being fulfilled in our day. Jesus called it, ...*the beginning of sorrows* –Matthew 24:8. This was a term that described birth pangs—a woman in labor just prior to delivering a child. Therefore, we can expect that what we are seeing today, will only intensify as the end of the age draws near and the return of our Lord is at hand.

As some examples of the kinds of events that should make us stop and think, there are three recent ones that come to mind, which have affected conservative Anabaptist individuals:

- **Indiana** –A husband and wife, age 40, were robbed at gunpoint by two men, and then shot. The wife was killed, and the husband seriously wounded.
- **Oregon** –Raging forest fires threatened properties, and church brethren fled their houses under evacuation orders along with hundreds of thousands throughout the state. The wind drove the fires toward populated areas, and there were reports that the spread of fires was enhanced by some persons intentionally starting more fires. Looting of the vacated homes was also known to be a potential threat.
- **California** –Included among the restrictions placed on churches due to the Covid-19 pandemic was a ban on singing in church.

None of these three examples have a connection with any of the others, however, they are examples that relate to three separate issues. The first one relates to violence that causes us bodily harm. The second one relates to damage brought upon our homes and possessions. And the third one relates to our faith, and governmental regulations that are contrary to the Scriptures. One thing that these three have in common is the human element—things that others do, or threaten to do, against us.

You may be thinking, “What do you mean about preparing for things like this?” Let me try to explain. I believe the first and most important preparation is in our hearts and minds. This is the preparation that will give us direction and stability in moments of crisis. We don’t know what specific things we personally may be faced with, so the focus should be on preparing for whatever might come our way, whether good or ill.

This brings us to what I think is one of the most important questions we need to ask ourselves in these unprecedented times. “When I am faced with a crisis situation, will my actions and responses glorify Christ and magnify Him?” This question embraces and assumes the truth that glorifying Christ is the most important thing for any person here on this earth!

The apostle Paul stated this clearly: According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain –Philippians 1:20-21. For Paul it was a matter of earnest expectation that Christ should be magnified! How does that impact how prepared I am for things to come? In answer, let’s consider how the world thinks, as compared to how the Christian thinks, concerning wars, distresses, perplexities, etc.



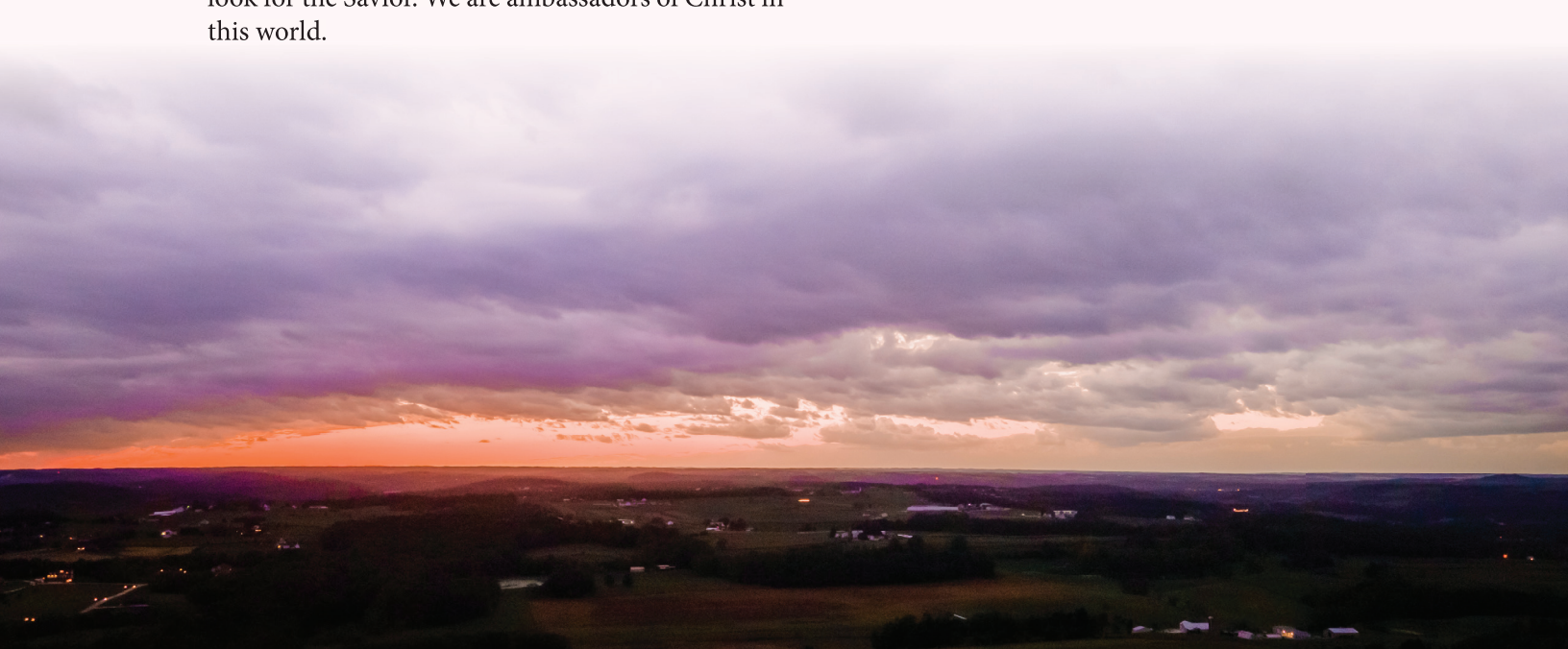
Ye were sometimes <b>darkness</b> , (THE WORLD)	Now are ye <b>light in the Lord</b> (THE CHRISTIAN)
› My life must be preserved <i>at all cost</i>	› My Lord must be honored <i>at all cost</i>
› <i>Arm yourself</i> with guns	› <i>Arm yourselves</i> with the mind of Christ
› Get self-defense training and learn to fight	› Be harmless as doves and learn to pray
› Secure precious metals, such as gold and silver. Protect from thieves.	› Lay up treasure in heaven. It will not tarnish and is safe from thieves.
› Hate those who oppose you. Revile them.	› Love your enemies. Pray for them.
› Support environmental issues and green energy. Save the planet—it's all we have.	› Be a good steward of this earth and use it with thankfulness. Expect decay. It will be restored after purging by fire.
› Restore this country to its “Christian” origins	› Declare plainly that you seek another country that is not of this world—a heavenly one.
› Get involved politically. Help put a stop to this nation's downward spiral.	› Preach the kingdom of God so that some may be saved from this world's downward spiral.
› Prepare... to be safe in this world.	› Prepare... for the world to come.

Now that we have contrasted two different ways of thinking, it should be obvious that there will also be very different actions and outcomes, depending on what we allow to guide our thinking. What I have listed here are just a few of the things that form a biblical foundation for making life choices. As you read this list, you probably thought of some current issues that these points touch on. These are topics that we should be talking about before a crisis, that way we will be prepared when we need to face them. Here's a list of some more foundational truths for us to ponder as we prepare our hearts.

1. Do not fear. Be of good courage because Jesus promised that He would be with us, even to the end of the world.
2. Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Savior. We are ambassadors of Christ in this world.

3. We have no continuing city here, but we seek one to come.
4. We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against ... the rulers of darkness of this world.
5. We need our brethren. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, but so much the more as we see the day approaching.

Our Father is desiring for us to be lights in the world, lights in this crooked and perverse generation. We need the grace of God to endure to the end, and not only for ourselves, but also to be a light for this generation, to show them the path of holiness.





# How Should I Vote?

Leonard Martin  
Bethel, PA

As the year 2020 winds down and we enter the last few months, there is one thing foremost on the minds of many—“Who will be the next president of the United States?” As Christians, we are confronted by the numerous campaign efforts. Lawns are littered with folks expressing their sentiment on voting issues. Billboards are being used to catch the eye of the passerby. We might even find our ‘Christian’ neighbors or relatives encouraging us to “Get out and vote, because” they reason, “when good men do nothing, then evil triumphs”.

What does the Bible say to us about being involved in the affairs of this world? How did Jesus and His apostles relate to the affairs of the country in which they lived? Do we jeopardize our New Testament standing if we get involved in politics?

Ultimately, what is it that determines who gets into office? Is it the people who go to the polls to vote? Is it foreign countries who allegedly manipulate the voting? Is it the one with the strongest voice, the one who can shove himself to the top? Or is there something else that will ultimately decide who the winner will be?

There are more questions we could ask: Should we care about who gets into office? Is it important if the elected officials are pro-life or pro-abortion? Does it matter whether or not they support the LGBT movement? Does it make a difference if they have conservative values or if they are more liberal in their approach to morality? Do we care if they are pushing for socialistic healthcare and such like?

Of course, we care. There is a lot at stake. Depending who gets in, and what their agenda is, will make a big difference

in the world in which we live. So, if we do care, and it does concern us, what should our approach be to the loud call to: “Get out and vote?” How should the Christian respond to the urging to get involved?

First, we have the teaching on the two kingdoms. If there are two kingdoms, what are the distinctions and who are the rulers of the two? Jesus, in answering Pilate’s question, stated, *...My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence* –John 18:36.

When Jesus was tempted by the Devil as recorded in Luke 4, Satan made the claim to be the king of the earthly kingdoms—*And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it* –Luke 4:6.

So, we have Christ’s Kingdom, which is not of this world with Jesus as its ruler; and we have the kingdom of this world, with Satan as its head. The Apostle Paul commands us: *Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing...* –2 Corinthians 6:17. This reality of the two kingdoms can only be lived out by accepting that we, who are born from above, are a part of a heavenly kingdom even though we are currently living among those of the earthly kingdom.

The Apostle Paul describes the Christian as being an ambassador—*Now then we are ambassadors for Christ...* –2 Corinthians 5:20. If we are to take this concept, it also shows that we are citizens of another kingdom while we abide in this earthly kingdom. An ambassador represents the government

of HIS home country while living at the capital of ANOTHER country. So, we are ambassadors of the heavenly kingdom and we are representing that kingdom here on this earth. An ambassador will not get involved in the politics of the country he is an ambassador to. His primary job is only to bridge communications between the two countries. So likewise, if we (as heavenly citizens) would vote while living in this earthly kingdom, we would be violating our position (as ambassadors) in the heavenly kingdom.

Furthermore, we can read in the Old Testament book of Daniel, *This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men* –Daniel 4:17. In this verse we see that God alone is the one who puts men into positions of authority. It even says that he will put in place the *basest of men*. This word *basest* simply means, “low one.” As New Covenant Christians we ought to pray fervently and leave it to God to rule and give the position to whomsoever He wills.

How can we, as Christians, get involved in the voting of this world, when men get to the top of the polls by destroying their opponents’ characters, and trampling over everyone else to get to the top of the pile? In Ephesians we are told to *...have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them* –Ephesians 5:11. Campaigning for political office has become such a “dog eat dog”, such

an assassination of character, that it is a far cry from the New testament teaching for believers. As Christians we are to, *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another* –Romans 12:10, our life is to be one of, *Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing...* –1 Peter 3:9, and we are to practice, *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another...* –Colossians 3:13.

Rather than helping a candidate to secure his office, we should be reprovng them for their ungodly attitudes and actions. You don’t need to drive far through urban or rural areas until you see the battle that is raging between the two parties. Ugly, unkind, demeaning statements are being publicly shouted from the signs along the highway. How can any Christian get involved in this war of words? What is meant when God’s Word tells us to *...come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you,* –2 Corinthians 6:17. In fact the next verse continues the thought, *And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty* –2 Corinthians 6:18.

The whole system is anti-Christian. The only option for Christ’s followers is to be completely separate, letting them have their kingdom, while we stick to ours.

Maybe the world understands the concept of the two kingdoms better than we do. Some time ago, a member of



our congregation was asked to serve as a juror in our local court system. The husband called the court and asked for a release because of Christian values. Whoever he was talking to asked if he votes. He said, “No, he does not.” On that basis his wife was released from serving as a juror.

I think we underestimate the importance of keeping the lines clear between the two kingdoms. If we are “entangling ourselves in the affairs of this life” (2 Timothy 2:4), I fear we will lose the good graces that the government has given to us as conservative people—being recognized as a separate people.

As Christians, we have a gospel message that will change a person from the inside out. New converts to following Christ will become ...*a new creature: old things [will be] passed away; behold, all things [will] become new* –2 Corinthians 5:17.

Going to the polls to try to change the world is going to be a losing cause. The government with its criminal justice systems, its prison systems, and its rehabilitation centers are primarily dealing with symptoms, instead of root causes. They will even tell you that a sexual molester will always be a sexual molester. However, we know that the gospel of Jesus Christ can truly deliver a person from his addictions, whether it be alcohol, drugs, or immorality. If every Christian would influence even just one other man or woman to become a true follower of Jesus Christ, then we will have accomplished more than we ever could by going to the polls every year for the rest of our lives. Going to the polls to change the moral climate of our nation is not the answer!

A friend of mine told me that there are over 100,000 homeless children living on the streets of Mexico City. It is also interesting that Mexico does not allow abortion. So, did the law fix the problem? No, the children were still unwanted. Even though their lives were not terminated, having over 100,000 homeless children in the city is certainly not a good alternative to allowing abortion. We certainly are not advocating for abortion; we are simply making the point that forced morality never fixes a problem.

If you and I can influence one mother to get born again, then rather than abort her child, she would love it, train it, and teach it Christian values, how much more will we have done for the good of the nation?! Those who scoff and say we are not doing our ‘Christian’ duty by not going to the polls, should consider that the gospel message in our hands has the potential to do a lot more.

I wonder if our prosperous lifestyle, and years of ease, has made us willing to cross the line of the two kingdoms. Are

we so passionate to keep our homes, our businesses, and our affluent lifestyles that the thought of suffering has become foreign to us? If we think like the world, and live like the world, then we will begin to adopt the world’s methods (just so we can keep our little stash here on this earth).

Throughout the centuries, the belief and practice of those who are born from above has been ...*that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country [and that] ...they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city* –Hebrews 11:13-16.

If we examine the life of Jesus or His apostles through out the New Testament, we find that they never involved themselves “to make change” through the secular government of their day. Jesus and the Apostles preached a separate kingdom; they taught a very different kingdom lifestyle that did not allow them to blend with the carnal, earthly kingdom perspective. Their message was repentance. When have we ever heard that one of our country’s politician’s primary purpose was to preach the gospel and that folks were getting converted due to his position in politics? The kingdom of this world is known to execute itself through power and coercion; the message of God’s Word is that ...*we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren* –1 John 3:16.

In conclusion, for us to go to the polls in November would be a violation of the two-kingdom principle and our kingdom focus. The rules involved in the game of politics, and the way it is played, is so anti-Christian that NO New Covenant believer should even begin to get involved nor should they want to be a part in any way. Our primary position is to go to God in sincere prayer. If Christians would truly care and would pray fervently, then I believe God will continue to orchestrate the affairs of the government for His purposes and for His glory.

So, how will we vote in the upcoming election? Let’s make our voices be heard in the halls of Heaven this November as we are commanded to in God’s Word—*I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth* –1 Timothy 2:1-4.



# The Wisdom of This World

Lee Rufener  
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*Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world?  
hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? –1 Corinthians 1:20.*

Perhaps some of us may stumble at the thought that there is a type of wisdom which is antagonistic to virtue, but the Scriptures affirm it to be so. While wisdom is highly esteemed and exalted throughout the proverbs of Solomon and, indeed, other inspired writers as well, we must honestly look at such an accumulation of intricate understanding and concur that wisdom, of itself, is amoral.

Wisdom is the understanding of how to accomplish our ends, whatever those ends may be. They may be temporal or spiritual—good or evil. Such wisdom is built upon a deep understanding of human nature, of the nature of plants and animals, and of the forces of nature. It is ultimately a thorough acquaintance with cause and effect. The man who sits on the back of his stubborn mule and kicks, spurs, beats, and

curse the beast has little wisdom. Despite all his animated and frustrating endeavors, the animal remains unmoved. Wisdom ties the carrot on a stick and holds it in front of the beast's nose. As the mule moves toward the treasure, the carrot moves with him. Such is the manner of wisdom.

We live in an era that has placed a premium on education. There are those with capacity to accumulate a wealth of knowledge but have little wisdom. I have a neighbor who earned a degree in Environmental Ethics. I asked him what sort of a job he is qualified to do with his study. He stated that there was no practical use for his schooling but that the only job he could do in the field is teach Environmental Ethics. This is not wisdom but knowledge (if it can even be considered that). Wisdom is the possessing of a practical

application of knowledge. It consists of knowing how men or things will respond to the influences placed upon them and how to rectify those forces to accomplish the goal.

All wisdom comes from God and is released to man at His dispensing. Still there are men who can apprehend wisdom without the character to use it for His glory. Such was the character of Ahithophel. And such is the case of many scholarly believers today who give themselves to the accumulation of wisdom but fail to surrender their prideful will unto God.

*And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had enquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom. II Samuel 16:23* This is a remarkable statement concerning this man. He possessed understanding far beyond many godly men. He bore this wisdom in such an astonishing manner that the words he spoke tumbled forth consistently as an oracle of God. Such a man cannot be ignored, and thus, *Ahithophel was the king's counsellor: I Chronicles 27:33* David stood in need of such wisdom in order to rule the people of God and fight the battles of the Lord, and he had sense and humility enough to use it. Those wise in their own conceit go on their way disdaining to ask counsel of any man wiser than themselves, in obvious denial that such a person exists. The hyper-spiritual individuals spurn to ask counsel of men, declaring that the Lord is quite sufficient for them. The pharisaical are quick to cite the deficiencies in those such as Ahithophel that disqualifies their counsel from their consideration. But the wise and the spiritual ask counsel and are glad to avail themselves a drink from the fountain of the wise. Therefore, David raised this man to the highest platform of honor and usefulness.

But just as godly men are not always wise, even so wise men are not always godly. It is here that we read of an amazing detail about this man. *So was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom. II Samuel 16:23* What sort of man can stand with both David and Absalom? What character could lend his wisdom to the designs and intentions of both men? Daniel faithfully served four heathen kings to his credit. However, to aid Absalom in usurping the throne by ousting the Lord's anointed, dishonoring his father, and defiling his bed required hardness of heart that rivals that of Judas Iscariot. Surely Ahithophel was as destitute of solid character as he was rich in wisdom. Thus, we must solemnly conclude that wisdom is not the sole property of the godly. Neither is it, of itself, spiritual.

*The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. Luke 16:8* Wisdom is the understanding which gives us the capacity to accomplish our end, and the world has mastered it in things pertaining to its kingdom.

Sports, entertainment, commerce, education, technology, religion, and global ideology have all benefited from man's application of God's wisdom. The devil knows how to accomplish his ends and how to bring the whole world to his feet worshiping the beast and the false prophet. We do well to examine the pitfalls of Ahithophel as the epitome of a foolish wise man, for *this wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. James 3:15* While it may appear that I am confusing the source of this wisdom, it seems to me that God is the original propagator of all wisdom. Every man that attains unto securing a morsel of it, while maintaining an unholy agenda will use God's wisdom for his sinister purposes and thus ministers it from below. Such was the wisdom of Ahithophel as he freely interspersed the oracles of God with that which was ...

### ...Earthly

The secularization of godly principles is nothing new. In the Book of Genesis, when the sons of God intermarried with the daughters of men, they produced a hybrid giant in the land. Those who should have had a heavenly agenda cast it aside for an earthly one. *And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David's counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh, while he offered sacrifices. II Samuel 15:12* He was obviously not void of scriptural principles, but when the summons arrived to participate in the conspiracy, he consented, unabashedly offering sacrifices to God and wisdom to Absalom. An ounce of loyalty, gratitude, righteousness, or the fear of the Lord would have demanded him to reject the invitation. But popular sentiment ran strong with the new candidate, *for the people increased continually with Absalom. II Samuel 15:12*

*For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company. Psalm 55:12-14* How painful it was for David to stand by and watch this treachery unfold. It was not just the surrender of his earthly throne. That he would have relinquished gladly. It was the pain of watching those loved and trusted individuals barter away eternal principles for earthly pursuits.

Herein lies the bane of the earthly mind. It cares little about the opinion of God, His Word, or His people. These will cast their lot and energies to the present and popular fashions of the day no matter how ridiculous they appear. He that dispensed wisdom yesterday as the oracle of God to establish the purposes of the kingdom, shall today dispense that same wisdom to overturn it. Why? Did David offend him? Did David change? No, David did not change, but his

circumstances did. Ahithophel cared nothing about loyalty and truth, it was personal advantage that concerned him. *And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom. II Samuel 15:13* We may rest assured that a messenger came with the same tidings to Ahithophel. While David is seated solidly upon the throne, so Ahithophel sits with him. When David is cast off, Ahithophel casts him off as well.

So, today, our churches are full of similar secular wisdom. We know what it takes to attract large and growing churches. Godly principles are abandoned in lieu of worldly entertainment that has captivated the hearts of men. Out with the old, solid music, modest dress, simplicity, and honor for the elders. Traditions are removed just because they are old. Sober preaching must be exchanged for a lighter, more positive message. This is wisdom ... but not from above.

### ...Sensual

*Then said Absalom to Ahithophel, Give counsel among you what we shall do. And Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Go in unto thy father's concubines, which he hath left to keep the house; and all Israel shall hear that thou art abhorred of thy father: then shall the hands of all that are with thee be strong. II Samuel 16:20, 21* This is good counsel – well adapted, that is, to establish the purpose of Absalom. Morally, it is wicked, but it will work well to its purpose. Ahithophel understands the nature of people and situations. As Absalom makes himself as odious as possible to his father, the breach becomes unrepairable and there is no middle ground. A militant army does the same. Once the sides are securely drawn, Ahithophel preaches courage, decision, and action.

*Moreover Ahithophel said unto Absalom, Let me now choose out twelve thousand men, and I will arise and pursue after David this night: and I will come upon him while he is weary and weak handed, and will make him afraid: and all the people that are with him shall flee; and I will smite the king only: and I will bring back all the people unto thee: the man whom thou seekest is as if all returned: so all the people shall be in peace. And the saying pleased Absalom well, and all the elders of Israel. II Samuel 17:1-4* Defeat David while he is discouraged and before he has time to recover from the shock of the events. This is prodigious wisdom that is utterly despicable and void of character. Instead, it feeds the ego and is fueled by the driving challenge, the sense of accomplishment, and the proving of his personal worth. People will climb mountains and perform the impossible, not because they are void of wisdom but because they are sensual. They do it to fulfill a passion burning within them, and they use all the wisdom of this world's strategy to accomplish it.

### ...Devilish

While worldly wisdom has its strengths, it has its pitfalls as well, for it is rooted deeply in shortsighted pride. If the princes of this world would have *known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. I Corinthians 2:8* But Hushai knows this and thus he valiantly sets foot in Absalom's court in attempt to befuddle the scene. He offers a grander scheme with the promise of a future ultimate and glorious victory with Absalom at the wheel ... along with a slight delay.

*And Hushai said unto Absalom ... I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person. So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground: and of him and of all the men that are with him there shall not be left so much as one. Moreover, if he be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there be not one small stone found there. II Samuel 17:11-13* This appealed strongly to the pride of the rebellion and lured them into the net of their own undoing. He who can give good counsel is capable of recognizing bad. This was bad counsel and Ahithophel understood this well. Had he cared an ounce for the welfare of Absalom's person, he would have pitied and pleaded with the infatuated upstart. Humility would have entreated and expostulated to save the deluded novice from his impending fate. But he cared nothing for the fate of King David, nor his son. His own honor was his god. Until now, he was regarded as the man whose words were as the oracles of God and he reigned supreme in that sphere. But his pride could not bear the rejection of his wisdom. *And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father. II Samuel 17:23*

Thus, does the pride that accompanies worldly wisdom carry men headlong to destruction. *Fire in the heart brings smoke to the head.* Though he departs not from this life in a fit of rage, it is his utter disgust at the folly of such simple dolts and their ill rejection of his superiority that he deliberately and calmly chooses to exit this life. Here is the acme of a foolish wise man. What a grand mistake it is to admire a man on the basis of his keen mind or to suppose him good because he is wise. *Where is the wise? Where is the scribe?* Let him first bow low before the counsels of God, then come and impart wisdom.



# Vision

God, take my eyes off myself,  
Help me see more of You.  
Too often I find my heart and mind  
With nothing but “me” in view.

Teach me to see what You see, Lord,  
The visions that live in Your heart.  
There’s so much more to be living for,  
Father, give me Your vision to start!

When all I can see is my hurting,  
And only troubles seem to exist.  
Open my eyes to what You see, Father!  
The picture’s much bigger than this!

Behind each storm, You see sunshine;  
Veiled in each death, Lord, You see life!  
Under the sorrows, You see a song,  
Within the fire—a purified life.

When I cry over the wasteland of dreams,  
You see what is out of my view.  
Just below the expanse of loss, and death,  
You see the new life, budding through!



Father, You know that to bring forth new life,  
First there must be a cross.  
The seeds for these delicate buds,  
Lord, come not, without a cost.

So when I am tempted to despair Father,  
And my view is crowded with gloom,  
When the fire I feel in my life,  
And the future, for happiness, leaves no room.

Remind me that in love you send fire,  
Not to kill, but to revive.  
For it burns away the rubble,  
That a pure life then will thrive.

It takes Your purging to reveal new growth,  
It calls for pain, to prune.  
But if I see as You do Lord,  
To Your will, my heart will be in tune.

No longer will I run from fire,  
Or cry when I feel Your knife.  
Instead of pain, my eyes seek Your gain,  
And the product of a Christlike life.

*By Adrianna Fanton | Griswold, IA*

# Never Giv

Jesse Sutherland  
Millersburg, OH

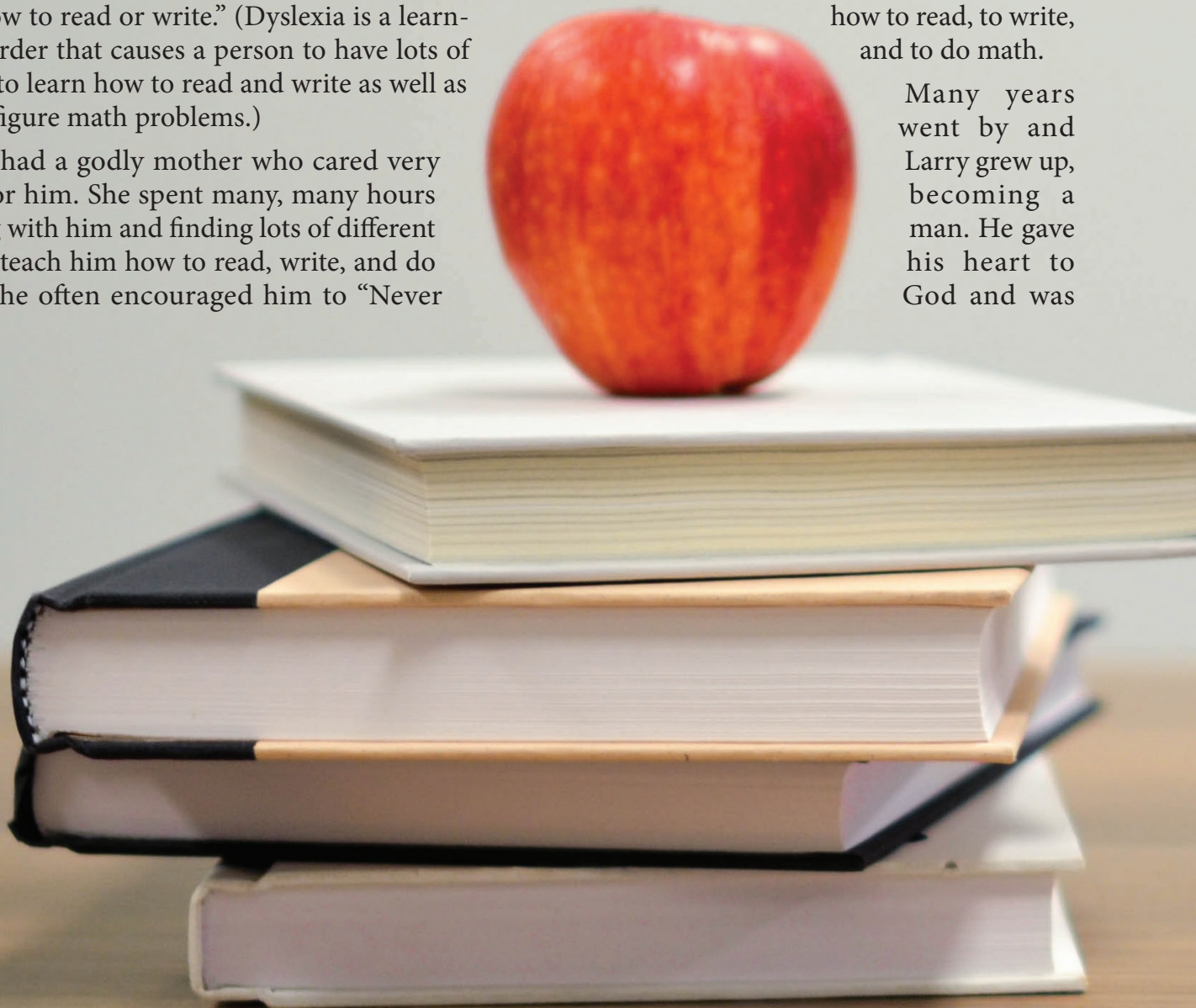
**A**round forty years ago, there was a baby boy born who we will call Larry. As he started to become a toddler his parents discovered that he had some learning problems. They took him to a doctor when he was around four years old. After checking him out, the doctor told Larry's parents that he had some bad news for them. "Larry has such bad dyslexia that he will never learn how to read or write." (Dyslexia is a learning disorder that causes a person to have lots of trouble to learn how to read and write as well as how to figure math problems.)

Larry had a godly mother who cared very much for him. She spent many, many hours working with him and finding lots of different ways to teach him how to read, write, and do math. She often encouraged him to "Never

give up" whenever he was having a difficult day in school. She knew that the Bible teaches us to persevere (or to never give up). In Galatians 6:9 it says, "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." Studying his lessons in school was very difficult for Larry. He often got discouraged, yet he never gave up!

Eventually, he learned how to read, to write, and to do math.

Many years went by and Larry grew up, becoming a man. He gave his heart to God and was



# e U p

born again. After spending a couple of years on the mission field, Larry felt God asking him to become a nurse. To become a nurse meant that Larry had to go back to school for several more years. There were times that his schoolwork was quite challenging. Sometimes, after having a rough time with his schoolwork, Larry would call his mother. He would tell her that he was ready to quit classes because he was having such a hard time learning. Can you guess what she would tell him? “Never give up,” she would say. “You can do it with God’s help!” Larry ended up passing all of his classes and becoming a nurse! He is very thankful that he had a caring mother who taught him to “Never give up.”

There are times that even adults face some very difficult times in life. In these times, they may feel like giving up. But it is important that we “Never

Give Up” because Matthew 24:13 says, “But he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved.”

The next time you find something difficult to complete and you feel like giving up, remember that God wants you to keep on trying until you accomplish the task before you. This lesson is important to learn when you are young. There are many things that God wants us to learn. It is easier to learn something when we are young instead of waiting until we are old. Also, if we have a teachable attitude, it is much easier to learn than if we choose to have a stubborn will. Thus, God teaches us as we surrender our lives to Him and His will.



# Old Fashioned Parents and *Jet Age Teenagers*

By David W. Lehigh  
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PO Box 391, Hanover, PA 17331

The family car was all ready to go. The seventeen-year-old driver was behind the wheel, listening with impatience to his father's last instructions concerning speed, time for getting home, and places to avoid. Finally, he said goodbye and the car was off. But as they went, the seventeen-year-old said to his companion, "Dad's still living in the dark ages."

This remark calls attention to a problem which is old, and yet is more acute at this present time than it has ever been before. More than three thousand years ago a father asked a heavenly visitor the question, "How shall we order the child?" (Judges 13:12). The generation gap has been a problem for years. In conversation, in cartoons, in magazine articles, etc.—one comes across repeated complaints like these: "You just can't reason with teenagers; they want their own way; they won't listen to advice; you can't talk sensibly with them." On the other hand, teenagers sometimes complain that parents are arbitrary and unsympathetic and that they are trying to force their children to follow the same pattern in which they grew up. Teens claim that times have changed, and they want to work out better ways of doing things.

It is true that in many ways, times have changed. At the beginning of the twentieth century there were no automobiles, no airplanes, and no radios or televisions. Electricity was not in general use, since the methods of transmitting high-voltage current had not been discovered. Telephones were few, and generally used only locally, since

the small independent companies that operated the local lines were not all connected. Farm crops were harvested with much hand work, and today's mass production techniques in industry were still far in the future.

The achievements of men have changed, but the Word of God has never changed, and it never will. Jesus says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matthew 24:35). The principles of the Bible have stood the test of centuries, and they are still valid. The Bible contains a number of principles which apply to the controversy between parents and teenagers. Many are from the Book of Proverbs, written by Solomon, but inspired by the Holy Spirit.

## 1. Instructions to Parents

**First:** Careful and purposeful child-training is needed. The Bible says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). This is much more than a command to use the rod of correction. "Train up" means careful teaching and guidance. It corresponds to the instruction in Ephesians 6:4, "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The best teaching has always been a consistent example. The alert parent will find many opportunities to clinch a lesson. A boy of six, for example, was rejoicing in his newly learned ability to read. He happened to discover that the family's maid could not do this. He ran into his father's study, crying,



“Daddy, did you know the maid can’t read, and she’s ever so much older than I am?” His father picked up a book and opened it. “Here,” he said. “Can you read this?” The little boy stood dumbfounded. The book was written in Chinese. In telling the story many years later, he added, “Whenever I am tempted to despise the ignorance of someone else, I remember my father’s lesson: I cannot read Chinese.”

**Second:** Begin child-training early. The Bible says, “Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying” (Proverbs 19:18). One who trains a dog must insist on obedience, or his training will be unsuccessful. Training a child is much the same, but with this difference: While we train the dog so that he may please us, we train the child to know what is best for his own good and happiness. For this reason the training of a child is so very important. Children do not belong to us. God only lends them to us, and He can take them back at any time.

**Third:** Don’t be so busy that you have no time for the companionship and training of your children. It is true that these are busy days. Children are perceptive. If the family is

struggling against difficult odds to make ends meet, they will realize it, and cooperate. But if they sense that the parents are more interested in making money than they are in their own children, the children are likely to become bitter about it. One of the most common complaints made by teenagers in writing to counselors is that their parents are too much concerned with making money to be companions to them.

**Fourth:** Keep a cheerful attitude and maintain a sense of humor. We do not mean to encourage foolish jesting, which is condemned in the Bible, but the wise man said (Proverbs 17:22), “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones.” The child whose parents are able to laugh in the face of irritations and disappointments has a priceless heritage. When the one-year-old pulls the cupboard door open and gets plastered with molasses, a cleaning job is called for—but it will go better all around if mother can laugh a little at the sticky-faced child.

**Finally:** Be honest with your children. If you make a promise, keep it faithfully. “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick” (Proverbs 13:12). One is reminded of a quick-tempered

mother who promised her boy a piece of candy for being quiet. When he reminded her, she snapped, "Didn't I promise you the candy for keeping still?" She said, "The longer you keep still, the sooner you'll get it!" Parents should never deal with a child on such an illogical basis.

## 2. Instructions to Teenagers

**First:** Remember that you must account for the way in which you spend your youth. Just as truly as parents need to remember that children are only lent from God, so young people need to remember that youth, that priceless, irreplaceable gift, is only given conditionally, and must be accounted for. Young folks often say, "I want to live my life my own way." But the Bible says, "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment" (Ecclesiastes 11:9). Whatever you sow, you will have to reap some day.

**Second:** Give respectful consideration to what your parents say. Proverbs 1:8 says, "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother." You may feel that you know better than they. It is possible that you do. But remember this: they have been over the road that you are traveling, and they have brought you up to be what you are. You can learn from them, even if only to avoid some of the mistakes they may have made. Treat them with respect and consider their advice carefully.

**Third:** Consider your company with care. The Bible says, "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not. If they say, Come with us, . . . walk not thou in the way with them" (Proverbs 1:10, 11, 15). It is important that you choose your company from those who are not infected with the spirit of wanting something without earning it by honest work. Some say, "Only dull people work hard. Smart ones find easier ways to get a livelihood." Sometimes people envy the worker who, through greater skill and acceptance of more responsibility, is better paid than they are. But don't forget that the skill required years of work to acquire, and responsibility is entrusted only to those who have demonstrated an ability to handle it well. God told Adam that he must eat his bread in the sweat of his face, and this has never been changed.

**Fourth:** Young people (both boys and girls) should consider the Bible's standard for ideal adulthood. This is most beautifully set forth in Proverbs 31:10-31. Open your Bible to that passage, and notice the qualities which are recommended for ideal womanhood (and many of these are just as needful for the men):

(1) Loyalty (verse 11). The Scripture implies that loyalty and trustworthiness are of more value than wealth.

(2) Skill in homemaking (verses 13, 19, 22, 27). Many girls today make light of domestic knowledge. They are constantly being urged to try to make themselves physically attractive in order to secure the attention of the opposite sex. But without skill in homemaking and the graces of good character, it will be difficult to maintain a happy home.

(3) Carefulness and orderliness (verse 27). Orderly habits can be cultivated. Lack of order in the home has disgusted many a good husband and caused his affection for his wife to cool. We should also add that a slovenly and disorderly husband adds to the burden of his wife's duties and can scarcely help but lessen her respect for him.

(4) Generosity (verse 20). This is the crown of womanliness as well as of Christian character.

(5) Wisdom and kindness in speech (verse 26). A sharp tongue spoils an otherwise admirable person.

(6) Verse 30 says that "favor," by which we mean "social prestige," is deceitful. It usually leads to envy and excess in display. A wise young person will not be anxious to secure it. The same verse also says that beauty is vain. The Bible holds high regard for beauty when worn as a crown for virtue (as its statements concerning the beauty of Rebekah and Rachel clearly show), but beauty alone is of no value. Our commercial and educational systems today often tend to encourage and exploit beauty of body at the expense of beauty of character.

The qualities named above do not change, and so to summarize the whole matter, we would simply say that while things have changed very much since our parents were teenagers, people have changed very little, and God has not changed at all. We do many things differently from the way they were done in the days of our parents, but the principles and qualities which bring happiness and peace and satisfaction in life have never changed. The principles that brought success and happiness to our parents will do the same for us.

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# The Christian and Conspiracies

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“Dad, why do people believe conspiracy theories?” My twelve-year-old son asked me.

“I don’t really know, Vince,” I said. “They’ve been around for a long time. I suppose they must help people deal with life in some way, but I’m not sure exactly how.”

Thus, my mind began to turn, thinking about the subject and trying to understand it.

\* \* \* \* \*

This is nothing new. Throughout history, there were many conspiracy theories. In Europe, long before World War II, there were strong beliefs that Jewish people were behind many terrible things in history. Europeans in the Middle Ages even believed that Jews caused the Black Death by poisoning their wells. There have been many interesting, if unprovable, theories about the assassination of John F Kennedy. And, more recently, there have been various theories regarding the people and purpose behind the events of 9/11.

The conspiracy theories that you buy into will depend on who you are and the culture that surrounds you. Citizens in the Middle East are much more likely to believe that the holocaust was faked or believe that many recent terrorist activities were sponsored by Western countries with colonial aspirations. On the other hand, Americans tend to believe that government agencies are “out to get them.” They think that the CDC is controlled by unsavory elements that which are trying to harm the citizens of the United States. And they are sure that “Big Pharma” is creating illnesses to pad their bottom line.

The most important thing about conspiracy theories, is that they do not require facts, but are more dependent on strong belief by the people embracing and promoting these theories. So, if you believe that the earth is flat, that the moon landing was a hoax, or that the CDC and all the other “experts” are faking the COVID pandemic, then you need very little data to support your opinions, or to convince you that the main stream opinion is incorrect.

## Conspiracy Theorists Value the Wrong Opinions

I remember a patient of mine who came to see me after seeing her cardiologist. “He tells me that I need a pacemaker and defibrillator,” she said.

“He’s a good doctor,” I told her. “I think you should probably go ahead and do it.”

“Yes,” she said. “But he doesn’t really know me, and I know he doesn’t care about me like you do. That’s why I wanted to come and talk to you about what he wants to do.”

I understand this feeling. Experts may be smart, but do they really have our individual concerns and needs in view? Maybe they are just trying to make their next boat payment.

At the same time, a cardiologist is far better to listen to than a family doctor when it comes to a decision about a pacemaker.

Conspiracy theorists are unwilling to trust the mainstream “experts.” They claim (and rightly so) that experts aren’t always correct. Computer simulation modeling and initial predictions are often wrong. So, they choose other experts, ignoring the facts and data informing their chosen expert’s opinions.

The most important thing to keep in focus when evaluating segments of the news, written articles and books, or online documentary videos presenting data on a specific subject should not be “Does this make me feel good?” or “Is this person charismatic?” or “Do I like what they are saying?” or even “Does it make sense to me?” Instead, the question should be “What are the facts behind the statements and is there real data that backs up the stated opinions?”

There’s one more thing—true experts are quicker to say “I don’t know” when something is unclear. This is usually not the case with Conspiracy Theorists.

## Conspiracy Theorists Exaggerate Their Credentials

I come at this from a medical point of view. I have read articles where doctors claim to have cared for “thousands of COVID patients” or to be members of some “Harvard”

task force. Upon further investigation, I have found that many of these claims are exaggerated.

I do not claim that a person needs to be board certified to have a valid opinion on a medical subject, but I do believe that a person should not be deceptive about who they are and what their background knowledge is.

For what it is worth, I am a small-town family doctor in Central Virginia who wants to serve Jesus and thinks a little too much about things like this. Those are my only credentials.

### Conspiracy Theorists Only Bring Up Facts that Support Their Theories

I suppose it is not surprising, but conspiracy theorists are quick to pull out certain phrases or focus on tiny sentences from within articles. Many times, these articles don't really support their point of view, but they pull a sentence or a phrase out of context, twisting it according to their preference, then claim that the article **does** support what they believe. Understand that this is not a court of law; this discourse is about having a real understanding of the facts regarding anything from COVID-19, wearing masks, or even assassinations.

For instance, if you are discussing the pros and cons of wearing a mask, I want an explanation about why countries that use them see reductions in new cases and deaths from COVID, while at the same time they do not see lots of hospitalizations and ER visits from mask-induced hypercapnia (a buildup of carbon dioxide in a person's bloodstream). If you don't address this, I am going to be less willing to listen to some of the other things you are sharing. Why? Because if you don't allow all the facts to be included, and to balance each other out, then the outcome or decision will be way off-track or out-of-balance.

If you claim that the earth is flat, I want more than criticism of the round earthers. I want an explanation of the physical laws of nature that we see and observe. Skipping that makes me believe that the round earth scientists are correct.

### Conspiracy Theorists are Unwilling to Trust Occam's Razor

William of Occam in the 1300s believed very strongly that all extra details need to be stripped away and the simplest explanation of the facts should be viewed as the most likely explanation. This is the opposite of most conspiracy theories.

For a conspiracy theory to be really 'juicy', there needs to be 'secret powerful societies' involved, as well as some 'foreign labs', and maybe 'a couple of suitcases full of money' floating around for good measure. All these sorts of things make a good spy story, but not so much what we see in our every day world.

Sure, there's always the possibility of a "rogue scientist". However, there's such public scrutiny of the proclaimed facts that if medical claims are made that are outrightly deceitful it's only a matter of time until the truth is revealed, and the false claims are corrected. On the flip side, God has promised that there is coming a time when there will be an increase in sickness, disease, and death as part of the lead-up to the end of time. So, there is a chance that, in His sovereignty, God may allow a mutated virus, or a rogue laboratory to be a part of that unfolding plan. As Christians we can respond either in faith or in fear to such a progression of events; the choice is ours.

So, from the perspective of faith, and the foundation of knowing that ultimately God is in control of all eventual outcomes, if the CDC makes a recommendation, it is not because a political party is paying them off, nor is it because "Big Pharma" is manipulating them. It is because





the scientists who work there believe that what they are saying is accurate. If they later change that recommendation, it is not because they are being paid off, but because new data has come out that makes the older recommendations no longer valid.

### **Conspiracy Theorists are Looking for Reasons**

Terrible things happen in this world. Men assassinate world leaders. Terrorists fly planes into tall buildings. Viruses somehow transition from bats to humans in China and lots of people get sick and some die. All of it seems like there should be plots behind it, replete with secret labs, illuminati, and criminals in dark suits and sunglasses.

Unfortunately, there aren't always reasons behind things. (We do live in a fallen world after all.) The experts give their assessment of the situation and maybe it doesn't feel adequate. In this absence of "real" or "complete" answers, people rise up who will try to explain the "why" of each tragedy. Each of these individuals has a following, if not the facts.

### **Conspiracy Theories Harm the People Who Believe Them**

There are probably a number of ways in which these beliefs are harmful, but there are a few which stand out to me. First, they lead to a general paranoia. There is enough evil in this world without believing that the people charged with our safety and protection are trying to destroy the very things they are supposed to protect. Paranoia is a dangerous mindset and one that can lead to depression, fear, and anger.

Further, it seems as though people who believe conspiracy theories in one area tend to have these beliefs become generalized. Quite simply, if you are certain that one part of the government is lying to you, it is easy to believe that other parts are as well.

Usually, folks who believe conspiracy theories are often unwilling to do things that would be beneficial to them from a health and wellness standpoint. They are afraid of vaccines or cholesterol medications and will not try them, even though there are numerous studies that show benefits.

Finally, these theories certainly seem to lead to anger and hatred towards anyone who holds different opinions. I suppose it is human nature, but over time people seem to become quite entrenched in their views, convincing themselves that those holding different beliefs are foolish.

### **Christians Are Commanded to be Discerning**

We know that in the Old Testament, false prophecy was judged harshly. False prophets were to be put to death even if just one of their prophecies was incorrect.

In the New Testament, Christians were still commanded to be discerning. John said, *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world –1 John 4:1*. Quite simply, John did not want the early Christians to naively believe everyone who came along.

According to Acts 17:10-11, we are to be like the Bereans, searching and trying to understand to see who is truly sharing truth.

### **Buying into Conspiracy Theories is an Indication that Christians are too Invested in this World**

This is a mouthful. Jesus told His disciples that they were to be in this world, but not of it. Paul told Timothy that "A time is coming when people will no longer listen to sound and wholesome teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell them whatever their itching ears want to hear." It feels as though this Scripture has come to pass in my lifetime.

Of course, Christians care about the society they live in, but they should care more about seeing people meet Jesus. Our focus should not be understanding the darkness, but on spreading the light.

It is important for Christians to carefully evaluate the source of their information, but even more, to not become overly politicized. When Jesus returns in the clouds, he will not be riding on a donkey (Democrat) or an elephant (Republican). Rather, He will return seated on a white horse. (–see Revelation 19:11)

Those He returns for will be those who have served Him, not those who voted a certain way or posted the right memes on social media. They will be those who visited Him in prison. Those who saw Him hungry and fed Him. Those who saw Him in need and gave freely to help His needs. The message of the Gospel is clear—As we do these things (or don't do them) for the neediest among us, that is when we are doing them to Him.

This morning I pray for clarity and for truth to prevail. I pray for anger and dissension among the people of God to end. I pray for false prophets and false scientists to be revealed.

Most of all, I pray that Jesus' followers could focus on Him and the other world to which they are going.

While Conspiracy Theories may, in some convoluted way, explain the darkness, they will never spread the light.

This world needs that light more than anything else. Let's do all that we can to do our part.



# To Marry or Not to Marry?

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That is the question many young folks seem to be asking today. In this article we are going to take a look at this question from a historical, cultural, and biblical perspective. There are many reasons to marry or to not marry. Let's explore them with an open mind. The concern behind this article is the apparent trend among our Anabaptist people to delay marriage for years and, in some cases, indefinitely.

Marriage is the oldest institution designed by God. It predates the civil government. It predates the church. Almost immediately after He created Adam, God observed: *...It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him* –Genesis 2:18.

Along with this was the first mandate given: *And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth* – Genesis 1:28.

The need for companionship and raising children to "replenish the earth"—these two principles have been a foundational, biblical premise for making marriage the rule rather than the exception. Traditionally among the Jewish people, a man was expected to make a move toward marriage by the time he reached the age of twenty. Some even suggested that if a man was not married by the time he reached the age of twenty, he was a "menace to society".

Historically, among our Anabaptist churches, efforts have been made to restrict courtship and marriage until the youth were sufficiently mature for the responsibilities of marriage. The typical age for dating to begin was eighteen. Forty years ago, some of us felt that that was unreasonably restrictive.

## TO THE YOUNG MEN

(Allow me to address the fellows first since they still are expected to make the first move.) What has transpired that we now have young fellows waiting until their mid to late twenties, and beyond, to pursue marriage? There



is no singular answer to this question, so I will suggest a variety of answers and you will need to discern which one fits your situation.

### **Finances**

There was a time when it was thought that economics influenced a young man's motivation to marry. That may have been true of a few isolated cases, but I know of no young couples who want to get married but just can't quite afford it yet. Young men of today who have any ambition at all can easily be making a good wage and should be able to save up enough money to be married by the time they are in their early twenties.

Unless... Unless they are spending it as fast, or faster, than they are making it, which brings us to our next possibility—too many toys. Maybe young men are not interested in marriage because they have too many toys and are having too much fun playing with their toys. Pick-up trucks, four-wheelers, boats, skis, hunting paraphernalia, and more can soon consume a young man's wealth, his time, and his affection, leaving little energy or desire for the domestic responsibilities of a wife and a family. Please note that this kind of lifestyle also delays spiritual and social maturity.

### **Maturity**

Oh, maturity... Maybe that is the answer. Maybe young men do not mature as early as they used to. Maybe our fathers and grandfathers who married in their early twenties were more mature by the time they reached that age. But why would the current generation be delaying in maturity?

### **Technology**

Today's generation has computers and cellphones. They have social networking, endless contacts, and instant messaging. Should not all this information and social interaction facilitate close relationships that should lead to marriage? You would surely think so.

However, there is this strange phenomenon—"Familiarity breeds contempt". I know this isn't a biblical term, but it is worthy of consideration here. Is it possible that our young people know each other so well that they have lost the mystique or the romance of boy/girl relationships? Let me explain. It is considered totally unnatural for a young man to be sexually attracted to his sister. Yes, I know, it happens, but it is not considered to be natural, or healthy, or normal. Growing up in the same home, brothers and sisters develop a familiarity that is beyond romance. She's my sister. I know her well. I see her strengths. I know her weaknesses.

This level of familiarity provides nothing of mystique or romance. Have our youth become so familiar with each

other that they have developed a brother/sister relationship? It is a wise young lady who is reserved in her relationships with young men. By her reserve she nurtures intrigue and interest. I confess, I am from the old school. When I was young, if a girl so much as smiled at me across the room, it was cause for a heart throb. I can not imagine how it affects our youth to be exchanging multiple cross gender texts per day with multiple friends. Is this kind of familiarity healthy or is this contributing to the delay in marriage?

### **Immorality**

There is another concern that must be given due consideration and that is the impact of pornography. It is commonly understood even in secular settings that pornography destroys the desire for, and the ability to, develop real person-to-person relationships. In a pure relationship the mystery and knowledge of sexual intimacy is discovered solely in marriage. If this sounds archaic and outmoded, then consider how far we have fallen... and repent.

### **Rejection**

While all of the above may be true, my interaction with young men who are not moving forward with marriage has revealed another factor that we must consider. Many of the young men who seemingly are not interested in marriage will tell you that, yes, they would like to marry, and yes, they have tried to establish a courtship relationship with a young girl, but, "It just didn't work out".

Many of these young men have become disillusioned with courtship and the fear of another rejection prevents them from making the effort. How can young men in this situation be encouraged? It is normal and proper that a young man who has experienced rejection should pass through a time of grieving not at all unlike the grief of losing a close friend through death. Grieving takes time... proper grieving leads to resignation and acceptance.

It seems that young men who experience multiple rejections tend to develop the perception that they are not marriageable material, so they surrender to a life of celibacy. If such is your case, it is wise to commit your situation to the Lord and allow Him to intervene in His timing. I have seen God provide in amazing ways in some of these seemingly desolate cases.

## **TO THE YOUNG LADIES**

The scenario that I have just described seems to be increasingly common. Perhaps we need to ask the ladies for their perspective on the matter. Are the young ladies being more difficult to woo and to win than in previous generations? If so, why?

## Negative Examples

There may be many reasons, and I will only suggest a few. The self-centered spirit of this age has produced a barrage of struggling marriages. Unhappy marriages must certainly have an effect on our youth as they contemplate marriage. Perhaps this is reason enough for our youth to look at marriage with trepidation.

## Lack of Trust

It is not a small matter for a young lady to consider beginning a courtship relationship with a young man. It is a decision that must be made prayerfully and with proper counsel and consideration. To agree to marriage is to seal your future to that of the young man. This must be a daunting decision; however, men and women have been marrying and been given in marriage since the beginning of time. Why should this generation be reluctant to take the plunge?

A burning question in the mind of every serious-minded young lady is, “Is this fellow morally pure and will he be true to me if I marry him?” This is an honest question that deserves an honest answer. If a young man wants to marry a pure, young virgin, he must live a life of moral victory and purity. This is not to say that past moral failure disqualifies him from ever marrying, but the desire to marry a pure bride should be a powerful motivation to be morally pure.

## Questioning How Best to Serve God

Perhaps some are foregoing marriage so they can serve God more freely in other ways. This could be a noble reason not to marry. The Apostle Paul would certainly give his assent to this. In 1 Corinthians 7:7a he states: *For I would that all men were even as I myself...* referring to his celibate state. So, in all fairness to Brother Paul we must conclude that some may be called to celibacy and we recognize that fact.

Brother Paul went on to make the argument that a person who is unmarried has much greater freedom to serve God in ways that a married person may not. This is true and is the reason that many young people want to be able to serve in V.S. (voluntary service), or in overseas missions before committing to marriage. This is certainly an honorable endeavor and if God has called you to singlehood and mission work, He will enable you to serve in that capacity.

So, if you as a young lady are going to forego marriage so that you can give one or two years to foreign missions what will you do with your life when your term of service is over? Unless you are a Mother Teresa or an Amy Carmichael you will return to your stateside home and pursue a domestic life. This may still include marriage or perhaps not.

What I want you to ponder is this: “Which will have the greatest impact for the Kingdom of Heaven—two years of foreign mission work, or marriage and raising a family for the glory of God?” I know, it’s difficult to measure, but I want you to consider the impact that godly families have had in the building up of the Kingdom of God throughout history.

## REASONS TO MARRY

The family unit is the foundational building block of the church and of the nation. Strong and growing churches are made up of strong families. If you do the math, you will discover that an average family size of six, will, in five generations, produce over a thousand descendants. This is what God had in mind when He said to Adam and Eve, “Be fruitful and multiply”. This is one way that we can build up the kingdom of God on earth.

In addition to this, the family unit is an important social structure. Our closest relationships are found within the family unit. Brothers and sisters are best friends. Parents and children fulfill one another and create lifelong bonds that bring security and identity. As parents grow older, they lean heavily on their children and grandchildren for support and care.

I know when we are young, we don’t tend to think that far into the future. However, before you blithely wave aside another opportunity to marry, I want you to consider the consequences of your decision. Living alone for the next fifty years could get rather lonely. Living with a godly spouse and raising a godly family is one of the most rewarding things you could do with your life. Consider well!

## IN CONCLUSION

Delaying marriage is a national trend. The average age of first-time brides is now 28 years. The average age of first-time grooms is 30. As I have already stated, there are many reasons for this trend. I have attempted to address a few. I’m sure there are more. I would that godly young men and women would see marriage as a high calling; a calling that is worthy of personal sacrifice and life-long commitment.

Jeremiah wrote: *It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth –Lamentations 3:27.* The responsibilities of marriage will certainly “make a man (or woman) out of you” like nothing else will. So... “To marry or not to marry?” That is the question.

So, young man, (or young woman), the answer will be found on your knees before the Lord and in wholesome relationships with your peers of the opposite gender which God brings into your life. Viva la difference!



# The Purpose of Suffering

By Harold S. Martin

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**I**n the Book of Job, we are told that man who is “born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). All of us have experienced that life seems short, and most of us have had plenty of troubles. This world is filled with heartaches and sufferings of all kinds. No one is immune from troubles. The rich suffer as well as the poor. The proud suffer and so do the humble. The sinner suffers and so does the saint. Wherever one turns, he finds suffering and sorrow and heartaches. There is suffering from sickness, suffering from infirmities of advancing age, suffering from disease, suffering from poverty, suffering from mental anguish—and on and on one could go.

There is the suffering of the young wife lost in despair because of the cruelty of a drunken husband. There is the mother suffering mental anguish because her only daughter is living an immoral life. There is the suffering that comes

when we must part because someone we loved dearly is called from earth by the angel of death. There is the suffering of the teenage boy who is a victim of a crippling disease. All these are experiences of suffering that we may need to face.

We don’t have much trouble understanding why wicked people suffer. We know that “the way of transgressors is hard,” and that “whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.” But we find a different problem when we see God’s saints passing through trials and troubles. Why do some of the most noble people of God have to experience heavy hearts almost continually? This is the big question. There are some things we will never understand until we are safe in the arms of Jesus, but the Bible does give some light on this vexing question, “Why do the righteous suffer?” Note the four Scriptural reasons why a righteous person may be called upon to suffer.

## **1. Suffering Gives Jesus Christ a Chance to Get Glory**

The Gospel according to John, chapter 9, tells about a man who was born blind, and how Jesus had opened his eyes. The disciples said to Jesus, “Who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind?” (John 9:2). Like many of us, they thought the affliction was brought on because of his own sins, or perhaps because of the sins of his forebearers. But Jesus answered the question: “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be made manifest in him” (John 9:3). The Lord did not mean that this man never committed any sin, nor that his parents were perfect, but He clearly stated that this particular suffering was not a punishment for his own sin, but rather that the affliction came upon him to give Jesus a chance to reveal His power and glory.

It was for the same reason that Lazarus was permitted to die. Jesus said in John 11:4 (when He had first heard that Lazarus was sick), “This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby.” When Lazarus was sick, his sisters called for Jesus, but Jesus did a strange thing. Instead of coming immediately, He waited until Lazarus was dead and had been buried four days. When Jesus finally arrived, He merely spoke the word and Lazarus came back from death. As a result of the miracle, many of the Jews were convinced that Jesus was really the Son of God and many believed in Him. Of course, the death of Lazarus meant some heartaches for Mary and Martha—and the fact that Jesus didn’t come immediately must have been even more disturbing—but think of the glory Jesus got out of it. People were saved through it.

Many of us have never experienced prolonged and terrible suffering. Yet one of the grandest opportunities you will ever get to glorify God will be in the hour of distress and suffering. When everything is rosy and the pastures are green—and you look up and say, “Praise God from whom all blessings flow”—the world won’t be especially impressed. They will say, “Why shouldn’t he be thankful, everything is going his way?” But when the shadows deepen and the clouds begin to gather and the sorrows pour in—if, in such a time, you can look up through your tears, and like Job, say, “The Lord giveth, the Lord taketh away, blessed be the name of the Lord”—the world will be convinced. They will say, “There must be something to this Christianity after all.” Jesus will get glory.

## **2. Suffering Is Chastening Intended to Make Us Holy**

The nature of divine chastening is described in Hebrews 12. We are told that God chastens (punishes) because He loves us, and He does it for our good. Hebrews 12:10 says that He chastens that “we might be partakers of his holiness.” The Scriptures make it clear that God’s purpose for us is that we should be holy. See Ephesians 1:4, 1 Thessalonians 4:7, 1 Peter 1:15. And God accomplishes His purpose in one of two ways. His first plan is that we should willingly make a complete surrender, eager to do His will from an obedient heart. But if we become rebellious, sometimes God has to lay us on our backs in order to get us to say, “Not my will but thine be done.”

When we punish our children, we do it not because we hate them and want to punish them, but because we love them and want the best for them in life. And just so God chastens us—not because He hates us and takes pleasure in punishing us, but because He loves us too much to let us go on and make shipwreck of our lives.

Sometimes we suffer in order that God might teach us some lesson in prayer. All of us call upon God much more earnestly and much more frequently when His chastening rod is on us than we do in the day of prosperity. The 107th Psalm repeatedly says, “They cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses.” We know that many times we don’t really pray. But when trouble comes, then we call on God from the bottom of our hearts.

Sometimes we suffer in order that God might teach us lessons in humility. Most of us tend to think that we are a little bit better than certain other people, and we secretly flatter ourselves that we are not “as other men.” Suffering cuts the props from under us and gives us a sense of need and dependence upon God, and we see that we are only poor worms of the dust. These things are good for us.

## **3. Suffering Fits Us for the Ministry of Sympathy**

God gives special comfort to His own children in the hour of suffering, and Paul says that we receive this strength and help from the hand of God so that we can extend sympathy to others. 2 Corinthians 1:4 says that the comfort we receive from God is designed to enable us to impart comfort to others.

This world is filled with suffering and heartaches, and one of the greatest needs that suffering people have, is for someone who can sympathize with them in their troubles.

And the only way we can really learn to comfort others and to sympathize with them, is to suffer ourselves. We cannot truly sympathize with those in sorrow unless we have suffered sorrow too. We cannot understand the loneliness of others unless we have been lonely ourselves. We cannot weep with those that weep unless we have been bereaved ourselves. There are some things in life that cannot be learned in the schools, and this is one of them. We have to learn how to sympathize with others by actual experience. Many of us have already learned that the person who can help us most in the hour of trial, is the one who has already passed through an experience somewhat like ours. This is another reason God permits righteous people to suffer. The fires of affliction make us tenderhearted and sympathetic toward others—and this results in greater compassion for other people.

#### 4. Suffering Turns Our Attention Toward Heaven

One of the besetting sins of the saints is earthliness. Most people live as though they were never going to die. Many follow business and pleasure and politics and science as if this earth were their eternal home. They plan and scheme for the future like the rich fool in the parable Jesus told. And Christians have a tendency to do the same thing. Thank God that He sends affliction and sickness. This takes our eyes away from money and pleasure and position and makes us think seriously of God. The Lord often permits suffering so that we don't become too much in love with this world and the things of this world.

Sometimes it takes sickness and sorrow and disaster and vanished hopes and shattered dreams to bring us to the end of ourselves and turn us to God. The suffering and sadness that we experience often gives us a desire to leave this world and to enter our rest in Heaven. Even the loss of a loved one in the hour of death—while it brings heartaches to us—often turns our attention toward Heaven. Most of us have had this experience. We know that Heaven is a place, and that it is being prepared for those who love God. But we only come to really appreciate Heaven when one of our own dear loved ones crosses the border into the eternal world. God permits sorrow and suffering to turn our attention toward the heavenly City.

In Hebrews 12, we learn that there are three different attitudes one can take toward trials and afflictions:

**We can despise them** (Hebrews 12:5). Many people despise their troubles and lash out violently against suffering.

They blame others and even blame God. This is dangerous for it will make us cynical and hard. It will poison our souls.

**We can merely endure them** (Hebrews 12:7). A great many people just grit their teeth and make up their minds they are going to bear suffering the best they can. They say, "We've all got our troubles; other people bear theirs, and I'm going to take mine like a man." This may be better than despising suffering, but it is not the best way.

**We can be exercised by them** (Hebrews 12:11). We can profit from our sufferings. Instead of accusing God, we can search our hearts, and as a result, we will grow in faith and patience and we will manifest the fruits of righteousness in our lives. No matter how severe the trial is, we should accept it with thanksgiving, and submit to it without a murmur because we know that God has a good purpose.

Those who continue to maintain faith in God will some day look into His face and thank Him for every sorrow that drove its sharp edge through their souls. You will thank Him for every stroke of affliction, for every night of loneliness, for every day of pain—because, like Jesus, you will have learned obedience through suffering.

Some day the tests and sufferings of life will be over, and the Bible says that God himself will wipe away our tears and take us to a place where there is no more suffering. Children of God are headed for a world in which pain and suffering will be gone forever! If you are yet unsaved, it could be that suffering and trouble are God's ways of calling you to salvation. Take Jesus as your Saviour today. If you pray "Lord be merciful to me a sinner"—He will answer your cry.

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# Stay at Home

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**Stay at home**, our government has been saying to us recently in light of the Coronavirus pandemic. Long before this, though, another Government—a higher Government—told us ladies to “stay at home.” Not in order to prevent the spread of disease, but rather in order to help the spread of the Gospel. But how can staying at home possibly spread the Gospel? Let us consider what happens when we spend the majority of our time at home, on a practical level, as well as on a spiritual level.

In Titus 2:5, it says that one of the things the aged women are to teach the younger women is to be **keepers at home**. A *home-keeper* is a woman who will be found in her home more often than not, one who is taking her role as a home-manager seriously. She is one who sees her tasks as a way to serve the Lord and not as an irksome duty to be endured.

Most often, being a *keeper at home* applies to a married woman, usually with children. She will have meals to plan and prepare; clothes to wash, mend, and store; rooms to

tidy up and clean; children to watch over bodily, spiritually, and emotionally; and a husband to please and serve, among other things. Very few of these things can be done outside of the physical house, so in order for them to be accomplished, by necessity, she must be at home.

A married woman is first and foremost a helpmeet to her husband. She is truly helping her husband by being mentally and physically active in keeping their home. As a result, her husband will have good food to nourish his body, clean and decent clothing to cover him, a tidy house to spend his time in, and a companion to spend his time with. Thus, on a regular basis, he will not need to do these things for himself and his family. This allows him to be available for other work, including working for the Lord.

If she is a mother, keeping the home also includes children. Children who grow up in a godly home with a loving mother who provides nourishing meals, clean clothes, a tidy house, and a peaceful atmosphere will have front row seats to learn





from a woman who has committed herself to the Lord in the role that He created her for. They will observe her in many circumstances and will take note of her trust in the Lord, and her faith in His promises of salvation, and His care for her. They will know the restful feeling of being in a home that is not disrupted by multiple trips out, and that does not run on the adrenaline of rushing about.

Ultimately, they will be the recipient of her decision of giving her energies to her home and those who dwell in it. If she has poured her life into them for the sake of serving the Lord in that capacity, they should feel loved and well-cared for. Children who feel loved and well-cared for by a godly mother are more likely to be receptive to the Gospel she has been proclaiming to them all through the years. Then, when they accept the Lord's forgiveness and begin living for the Lord in the Spirit of Christ, they will have a similar desire to share that Gospel with others. By God's grace, she will then have multiplied the number of soldiers who are working to advance the Kingdom of God. That is how *keeping at home* spreads the Gospel—by ministering to her husband, making him available to the Lord, and by ministering to her children, preparing them to be available to the Lord.

Any woman who is *home-keeping* need not leave her home to be the hands and feet of Jesus in a lost world. From her own home she can show hospitality, she can encourage others, she can pray for many, and she can study God's Word to equip her for anything that she will face.

There are many obstacles that stand in the way of a woman staying at home to perform this monumental task. Often, they come in the form of invitations. "Can you come over for the day?" "Do you want to help at the comfort-knotting?" "Could you be a part of our book group?" "There's a sale on fabric and shoes, do you want to go shopping with me?"

Spending time with others, helping knot comforters and similar activities, and getting deals at stores are not wicked things, but when you accept too many invitations, it takes you out of your home and divides your attention.

How many invitations do you think the Apostle Paul had to speak in various cities? A handful? More like a life-time full! And what do you think he did with all those invitations—do you think he accepted every single one of them? Paul had to be careful in choosing where he went and how often he went. What Paul did when he could not be in two places at once was to send a letter to those he could not physically be present with. You may find it helpful, and possibly even enjoyable, to take a leaf out of Paul's book and drop someone an old-fashioned letter or card to let them know you are thinking of them or to encourage them in their faith, especially if you need to decline their invitation.

And that does not even take you out of your home—you can do it from your very own kitchen table!

If you are having trouble with being over-stretched with outings, you may want to consider looking at your entire week and limiting your time away from the home. That way, when you receive invitations you can evaluate whether your week is full instead of just considering that particular day. You need not be embarrassed to say "no" when you are doing so to give yourself fully to being a *keeper at home*.

In addition to receiving invitations, which is another pressure that *keepers at home* face—the desire of wanting to get out and socialize. "Gadding about" is how it used to be referred to, and a *keeper at home* needs to monitor how often she leaves the house just to socialize. This pressure can also come in the form of using social media, where a mother is physically present in the house, but emotionally absent from her home and family.

A word for daughters whose mothers are *keeping the home*: "Think twice before seeking a job outside the home." It is becoming increasingly normal for our young girls to get jobs at stores, restaurants, greenhouses, or nursing homes during their youth years. I have no doubt that there may be opportunities to be a witness for the Lord, but a young girl who puts her energy into learning the finesse of *keeping a home* by serving in her mother's home or in another church mother's home, will be well prepared for life. Lending a capable set of hands is setting herself up for successfully *keeping her own home* one day. She will be conditioning herself for the days when her to-do list doesn't look grand and glorious, but rather consists of daily changing pampers, kissing bruises, and putting three meals on the table. A young girl who is helping others, such as her own mother or other church mothers, will learn cheerfulness and contentment in doing a thankless job—one that will need to be redone again in a few hours—ALL for God's glory. However, one who works outside the home may condition herself to expect to find her fulfillment by getting out of the house and doing other things.

Being a *keeper at home* does not mean just going through the duties, but also doing them with a good will and a right spirit so that the home is restful and not clouded by grouchiness. Having clean plates with delicious food on them doesn't mean much to anyone if they are served with irritation, bitterness, or anger. We need to be happy about being a *keeper at home*.

"Stay at home" we've been told. Will we heed these words? If our home is our ministry, may we be found there more often than anywhere else, for the sake of spreading the Gospel and advancing the Kingdom of God.





to pass on a video or audio recording of the event. It wasn't long until there were peaceful protests, which gravitated into violent protests and riots. Some cities used whatever arm of the law was necessary to quell the violence, while others gave in to the public pressure to be nice.

There was even a push by some to “defund the police”. What are they thinking? The Bible is clear that civil authorities are ...*the minister of God ... for good*. It goes on to say, *But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil –Romans 13:4*. History is full of situations like this—if the arm of the law is withdrawn, then it is only a matter of time until anarchy rules, because without God, man is the same today as he was back in the beginning of time. *And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually –Genesis 6:5*.

To anyone familiar with God's Word, it seems clear that the end of time is fast approaching. As Christians, if our hearts are right with God, we should be looking forward to our new home in heaven. A time when there will be no more sorrows, nor tears. A time when there will be no more sickness, nor pain, nor death. IF we have this hope in our hearts, let's do all that we can to minister to those who God brings into our lives as we encounter more and more challenging events.

We should have hope. We should have joy. We should have peace. We should have love. Let's pass it on.

Now on to some points of interest about our ministry—The Berean Voice. Being a small, yet growing organization, we were caught somewhat off-guard by some of the ripple effects of the virus pandemic. As a result, we have been making a number of changes to help streamline our efforts. We plan to learn from the challenges that come our way and make the necessary changes to keep things on track.

In the past, we have struggled at times to have an article available to fit a certain category by the time that issue of the magazine should go to print. We have made a number of changes in this area over the last several years that has made this problem continually better. We thank each of you who has helped to make this possible through your prayers, your suggestions, your personally authored poems and articles, and your generous financial contributions.

Going forward, we will be continuing to restructure some more, as we see better ways of handling various situations. As we continue, we covet your prayers, we welcome your suggestions, and we appreciate your patience and understanding with the changes that come.

Finally, there have been various questions and requests that we have received over the last while that we regretfully haven't had the time to respond to. Our goal is that with some of the changes we have been making, we will be more available to respond to these requests. If you are one who has made such a request and haven't heard from us, we ask that you send us a renewed version of that request and we will try to respond.

Blessings to all,

Curvin L Wenger



# Recommitment

The sun sets on another day.  
Kneeling, you realize you have nothing to say.  
It's been so long since the fire burned hot,  
Replaced with darkness, your stomach a knot.  
It didn't take much, just a slow drift away;  
If there's no change, what a dear price to pay!  
But why so hard this narrow way?  
If it would be easy, I could do it today!  
This battle is real, my life's on the line.  
Oh God! Please help me my life to refine.  
I feel sudden hope, God, You are really there.  
Yes, I feel Your presence, You really do care!  
Oh, forgive me I plead, please grant another try!  
Whatever you ask, my gaze is on high.  
Thank You, my Lord, my Sovereign Friend.  
My life on the altar until the very end!

*By Barry Grant | Titanyen, Haiti*

The Heartbeat of  
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Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good  
courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for  
the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest.  
*Joshua 1:9*