

The Heartbeat of 

The Remnant

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A ministry of
The Berean Voice



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~ The Berean Voice Board

It is our goal that the content of this magazine bring honor and glory to God. All Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version unless otherwise notated. In the event of discovering any errors in content or detail, please count it to our oversight and kindly bring it to our attention.

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Greetings of love in the name of Jesus, our Savior, our Redeemer, and our Lord. When our last magazine issue went out, most things in the world seemed to be continuing quite normally. Suddenly, everything started changing with unnerving speed and uncertainty. The next thing we knew a previously unheard-of virus had everyone's attention. How our lives have changed.

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation –2Pe 3:3-4. I had to think of this verse as Covid-19 started upending basically all of life. Where did the church find itself during this all? Surely, we weren't *scoffing*... Hopefully we weren't *walking after our own lusts*... But where were we? Maybe some of us had become lulled into the belief that things would continue according to what we understood as normal, at least for our indefinite future.

But suddenly what was once normal was gone. Schools closed—forcing many families to oversee their children's education at home. Businesses closed—forcing many folks to find a way to work from home. Libraries closed—forcing folks to read at home. Daycare centers closed—forcing many parents to find a way for at least one of them to watch their own children at home. All personal care facilities (barber shops, nail parlors, etc.) closed—forcing many families to figure out how to take care of themselves and each other at home. All centers of entertainment closed—forcing families to start entertaining themselves and each other at home.

More and more families were required to stay at home without the opportunity of interacting with others. Many were the negative predictions by professionals, authorities, and the media—**Domestic Violence** would rise, **Child Abuse** would escalate, **Addictions** would increase, and **Mental Illness** would become a major problem.

As I am writing this, our state of Ohio has started relaxing the “stay at home” order, yet no matter how much someone may wish or worry, the old normal has yet to be willed back

into existence. As time has passed, new normals have begun to develop. And yes, some of the negative predictions did come to pass, yet in the middle of it all some surprises have arisen as well.

Recently, I came across an interesting article¹ published by CNN titled, WHY SOME KIDS ARE HAPPIER RIGHT NOW, AND OTHER UNEXPECTED EFFECTS OF QUARANTINE. Surprisingly, this article didn't appear to go viral nor did it seem to generate much attention in the media. To me, this type of information should be of interest to parents and children across the whole world, yet for some reason it didn't seem to be the type of news that the majority of the media wanted to focus on.

Information like this runs counter to the direction the world is going. It would undermine way too much of the accepted system—daycare centers for children of working parents would go out of business; mothers would need to give up their careers and instead be stay-at-home moms; extra-curricular and after school activities for all the children in any given community would no longer be needed; children being raised by the system would instead be raised by their parents; emotional and mental struggles would no longer be treated primarily with therapy and drugs, and the list could go on.

Now on to the news article. In spite of their misgivings and apprehension about all the possible negatives of the whole family being at home together most of the time, *hundreds of families from around the United States ... shared on social media and in discussion boards a sense of relief and joy regarding the actual outcome after some time had passed.* This outcome was unexpected by most, yet according to the research of professionals, it *tracks with what we [they] know about the causes of childhood anxiety and depression today.* This article states that according to the research **one of the most well-supported explanations for this rise of mental health disorders is that children have too much going on and not enough choice over what they do.** *It's a function of a whole society that is overworked and time-poor, and our kids are paying the price for it.*

¹ <https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/27/health/children-mental-health-quarantine-coronavirus-wellness/index.html>

This article quoted parents from across the United States, including North Carolina, Tennessee and California. It discussed an interesting phenomenon, which was referred to as *a happiness spike*, among children during this unexpected disruption of normal hectic schedules. Much to their surprise and appreciation, the outcome of this *happiness spike* was counter-intuitive to what parents had fully expected would result.

According to one parent, *the whole family now eats three unrushed and healthy meals together every day; the children are sleeping more and they are having a chance to get bored and then also having time to find a solution on their own.* Finally, since they are going through this time of uncertainty and heightened emotion together, it *has given them something to bond over.*

Peter Gray, research professor of psychology at Boston College and author of the book FREE TO LEARN, says that “Suddenly kids are being able to [be self-directed]. They have time on a nice spring day to just sit outside and enjoy the sunshine. The things that are the subject of poetry that we have been denying our children are suddenly available to them. He believes that children need to develop healthily and happily—[have] time to play and explore.

A number of things were listed which parents, psychologists, and researchers see as results of this disruption in the normal schedules for many families.

- They are *seeing more of their parents*
- They have *become better behaved*
- There is an *increased camaraderie among siblings.*
- They are *kinder to one another*
- They are *playing more alone or with siblings*
- They are *less emotionally overwhelmed*
- They are *sleeping better*

They talked about how children could now be children since they were no longer in the rat race of life. They now had time to explore their world, in their way. They had time to use their imagination and creativity. They were no longer under the pressure of rushing from one adult-scheduled appointment to another. No longer were they under the pressure to achieve a certain level or performance based on their peers. The article says that research shows that all these *small acts can give them [children] a much-needed confidence boost.*

According to the news article, *the sense that they [children] are in control of their own lives and can handle disruptions on their own [is] a crucial element of emotional well-being.*

And surprise of surprises, emotional struggles and mental disorders started to correct themselves. According to one mother, her 12-year-old daughter who had been diagnosed with ADHD and with Autism Spectrum Disorder, began to see marked improvement after about two weeks. The change was so pronounced that the negative behavior that had been part of this girl’s identity due to her diagnosed disorders, actually began to return to that of a normal 12-year-old girl.

Bottomline... *hundreds of families from around the United States are reporting that their children seem happier.*

While we realize that this is according to secular wisdom, most of it is simple, common sense derived from unbiased observation of the facts. Many of these conclusions are supported by the simple teaching of God’s Word, the Holy Bible. It is interesting to me how so many in the church today want to follow in the footsteps of the world when it comes to family structure, personal development, and child rearing. Some in the church have seemed to get to a point where they feel that God’s teaching is too simple, too old-fashioned, or for some other reason they believe it just doesn’t work to accomplish a successful outcome.

My goal in highlighting this news article is to help us see that the world’s system isn’t all its cracked up to be. It doesn’t produce the kind of fruit that we all are striving for. Let’s get back to believing in the Holy Scriptures, following them in simple obedience, and believing that God’s ways will work even in our times of uncertainty.

I will close with several thoughts that I wish to leave with us all. Within the last several weeks, I heard several thoughts that were shared by two different ministers. Both were regarding this virus issue and the world-wide disruption of normal schedules. First, even though this has seemed like a major obstacle for many of us to overcome, we can be sure that this will not be the last, nor will it be the worst. We can expect to face much more difficult situations as the end of time draws ever closer. Second, is the thought that we should look at this as a wake-up call to our spiritual lives. And that there should be NO person who doesn’t allow this to bring about change in their lives. There is NO human being that is so holy that they have no need of improvement where God is concerned.



For Conscience' Sake

Barry Grant
Arcahaie, Haiti



I have heard many Christians say they are not satisfied with their relationship with God. They wonder why God does not speak to them like He spoke with people in the Bible, or even in the early church. I have often thought of this, and at times have felt the same way. I have come to realize that God is still speaking with His children today, just as He always has. The problem is that we are not always listening.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: -Joh 16:7-8.

I have excellent hearing. However, I had to consider whether I listen to only the things and people I desire and unknowingly block out what I do not want to hear?

Today the god of this world has filled people's lives with distractions, and while not all are bad, he (Satan) wants our attention and focus to be on other things, then when God speaks to us, we do not hear. So, what happens when we stop listening to God? He stops speaking, and we eventually drift away from truth. God gave everyone a conscience. It is a wonderful thing that keeps us on the strait and narrow way. But God's word says that if we continue to ignore the prodding of the Spirit, our conscience will stop working properly. *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving*

heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; -1Ti 4:1-2. In other words, we do wrong, but since our conscience doesn't work any longer, there is no feeling there. We begin to justify our actions; we are always right.

I remember years ago as I was driving to work, I noticed a police car coming in my direction. I then realized I was not wearing my seat belt, so I slyly slipped it on, hoping he had not noticed. To my disappointment, he turned around and pulled me over. He asked me a very straightforward question. "Sir, did you just put your seat belt on when you saw me?"

I smiled and told him with an apology that I did. He went back to his car and several minutes later he returned. He told me that he sees many people do the same thing. They see him and quickly put their seat belt on, but he has never had anyone admit to it. They all argue with him that their seat belt was already on. He gave me a warning and thanked me for being honest.

It is sad that today, so many people no longer listen to their conscience, which is telling them to do right. Instead, even when they know they are wrong they argue, trying to deny or justify their wrong. We expect this from the world, but is this a practice that we are seeing more and more in the church today? I have even heard many people use the Bible to try to justify their wrongdoing. Have we stopped listening to God? Have we pampered 'self' to the

point that we no longer can admit when we are wrong? Would we rather look 'right' and have a guilty conscience? Or humble ourselves, admit our failure and rejoice with a clear conscience. Friends, do we value a clear conscience? Can we say with the apostle Paul that we ...*have lived in all good conscience before God until this day ... to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men* –Act 23:1-24:16.

Let's look at the account of David and Bathsheba. David was a man after God's own heart, so why did this happen? The account is in II Samuel chapter 11. It was the time when kings went forth to battle, and they had a battle going with the children of Ammon. But David tarried still at Jerusalem. When we begin to do things the way we want and ignore the call of God in our lives, we hinder the Spirit. So, David is just hanging around; it says that David was laying on his bed. Was he seeking God? It doesn't seem like it. An ancient proverb says that 'idleness is the devil's workshop'. David decides to take a stroll on the roof. Was David innocent even at this time? Maybe David already knew he could see this woman from his rooftop? Maybe he had been tempted before, 'at even tide', to look over toward Bathsheba's home. Either way, he now found himself in an awkward situation. What amazes me is there was no thinking—David does not seem to give his conscience any time at all to work. He simply sent messengers to go and bring her to him, and then he laid with her. Again, it seems that David's conscience is not working. But rather he goes right into coverup mode. He calls for Bathsheba's husband and eventually has him killed... and then marries Bathsheba. But God was not done with David. In II Samuel chapter 12 it says that God sent Nathan to David. Often before God gives us over, He sends a messenger. Maybe it's a brother in the church, maybe it's a church leader. Are we aware of, and listening to, the messengers God sends to us?

Nathan went to David and told him a story...

There were two men in one city: the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter.

And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him; but took the poor man's lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger was greatly kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, As the LORD liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die: And he shall restore the

lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man... –2Sa 12:4-7.

David now came face to face with his sin; there was still time. David repented with genuine godly sorrow and was forgiven (read Psalm 51).

David could have become angry with Nathan and had him killed. Or what if Nathan would have refused to go talk to David because he feared him? When we want a clear conscience, I believe people around us will know that and it will be easy for them to come and talk to us about sin in our lives. But too often the opposite happens; we would rather live the way we want and shield ourselves from the counsel of others, and when a brother or sister comes to talk to us, we get angry and they don't come talk to us again.

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise –Pro 12:15.

If Nathan would have refused to talk to David, maybe David would never have seen his sin. It is our responsibility to talk to one another and it leads to a clear conscience. It often doesn't feel good when our conscience is pricked, but that is the way God designed it, so we act upon a guilty conscience. Unfortunately, there are many other accounts in God's word where someone refused to repent, and God's judgement was poured out.

When our conscience is pricked, we have two choices: either to get angry and deny, or to humble ourselves and repent. It is really that simple. What do we find ourselves doing when God speaks to us through our conscience? Are we broken?

In the book of Acts, we have a few accounts of how people responded to their conscience being pricked. The first account is in chapter 2, the day of Pentecost. Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, lifted up his voice and spoke some very hard things to the large crowd that had gathered. It says that after Peter was finished preaching, the people were pricked in their heart. So how did these people respond? They ...*said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost* –Act 2:37-38. And about 3,000 souls were added to the Kingdom.

When we respond to that pricking of the heart, or the voice of God to our conscience, God hears us and will forgive us! However, if we turn just a few pages in our Bibles we see another response to the pricking of God in our conscience.

In Acts chapter 5 we see that the apostles went about preaching and healing the sick, and the high priest and those that were with him put them in prison. But God opened the doors and released them. Notice that this group of more than likely very young men, and new in the faith, rose up early the next morning and went into the temple to teach. They were sold out. That day the high priest wanted to talk with the disciples, so he sent someone to the prison, but they were not there. *Then came one and told them, saying, Behold, the men whom ye put in prison are standing in the temple, and teaching the people –Act 5:25.* So, they went to the temple and brought them to the high priest. Peter then again began to speak boldly, telling them that they should obey God rather than man: *...we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him. **When they heard that, they were cut to the heart,** and took counsel to slay them –Act 5: 32-33.*

Again, we see God speaking, convicting the conscience, but notice their reaction to the voice of God: ‘They took counsel to slay them.’ Even though we are believers, we still tend to give a similar response when our conscience is pricked. We want to neutralize whatever it was that was spoken to us. In similar manner as David had Uriah killed, the Sadducees sought to slay the disciples, Herod beheaded John the Baptist, and the World killed our Lord, we avoid people that speak truth and say the hard things that God wants us to hear. The Lord is hated by the world because he testifies *...of it, that the works thereof are evil –Joh 7:7.*

Maybe we begin to have itching ears, hearing only what we want. We rid ourselves of the presence of people who love us and desire to speak into our lives. We often forget that our conscience is a gift from God and a very important part of a believer’s life. When it stops working, we are in big trouble.

A guilty conscience has proven to be a very difficult thing to deal with. It has caused many to turn to drugs and alcohol. It has also caused many like Judas to take their own life. Many people do not understand that a troubled conscience is God’s way of calling someone to himself. There is great hope for a bad conscience. It is not pills, or classes, or drugs, or entertainment. It is the Lord Jesus Christ and only Him. It is impossible to drown away a bad conscience.

What is worse than a bad conscience is a seared conscience. This occurs when someone has ignored God’s calling to repent and turn from their wrong for so long that He gives them over to their sin. He allows them to think that what they are doing is okay. This is a position that is very dangerous, and few find their way back to truth.

One hundred years ago it was common for a town or village to only have one sheriff to control its crime. Forty years ago, someone asked one of these then-retired sheriffs how they were able to control all the crime by themselves. He said that it was easy; back then, men’s consciences still worked. He went on to say that most criminals would eventually turn themselves in. They would rather face prison than continue living with a guilty conscience.

Today there are many criminals on the run, and men everywhere comfortably living in sin. It seems that their conscience is no longer working, being seared with a hot iron. That is not my concern today, but rather my concern is for the church of Jesus Christ. Do we have a clear conscience before God? Are we really looking forward to the return of the Lord? Do we have joy in our lives, relationships, and marriages? Are we actively pursuing the Kingdom of God, or are we trying to ease our conscience with the ways of the world, money, entertainment, pleasure, and the likes?

My children wanted a dog for some time, so I finally decided it was time and brought a puppy home. The children fell in love with it over the next months. Then someone stole it. The children were devastated, and they prayed every night that God would bring the puppy back. One day as we walked home from the Sunday service a puppy came running from a small house, jumping and yipping. We quickly realized it was our puppy. I walked over to the house and asked the man if this was his dog. He said that it was, so I asked him where he had gotten it. The man claimed he had purchased the dog. I then asked him if he was a Christian; guiltily he said he was. I smiled and told him that he should know that God knows the truth, that God sees everything. I patted him on the back, and we walked home.

Then we waited... sure enough, there was a knock at the door. Opening the door, I saw the man holding our puppy. He said he was sorry and gave the puppy back. I shook his hand and told him that God was pleased with his response to his conscience. The man walked away with no puppy, but with something far greater, a clear conscience before God.

When we choose to ignore our conscience, we eventually become bitter; we believe everyone is out to get us. We have a problem with the sermons we hear, we have a problem with our spouse and children. We shut ourselves off, we separate ourselves from God and his people.

If you find yourself in this state, remember, a clear heaven is only a prayer away.

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise –Psa 51:17.



Redeemed

His pillow was wet, tears continued to flow,
Oh! Where is the day? This night would not go.
Decisions he made; he would never forget.

His wife and his children, oh the regret!
(You don't know what you have, until it is gone.)

He reached for the bottle, awaiting the dawn.
The days came and went, they seemed like a blur.
He needed some answers, to fix how things were.

'Go to your neighbors,' a small voice he heard.
'But he is a Christian!' the thought seemed absurd.

'He has the answers, so do not delay!'

He decided to go, but just not today.

He laid on his bed, his burden too great.

'Go to your neighbors, it's still not too late!'

The call was so great, he got off the floor,

Put on his boots and went for the door.

His neighbor was home, his smile so warm;

He told him of Jesus, his life He'd transform.

It hardly seemed true, the words that he spoke.

It all seemed so clear! He wept as he broke.

The love of God flooded his needy soul,

He knew with no doubt that he was made whole.

A call to his wife, he did with no wait.

"Oh, do please come home, God has taken the hate!"

With his family by his side, his sins in the sea,
He could hardly wait, to be who God made him to be.

- Barry Grant

Weep for Yourselves

Lee Rufener
Athens, WI

And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus turning unto them said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children –Luk 23:27-28.

Our Lord began his preaching ministry in a rather usual fashion: in a church, reading from a passage of scripture, ...*And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears –Luk 4:21.* Many sermons from parables to prophecies flowed from the lips of the Lord's Anointed over the next three years, but never would we guess that His final message would end in such an abnormal fashion. The bruised, beaten, and bleeding Christ, upon being thoroughly molested and mocked, began the painstaking journey up the Via Dolorosa pathway to Golgotha. Tradition would tell us that He fell beneath His cross, but scripture does not confirm this. It is here that Jesus slows His pace to offer His last public address to the women at the side of the road bewailing His plight.

Luke is the only evangelist whose insight records this, as he often takes greater notice of the ministry of women in the life of Christ. It is from him alone that we learn of ...*Joanna the wife of Chuza Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto him of their substance –Luk 8:3.* It is from him that we learn of Gabriel's visit to Mary and her inner thoughts concerning the virgin birth and her visit to Elizabeth; Anna the prophetess; the widow of Nain; the Lord's anointing by the woman who was a sinner; and Mary and Martha's sibling rivalry at Bethany. So it is little wonder that notice is made of the fulfillment of prophecy by the female gender—...*they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem ... And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; ... and their wives apart; ... and their wives apart; ... and their wives apart; ... every family apart, and their wives apart –Zec 12:10-14.*

These *wives apart* being of the gentler nature are traditionally more capable of offering sympathy and tears than their male counterparts. Thus, who in time of sorrow could refuse their gentle touch, their passionate condolences, and their empathetic pity? Our Lord! He whom we oft find bestowing great compassion on the multitudes, certainly can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Yet herein is found the resisting and rebuking of the offerings of lamentation from His female encouragers. Has He become insensitive in His last hour? Since He is God's own Son, the Lamb without blemish, we must not reckon it so.

Though their tears would seem rather to be chosen than the rabble cry for crucifixion, Christ pronounced their offering defective. We must distinguish this crowd of women to be a different sort than the ...*many women [who] were there beholding afar off... –Mat 27:55.* I would suggest that these are Jerusalem sympathizers: professional weepers who would forget tomorrow that they had wept today. These fickle ladies, adept at making loud wailing, found their way to the house of Jairus before Christ's arrival. When He pronounced that the dead was *not dead, but* [that she] *sleepeth –Mar 5:39,* they immediately ceased their weeping ado; *And they laughed him to scorn... –Mar 5:40.* This, of course, is but personal surmising, but the prophetic injunction consummating this discourse concerning the impending destruction of Jerusalem, and the evil days to come, were not directed to His followers (they were instructed to flee) but to the resistant Jews.

And so, He deftly rebukes them—Weep Not!

One will not decry their natural empathy. Our emotions are as fleeting as the environment that creates them. We can feel so tender at a given moment without an ounce of the Holy Ghost. We may assume that our passionate tears are flowing from a heart of flesh, but moisture may

as well be condensed upon a cold heart of stone. Jesus admonishes them soundly for their weeping. This is not just a gentle reminder, “You shouldn’t worry about me, I’ll be OK.” We see here a forceful rebuke commanding them to weep not. Their well-meant tears were falling on unfruitful soil and Christ will not have it so. Jesus does not condemn sentimental expressions, and certainly does not denounce sympathy and weeping with and for others in their time of suffering. But the tears of these women were only muddying up the path, for they were shed for the injustice, personal loss, and pain they felt. They liked this man. He went about doing good deeds. They hoped that He would free them from Roman tyranny.

“A moment to give a loose to grief,
Let grateful sorrows rise,
And wash the bloody stains away
With torrents from your eyes.
Oh, come and mourn with me awhile;
Oh, come to the Savior’s side.
Oh come, together let us mourn:
Jesus, our Lord, is crucified.
Have we no tears to shed for Him,
While soldiers scoff and Jews deride?
Ah! Look how patiently He hangs;
Jesus, our Lord, is crucified.”

While these shortsighted ancient words call us to weep over our Lord, He himself does not. So oft we find ourselves in parallel situations and refuse to see our own renegade tears. We cry from the depths of pain wrought by emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental anguish. This is but natural. A Hollywood film or a frivolous novel may move us to the same condition of heart. Emotional sympathy excites no sin, but the farewell address of our Lord bids us to look elsewhere to plant our tears and so he beckons us to “weep not for me.”

When we behold the suffering of our Lord, we must look to something else—The Cross!

In His suffering for us, we must see that He is doing exactly what He voluntarily came to do—*I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep ... Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again –Joh 10: 11-17.* While the band of women wailed and grieved, God looked down and smiled—*Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied... –Isa 53:10-11.* This current scene had long ago been instated ...*by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have*

taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: –Act 2:23. Though Peter’s quick feelings rejected the mention of it, ...*but for this cause came I unto this hour –Joh 12:27.* Like Peter, we weep and resist Christ carrying the timber for fear that we should have to shoulder it as well. Here is the God-ordained apex of human salvation and it was being met with regret. The Son had ‘set His face as a flint’ to conquer the sin of the world. Shall we dilute it with our tears? Herein we are called to a major paradigm shift.

Weep not over the crucifixion but consider our transgressions that nailed Him there. Weep not over the dying Savior but bewail the sinner. Shed no tears upon the surgeon’s knife but grieve the spreading tumor which that knife must cut away. Bewail not the remedy for sin but mourn for the root of it. Cherish not the old rugged cross but lament the old ribald cause. Christ willingly endured the cross for the joy set before Him. Spiritual wisdom will demand that we fling our intuitions to the wind and shout for joy. The cross is not an emblem demanding our sympathy but is the divine expression of His love for us. Jesus chose the cross, came for the cross, prayed for the cross, then ultimately conquered sin by personally experiencing the cross. This is no cause for weeping. Nowhere are we instructed to feel sorry for our Lord.

Our dying Lord exhorts us, Weep not for me, but weep for...

...Yourselves

We are the cause for such a livid scene, and every honest heart will lament and feel the sting for the pain that we have caused. *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani* (Mar 15:34), is resting upon our own heads. His God forsook Him because of our transgressions. Our pride-stained relationships, presumption, and rebellion drove Him to such a plight.

‘Twas you, my sins, my cruel sins,
His chief tormentors were.
Each of my crimes became a nail,
And unbelief the spear.
‘Twas you that pulled the vengeance down
Upon His guiltless head:
Break, break, my heart, oh burst my eyes!
And let my sorrows bleed.
Strike, mighty grace, my flinty soul,
Till melting waters flow,
And deep repentance drowns
My eyes in sorrow and in woe.” –Watts

Funerals are a traditional cause for weeping. Each of us shall slowly pass by the bier and numbly stare into the corpse of our own sinful nature staring back at us. All the vain things that have charmed us most lay mortified within the vault. Our final tear-stained farewell must be said to

self-love, self-interest, self-centeredness, self-confidence, and self-pity as we stretch to entertain the final words of our Lord.

Thus, might I hide my blushing face,
While His dear cross appears.
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness,
And melt my eyes to tears. –Watts

...Your Children

Not only are we accountable for the Roman spear that pierced His side, but we must consider the Jews who spoke on our behalf that notable day—...*His blood be on us, and on our children* –Mat 27:25. How little we have considered the thundercloud of divine wrath that we have evoked upon our children. Many parents will pass off the neglected responsibility that they have toward the spiritual wellbeing of their offspring. None of us can change the mistakes that we have made in the training of our children, but the least we can do is spend our days weeping over the poor example we have been and difficulty we have created for their conversion. As the environment around us continues to decay and crumble, we should carefully and tearfully consider their future at every turn. Job did. How much more should we? ...*when the land sinneth against me by trespassing grievously, then will I stretch out mine hand upon it, and will break the staff of the bread thereof... Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord GOD, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness* –Eze 14: 13-20.

...The Sin of the Nation

For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry? –Luk 23: 29-31.

In the remnant portion of His message, Christ prophesies of the coming national destruction of Jerusalem. This abomination brought Jerusalem to desolation in 70 A.D. and no atrocity has surpassed it since. Our own nation stands on the brink of the judgment of God and what shall our portion be? Shall we spend our hours lobbying for better leaders, religious perseverance, and anti-abortion/anti-gay agendas? We would better spend our time alongside Daniel, Nehemiah, Ezra, and countless others confessing our sin and the sin of our people Israel, and presenting our supplication before the LORD our God. (see Daniel 9:4-20)

...Fellow Believers

Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain

of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people –Jer 9:1. We need not look far to be disappointed by the lives of our fellow believers, *for some are already turned aside after Satan* –1Ti 5:15. It takes no spiritual mind to judge and label such folly. It is perfectly natural to become sarcastic, shake the head, and proclaim their error unto others. It takes love and concern to shed the penitential tear on their behalf. King Saul had turned back from following the Lord and ...*it grieved Samuel; and he cried unto the LORD all night* –1Sa 15:11.

...Impenitent Sinners

Those of us who can find tears for the dying Saviour should indeed reserve them for the souls to whom death is but the beginning of evils. *These souls carry in their bosom the instrument of their own destruction. Sin is the cross to which the soul will be fastened, and habits and depravities are the nails! The soul is bearing its sin, and loving to bear it! Look, it is going to execution, but at each step it laughs! Every step it takes is bearing it towards hell, and yet it makes mirth! Lo, the infatuated one scoffs at the voice that warns him, and every scoff he utters is increasing his guilt! Look forward to its end, its never-ending end; look forward to it steadily, with calm and tearful gaze – is it not an awful spectacle? But what if you should be beholding yourselves as in a vision, or seeing your child in the glass of prophecy? If it is your case, I beseech you repent of your sins, bewail your condition, and fly to Christ for shelter! And if it is your child, give heaven no rest; plead continually at the throne of grace till you have brought down a blessing from God upon your offspring! Never cease to pray until your sons and your daughters are safely landed on the Rock of Ages, and so secured there that they will need no other rock to hide them in the day when Christ shall come.* –unknown

...Eternal Tears

Several years ago, hordes of humanity flocked the theaters and wept at Mel Gibson's motion picture—The Passion of Christ—**but few wept over their own sin.** Many will say, "Lord, Lord, did I not weep at the scene? Did I not bewail your pathetic condition?" Jesus wept in Gethsemane, over Jerusalem, and at the tomb of Lazarus. But Christ's tears were eternal and void of every wrongful motive and selfish intent. How natural to soak our couch with tears when our feelings are hurt. We fight pangs of pity at the loss of a loved one or our reputation. These are earthly tears. If God were to ...*put thou my tears into thy bottle...* –Psa 56:8, what would He label it? *For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death* –2Co 7:10.



Four Characteristics of Motherhood

Harold S. Martin

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Editor's Note: As a church and as an organization, we believe and promote the headship order as taught in the Holy Bible. With this view, the father and the husband is encouraged to be proactive as a servant-leader while leading his home and his family in all areas of life. Some folks would call this perspective “patriarchal” as opposed to a “matriarchal” functioning of the home. The world (and the church) tends to err more heavily on the aspect of sidelining the man as being the leader in the home. However, IF the patriarchal view is pushed too strongly then the tendency is to err on the side of demeaning or demoting the mother. As we have considered all these things, we thought this article provides an excellent encouragement for mothers in their desire to be godly and as they endeavor to follow the Scriptures.

It is a good thing to be reminded of the blessings of godly motherhood. The United States Congress designated May 8, 1914 as a special day to honor mothers, and ever since, the second Sunday of May has been observed in honor of our mothers. People in every country, even if a special day is not set aside, can make use of opportunities to honor their mothers.

We want to look at several mothers mentioned in the Bible and notice the qualities that characterized their lives.

1. Mary: Undying Love

In the account describing the crucifixion of Jesus we have a beautiful picture of a mother's undying love. The Bible says that when Jesus was taken out to Calvary, and was crucified, even in the midst of the taunting Jews and tough Roman soldiers, Mary stood by Him to the very last. The love and devotion of a true mother never fails.

From the Bible account of King David, there comes a moving story of a mother's undying love. It is the story of Rizpah, wife of King Saul. The account in 2 Samuel is blotted with cruelty and revenge, but in the middle of this record, there is a beautiful moving story of a mother's love and concern. Seven sons of Saul were tortured and killed by the Gibeonites because Saul had molested their land many years before. David permitted the Gibeonites to seize these boys (the offspring of Saul), and put them to death. 2 Samuel 21:9 says, “They hanged them in the hill before the Lord; and they fell all seven together, and were put to death

in the ... beginning of barley harvest.” Can you imagine the sorrow and consternation that came to the mother of the seven boys, when the officers came to their home and took them off to be crucified? The sons of Saul were taken out to a hillside and hanged. But as the darkness fell on the evening of their crucifixion, Rizpah (the mother of two of the boys) journeyed to the barren hillside, spread a blanket over the ground, and stayed there for several months—to drive off the birds and to stay by her sons (2 Samuel 21:10). This is a moving account of a mother's devotion and undying love for her children. Only a mother would have done it. One of the characteristics of real motherhood is undying love.

Norman Macleod (a preacher from Scotland) tells of a highland widow who was evicted from her home because she couldn't pay her rent. She started out with her only child—on a walk of ten miles—to her nearest relative on the other side of the mountain, to see if she could make her home with them. It was the month of May, but by the time she reached the mountain, a spring snowstorm set in, and as the night wore on, it increased in intensity. The Scottish preacher says that the next morning they found the mother cold in death—but beside her (wrapped in the mother's outer garments) they found the little child, cozy and warm. Not every mother has been so loyal, but a true mother's love is steadfast even to the point of death.

This is one of the reasons why the word “mother” touches a tender cord in the heart of every thoughtful person. The very thought of our mothers carries us back to childhood

days. We think of love, and tenderness, and watchful concern—and all this makes us feel like bowing our heads in honor to our mothers.

2. Hannah: Untiring Sacrifice

“Untiring sacrifice” speaks of a mother’s work and toil for the welfare of the family. One of the most expressive pictures of a mother’s care to be found in the Bible centers around Hannah, the mother of Samuel.

After dedicating the child Samuel to the Lord and to the work of the temple, Hannah left him to Eli the priest. But her care and concern for him did not end there, for we read, “His mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice” (1 Samuel 2:19). Each year she visited Samuel and presented him with a little garment that was woven by her own hands. The little coats that Hannah made for Samuel have long since crumbled into the dust, but they were a small token of a mother’s untiring sacrifice for her son.

Devoted mothers make many, many personal sacrifices. In fact, when a mother in the first place goes down into the valley of the shadow to give birth to her child, she does it at great personal sacrifice. She endures travail in order to bring new life into the world. And then when the children are growing, there is always an endless amount of work. An old proverb says, “Men may work from sun to sun, but a woman’s work is never done.” It is never fair to say to a mother, “Are you just a housewife, or do you have a job?” The poet says: “Nobody knows the work it makes, to keep the home together; nobody knows the steps it takes, nobody knows but mother.”

Even with the convenience of some of the newer gadgets and household appliances, motherhood is far from easy. Most mothers must serve as a cook, housekeeper, seamstress, nurse, doctor, lawyer, counselor, peacemaker, purchasing agent, and teacher. Our mothers generally cook and serve an average of one thousand meals for each member of the family each year. And then there are dishes to be washed and windows to be cleaned and rugs to be vacuumed—and it seems like there is no end. Surely mothers deserve our respect.

For most of us, our mothers guided our steps when we were just little tots. They read stories to us as soon as we were old enough to look at pictures. Mother kissed our hands when they were injured and hurt. The little poem says: “Who ran to help me when I fell, and would some pretty story tell, or kiss the place to make it well? My mother.” We need to honor our mothers because of their untiring sacrifice.

3. Jochebed: Untold Influence

Moses was adopted into a pagan Egyptian household, but the Bible says that when “he was come to years, he refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season.” That was Moses’ own personal decision. He decided to go with the people of God. But Moses learned the issues at stake at his mother’s knee. The influence of Jochebed on the life of Moses during his early years was so great that all his training in the king’s court could never erase it.

There are many factors that influence our lives. Heredity, associations, environment—all these contribute to the sum total of our personalities. But of all the factors that influence our growth and development, the influence of a mother is the most unique and outstanding. In fact, the influence of a mother is so great that it is often said, “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.”

The influence of a mother on her children can never be overstated. The influence and prayers of godly mothers have been a blessing and inspiration in countless lives. When Grover Cleveland was elected governor of the state of New York, he wrote a letter to his brother in which he said, “You know, if mother were still alive, I’d feel much safer. I’ve always thought her prayers had much to do with my success.” Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “Men are what their mother’s make them.” Abraham Lincoln once declared, “All that I am and all that I ever will be I owe to my mother.”

Every mother has a tremendous opportunity to influence her children for God, or against Him. No one else is as close to a little child during the tender and formative years of life, as the mother. From her lips we learn to speak; from her footsteps we learn to walk; from her attitudes we develop our character. Henry Ward Beecher used to say, “The mother’s heart is the child’s schoolroom.” The simple prayers that our childish lips first uttered were actually echoes from our mother’s heart. A mother’s task in molding lives and shaping character is a tremendous responsibility. There is no task under the sun that is greater than rearing boys and girls for God, and sending them out into the world to lead good Christian lives. For this reason, the mother of growing children should be a “keeper at home” (Titus 2:5), and not working at some job outside the home. We honor our mothers for their untold influence.

4. Eunice: Unfailing Faith

When the Apostle Paul was preaching in Lystra he met a wonderful family—a young man named Timothy, his mother Eunice, and his grandmother Lois. A number of years later, Paul reminded Timothy that his faith dwelled

first in his grandmother Lois and in his mother Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5). This does not mean that a child “inherits” faith. Every individual must make the decision to serve Jesus Christ for himself—but there is a very definite advantage in having a Christian heritage.

It is tragic that many mothers give their children a warm bed and nourishing meals and adequate clothing—but little spiritual nurture. A true Christian mother always provides for the spiritual needs of her children, as well as for their physical needs. Eunice taught Timothy the Holy Scriptures. He had known the Scriptures from childhood, and Paul says it was this that made him wise unto salvation. The concerned mother begins early to impart religious faith. She tries not to let an evening slip by without reading a Bible story at bedtime. She plants the law of God into their young minds every night, just before they move out into dreamland. Many of the words may be forgotten, but impressions will be left that time can never erase.

A young girl lay on her bed with what proved to be a fatal illness. She was the only child and the idol of her parents. She got everything she wanted. The doctor was called, and after examining the sick girl, he whispered into the mother’s ear. The girl sensed what he told her. She said,

“Mother, you’ve taught me how to dance, to dress well, how to conduct myself in the world—but one thing you failed to teach me—and that is how to die.” A good mother will teach her child how to die. Talk with your children about God’s plan of salvation—read to them, pray with them, and teach them wholesome things.

A Christian mother is the fairest flower that grows in the garden of happiness. If your mother is still living, visit her often. Show kindness to her while you can. The day will soon come when her eyesight and her hearing will become less keen, and her heart will be stopped in death. If your mother is gone, remember the advice she gave and the lessons she taught. And keep the place where she is buried neatly trimmed. A neglected mother’s grave is always a disgrace to any family of children. If you have wandered far from your mother’s precepts, won’t you turn to Jesus Christ and find forgiveness and make sure of meeting your redeemed loved ones in Heaven?

Truly, we can say “amen” to the following bit of verse: “Of all the earthly things God gives, there’s one above all others; it is the precious, priceless gift, of loving, Christian mothers.”



The Call to Labor

The early church in olden days
Had a desire to tell
The sinner about Jesus Christ,
About Heaven and hell.

Indeed, they were not perfect souls,
But yet they loved their Lord;
And strove to follow this command
In spite of peril and sword.

The more people they converted,
The more the tension grew.
The wicked rulers of the land
Did not know what to do.

A lot of folks were burned at stake,
Some put in dungeons cold,
Because they spread the Gospel word
With faith and courage bold.

These brave soldiers who suffered much
Were such bright lights indeed,
But to tell others about God
They still did see a need.

Now many years since then have passed;
We Christians tend to say
“Be an example to the world;
You need not tell the way.”

But if this point of view were true,
Then I would like to know:
As did the church in olden days,
Why doesn't our church grow?

Is it that in America,
The fire has grown cold?
Since faith is good, why don't we share
As did the saints of old?

In other lands this very day,
The fire is burning bright;
Because Christians are zealous there
And vigorous in fight.

While we thank God for freedom here,
They praise their Lord on high.
And thank Him that for Jesus' sake
They suffer and they die.

So as martyrs in other lands
Are shedding blood for God,
If we would also spread God's Word,
Our blood would stain our sod.

Is it a blessing from our God
That our country is free?
Or is it 'cause we aren't a “threat”
To the society?

Are we ashamed or have no time?
Dear friends, the time is nigh.
If we don't bring the folks to God,
The populace will die.

So, in conclusion, friends, let's take
The path that Jesus trod,
Showing lost souls, the narrow way,
That leads men home to God.

Overcoming Fear WITH Faith

Sheryl Zeiset
Tanzania, East Africa

Wars and rumors of wars, a pandemic sweeping across the world, whispers of economic collapse, carefully made plans disrupted. This is our world today. Why would God allow a tiny microbe to encroach on all of humanity, changing everything in its wake, and taking thousands of people's lives? What if it touches my family? The cold hand of fear grips my heart.

But wait. That is a familiar feeling. I've felt it often—long before the more recent uncertainties. I've felt a twist of raw fear when my son climbed a tall tree, or when there was bad news from a government office. Sometimes I'm afraid simply because it's the first natural human response to anything uncertain. I want to be comfortable and live a life free of pain and grief. I want to live my life happy and carefree, then die without drama in the end. If anything hints at upsetting those carefully controlled plans, fear rears its ugly head. Sometimes fear is irrational and can't ask neatly expressed questions. Other times the questions come as bold intruders, stalking into my peaceful world. What if someone I love dies? What if life will never be the same again? What if something terrible happens to one of my children?

Let us see what God has to say about those "what-ifs". Fear and worry take root in our hearts when we focus on the unknown future. But God says, *Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature ... Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself...* –Mat 6:27, 34. Or to quote the ESV version of the same verse, "And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his life span? Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow..."

In other words, we are frail humans. We don't have the power to fix our world or our problems. We don't have the power to determine the day of our death or how it will come. We cannot control our lives. Being anxious is not the answer to this dilemma. So, what is the answer?

One part of the answer is taking on God's eternal

perspective. Tribulation is a theme throughout the Bible, which we often miss simply because we have lived the affluent lifestyle of the 21st century. For many believers, tribulation is not a normal part of their Christianity. Then if grief, death, or shattering comes into their lives, they become confused. (Why would God allow this in my life if He says He loves me?) Some lose faith in God altogether. (If God says He is love yet allows these things, how can I trust Him?) I also have asked questions such as: Why is He not answering my prayers? Am I being punished?

This is the agony of a human heart trying to understand God's ways.

Even nature shows us that our Creator God has the good of all creation in mind when He allows trials. The Lodgepole Pine Tree seeds require a forest fire to break open the hard-outer shell of its pinecone and release the seed. A caterpillar must give up its entire identity and spend weeks in a dark chrysalis before emerging as a butterfly. The nutrient needs of the forest floor are dependent upon trees falling, then rotting into humus. Wheat becomes beneficial only after being ground into flour. Gold becomes far more beautiful and valuable after it has been refined with much heat. The precious face of a newborn baby is seen only after the pain of childbirth. There is no rainbow without rain and dark clouds. Likewise, our soul stays stagnant without pain.

In all of creation this is God's design.

Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy –1Pe 4: 12-13.

This verse is God whispering to those of us who have built a hard shell around our heart. Just break, give in to the fire, the damp dark earth, the confining chrysalis, and the pain. It would be foolish to tell the caterpillar to not worry, or to

reassure the seed that it will reproduce and grow. We don't try to convince the Lodgepole Pine that the fire is doing a good thing. It's simply nature taking its course.

So it is with you and me. When we understand the value of pain, then fear and worry will disappear. We will learn to rejoice through the pain when we believe that it is simply our Loving Father preparing our souls for heaven. Even our darkest trial is not dark to Him, because He sees through the darkness into the eternal glory giving life to our souls. He sees the short span of earthly sorrow and knows it will soon give way to eternal joy. The glories of heaven are His secret; we only need to trust that our deliverance is coming.

Radically different then the lawless slogan of the 1990s, "No Fear", as Christians we can truly say, "No fear," because God has put the hope of eternity in our hearts. We can safely let go of everything else. Our Anabaptist forefathers knew this well and lived it, even giving their lives for the truth. We can do the same as we face life with a strength of spirit that values the spiritual over the earthly. We can face the shattering of dreams, a world-wide pandemic, or death by persecutors. These things have no power over our destiny. God's purpose is eternal and not just for our earthly comfort and happiness. Instead of fearing temporal troubles, we are to fear the things which lethargize our souls—the shallow living which blankets our souls in a false security.

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind –2Ti 1:7. Fear is debilitating. It consumes our mind; it steals our focus. The devil knows this. Fear often attacks me at night, leaving me weak and exhausted. Foolish? Yes, because most times my fears are irrational. But it is real, none-the-less. It is a battle that I must fight. Instead of fear, God has given us the spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind. When woven together, these three cords form a strong rope that will not break under pressure.

Let's examine these three cords more closely.

Power simply means 'the ability to do or act with force.' God has given us the ability to make conscious choices and to do the next right thing. **His** power, given to us, overrides our human tendencies of fear and control.

Love is a profoundly tender affection. This is the love God has for us even as He allows and purposes trials. He puts this love in our hearts which sweetens all of life and lets everyone know that we have been with Jesus. Fear tightens and debilitates. Love makes us free and open. God needs women who choose love—for love casts out fear. If we understand the love by which God is ordering our lives, there is no room for fear.

A Sound Mind is healthy and in good condition; competent and sensible. The Greek word for this gives us the sense of someone with self-control and self-discipline. God needs women with active, creative minds, who order their lives in a competent and sensible way; women who exchange the internal drama of fear for a clear mind that can reach out and bless others.

Today we can choose to lay aside fear and reach for this threefold cord of power, love, and a sound mind. Love hard— ... *love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself –Luk 10:27.* Use your

hands to comfort and bless, sing with your children, and take time to enjoy the beauty of the sunrise and the sunset. Do each small duty with a heart of trust and faithfulness. Whatever happens, let's be found living in abundant grace, joy, and obedience to God's Word.

Wars and rumors of war? Disease? Economic collapse? Persecution? Trauma? Perhaps. But the outcome is clear. Jesus said, ... *In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world –Joh 16:33.* Do not be afraid, sisters; He has already overcome!



That Ugly, White Pocket Knife

Louella Burkholder
Myerstown, PA



Joel had a serious problem of taking things which did not belong to him. Sometimes he would sneak mother's freshly baked cookies from the cookie jar, or he would take Nathan's magic markers without asking to use them. To make matters worse, Joel would lie or make excuses when he was caught. Mother and Father had to punish Joel many times. They told him that if he continued to take small things without asking for permission, it could lead to stealing bigger things as he grew older.

And God hates stealing!

One day Mother took Joel and Nathan to Weaver's Country Store to buy shoes. "Look Mother," Joel said excitedly, pointing to the shiny pocketknives on the counter. "Will you please buy one for me?"

"No, Joel," Mother replied. "You must wait until you are older for a pocketknife."

"O.K.," Joel answered rather disappointedly.

Later, while Mother was fitting shoes on Nathan, Joel wandered front to the pocketknives again. He looked at them longingly. "That white one is a beauty," he thought to himself. "Oh, if only I could have it! Mother just does not understand that I am old enough to have one. All the other boys my age have pocketknives." Just then another ugly thought entered his head. "I think I will just take that white one. No one will ever know." Joel

glanced toward the back of the store where Mr. Weaver was helping fit shoes on Nathan. No one was looking, so he quickly reached up, took the white pocketknife from the box on the counter, and stuck it into his pocket.

Turning nervously, Joel walked back up the aisle. His head started to pound, and his heart was thumping so hard he was afraid everyone could hear it. He hoped Mother would take more time fitting shoes on Nathan. Then maybe she would not notice how hot and red his face was getting. Mother always seemed to notice when something was wrong.

But Mother did not notice this time, and soon they were on their way home. After several days, Joel discovered that it was not fun having a stolen pocketknife. He could hardly ever use it for fear of getting caught. He had to keep it well hidden most of the time!

Several weeks passed. Then one evening, Nathan came into the kitchen where Joel and Mother were doing the supper dishes. "Look, Mother! I found this pocketknife under the couch cushion. I wonder where it came from?"

Joel's heart began to thump wildly as he watched Mother examine the pocketknife. He wished he could dash outside and disappear. He had just slipped the pocketknife under the couch cushion that evening when Mother had walked into the



parlor unexpectedly as she announced that supper was ready. He never thought someone would find it there.

Suddenly he realized Mother was looking at him. "Joel, do you know where this comes from?" she asked.

"Oh! Err – well – ah – I think Cousin Mike has a white one like that," Joel stammered. "It – ah – it probably slipped out of his pocket the other evening when they were here visiting."

"I see... Well, I will need to ask Aunt Eva about this," Mother replied calmly as she placed the pocketknife on the window shelf.

Joel felt miserable. It seemed as if Mother's sad eyes were watching every move he made. Oh, how he wished he had never stolen that pocketknife! Every time he looked at it, sitting there on the shelf, it seemed to grow larger in size! He decided to go to bed early, but when he closed his eyes, all he saw was that ugly, white pocketknife, leering at him from the window shelf!

The next day, Mother called Joel to her. She was holding the white pocketknife. "I called Aunt Eva today, and she said that Mike does not have a pocketknife. Now Joel, tell me... where did you

get this pocketknife? And remember, it does not pay to lie," Mother said firmly as she placed her hand under his chin and raised his drooping head to look into his eyes.

"I – ah – took it from Weaver's Store," Joel stammered.

"Do you realize that was stealing?" Mother asked.

"Yes, I do, and I – I am sorry I lied about it too. I will never do anything like that again. I – ah – I felt so awful ever since I stole it," choked Joel as his body shook with sobs.

"I am glad to hear you say that Joel," Mother said. "Father and I have been asking God to help you with this problem of lying and stealing. This evening when Father comes home, you will need to tell him all about it, then Father and I will decide what your punishment should be. After that, we will take you back to the store and you can give the pocketknife to Mr. Weaver. Also, since you used the knife, you will need to pay for it with your own money."

How Joel dreaded facing Father and Mr. Weaver, but later when it was all over, he felt so much better. That day Joel learned a lesson he never forgot.



Prepare to Win!

Dwayne Stoltzfus
Millersburg, OH

There was a time in my life when I volunteered on the ambulance with two local EMS stations in Pennsylvania where I lived. I was a trained EMT and equipped to help a hurting person.

During my times of duty, I was prepared to run at a moment's notice. I had no idea when my ever-present pager would sound an alarm. At night, I would sleep fully dressed in my EMT garb. My boots were parked by the door. My car was backed up to the house and the keys were lying on the nightstand. I was prepared!

Some nights my pager never sounded. Other nights, the pager would beep loudly, disturbing a deep sleep. All my preparation time paid off and within seconds of the alarm I was driving down the road. Every second counted. I had to be prepared at all times.

It is no secret that athletes who play in the Olympic games often dedicate most of their life toward preparing for the game. They want nothing more than to reach the goal of winning that medal. But they must prepare! They do not wake up one morning and decide to travel to the Olympics that day to compete for the gold medal. If they want to win, they need to prepare. If they want that gold medal award, they need to train.

By about the age of 14, a British athlete will have decided on which sport to focus. At that point, he will begin to pour his life into training. An incredible amount of commitment, resources, and investment is needed to compete on the highest stage. The average elite athlete trains six hours a day, six days a week, twelve months a year. His goal? To win!

One athlete said, "All the hard work will be worth it, though, to simply compete in front of a home crowd—and

to win a medal would just be a dream come true."

As a Kingdom Christian, I look at a quote like this and say, "how frivolous and empty." But I ask you, young person: if they give everything that they have to win something so temporal, what are you giving to win something so eternal? What are you giving for a reward that will outlast anything on this earth—a reward that has value out of this world?

Paul used a runner as an example of how we should run in our Christian life: *Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain* –1Co 9:24. You are to run this race of the Christian life in such a way that you may win! I ask you, are you preparing to win? Are you running in such a way that you will win?

Let's take a brief look at two observations from an Olympic athlete and then make practical applications to our spiritual walk.

Observation #1: Exercise must be an everyday occurrence for an athlete.

Pro athletes don't train because they must. They grow up wanting nothing more than to play their sport for the rest of their lives. But to do so, they know that making exercise a part of everyday life is essential to winning. It doesn't matter if they run, lift weights, or go for a walk, athletes in training will get into a habit of daily exercise. It is as much a part of their day as brushing their teeth or combing their hair.

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible –1Co 9:25. As a Christian, if your goal is to be faithful to the end and win the race of your Christian life, then you will need to become serious about

your spiritual exercises. In fact, daily spiritual exercises are essential to staying fit for this intense race.

Exercise must be an everyday occurrence for a Christian. Read your Bible as though your life depends on it—because it does! Pray and stay connected to Jesus with the same purpose of heart that an athlete drinks fluid. (Did you know that drinking fluids is the most important part of an athlete's diet?) Pray as though your life depends on it—because it does!

Observation #2: An athlete in training gets the results he deserves.

It is so hard to get up early in the morning when you're snuggled under the covers and it's dark and cold outside. But an athlete in training knows that if he doesn't get up to practice and exercise, he will lose. He knows that the more he exercises, the better chance he has of winning. An athlete in training knows that he will be rewarded for his time spent in preparing. There will be results from choosing to exercise.

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace –Rom 8: 4-6.

As a Christian, what you feed will grow. You will either be feeding **the flesh**, or you will be feeding **the Spirit**. If you want to win the race and reach the reward of being restored to how you were really meant to live, then you will need to be spiritually minded and feed the things of the Spirit. Now let's consider a partial list of things that depending how or why we do it, will determine whether we are feeding our flesh or the Spirit.

Hunting and getting meat for the freezer is a very natural activity for survival and has been done for centuries. But when you go hunting to get the biggest buck to boost your ego and self-esteem, that is feeding your flesh.

Listening to the world's music will not do a thing to feed and exercise the spiritual man. But your flesh will be richly fed.

Following and/or playing in the professional sports world will not help you in winning the spiritual race. In fact, you will lose if you feed your flesh unheedingly.

Gluttony and/or consuming unhealthy food and drink will not help your spiritual man grow in the Lord. In fact, it will only feed your craving for more and more. Let's be careful that whether we eat or drink we are doing it to God's glory.

My dear friend, the simple fact remains: if you do not persevere in disciplining your spiritual life, you will lose! So, what are *you* exercising and feeding—your flesh or the

Spirit? Remember, when the natural man grows, there is no more room for the spiritual man to grow.

Reaching Forth and Pressing Toward

Paul says, *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus –Php 3:13-14.*

There's a *pressing* and a *reaching* that must happen in your Christian life if you want to win. You don't just get by with doing the minimum in the Christian life—God calls that lukewarmness and the Bible says He will vomit a lukewarm person out of His mouth (see Rev. 3:16). God is not looking for half-hearted overcomers. He is looking for 'more than conquerors.' There is no room for lukewarmness in the kingdom of God!

To prepare ourselves to win this race, we cannot get by without discipline and self-sacrifice. Are you a disciplined person in your spiritual life? How does it compare to your physical work and hobbies? Do you get up early for a physical sport you enjoy? Do you make sure you're at your job on time?

Do you have the same drive to get up early and discipline yourself in your spiritual life? Do you reach for your Bible as eagerly as you reach for your softball glove? Do you reach for your Bible as eagerly as you reach for that can of pop? Do you reach for your Bible as eagerly as you reach for your gun or bow to go hunting? Do you reach for your Bible as eagerly as you reach for your phone? Do you spend more time focusing on your spiritual life than you do dressing yourself and combing your hair? Do you care **more** what your friends think or what Jesus thinks?

There's a big social media craze to show everyone what you're doing and gain approval of men. Viewing social media postings will rob you of your spiritual focus. Posting on social media sites for all to see feeds a craving for approval of men.

There are many social media sites and apps out there. However, there's one app that creates similar cravings, but in a more subtle way. It's an app that lets you tell others "what's up". This app is named *WhatsApp*. This app is very useful for texting, especially with our acquaintances who are overseas. But included in WhatsApp is a button called Status. It allows you to post things for others to see. It allows you to see what your friends are doing right now—what their status is!

Posting one's activities and life's events online for the world to see has become a gripping drive and craving for

attention—a crave for the approval of men. If you feed this drive, it will grow. Ask yourself these questions, “Does posting my status on *WhatsApp* bring glory to God? Does checking social media sites to see what others are doing and how they are dressed draw me closer to God? Am I more eager to check the status of my friends than I am to open my Bible and check the status of my walk with God?” Is the time you spend on your phone making you better prepared to win this race?

The Demand for Your Time

How much time do you spend exercising? If an athlete would do one push-up a day, do you think he would win? If an athlete who desperately wants to win that gold medal would only walk 1/10 of a mile each day, do you think he would win?

So, as you prepare to meet God and win this race, is one Bible verse a day enough for you to win? Is one minute of prayer time each day with your Savior enough for you to fight the intense spiritual battles with the enemy?

Take **time** to read your Bible—your life depends on it for survival! Take **time** to pray—you cannot run this race without it!

“I got up early one morning, and rushed right into the day;
I had so much to accomplish that I didn’t have time to pray.
Problems just tumbled about me, and heavier came each task;
“Why doesn’t God help me?” I wondered.
He answered, “You didn’t ask.”

I wanted to see joy and beauty, but the day toiled on gray and bleak;
I wondered why God didn’t show me. He said, “But you didn’t seek.”
I tried to come into God’s presence; I used all my keys in the lock.
God gently and lovingly chided, “My child, you didn’t knock.”

I woke up early this morning, and paused before entering the day;
I had so much to accomplish that I had to take time to pray.”
-anonymous

The demands for our time could not be greater. Technological conveniences are shaping our lives. Our booming economy is reaching for our time. We are living in spiritually dangerous times! Have the demands and distractions of life lessened your time in spiritual exercise?

Does it concern you when your prayer time and Bible reading time diminishes because you simply don’t have time?

Remove Distractions

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, -Heb 12:1.

The Greek word for *weight* describes it as a **hindrance**. Are there activities or habits that hinder you from giving all you have to run this race? Is there something that is hindering your exercise—your spiritual growth?

The Greek word for *beset* describes it as to **distract** or **compete**. Are there sins distracting you from the race? Are there things that you do that compete with your spiritual exercises?

Maybe busyness is the weight that’s hindering your race. Maybe spiritual apathy is your sin—apathy is a lack of interest or concern. You’ve gone to sleep spiritually, and you simply do not care. Maybe things the world highly esteems are competing with your spiritual life and exercise—things such as wealth, sports, and popularity. The world highly esteems clothing? Did you ever go shopping and buy a piece of clothing you didn’t really need, just because it was nice—a new style?

Maybe your weight or distraction is simply a lack of vision for the kingdom of God. The Bible says that where there is no vision, the people perish. If you do not have a vision, you will perish. Plainly stated, you will lose the race and go to hell if you do not have a vision for the Kingdom of God!

I encourage you to open your life before the Lord—ask Him these serious questions.

- “God, are my priorities straight?”
- “God, do I value what you value?”
- “God, am I lacking vision?”
- “God, am I reaching for things that don’t last?”
- “God, am I too busy running after things that hinder my running?”
- “God, what is my *weight*—what is my *hindrance*?”

This is all about preparing to meet the Lord and preparing for our eternal destiny. It’s all about being effective soldiers in His kingdom. If you refuse to run the race well here on earth and be faithful, do you think God wants you in heaven?

Maybe you need to get desperate with God. Maybe you need to make some radical changes in your life—changes to your schedule, your focus, your activities, your pursuits.

No Man Knows the Time

All of us have an appointed time of death on God's calendar. You have no idea which day of which year your name is listed on God's calendar. It could be that you have only one more week here on this earth.

There is also another appointed date on God's calendar that only He knows. It is that great day when Jesus will return and end all life and time on this earth. Maybe that day will come while you and I are still here. Maybe it will come next week. How prepared are you at all times for your appointment with God?

Jesus said, *Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh* –Mat 24:44. Your appointment with God will happen when you're not thinking about it.

A Prepared Place

Only prepared people will be rewarded with this perfect eternal place of peace and rest that Jesus is preparing. Heaven is a holy and prepared place for only holy and prepared people. Try to imagine how it would be if everything evil and rotten would be non-existent. No rust. No decay. No pain. No aging. No darkness. No sin. Read Revelation 21 and 22 for graphic descriptions of this prepared place—Heaven! The Bible says that there will be no more curse. Can you imagine a place with no more curse? Living in a place that is ravaged by the curse, we know of nothing different. All creation travails under the curse that man's sin in the garden brought on us. But at the end of this life, God will reverse this curse! Think of it—death will be stopped. Chaos will be brought back to order. There will be no hunger, no thirst, no need of sun, no night, no sorrow, no crying, no pain, no tears. The pain and struggle that sin brought to this earth will simply BE NO MORE!

Heaven will be filled with the fulness of God's glory. Those who prepared and won this race will be in the very presence of God—they will be like Him! *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is* –1Jn 3:2.

Just as the physical sun sustains life on earth, so Jesus, the Son of God will sustain life in Heaven. He will be the source of everything needed to live in heaven—He will be the source and sustainer of life and hope for all eternity. But while the redeemed are enjoying the fulness of God in heaven, those in hell will be experiencing the complete opposite, most of all will be the absence of God.

Hell is the absence of God and all His attributes. No light—only pitch-black darkness. No bottom of gravity—only

falling. No seasons—only intense heat. No rest—only constant gnashing of teeth and screaming. No water—only parched dry mouths. Nothing beautiful—only flames. No love—only hatred for the devil and his angels. No joy—only sorrow. No healing—only pain, pain, pain. No hope—only an eternal future of torment and regret. The curse in its fullest—with no restraints and no reverse!

What Will Your Last Words Be?

Ponder these last words of people who rejected Christ's sacrifice:

Adams, an infidel said, "I'm lost, lost, lost. I am damned forever." His agony was so great that as he died, he tore the hair from his head.

On his deathbed, Sir Julian Huxley, an English evolutionist, biologist, and staunch atheist said, "So it is true after all, so it is true after all."

Cesare Borgia was a famous writer and politician who was a meticulous planner and planned everything to the minutest detail. When he knew he was dying he said, "When I lived, I provided for everything except death. Now I must die, and I am totally unprepared and unprovided."

But the final words of the unbeliever are vastly different from those who believe in Jesus Christ. When Christians die, they often report, on their death bed, of seeing angels. Quite often they hear the most beautiful singing they've ever heard. The closer to death, the more beautiful the sound.

Charles Spurgeon said on his deathbed: "I can hear them coming!" He sat straight up in bed and asked: "Don't you hear them? This is my coronation day. I can see the chariots, I'm ready to board."

The final words of Augustus Toplady, author of the song Rock of Ages were, "All is light, light, light."

Dwight L. Moody, a famous preacher, while on his deathbed said, "Can this be death? Why, it is better than living! Earth is receding, heaven is opening. This is my coronation day."

What will your last words be on this earth? Are you daily preparing for eternity—your real home? Are you running as if your life depended on it? Your eternal destiny does.

Sources:

Last Words <http://www.pdegraaf.com/articles/last_words.pdf>



Coronavirus— God, the World, and the Church

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Who would have ever imagined that a little germ which cannot be seen with the human eye, has put the entire globe in a tizzy, a panic, and an economic disruption? I have not seen a pandemic of this magnitude in my lifetime and, when this first emerged, I was one of the gainsayers who could not believe it would cripple our world to this extent. Questions abound, conspiracy theories are propagated, and fear has run rampant throughout the world as the entire globe responds to the pandemic. Will there be a cure, or will this continue to be a scourge in our world? If this little virus trespasses into my physical body, what is the chance of survival? Will it affect any of my loved ones? The questions are innumerable. Where it has come from has been theorized by many, but does anyone really know? Where is God in the whole thing? Did it surprise Him? Is it God's judgment on humanity? These and many other questions are being asked by many sincere people and the answers that are given often contradict one another.

One of the outfalls of the pandemic is the government invasion into the church and our personal lives in a way that has been unprecedented in my and your lifetime. Suddenly, we are faced with decisions that many of us have not thought through. When, and how much, should the government mandate things in our lives when we clearly believe in separation of Church and state? What are my rights? What will I do if I lose my business? Will I cash in the stimulus check that is supposed to arrive in the mail in the near future?

There is a verse in Peter that reminds me that if anyone should have answers in this time of pandemic, we as

Christians should. *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: -1Pe 3:15.* We may not know the origin of the virus, nor the outcome, but we do know Who knows all things, and that it was not a surprise to Him. It is the right time to turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who holds all things by the power of His Word. If anytime in recent history the Christian has an opportunity to be salt in the earth and light in the world, it is during this time of upheaval. So, what should the response of the Christian be?

Consider this verse in Luke: *Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth... -Luk 21:26.* For the Christian, earthquakes, famines, and pestilence should be no surprise since they have been prophesied to us through the Word of God. And while these things are happening and will happen, God has provided clear scriptural mandates for us as Christians to follow. We are clearly commanded in the scripture to not worry about tomorrow: *Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof -Mat 6:34.*

So, we as Jesus' disciples know that God will give us wisdom and grace for the difficulties of today. We are commanded to not borrow tomorrow's troubles. We need to be reminded once again, in this time, as always, God will provide grace for today that will be great enough to sustain peace in the midst of the storm, and will provide it tomorrow if we live. Let us learn a lesson from Peter and the disciples—to focus on Jesus. We need to trust Jesus even when He seems to be asleep in the boat, rather than

focusing on the storm that is raging all around us. Jesus was in control whether he was sleeping or awake and still is. But we might say, “How do I know if I will have food or clothing, or my business tomorrow?” And again, we hear the Savior say, “Look at the lilies, the fowls of the air, and learn a lesson from them!” We cannot even do some of the simplest things by God’s estimation, like add a cubit to our stature, so why would we try to deal with the hard things of providing for a tomorrow that is out of our control? Do these commands fit for the year 2020 and the pandemic that we are facing? I am sure that, in theory, we can agree, but can we internalize these verses and make them a very prominent place in our lives today?

There are principles given in God’s Word that, if we have not embraced them, we will also ‘reel in a tizzy’ when faced with things like the pandemic that is completely out of our control. One of those principles is the clear teaching that suffering is a way of life for the follower of Jesus. *And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together –Rom 8:17.*

The ‘health and wealth’ gospel that is peddled by many preachers today is a false doctrine and can leave a person reeling when they are faced with health or economic loss. We need to be okay with suffering, we need to embrace it; we need to arm ourselves with the same mind as Christ. The loss of our business, home and yes, even our own lives also, by economic disaster, storms, or accidents is not outside the realm of the will of God for the Christian. We know that God can eliminate any of these calamities and will protect us from them all IF He so wills. But whether He does or not is God’s prerogative and we are the happiest IF we surrender our lives completely to Him in faith, and trust Him to keep us, whether with little or with much.

Another principle we need to reckon with is that we have no rights except the right to the Tree of Life. For us as Christians it makes little difference if we are citizens of the United States or not. We have many privileges for which we are very grateful for, but we should not think we have a right to own, keep, or buy, or that we have a stake to claim in this world. In the Holy Scriptures we are reminded that we are but pilgrims and strangers here (see Heb 11:13-16). As Abraham and the other patriarchs, we have no abiding city here but look for a city ...*whose builder and maker is God –Heb 11:10.*

There are plenty of lawyers offering to fight for our rights, but the truth of the matter is, our citizenship is in Heaven and we are just ambassadors here and can be kicked out by society and need to leave all anytime without a moment’s hesitation. If this will be a reality, we need to live our lives

with all our things held with an open hand. We do not have the right (only the privilege)—to own land, to have enough food, to enjoy good health, and to live without suffering—nor should we fight for those so-called rights, but we, God’s people, must put on the mind of Christ and be willing to leave all behind for the sake of Christ and trust Him completely for our sustenance. Jesus said He sees one sparrow fall to the ground and reminds us that we are worth more than many sparrows. Jesus calls us to hate all that we hold dear here on this earth: *If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple –Luk 14:26.*

As Christians, we do not plan to stay here on this earth; we are anticipating Heaven. The scriptures express this sentiment when it not only considers the whole earth groaning to be delivered from this death and decay, but that we ourselves are also groaning to be delivered. Should there be such a strong pull to be here that our hearts fail us ...*for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth...? –Luk 21:26.* Should we much rather cry out “how long Lord Jesus” “so come”? Even as the apostle intimates as he wrestles with being “betwixt two”—*For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. –Php 1:23-24.* The apostle clearly indicates “having a desire to depart and be with Christ is far better,” and the only thing that holds him here is the fact that there is work to be done.

Another area we should be awake to, is our vulnerability during this time of no church services. We may be tempted to go on-line and be fed spiritually by those who are false prophets or those who teach false doctrine. We need to “try the spirits” and know whose feet we are sitting at. Be selective to whom you might listen, or from whom you might allow your family to take nourishment. We, as fathers, are called to lead and lead we must. The burden is on our shoulders to help our families navigate through these uncertain times. We as fathers may need to be more proactive during this time. It is a call to us to rise up and lead our wives and children. Not only do we have to watch “whose feet we are sitting at”, but we need to lead our families with confidence, calling them to trust in God, and leading them in prayers of faith. We need to provide them with an example of faith and trust in God that no amount of buffeting will shake. This time of upheaval will not knock us off our feet IF we are rooted and grounded in Christ.

At a time like this, we need to make wise decisions, even decisions concerning the future, but still refrain from falling into the panic mode and running around as if we have no

Heavenly Father. We also need to lead our families in being careful not to believe everything that one hears, but to be aware of where our news is coming from and to consider how reliable it is. Conspiracy theories abound concerning how this virus started and the political agenda theorized to be behind it. Refrain from spending time following these conspirators and rather follow the scripture mandate, “casting down imaginations.” The simple truth is this, we do not know, and if we did know it still should not change the way we live and our overall response. God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love and a sound mind. John tells us to not “believe every spirit, but to try the spirits to see whether they be of God.”

I believe that this is an awesome opportunity to reach out to our fellow brothers and sisters by praying for one another and by staying in touch so that we can ‘weep with those that weep’ and ‘rejoice with those that rejoice’. Some of us have jobs and some do not. God’s Word tells us that those who have are to give to those who do not have so that there may be an equality. It is a time to reach out to the elderly in our church or community and stay in touch by mail or phone. This is a time in which the lonely will only get lonelier. A cheery word, or a letter in the mail, and whatever other resources you can appropriately use may be just the thing that those around you need.

During the times of mandatory “stay at home”, there is a whole group of our society that will face challenges that they have not seen up to this time. According to various news sources there has been an increase in domestic violence since family members are spending much more time together than they normally do. But let this not once be named among us. This is the time for us as God’s children to maximize on “in home” relationships. The Bible calls us to “redeem the time” and this can be done by making the most of our time together as a family. Spend time together—reading the Bible, praying together, singing together, and just simply doing enjoyable things together—things that will nurture growth and love in our relationships. We need to be creative as fathers in bringing our family together in a way that will produce an atmosphere of unity and oneness.

One question that begs an answer is this, “Should the government dictate whether we have church or not?” This is something we need to answer since for some areas of the country it is more than a suggestion but has become mandatory. I believe that since the suggestion/order to not meet together during this time is for the purpose of not spreading a virus that is quite contagious, this then fulfills the scripture “to love our neighbor as ourselves.” It is a good opportunity to show the public that if the mandate does not ask us to violate the scripture, then we choose to honor

the government. There may come a time soon enough that we will be asked to do something that we cannot do with a clear conscience and then we will need to stand and “obey God rather than men.”

Some feel a twang of guilt because of the verse, “to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together”, however, this seems to be addressing a habit or a way of life. I suppose this is dealing with the lazy, slothful heart that does not see the benefit of getting together. We want to get together... As soon as we can get together again, we will take advantage of it. There is a big difference between those who cannot get together for a short time and those that choose not to since they do not see the value of it. For the present time, it seems the best testimony to our world and public relations to honor the mandate since they are not fighting against our faith and God. Let’s just take care to not let this become our new normal. Let’s keep our eye on a path forward to once again practically function as a local body.

What can we do? Pray more than ever that God would use this to win the lost and refine the church. Spend time building relationships with those you are closest to and have been encouraged to stay home with. Let this pandemic prepare us for what God has for us in the future. Let us be very careful how we talk about the government and some of the rulings that have come out through this all. We are called to honor the king and we need to spend more time thanking God for our freedoms than maximizing on the negative—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; -1Ti 2:1-3. For the Christian, ...we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose -Rom 8:28.



Only *in the* Darkness

Is it only in the heartbreak,
When confusion 'round me churns,
That I truly seek my Savior's arms
And my will toward Him turns?

Is it only in the darkness,
When I cannot see my way;
Or when asked of something I do not know
That I think to stop and pray?

Is it only when I feel
The force of evil 'round me gathered,
That I seek for His protection;
To in His arms be sheltered?

Oh, foolish heart of mine!
How can you call Him your best friend
When it's only in your trials
That on Him you will depend?

In good times too, you need Him,
Perhaps more desperately;
Since it's easier to forget to seek
When the way you think you see.

Even when you fail to hear Him,
When by His side you fail to stay,
He will hear you when you cry to Him
And on Him your troubles lay.

But how much better it would be
To earnestly seek His face
As much in the smoother times of life
As in the rougher place!

To seek and to search, to stay by His side,
To share the joy and the sorrow,
The unknowns in His hands, He'll be at your side
For whatever may come in tomorrow.

-by Katie Good

Living in the End Times

Studies in 2 Timothy 3:1-4:5

Harold S. Martin

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In this lesson, Paul describes many characteristics of the end of the age. There will be a love of money, arrogance, blasphemy, and disobedience to parents. Intemperance will be common. Some will despise those who are good. Still others will have a form of godliness but will deny its power. Conditions will become progressively worse as the church age draws to its close. The days will be perilous.

1. The Characteristics of Perilous Times (3:1-9)

Paul is speaking in this chapter about those who “resist the truth” (verse 8). He is describing attitudes that will prevail and conditions that will exist in the days toward the end of this present age of grace.

(3:1) “In the last days perilous times shall come.” As we move toward the time of Christ’s Second Coming, the struggle between good and evil will become more intense, and the days will become more threatening to our faith. They will be perilous times. There will be times of stress. The Apostle Peter says that in the last days, scoffers will come, “walking after their own lusts” (2 Peter 3:3).

Then beginning at verse 2, we are given a list of sordid and almost depressing human sins. There are nineteen vices listed here that will characterize the social structure in the last days.

(3:2) “For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy;”

The phrase **lovers of their own selves**—speaks of those who are self-centered, conceited, and egotistical. It refers to the tendency to think of oneself first and last and most of the time. A young woman in Holland married herself

(World Magazine, March 22, 2003). Jennifer was planning, as far as was known, the first post-modern marriage. “We live in a ME society,” she said, “Therefore it is logical that one promises to be faithful to oneself.” She planned a \$22,000 reception for her relatives, and in the ceremony was married to herself. A new Cable TV channel is called Me-TV.

The phrase (**covetous**) or lovers of money—speaks of greed and of materialism. The emphasis today is on large salaries, luxurious living, and accumulating more and more. Jesus said more about the dangers of wealth and possessions than He did about any other subject. Advertisements create the impression that riches and material comforts will bring everything for which the human heart longs. If that were true, the present generation, in western nations, should be the most contented people who have ever inhabited the earth.

The word **boasters**—speaks of bragging; it is an attempt to draw attention to one’s own achievements. The fable about the ant riding on the back of an elephant tells how they crossed an old bridge. It creaked and groaned and vibrated as they crossed. The ant said to the elephant, “My, didn’t we shake that bridge!”

The term **proud**—speaks of those who portray themselves as superior to other people. There is a pride of intellect; a pride of race; a pride of face; and even a pride of humility—a subtle form of pride that gloats in its own holiness.

The word **blasphemers**—describes those who speak irreverently and disrespectfully of sacred things. It is a mark of blasphemy to take God’s name in vain, to imply that the Bible is the work of mere humans, and to declare that Jesus is not God.

The phrase **disobedient to parents**—speaks of the breakdown of the family, and pictures rebellious and uncontrolled children. Many no longer remember the account of Greg Kingsley (a 12-year-old boy) who in 1992—for the first time ever in the history of our nation—won the right to “divorce” his own mother and was adopted by his foster parents. And most readers have forgotten the Time magazine article that tells about children who kill their parents. Children are pampered and allowed to do what they please, and we are reaping a harvest of delinquency.

The term **unthankful**—speaks of being ungrateful and lacking in appreciation. The Scriptures repeatedly admonish us to be thankful, not only for happy families and decent jobs and strong bodies—but also for disappointments and hard places. Thanksgiving is rooted in the belief that a sovereign God is in control of everything that touches our lives, and so we can be grateful in all things that touch our lives.

The word **unholy**—denotes any kind of sin but refers especially to sexual impurity. Sexual perversion in our day has multiplied all around us. Reader’s Digest (May 1993 issue) tells about the dilemma of an eighth-grade public school teacher in Chicago: She says, “I try to teach, but it isn’t easy when my smartest student is already pregnant with her second child.” Because of modern birth-control methods and the general disregard for Bible principles—the volume of sex perversion has multiplied all around us. In many public schools, condoms are being handed out, making sexual activity among teenagers seem legitimate and normal. In many of these same schools, the Gideon’s are no longer allowed to distribute free Bibles.

(3:3) without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good...

The term **without natural affection** describes those who have no regard for normal family ties—like the father who on Thanksgiving Day, in the late 1980s, placed his two sons (one aged 4 years; the other 13 months old)—in a huge foundry oven, and heated it to 1,300 degrees and cooked them while they were alive!

The term **trucebreakers**—speaks of those who refuse efforts to make peace. To be unforgiving and a trucebreaker is to refuse to excuse another for a failure or an offense. Many are not willing to renounce their anger against another and reject the idea of becoming reconciled with those who disagree with them, unless they absolutely get their own way.

The term **false accusers**—speaks of those who utter false charges which damage the reputation of others. A sign in

a restaurant said: “If you like our food tell others; if you don’t, tell us.” That would be a good sign to hang in our church vestibules.

The word **incontinent** indicates a lack of self-control and discipline. Self-control is the determination to say “No” to harmful things such as the use of tobacco, the squandering of time, and the wrong use of the tongue. Self-control is also the determination to say “Yes” to good things like spending time with one’s family and showing kindness to those who are objects of ridicule.

The word translated **fierce** is sometimes translated “savage” or “brutal.” It speaks of being harsh and severe, the opposite of gentleness and mildness. Our day is characterized by school shootings, sexual abuse, guerilla warfare, violence in the media, and widespread abortion. After World War II American soldiers found 16 cases of gold teeth and one case of “pure Jewish soap.”

The phrase **despisers of those that are good** is a reference to the fact that people will often look down upon those who are true, honorable, upright, and pious in their daily living. They accuse those who are virtuous of being self-righteous, pharisaical, fanatical, narrow-minded, legalistic, holier-than-thou, and puritanical. These attitudes are mild forms of persecution.

(3:4-5) traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof; from such turn away...

The word **traitors** refers to those who give way to the enemy. The word speaks of anyone who betrays others. In the church, it speaks of preachers, who by failing to preach the Gospel, are traitors to their ordination vows. It can refer also to believers, who by careless living are traitors to their baptismal vows.

The word **heady** implies rash, reckless, and thoughtless behavior. It speaks of going headlong into an action without sufficient forethought. We live in a fast age. In our day, taking time to meditate and think and plan is often ignored.

The word **high-minded** means conceited, puffed up with pride. The paraphrase of Romans 12:16 expresses the truth: “Don’t try to act big. Don’t try to get into the good graces of important people but enjoy the company of ordinary folks. And don’t think you know it all!” (Living Bible).

The phrase **lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God**—is saying that, in the last days, the pursuit of pleasure will be put ahead of the worship of God.

Average American workers today have 22 more years of free time (during a life-time of work) than did their grandparents. More than half of the United States population

lives within a one-hour drive from the sea-coast—and so much of the free time is spent in water-oriented sports—boating, skiing, fishing, swimming, and just vacationing along the water. Thousands of people will sit for hours on a hard seat to watch a ball game. Very few of these same people will show the same kind of devotion to the things of God. Today, even churches are emphasizing entertainment. Drama, clowning, interpretive dance, miming, and mini concerts are replacing revival meetings and in-depth Bible studies. People get all excited over anything from skin-diving to cake-decorating to frog-jumping contests.

The phrase, **having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof**, speaks of those who observe the outward forms of religion, but their hearts and lives do not correspond. They recite creeds and go through various forms of liturgy—but they know nothing of true conversion and changed lives.

A church building may have a beautiful worship center: there is good music and a hushed service, but as one writer says, “If the Holy Spirit were suddenly removed from the earth,” he believes that “95% of all church activity would continue on as if nothing had happened.” J. I. Packer has said, “There are churches all over America, and it seems that Christianity is 3,000 miles wide, but it’s only one-half-inch deep.”

The days immediately preceding our Lord’s second advent—will see little restraint upon sin, and religious life will consist largely of external forms only.

(3:6-7) “For of this sort are they which creep into houses and lead captive silly women” who are loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

The words **creep into houses** indicate that false teachers had already emerged as a plague in the church in New Testament times. Those who listen to false teachers may learn many new things, but they never acquire the true knowledge of the way of salvation (verse 7). Many study philosophy and speculate about the nature of human destiny—but apart from the message of the Bible, there are no answers to the deep dilemmas of life.

(3:8-9) In verses 8-9 Paul refers to the magicians in Pharaoh’s court many years ago in Egypt. These men were able to counterfeit some of God’s miracles, but there was a limit on what they could do. We must not be deceived by false prophets, including those (the Mormons and the Jehovah’s Witnesses) who knock on doors.

2. The Deceitfulness of False Teachers (3:10-15)

Paul urges believers to continue to uphold the Bible as the only source of truth.

(3:10-11) Not all church leaders are seducers and apostates and false teachers. Many of God’s servants, like the Apostle Paul, are valiant contenders for the faith. Timothy had traveled extensively with Paul, and he knew that Paul was a true man of God. There are nine aspects of Paul’s life that every professing Christian should be willing to follow.

- In doctrine... Paul’s teaching was Bible-centered and Christ-centered.
- In manner of life... Paul’s daily walk was above reproach.
- In purpose... Paul aimed to do God’s will.
- In faith... Paul was confident about the promises of God.
- In longsuffering... Paul was forbearing with sinners and held a wholesome attitude toward persecutors.
- In charity... Paul had a consuming passion for souls.
- In patience... Paul kept a gentle spirit which was manifested over and over again.
- In persecutions... Paul was patient toward those who mistreated him.
- In afflictions... (that came to him in the Galatian cities of Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra) Paul (even though bombarded with stones and left for dead), was delivered by the good hand of God.

Paul mentioned all this to encourage Timothy and to challenge every one of us to face our duties with the same devoted spirit.

(3:12) Paul declares that persecution is a normal part of a devout Christian life. It is unavoidable for those who desire to live in a godly manner. The reason is simple. Your godly life exposes the wickedness of others. People don’t like to be exposed, and so instead of repenting of their sins and turning to Christ, they seek to destroy the one whose wholesome life reminds them of their wrong behavior.

There are a number of forms of persecution. Some persecution is mild—for example, being passed over for a job promotion or becoming the victim of derogatory remarks. At other times persecution has been more severe.

Roman opposition to Christianity began when Emperor Claudius banned Jews and Christians from Rome in A.D. 49. In the 1500s, the Anabaptists were hunted down by mounted soldiers who were ordered to kill the rebaptizers on the spot without any fair trial. A number of Anabaptists were martyred by the acts of beheading, drowning, and burning at the stake. In the book, *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision*, Guy Hershberger says, “The dreadful severity of the persecution of the Anabaptist movement in the years 1527-1560 ... testifies to the power of the movement and the desperate haste with which ... (the)

authorities tried to throttle it before it should be too late” (page 185). One decree ordered that “every Anabaptist and re-baptized person of either sex should be put to death by fire, sword, or some other way” (page 32).

Persecution involves inflicting some kind of injury—sometimes to one’s feelings, or family, or reputation, or property—and sometimes to one’s body. The more severe methods of persecution include torture, imprisonment, banishment, and even death.

There is an easy way to avoid persecution. All we have to do is yield our convictions to the ways of the world. Our text says that godly people “*shall suffer persecution.*” We might conclude that if our Christian life is too easy, perhaps it has not been too godly.

(3:13) As we move toward the end of the age, things will go from bad to worse. And so, we are to be encouraged by Paul’s example (as seen in verses 10-11). Persecution is bound to come. We will not escape it, but like Paul (at the end of verse 11)—when summarizing his difficulties, he declares: “But out of them all the Lord delivered me.”

(3:14-15) Believers are instructed to sense the power and strength of the Word of God. But we are to continue in the things which we have learned. Verse 15 declares that the message of the Bible is the vehicle which God uses to make a child “wise unto salvation.” Paul did not see the Scriptures as a mere compilation of ancient records, laws, and prophecies—but viewed them as a revelation of God’s saving purpose for the human family.

3. The Prominence of God’s Word (3:16-17)

In verses 16-17 Paul reassured Timothy that all the Scriptures were inspired by God and have been transmitted under His supervision.

(3:16-17) The Scriptures originated in the mind of God. The Holy Spirit guarded the whole process of producing the Scriptures so that the writers were preserved from error. The latter part of verse 16 and all of verse 17 tell about the Bible’s purpose. The Bible is a handbook on salvation and on Christian living. The Scriptures are useful for:

- **doctrine**—they set forth the mind of God with regard to the Trinity, man, sin, salvation, the church, and future events.
- **reproof**—they show us where we are wrong.
- **correction**—they tell us how to get right.
- **instruction in righteousness**—they give us rules for good Christian conduct.

The Bible should be our road map for life. The Bible is part of the armor which God provides to help us stand firmly against the inroads of false teaching (Ephesians 6:17).

4. The Message to Bring in Times of Apostasy (4:1-5)

God knows that the best way to be insulated from error is to be saturated with the truth—and so He urges sound preaching of the Word.

(4:1-3) The preacher is to proclaim God’s Word. Christians are to be ready at all times to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with longsuffering and teaching.

The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but because they have itching ears, will heap up for themselves teachers who will condone their sins and comfort them in their wicked ways. They want a message that pleases the carnal mind—a message without demands and without restrictions.

The time will come “when they will not endure sound doctrine” (verse 3). The NIV rendering says, “To suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.”

The evidence is clear, and it keeps mounting daily. This present age is drawing to a close. History is approaching its climax. The literal, personal, visible return of Jesus Christ is one of the most certain things taught in the Scriptures. People will be busy with the routines of life, making plans for the future and taking care of business. What should be our attitude in light of all this?

- We are **not** to be terrified by the present upheavals (Matthew 24:6).
- We are to hold steady, and not to be “soon shaken in mind” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2).
- We are to purify ourselves (1 John 3:3) so that we might be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless (2 Peter 3:14).

When the world is burning, and the judgment is setting, and the stars are falling—and the people are crying—many will wish that they had taken seriously the admonitions found in 2 Timothy 3, and the early part of chapter 4.



Holding the Hearts of our Children

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The Formative years

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse –Mal 4:5-6.

The vision of godly parents is to maintain an intimate and enriching relationship with our children. Family relationships are the building blocks of our churches and the fabric of our society. If you grew up in a close-knit family where there was constructive, open-hearted sharing you may assume that that is a common and “normal” family life. Unfortunately, this is not always the case.

In this article we intend to consider methods of relating that draw parents to their children and children to their parents. We will be focusing on the formative years which are the childhood years from birth to adolescence. We will look first at what parents can do to “hold” (get and keep) the hearts of their children, then we will consider remedial efforts for dysfunctional relationships.

The best way to trace the quality of a parent/child relationship is to begin at birth and follow the relationship through as the child develops. Children are born with basic fundamental needs. Where these needs are met, healthy development takes place. When these needs are not met, a child will struggle developing to their full potential.

The First Year

Acceptance

Studies have shown that a child can sense rejection, even at times, in the womb. If a child is unwanted, that child will naturally mirror what they are experiencing. Thus, they tend to develop a sense of that rejection and then not bond properly with the parent. In a normal parent/child relationship the child is naturally bonded to the parents, and parents need only to nurture and strengthen the bond that already exists.

Physical Touch

There was a day when babies were whisked away to the nursery for “professional” care the moment they were born. This practice and other similar ‘abuses’, such as fathers being barred from the delivery room, paved the way for home deliveries. Fortunately, even the medical profession has become ‘enlightened’ to the fact

that there is powerful bonding that takes place in those first few hours and days of an infant’s life.

Most mothers and fathers do not need to be told to cuddle and kiss their babies. For those who are not inclined to be physically close to their infant, be advised that physical distance in infancy leads to emotional detachment later in life. We need only to consider Jesus, the representation of our Heavenly Father as detailed in the Scriptures to learn how parents should use physical touch when relating to their children—Jesus laid His hands on the children in Matthew 19:13-15; Jesus took the children in His arms in Mark 10:13-16; and throughout the New Testament Jesus used His hands to offer a healing touch to the many, varied ailments of those with whom He came in contact.

Proper Care

The essential needs of an infant are quite simple and obvious: food, diapering, and plenty of sleep. Most parents will naturally provide for these essentials. In rare cases where children are neglected at this stage of their lives, permanent, lifelong struggles will develop.

Ages two to five

Somehow, the second year of life has become known as the “terrible twos”. Instead it is actually a wonderful and necessary time of learning and exploring for a child. There is probably no season of life in which a child is more impressionable. Their brain is developing very rapidly which provides great opportunity for parental input.

Here are a few of those opportunities...

...Learn to pray

Our family philosophy has been “if a child can talk, a child can pray”. While they may not understand much about who God is, praying impresses into the mind of the child the fact that “God is”. This simple awareness of the existence of God will follow and bless that child all throughout his/her life.

Their initial prayers are sure to be simple such as “Thank you for the food, Amen”. A parent can train their child to pray with a simple ‘repeat after me’ type of prayer. A child that develops the habit of praying is laying the foundation for a disciplined life of prayer.

...Learn Bible stories

Children love to be read to. When a parent reads to a child, the child believes what is being read because mom or dad “said so”. Before the age of five, children are unable to discern between truth and fiction. In their mind everything is real.

This season of life is an ideal time to introduce your child to the wonderful stories of the Bible. There are many Bible story books available. Make certain that they are Biblically accurate and not some glorified fantasy. Bible stories impressed upon the mind of a child will go with them for life.

...Development of empathy

Recent studies have shown that empathy—the ability of a child to feel what another is feeling—is developed between the ages of two and five. This same study has shown that children who are allowed to be entertained with electronic media at this season of their lives fail to develop empathy. The fast-paced visual input of movies and computer games over-stimulates the brain and inhibits the development of more subtle influences of caring and feeling. Additionally, much of this entertainment is violent and self-serving in its nature. This study is very alarming when you consider that most children today are growing up with this sort of surrogate parenting.

The Apostle Paul prophesied that in the last days *...men shall be lovers of their own selves...* –2Ti 3:2. This prophesy is being fulfilled in the lives of children who are failing to develop empathy.

...Development of obedience

In the years of two to five a child’s will is most malleable—that is, able to be conditioned. Parents do well to regard this as the prime season for training the will. The litmus test for obedience training is whether or not a child responds to voice commands. Children who disregard parental commands have not learned obedience and will grow up taking their own way in life. A child who learns to live with a surrendered will to their parents will one day much more easily walk in unquestioning obedience to God.

The Bible gives clear directives on the use of the rod. *The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame* –Pro 29:15. The most effective remedy for rebellion is the rod. This must be done discreetly and moderately, never in anger and never in excess. Until the **pain of disobedience** exceeds the **“pain” of obedience**, a child will continue to disobey.

Loving and caring discipline has the effect of drawing the heart of the child to the parent. Discipline, IF done properly, has the effect of freeing the spirit of the child from guilt and restoring the child’s relationship to the parent. We have found that the child is drawn to the parent who administers the discipline. Discipline has a way of bringing the child into compliance with

his own conscience so that he is now at rest—emotional and spiritual peace and tranquility. In this state of inner peace, the child is now free to once more relate with his parents.

Ages six to adolescence

These years are critical years in the development of parent/child relationships. During these years, children are developing relationships with others that sometimes compete with parental relationships. As our children become less dependent on us there is a tendency to not feel compelled to invest as much time and energy in maintaining that relationship.

Teenage rebellion begins before a child reaches the teen years. If the relationship is not nurtured throughout these pre-adolescent years, the heart of the child turns elsewhere.

Let’s look at some of the needs of children at this season of their lives...

...A Personal Relationship with God

Children who are raised in a Christian home and who sit regularly under gospel preaching will come to a point of decision where they must choose to make their earthly father’s God, their personal God. We sometimes refer to this as the ‘age of accountability’. Exactly at what age this happens will vary from child to child, but if parental training and gospel preaching is at all effective it will bring about conviction of sin and repentance at some point, most commonly during adolescence.

This impacts parent/child relationships in that a child who is resisting God’s authority will also resist parental authority and vice versa. A child who is under conviction is sometimes sullen, withdrawn, and not very cooperative. A wise parent will be sensitive to this and will help his/her child to be birthed into the Kingdom. While we do not promote child evangelism, we must be aware whether God is speaking to the heart of our child and be available when the time of spiritual birth has come.

...A sense of personal worth

This season of a child’s life is a time of learning and doing. Children learn by doing and should be encouraged to discover their creative gifts. The process of ‘learning by doing’ many times involves failure as the child learns by ‘trial and error’. Children should not be criticized if their efforts do not work out immediately. After hundreds of failed attempts Tom Edison finally invented a functional light bulb.

A sense of personal worth results when a child discovers that “I can do things” and “I can contribute to my family and my community”. A child who is okay with themselves and their natural abilities will feel okay with their relationships with friends and family.

A child who has been put down and made to feel incompetent will withdraw from intimate relationships and will be looking elsewhere for their affirmation. The absence of parental

affirmation in a child's life can impact their relationships for the rest of their life. Only through understanding God's unconditional love and acceptance can this be resolved.

...Personal Responsibility

In this season of a child's life the child must learn personal responsibility. Simple things like making their bed, cleaning their room, and helping with household chores teaches them to become responsible members of the household. This discipline becomes a pattern of life that will allow them to eventually become contributing members of the local church and of society.

Learning personal responsibility early in life shifts a child's focus away from pleasing self to living in harmony with others. Many people who struggle with relationships as adults have had a childhood of self-pleasing or self-focus. Parents can prepare their children for adulthood by training them to embrace personal responsibility early in life.

...Good study habits

The pre-adolescent mind is like a vacuum in that it absorbs well and has good retention. A caring parent will provide plenty of good quality reading material for their child. In a world of many books it can be a challenge to discern what is good quality and what is not.

It is of primary importance that we provide books that promote sound Christian values that align with our Kingdom perspective. There are many such books available from our Anabaptist publishing houses. Know the interests of your child and encourage them to expand their world of knowledge through extensive reading.

Encourage your children to be reading "up", that is, slightly above their level of comprehension. They should also be reading "out", that is, outside of the topics that they are naturally drawn to or are interested in. Children learn by reading "up" and "out". They learn new words, new facts, and new concepts as they read.

What does this have to do with parental relationships? Parents should be involved in their children's education whether they are homeschooling or not. Ask them about what they are reading. Offer your perspective and insight on the subject at hand. Win their respect by demonstrating your knowledge and opinions.

...Musing vs. amusing

We are training children to become adults and that process must involve allowing them to become critical thinkers and providing them with a Biblical foundation for evaluating the broad range of ideas that they will encounter in life.

To 'muse' means *to think*. To 'amuse' means *to not think*. Much of the children's entertainment that is available today is designed to "amuse". This is especially true of computer games and movies. These forms of entertainment encourage the child to open his mind to predetermined values.

It is amazing what some Christian parents will allow their children to watch. Many computer games involve violence. Most movies contain scenes of compromised morality. These influences go directly to the heart of a child and help to form their conscience—their sense of right and wrong.

...Heart-level communication

Preadolescent children should be encouraged to talk about their inner feelings. Relationships are built with open-hearted communication. There was a time when the teaching was that children were to be 'seen but not heard'. More recently the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme where the child becomes the 'center' of focus, and the feelings of the child is understood to be paramount.

Both of these extremes create an unhealthy and unnatural parent/child relationship. Instead when we follow God's direction, the parent must maintain the role of mentor, maintaining the upper hand and providing healthy direction for the child. The child's feelings may not dominate the relationship, but neither should the child be suppressed to the point that he is made to feel that his feelings are invalid.

The child who is forced to suppress his feelings will have the tendency to become angry and his heart will be redirected to the first person who shows a caring attitude. The child who is emotionally pampered will tend to become extremely self-focused and will struggle in intimate relationships.

Summary

Children are naturally bonded to their parents. Proverbs 17:6 says ...*the glory of children are their fathers*. Most children want to be able to boast about their parents. Our identity is linked to our parents and we often measure our worth by our relationship with our parents. This relationship becomes the framework for future relationships. Many adults struggle with relational issues that can sometimes be traced to parental neglect or outright abuse. If this is your situation there are two things that you should be aware of.

The first is that healing can only be found in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. None of us have had perfect parents, but Jesus is a perfect friend. Knowing Him intimately fills the relational void of imperfect human relationships.

Secondly, if you did not have a good relationship with your parents you need to find God's healing for that, or you will most likely repeat the neglect and/or abuse with your own children. We tend to emulate the parenting pattern of our parents unless we make intentional choices to do otherwise.

Children who are happy, contented, and socially adaptable are children who have grown up in a loving environment in which their essential needs have been met. Parenting is a big responsibility, but one that brings with it the greatest fulfillment, complete with eternal rewards.



JOY

One fruit of the spirit is a word we all know.

Joy is a blessing for us believers below.

Man can't produce the Joy that I speak,

It comes from God, given to the meek.

It allows you to suffer, having peace within.

It only leaves at the presence of sin.

Joy brings you through the trials of living.

A peace in your heart that keeps on forgiving.

It doesn't forsake us; through the struggles we face.

But rather gives courage and keeps us in grace.

Joy is something this world does not know.

It comes not from pleasure, nor feelings that grow;

But comes from the peace that only God gives.


It's for the redeemed, and the life that he lives.

So why do so many reject this great gift?

That is known for healing and burdens to lift.

If you find yourself lacking the Joy from above,

Turn to the Saviour and His redeeming love!



The Heartbeat of
The Remnant

c/o The Berean Voice
P O Box 279
Shreve, Ohio 44676

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Erie, PA
Permit #227

Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.

Luke 21:36