



Winter 2024

The Heartbeat of 
The Remnant

A ministry of
The Berean Voice



Table of Contents

- 3 From the Editor
- 4 A Glorious Church
- 7 City of God
Poem
- 8 It Was Winter
- 11 Winter Song
Poem
- 12 A Chronicle Like to Ours
- 14 The Mint Man
Children's Corner
- 16 Timothy: A Valued Helper
- 20 A Christ-Centered Courtship
For the youth
- 25 The Googlification of Medicine
- 30 Joy in the Crevices
For the sisters
- 33 Crown Him with Many Crowns
Hymn history

Purpose Statement

The Berean Voice is an outreach ministry of Faith Christian Fellowship, located in Holmes County, Ohio. It is operated by a board of directors, which ultimately answer to the elders of the church.

As a non-profit ministry, we desire to work with the Lord, for without Him we can do nothing. We are trusting God to provide for the ongoing work of this magazine and our other outreach projects through the free-will offerings of His people. Would you join us in prayer for this work and ongoing need?

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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 noted. 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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From the EDITOR



January 21, 1525, was the 500th anniversary of Anabaptism. Five hundred years ago, a monumental event in the history of the Christian church occurred. A small group of radical Christians quietly gathered in the home of Felix Mantz in Zürich, Switzerland. The state church government of Zürich had ordered parents to have their infants baptized or face being banished from their homes. Gathering together for Scripture studies and prayer meetings was outlawed, too. Yet, on this momentous winter evening, Felix Mantz, Conrad Grebel, George Blaurock, and a few others took their obedience one step further. After praying and committing to serve God faithfully, George Blaurock asked Conrad Grebel to baptize him in true Christian faith, which Conrad did. The others also requested baptism, and George, in turn, also baptized them. And thus, Anabaptism, as we know it, was born.

Though these three men played a key part in Anabaptist history, the Reformation did not begin with them. The real catalyst for flaming the fires of revival was kindled 88 years earlier. In 1436, a German goldsmith named Johannes Gutenberg invented a moveable type printing press. This dramatically improved printing, and books could be printed in greater quantities. Instead of a few books only in the hands of the wealthy, the common person could now afford to buy books. The first books to be printed on the Gutenberg press were Bibles. When common folks began to buy and read Bibles, they began to realize that the darkness of religious oppression was keeping them from understanding the true light of God's Word. And thus, the Reformation was born.

Fast forward 588 years. The printed paper still inspires men and women. But today, it is much easier to print a periodical magazine such as The Heartbeat of the Remnant. We simply take up the pen or keyboard and write. Our document is then digitally edited and electronically sent to the printer. After the files are uploaded, the printing press will print 6,000 copies in a little over 12 hours. It is then finished and mailed to 51 countries around the world and many states in the U.S. Printing has come a long way since 1436 when each page had to be set up and printed individually.

According to a 2010 Google project, just under 130



Gutenberg Bible on display at the U.S. Library of Congress.

million books were published globally. Since then, UNESCO estimates that approximately 2.2 million new titles are published each year. By adding these yearly publications to the initial count, we can estimate that as of 2024, there are more than 160 million unique books in the world. This number does not account for books that may have gone out of print or been discontinued since their initial publication. The wise preacher was right when he wrote, "And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh" (Ecclesiastes 12:12).

Let's use this freedom of the press to God's glory while we have the chance. I work for Christian Aid Ministries, and we regularly hear testimonies from Christians in closed and restricted countries who are extremely blessed to receive Christian literature. One person from an undisclosed location wrote, "... we all take turns reading the magazine in church. A very edifying magazine. God bless you! God's blessings." Hearing testimonies like this makes me more thankful for what we have. But I'm sure people in persecuted countries value their Christian literature more highly than we who have Bibles and Christian literature in abundance.

In this issue, we reprinted two articles by request. A Glorious Church by Barry Grant and Joy in the Crevices by Sheryl Zeiset were both first printed in 2019. May our churches demonstrate the virtues and our homes radiate the beauty that is portrayed in these timeless articles.

Blessings to all,

Edward Martin

A Glorious Church

Barry Grant

Shelbyville, Indiana

What do we think about when we think of the term ‘church’? We live in a day when there are many and varied churches. If one church doesn’t suit you, there are others to choose from. While some churches encourage their people to live for God and others instead of themselves, other churches promote a gospel that says lots of money and a better life now are the results of following Christ. However, there are still churches that try to follow what the Bible says—*Sola scriptura* (scripture alone). Traditionally, the conservative Anabaptist churches in America have tried to function in this manner. But is that changing?

We live in a day when lines are being crossed, blurred, and confused. People aren’t sure what is true and what is

not. Today, men and women around the world are looking for answers and solutions, but where should they look?

I was talking with a young man who testified of being converted at a young age. He attended church faithfully and was considered quite gifted. But there was a problem—he had a sin that he still could not control. As he wrestled with God and pled for victory, he began to hear a recurring message from other professing Christians, “No one is perfect!” “We all have issues.” “Everyone has sinned!” Finally, this young man accepted his sin as normal. He justified it because it seemed that everyone was saying they had sin also, that they were not living in complete victory. It led this young man to a place of complete ruin.

Are we preaching and accepting a defeated Gospel—a

gospel that doesn’t offer complete forgiveness and complete victory? Many youth of today are confused. Many people in today’s world don’t understand. Anyone can go to church and try to be a better person. But what about the all-powerful, life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ?

The apostle Paul says that Jesus is coming back for “...a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27). And Jesus Himself said “...That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Matt. 16:18).

Before I was converted, I was certainly a slave to sin, but I wanted victory. I was addicted to drugs and alcohol, but I didn’t like it. I wanted to be free. I went to counseling and rehab facilities all over America, but it didn’t work. I had no power. I could quit for a few days or even weeks, then anger and depression would set in, and I would return to the substances. One day, I came face to face with the Creator. The hand of the almighty God got ahold of me and opened my eyes. I repented of my sins and was given a clean slate and a clean heart. I never went back. Drugs, alcohol, and two packs of cigarettes a day were finished—forever.

I could hardly believe what God was doing. The power of God was real. I could not overcome it by myself, as none of us can, but God has promised us freedom from bondage and a new life of victorious living if we submit our lives to him. This ability to overcome the power of sin and then walk in victory is what the world is looking for. Do we believe that God can free us not only from substance abuse but also from anger, selfishness, bitterness, greed, and pride? God’s Word says “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). No one is interested in a defeated Gospel, no one except those who are living in defeat because they have chosen the things of this world over God and His Word.

Are we willing to testify of the power of the resurrection? We need to proclaim a gospel that completely saves people from the bondage of sin—forever. We must be bold and confident in our faith so we can lead people to the Master.

I was witnessing to a man when he said in a rather loud voice, “God is not real!” My six-year-old son’s mouth fell open, and he gasped, “Daddy, he just told a lie!”

My son doesn’t need to be convinced that God is real; he believes it with all his heart. The world out there does need to be convinced. They need to see something that science cannot explain. They need to see something that defies all odds.

That something is a heart that has been truly changed. The fighter now loves his enemies. The person with an anger problem now loves others unconditionally. Broken families are healed. Wretched sinners are forgiven and living a transformed life. Hope, peace, love, and power

are freely given to men and women who seemingly have no hope. “The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them” (Matt. 11:5).

Are you living your life so the world can see the work of God being practical, effective, and real every day? Here are a few things the Church needs in our day to once again draw in the lost.

A willingness to suffer

History would show that the church, all through the ages, has suffered for Christ. It was part of the cost of following Christ. The Bible says, “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). It was something that just happened.

Today, many people want the American dream. Folks live a good moral life, are good citizens, make a good living, and go to church on Sundays. But is that what we are called to? The gospel spread like wildfire when the church suffered persecution and did so willingly and joyfully. It was something the world had never seen—a faith that people showed by their life, and their death was something worth dying for. Let’s not be afraid to suffer for Christ today.

Denial of self

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matt. 16:24).

Have you ever wondered why Jesus instructs us to deny ourselves? After all, He gave us desires and passions, so why must we deny them? I have heard people say that we need to align our will with God’s, but I do not find this in the Bible. Rather, we should simply deny our will and accept God’s will.

I remember the first day of boot camp when I joined the Marine Corps after graduating from high school. Close to one hundred young men were there. We all had our own desires and thoughts. We had our own identity. It was amazing to see all the diversity. It would have been a disaster if the United States of America had sent us off to battle that first day. So, they had a plan set in place to fix this problem. Over the next three months, they broke us. Physically and mentally, we learned how to deny ourselves and submit to our commanders and each other. The world is often amazed by the great discipline and unity for which the Marines are known.

When we become a part of the kingdom of God, we cannot be effective if we each do what we want. A body of believers can all have good intentions, but if any one person has not denied themselves, they will never be able to submit to the greater cause. There is a war raging, and we cannot fight it alone. We must deny ourselves, join forces with our brethren, and fight for victory in our homes, churches, and lives.



Submission

The Bible calls us to submit ourselves:

- to God (Jas. 4:7).
- [to those] that have the [spiritual] rule over you [us] (Heb. 13:17).
- to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake (1 Pet. 2:13).
- one to another in the fear of God (Eph. 5:21).

Once we deny ourselves, then and only then, can we submit to others. Many people today have great difficulty in submitting to their fellow man. Some feel they are free in Christ; therefore, they can do as they please. There is a reason why we are instructed to submit to others. It is easy for us to drift away from sound doctrine when we believe we can figure everything out on our own.

When we have truly denied ourselves, we find that it is rather easy, and even a great blessing, to submit to the brotherhood. In fact, it is true freedom. What you want doesn't matter, and you begin to depend on your brothers and sisters. When getting our own way isn't important to us, then when we don't get our way, we are fine with it. As we lay down our lives for each other, we become a force that the world doesn't understand. The world was drawn to the church for centuries, wanting what it had. But amazingly, today, it seems the church is being drawn to the world, wanting what it has.

There is power in submission. Hundreds of years ago, a man named Alexander the Great conquered almost all of the then-known world using military strength and cleverness mixed with diplomacy.

The story is told that Alexander and a small company of soldiers approached a strongly fortified, walled city. Standing outside the walls, Alexander raised his voice and demanded to see the king. When the king arrived, Alexander insisted that the king surrender the city and its inhabitants to Alexander and his little band of fighting men.

The king laughed, "Why should I surrender to you? You can't do us any harm!" So, Alexander offered to give the king a demonstration. He ordered his men to line up single file and start marching. He marched them straight toward a sheer cliff.

The townspeople gathered on the wall and watched in shocked silence as, one by one, Alexander's soldiers marched, without hesitation, right off the cliff to their deaths! After ten soldiers died, Alexander ordered the rest of the men to return to his side. The townspeople and the king immediately surrendered to Alexander the Great. They realized that if a few men were actually willing to commit suicide at the command of this dynamic leader, then nothing could stop his eventual victory.

Obedience

Submission and obedience go hand in hand. If we are willing to submit to something or someone, we will want to obey it. It becomes very important to submit to those who are over us, especially the almighty God in Heaven. If we struggle to submit, we will usually struggle with obedience. God forbid if we begin to believe that we are better off doing things alone without our brothers.

Love

"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35).

People wave to each other at an intersection, or they will open the door for an elderly person. People are generally loving people until something doesn't go their way. Then they can become very difficult. Is that the way the church today is showing its love to the world? As long as everything is going smoothly, and no one steps on our toes, we all get along and we love each other. Then as soon as there is something worth fighting over, we put the "boxing gloves" on. Doesn't the Bible say that "charity (love) beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. 13:7)? True love is revealed when we face adversity or when a brother does something to offend us. That is the love that will show the world we are disciples of Jesus.

Do we love our brother enough to help when he is in need? Maybe he is unknowingly straying away from God in a certain area. How much do we love him? Some people think that love is only talking about positive things with each other, but if we truly love our brother, we will go to him in love and speak honestly with him. Then if we are practicing a lifestyle of denying ourselves and submitting to the brethren, it should go well. God forbid if we get angry with a brother who comes to us to show us our error.

When we have chosen to suffer with the people of God and have denied ourselves, then we appreciate when a brother or sister speaks into our lives. We will not allow ourselves to become offended.

Suffering for and with each other, plus denying ourselves for each other, often forms a solid love for one another. This type of love is the kind that the world around us does not know but desires greatly. The world is getting more selfish and independent as the days pass. We can't afford to miss our opportunities to show them the power of God with our love for one another.

Godly people throughout the ages have had their opportunity to serve the King and spread the message of the Kingdom of God, but they have moved on to eternity. Today it is our turn. The fields are white unto harvest. Let's plug in and, with God's help, preserve the glorious church of Jesus Christ for our children, the next generation.

City of God

City of God, how broad and far
outspread thy walls sublime!
The true thy chartered freemen are
of every age and clime:

One holy church, one army strong,
one steadfast, high intent;
one working band, one harvest-song,
one King omnipotent.

How purely hath thy speech come down
from man's primaeval youth!
How grandly hath thine empire grown
of freedom, love, and truth!

How gleam thy watch-fires through the night
with never-fainting ray!
How rise thy towers, serene and bright,
to meet the dawning day!

In vain the surge's angry shock,
in vain the drifting sands:
unharm'd upon the eternal Rock
the eternal city stands.

— Samuel Johnson (1822-1882)

It Was Winter

Lee Rufener

Athens, Wisconsin

And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the dedication, and it was winter (John 10:22).

As the maddening winds howl about him, man turns his collar to the cold and damp. Little praise arises for the season that greets him at his weakest point and seeks to discomfort and discourage him from the zest of life. Winter settles in as a formidable authority and arouses anxiety not so much by the infliction of pain but the removal of the pleasant. As we cross the equinox, “the days get longer, and winter gets stronger”, states the old proverb, and it remains incisively correct.

Winter is the season of profound, persistent cold that drives the frost deeper and thickens the ice on the ponds. Man and beast battle its ferocity, and even the lifeless machinery rebels against winter’s adamant arrival. Chilly drafts penetrate every crack and crevice, forcing their heartless presence into the most private chambers. As the woodpiles shrink, utility bills increase in the struggle to resist winter’s array of armed forces. While a few gay tunes, such as Winter Wonderland, seek to capitalize upon its majestic moments, winter is generally despised by the normal inhabitants of this earth. We grimace under the menacing icy grip that holds us captive and longingly anticipate its eventual release.

Spring may have its equal share of soggy and uncomfortable appointments and ragged days. Northern tradition states that the robins must get snowed on three times before the full arrival of spring. But springtime is never void of the hope and glory of better days ahead. Summer can be unbearable with its burning heat and humidity, but it bears a semblance of blessed fruitfulness on every side, and few will slow their activities to notice its discomforts. The autumn days carry their nostalgic enchantment while the beauty of nature is painted in the most remarkable colors on the foliage of the landscape. The bounties of harvest provide an aura of rejoicing in their sheaves, and man’s heart is still merry with the prospects of maturing life. And then comes ...

Winter

Our Lord experienced the fullness of it; probably not the fullness of the natural elements that those of us in the northern climates face, but the season of apparent fruitlessness. Some said, “He hath a devil, and is mad; why hear ye him?” (John 10:20). At a time when there was to be a feast of dedication, “it was winter.” There was a massive division among the people. Confusion reigned on every side. Jesus had just healed a blind man, and the Jews cast him out of the temple. Such fruitless and cold stony hearts inhabited the fields that were acclaimed to be “white unto harvest.” The icy grips of sin had hardened the hearts of humanity, and the meadows of religion were littered with barren stalks draped with the remains of empty husks. The

beloved disciple wasted no words when he brought us the fact that ... it was winter.

“Thou hast set all the borders of the earth: thou hast made summer and winter” (Psalm 74:17).

It is easy to believe that God has created summertime. The tunes on a perfect summer day sing to us of the Divine. The beauty revolving about us everywhere speaks of His presence. The cheering birds in every tree, the warmth of the pleasant sunshine, and the amazing prodigy of life draw our hearts to the Giver by a thousand invisible filaments of life. These all testify to the truth that “Thou hast made summer.”

The days of winter are different. “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). We share similar sentiments to those of Nathaniel toward the winter months, for it is not so easy to see the hand of God there. There is a great deal of suffering and rejection that we feel penetrating our inner man. I obviously speak not to the season within nature but to the seasons of life that parallel its existence. We do well to aid our frail faith by some solid affirmation that God has made winter, as well, and that we ought not to doubt His divine purposes in it. What, but a season of chilling despair and discomfort can arouse our apathetic souls to ...

Appreciation

Absence makes the heart grow fonder. Thus does the advent of winter incite our appreciation for summer. We would be blind if summer were perpetually present. It has been aptly said that our dear ones are only ours when we have lost them. When the winter season finally claims their last breath, we then begin to appreciate them for who they really were. It is not the man with an abundance of uninterrupted health who feels most deeply the value of his well-being. That realization arrives on his doorstep the day his health is shattered. There have been many wealthy men who had previously known the stark bareness of bankruptcy. This indelibly embossed a permanent mark in their character that fitted them for the success that followed in its wake.

So the Christian will often experience a season of winter—a time when all that he had labored over, longed for and loved lies languishing beneath the mounds of sterile hopeless drifts. John the Baptist prophesied boldly while the vision was fresh and the crowds pressed around to hear him preach. But the dark and cold prison cell was difficult for him to appreciate. Yet, God has made winter, and these seasons in our lives are paramount to our spiritual well-being.

Strengthening

In the 1700s, a luthier by the name of Stradivari created violins unequaled in their excellence for beautiful sound. As modern experts puzzled long over their inability to create

a similar instrument, most have resolved that the wood of the day had been seasoned by difficult winters, producing a quality that cannot be replicated in our day. All nature strains under the duress of the winter months, and man is not exempt. The short days and deep, brazen chill of the night apply a great demand upon our will. In summer, it is comparatively easy to get out of bed at the appointed hour. The earth is warm, the birds are busy singing, and the light is streaming through the open windows. But in the dark of a frigid winter morning, to fling back the covers and arise in a triumphant air is a challenging proposition. It demands a solid resolution to achieve and makes a failure out of many good intentions.

As we broaden that thought to encompass the soul of man, we reach a truth that cannot be denied. Those who have borne the deep burdens of hard living have an innate strength ingrained in their character that those of a mild environment cannot apprehend. The moral character of Adonijah had eroded, for “his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so?” (1 Kings 1:6). This is the bane of easy living. Those who will insulate themselves on every side from the buffeting of winter will, no doubt, incur a weakening of the will. Those who can conquer their will in the presence of a blatantly cold society are on the highway to success. Summer is languid; but winter makes us resolute. We need to do things even when we don’t feel like doing them. And thus, God has made the winter.

Togetherness

“If two lie together, then they have heat: but how can one be warm alone?” (Ecc. 4:11). There is no need for such togetherness in the summer—and no desire for it either. The crackling stove has a mesmerizing effect upon the household members and most of our winter evening activities center around it. We speak in the same breath, of hearth and home, and it is in winter that the hearth glows and love grows.

There are but shallow relationships among those who have known no hardship. It takes the heavy austerity of winter to perform the genius of love in our hearts. Adversity levels the playing field, while sage and simpleton pull together in the same yoke. Often, as death wraps its cold fingers around a frail body, loved ones rush to the bedside. Past grievances are forgotten in the solemnity of the moment. It was at the gates of winter that “Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age” (Genesis 25:8). It is here that the separating curtains of the long-standing conflict between Isaac and Ishmael abated and a joint effort between the two brothers “buried

him in the cave of Machpelah”.

While none of us shall ever hope for the political unrest that would bring persecution and the removal of religious freedom from our land, it is still my belief that our carnal church divisions will cease upon its advent. It takes winter to pull us together, and Christ was the vehicle upon whom it rode in. “It was winter. And Jesus walked in the temple in Solomon’s porch” (John 10:23). There, before the inauguration of His death, His disciples were all pushing for the head of the line and striving to be the greatest. Now, after the cold harsh removal of the green tree, they were all found to be “with one accord in Solomon’s porch” (Acts 5:12). Such is the ministry of winter that our God has gifted us with.

Sympathy

For some reason, it seems that we must receive a full dosage of maltreatment before the door of our hearts is unlocked to thoughts of the sorrowful plight of others. One can only wonder what the Good Samaritan must have experienced to be so thoroughly moved by the scene of the man in the ditch. Did not the Jews paint a fresh emblem of hatred and disdain before him on the canvas of each new day? For some, the ill-treatment has a tendency to harden the heart. These go through life in reclusive fashion, with bitterness and spite at the helm of their ship. Any acquaintances that remotely fail their discrimination are categorized as suspect, and avoided.

There are others who have endured the cold blast of winter and loathe that any should have to experience the same. These hearts are quickly aroused to pity and carry bias sympathy toward those of similar plight. Even the rich man who met his wintry death and was now in eternal hell was moved to extend mercy to his five brethren who were bound for the same dreadful destination. How much more should our sluggish hearts stir to charity when met with such discomforts as spiritual winter? Can we greet our fellow man with the same stern, icy glare that has smitten us in the face in bygone days? Is there no storehouse of mercy to extend to the wayward soul who is reaping the cold reality of his folly-filled life that he has sown in his youth?

It was winter in the days when our Lord walked in the temple, and surely, the spiritual environment today is no less frigid. “Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold” (Matthew 24:12). Those of us who choose to despise this barren wilderness can live reclusive at our will. The rest of us shall readily acknowledge that our God hast made . . . winter and allow it to have its perfecting work in our hearts.

Winter Song

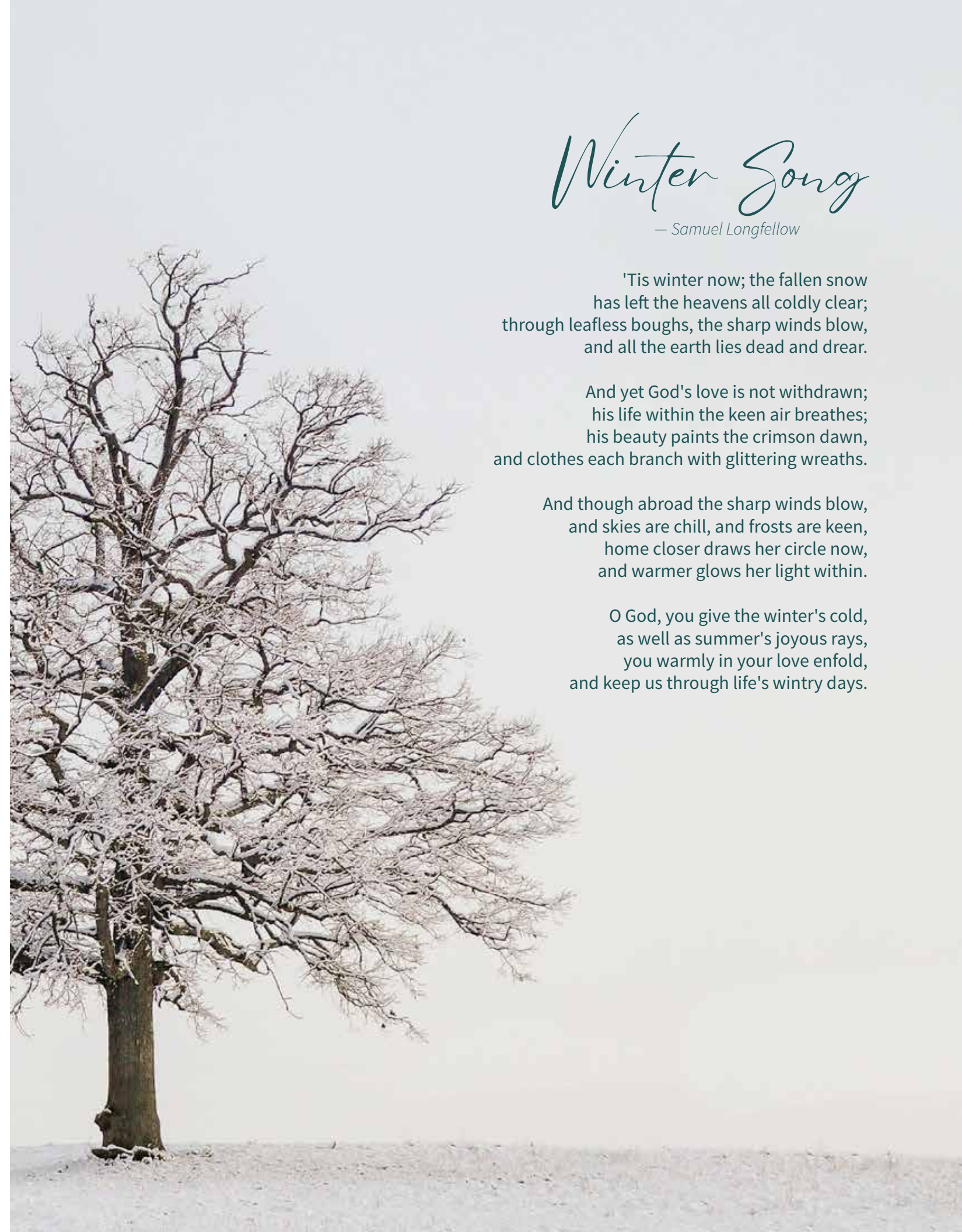
— Samuel Longfellow

'Tis winter now; the fallen snow
has left the heavens all coldly clear;
through leafless boughs, the sharp winds blow,
and all the earth lies dead and drear.

And yet God's love is not withdrawn;
his life within the keen air breathes;
his beauty paints the crimson dawn,
and clothes each branch with glittering wreaths.

And though abroad the sharp winds blow,
and skies are chill, and frosts are keen,
home closer draws her circle now,
and warmer glows her light within.

O God, you give the winter's cold,
as well as summer's joyous rays,
you warmly in your love enfold,
and keep us through life's wintry days.



A Chronicle Like to Ours

Joshua Yoder
Dundee, Ohio

The people we commonly refer to as the Russian Mennonites came into being as a group in a way quite similar to that of us with an Anabaptist heritage. We sprang from the same areas of Europe, from much of the same teachings of early Anabaptism, and have both experienced many of the same temptations and pitfalls, though at different times and locations.

This article will not focus on the beginnings of the Russian Mennonites apart from a brief overview. The group first entered Russia upon the urgings of the Viceroy Potemkin, who came into authority over the area now known as Ukraine after its annexation by Russia in 1783. The area had been under his partial administration since 1774, and he was eager to populate the land with foreign settlers. The residents of New Russia, as it was then called, were mostly nomads and Cossacks, a seminomadic group present in the steppes of Russia. The Mennonites in Danzig, Poland, were first approached with the offer of land, which would have appealed to them because they were routinely denied land ownership as a semi-persecuted people at that time. This offer came in August of 1786, and two brothers from the Danzig church were sent to survey the land and make arrangements for possible immigration.

The first immigration of 462 families began in 1788, and the “Old Colony” was established at Chortitza. They were afforded freedom of religion, exemption from military service, and the right to maintain their own schools and governances.

The Mennonites thrived in their new homeland. Although the first years were hard, partially due to the fact that mostly poorer families and those not in church leadership chose to resettle in Russia, the group soon began to transform the barren plains and steppes into rich agricultural communities. As the churches grew, so did their prosperity.

This period of relative peace lasted for over a century, until the late 1800s, when the Russian government,

dissatisfied with the number of foreign settlements inside its borders, began applying pressure to many of the groups it had invited to settle its land some 100 years before. The Mennonites were not the only ones targeted, as many groups from various nations had established themselves in Russia. Steps taken against the Mennonites included pressure to participate in the armed forces as well as pressure to drop the German language that the communities had been using in favor of the Russian language. As these pressures increased, some Mennonites chose to flee the country in the 1870s. The majority, however, by now quite wealthy and affluent in comparison to their Russian peasant neighbors, chose to stay and weather the storm.

Unbeknownst to them, a full-scale revolution that would reshape Russia as a country was just around the corner. In 1917, the Bolsheviks came to power through the October Revolution, an event where the reigning tsar, or emperor, was deposed and exiled, and a new government was set up. A civil war broke out, and much of the fighting raged over the lands occupied by the Mennonites. Here, it is necessary to insert a brief history of the ideology of this new government.

The October Revolution and its subsequent change in government were fueled by a class war. As opposed to Nazi Germany, where a person could be arrested and killed for their race, in Russia, a person could and would be arrested for their class, for example, property ownership was seen as a crime against the people, and so the wealthier class of Russian peasants and farmers, those who most often owned property and employed the lower class of peasants, became an instant target a revolution that claimed to want to distribute all property and resources evenly amongst its citizenry.

By this time, the strong agricultural society of the Mennonites had transformed Ukraine into a breadbasket, its vast fields sown with wheat developed specifically by the Mennonites: Turkey Red Wheat. This hardy crop

had made the Mennonite church quite wealthy, and their colonies had grown and flourished into villages of comfort and, at times, extravagance. This must have been a two-fold insult to the still impoverished peasants of Russia. Not only was there a large group of people in their midst that taught, spoke, and did their dealings in a language not of the Motherland, but these people also were wealthy beyond most peasants’ dreams.

It is, therefore, no surprise that when the kulaks, the wealthy class of peasants, came under persecution from the new government, the Mennonites were seen as the enemy of the people. As the civil war raged over Mennonite lands, villages were burnt and decimated, people executed or driven off, and livestock and grain plundered. Eventually, this period of fighting did come to an end, but for those few who survived the destruction, there was no reprieve to be found.

With the label of kulak and being generally defenseless, the Mennonites faced intense persecution. Religious services were rarely allowed, and the agricultural communities that had fed Russia and many others besides were collectivized and put under government control. Many of their churches ceased to exist entirely, although those in the east tended to last longer than the western villages.

Imagine then, to a people accustomed for generations to the favor and benevolence of material possessions and success, that all things material are stripped away. In a historical eye blink, the wealthy become the poor, and the favored become the hated. Even with a strong Christian faith, such a turn of events would shock and confuse.

But further tests were yet ahead for those who endured the first 25 years of the Soviet persecution. With the memory of their easy lives still fresh, the dawn of World War II brought a unique and enticing opportunity: the

rise of a government that promoted the well-being of the German race, that valued those groups that could turn an empty prairie into a sprawling farm, that was vehemently anti-Communist- to this beleaguered group of believers, this must have seemed to be a God sent miracle to deliver them from their burdensome exile.

And so, they embraced the invading Germans. We readers, who are blessed with the ability to see the end result of these people’s decisions, can certainly make a good guess at what the end result was of wholesale support for the Nazis, but we must remember the scenarios that these Mennonites found themselves in...it was not one that would have been easy to decipher and decide upon if it were to be judged by man’s knowledge.

And so it was that the descendants of those helpless believers who gave their bodies at the stake and sword aligned themselves with a worldly kingdom that promised to protect and provide for them. In exchange for an eternal heritage, they chose to hope that the might of the German army would win back their earthly heritage and riches, and it was in this might that they trusted, forming bands of men who fought alongside the Germans against their old neighbors.

History did not deviate from its course, and the German army was eventually beaten back to its own borders and then further, and yet further into German lands. Before this retreating army ran those that had looked to it for their deliverance.

The atrocities of the Soviet government against its citizens are well documented in various works, most famously in the *Gulag Archipelago*, a book written by a Russian officer who was accused of treason. That author, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, painted a terrible picture of the treatment and exile of those who had opposed the USSR. Amongst the imprisoned or executed millions described in his tomes, there lie the remnants of a people who began as we did, experienced the smile of prosperity as we do, and then, treasuring that prosperity, lost it in calamitous fashion. We would do well to consider the paths we choose, as the wise king of the Scriptures instructs us, lest we, too, fall in the pursuit of prosperity. “Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established” (Proverbs 4:26).



THE MINT MAN

A Story About Gratitude

Elizabeth Rust
Rome, Pennsylvania

Dirk scanned the sanctuary, trying to be discreet and yet utterly failing as he twisted and turned in his seat. He was intent on locating Brother Silas before the service began. Every Sunday morning, he would crane his neck in search of the hoary head of the fellowship's oldest member, and every time his mother would cast Dirk that glance that meant, "Sit still and look forward."

This morning, he didn't have to even look behind him. Two rows from the front of the auditorium, Dirk spotted Brother Silas' white hair and his black vest. To Dirk, it was a very special vest. In the pocket of that vest was something very important. In that vest pocket, there were mints. Lifesavers, to be exact. And all a little boy had to do to get one of those mints was to go up to Brother Silas after church service and politely ask to have one. And then, Brother Silas would smile, reach into the inner pocket, draw out a mint, and hand it to the little boy.

That was why Dirk diligently searched the church house to find Brother Silas' whereabouts - so he would know where to go to get one of those mints. This Sunday was no different, and as soon as the last Amen was said, a swarm of young boys and girls began to cluster around Brother Silas like chickadees at a birdfeeder. Brother Silas genially doled out his mints in turn, all while continuing to chat with the men. When Dirk's turn came, he dutifully said, "Thank you," without even thinking what he said.

Dirk didn't lose any time eating that mint, and before he knew it, the mint was gone and he could go on with his afternoon and with the rest of the week.

That Thursday, the phone rang, and when his mother picked it up, Dirk could tell that it was a recorded message announcing something because his mother only listened instead of holding up her end of the conversation. He didn't think much of it until later in the evening when he overheard his parents discuss the message.

"What hospital did they say Brother Silas is in? Did they

say how long they expect him to stay? Maybe we should make a visit," Mother said.

"I think it would be worthwhile for us to pay him a visit," replied Father.

"Will he be in church on Sunday?" interjected Dirk, stopping the travels of his tractor in his concern to hear the answer.

"No, I think it will be quite a while till he'll feel able to be at church again. He's very sick, Dirk," Father said. Neither his father nor his mother expected the response that this answer caused. Dirk started crying, and at first, they were touched that he would be so compassionate about Brother Silas. And then Dirk started fussing.

"But what about my mint? If Brother Silas isn't at church, I won't get my mint! He just has to be at church!" He would have gone on and on in this way if his parents had let him.

"Why Dirk Phillips, first of all, we do not go to church services so that you can get a mint. We go to church services to worship God. Furthermore, you should be concerned about Brother Silas, not about whether you will get a mint or not. How would you like it if your friends were only concerned about something you gave them, without considering how you are doing?" "I'm sorry. I didn't think about it like that," Dirk sniveled, using his sleeve as a handkerchief.

"Can you think of anyone in the Bible who complained when they didn't get what they wanted?" Mother inquired. No one came to Dirk's mind, although he was sure that there were plenty of examples in the Bible. "The Israelites, Dirk. They often complained and it did not please God," she prompted.

Father then asked Dirk to read through Numbers 11 and copy down the sentences that showed ungratefulness and how God felt about it. His parents then assured Dirk that they would look into visiting Brother Silas. They suggested planning to pick up a bag of mints on their way, just for Brother Silas.

When the day came to visit Brother Silas, Father took his son into the store to select a bag of mints. "Did you ever stop to think how many times Brother Silas has to do this to keep his pockets well lined with mints for all you children?" he asked Dirk, whose eyes grew wide at this little revelation.

"No, I never did. But he probably had to buy a whole bag every week! There's a lot of us children at church."

It was a full month before Brother Silas felt well enough to attend church services again. When he did, Dirk's eyes lit up at the sight. At the close of the service, Dirk hung back for a while before approaching him. To be honest, he felt a little shy. But as he watched the other children receive their mints and he saw the unmistakable twinkle in Brother Silas' eyes as he doled them out, Dirk grew more confident. He, too, joined the throng.

"I'm glad you're feeling better, Brother Silas. I missed seeing you," Dirk confided as he looked up into the face of the kindly gentleman.

"I am, too! It is very nice to be back. I quite missed being here," replied Brother Silas, placing his hand gently on Dirk's shoulder as they spoke. He then reached into his vest pocket and pulled out a mint. A Lifesaver, to be exact. And this time, when Dirk gave his thanks, it was with the feeling of gratitude and not just the words of it.



Timothy: A Valued Helper

By Harold S. Martin

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Timothy was Paul's close friend and an associate in the ministry. Paul was a born leader; Timothy was a willing follower—perhaps not yet quite twenty years old. Paul burned with zeal for spreading the Gospel message. Timothy seemed frail in health and timid by nature, but he was an indispensable traveling companion who accompanied Paul.

Paul had been at Lystra on his First Missionary Journey a few years earlier. At that time, Paul was accompanied by Barnabas, and at Lystra, there was a man who had been crippled from birth who was miraculously healed through the ministry of the Apostles (Acts 14:8–10). That miracle of healing caused lots of excitement in Lystra, and Paul used the occasion to preach the Gospel.

Undoubtedly there were a number of conversions—but there was also much opposition to Paul's preaching. Paul was stoned and dragged out of the city, left for dead. He later revived and then went on to the next city.

The converts on that first missionary endeavor (described in Acts 14) likely included Timothy, and his mother, and his grandmother. Timothy, however, is first named in the Scripture only at the time when Paul and Silas came to Lystra on the Second Missionary Journey.

Timothy was highly regarded, not only by the Christians in his hometown of Lystra but also by those who lived in Iconium, nearly 20 miles away (Acts 16:2). He impressed the early church leaders as an unusually dedicated young man. Paul apparently saw that Timothy could be a valued helper in the ministry of the Gospel, and so Timothy was invited to join Paul while he and Silas were at Lystra on their Second Missionary Journey.

Christians are impressed by the fact that Timothy left the pleasant home of his loving mother and grandmother almost immediately to share in Paul's labors and sufferings.

Timothy was the son of a Gentile father and a Jewish-Christian mother. His mother's name was Eunice, and

his grandmother was named Lois (2 Timothy 1:5). The New Testament makes it clear that Timothy had a godly heritage. His mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, doubtless spent many hours reading to the boy Timothy from the Old Testament Scriptures.

Timothy's father was a Gentile—likely not a believer in the Gospel message—but he apparently didn't object to the Jewish training Eunice was giving to their son.

Our lesson is taken from four brief portions of Scripture, and each passage lifts up a different aspect of Timothy's life and work:

- 1) Timothy was a helpful team mate (Acts 16:1–5)
- 2) Timothy was a caring servant (Phil. 2:19–24)
- 3) Timothy was a trusted teacher (1 Tim. 1:1–3)
- 4) Timothy was a faithful leader (2 Tim. 1:3–6)

1. Timothy Was A Helpful Team Mate (Acts 16:1-5)

Timothy had been growing in the faith ever since Paul's first visit to Lystra—and since Timothy had a growing and excellent reputation in his home town and was well spoken of by the believers there, Paul invited him to serve on the ministry team. But the fact that he had a Greek father meant that he had not met the Jewish expectation of circumcision.

Paul did not make a practice of yielding to the demands of the Jewish leaders who insisted that Gentile believers must be circumcised to be saved, but he did arrange for Timothy to undergo the procedure (Acts 16:3).

Paul was concerned that Timothy would not meet unnecessary opposition from local Jewish leaders as they traveled from place to place proclaiming the Gospel. His mixed Greek and Jewish background could have created problems on their evangelistic visits to churches.

Timothy already had good Jewish training in the Scriptures from his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 3:14–15). By the time of Paul's second visit, Timothy was a respected disciple of Jesus.



Timothy did not hesitate to join Paul and Silas, and he accompanied them on the rest of the Second Missionary Journey (Acts 16:3). They delivered the decrees from the Jerusalem Conference (described in Acts 15), and the churches that had been established grew in faith and in number (verses 4–5).

Through the years, Timothy became an increasingly valuable team helper. Timothy stayed with Paul through the end of the Second Missionary Journey and through the start of the Third Journey—until they reached Ephesus. It was at Ephesus that Paul learned of serious problems at Corinth, and so he sent Timothy back to Corinth to help settle issues that had arisen there (1 Corinthians 4:17).

One of the special things about Timothy was that time and time again we read that Paul had sent him somewhere. In fact, Timothy spent most of his life going on expeditions that Paul had sent him on.

2. Timothy Was A Caring Servant (Phil. 2:19-24)

A number of years had now passed since Paul and Timothy first began traveling together in the Lord's work. Timothy had been with Paul when the church at Philippi was founded, and the people there had come to love Timothy because they knew that he was genuinely

concerned about their welfare.

When Paul wrote to the Philippians, saying he hoped to send Timothy to them once more (verse 19), they were filled with joy and expectation. Paul was anxious to learn of their current condition. Since Paul was in prison when he wrote the letter to the church at Philippi, it was his desire to send Timothy to bring encouragement to the people there.

In verse 20, Paul said that Timothy possessed a genuine sense of care for the Christians at Philippi. There was no other helper who was so well suited for the task at hand. Paul, in writing to the church at Philippi, says, in essence, "I have no one else like Timothy, who genuinely cares about your welfare" (Philippians 2:20).

In verse 21, we are told that the other believers there were too self-centered, too involved in their own lives, too wrapped up in their own pursuits—and thus, they were not much help to Paul. The general run of Christians (even in the early church), were putting themselves first and Jesus next! The same thing is often true today. Many who attend the church service on Sunday morning are people who, from Monday through Saturday, seek after their own interests. Their lives do not revolve around Jesus, and their energies are not given to sharing the Gospel and the

great principles of Christian living. All of us are tempted to put our own desires, our own ambitions, and our own plans—ahead of God.

In verse 22, we learn that one of the marks of Timothy's character was his willing acceptance of second place—as a son with a father. Paul says, “He served with me in the gospel.” Paul and Timothy were like a father and son working together.

The thought in verses 23–24 is that Paul's hope was to send Timothy to Philippi very soon—desiring also that he himself might be released from prison and able to re-visit the church there. The words “I trust in the Lord” (verse 24) express Paul's doctrinal belief that the sovereign God rules all things—even things such as freedom or imprisonment, comfort or discomfort, sickness, or health. He was willing to accept what the Lord ordained—but his hope was that he would be released from prison and that he would be able to make the visit again to Philippi.

3. Timothy Was A Trusted Teacher (1 Tim. 1:13)

In the first verse of the First Letter to Timothy, Paul describes himself as an Apostle, given authority by God the Father and His Son, Christ Jesus. Paul had the God-given right to speak words of authority to the young preacher Timothy.

The words the “Lord Jesus Christ, who is our hope” (verse 1b) are significant. The Lord Jesus Christ is our hope! Some think that money is our hope for a better future. Others look to armed power and military preparation as our hope for a more peaceful world. Some believe in science, culture, and improved education. But the Bible says that Jesus is coming back, and when He returns, wrongs will be righted, a kingdom of peace will be established, and righteousness will finally prevail on earth. So Jesus is our hope!

Timothy is addressed (verse 2) as “my own son in the faith,”—indicating that Timothy was converted under the influence of Paul's preaching.

The words “grace, mercy, and peace” (verse 2b) convey Paul's good wishes for Timothy's well-being. Grace, mercy, and peace are the triple blessings of the Christian life, just as faith, hope, and love are the triple fruits of Christian character.

Verse 3 names one of the reasons why Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to minister there. Timothy was to “charge” certain persons that they teach “no other doctrine.” Paul was convinced that what a person believed was as important as what he did. What a person believes determines how he behaves.

The heresy prevalent at Ephesus was the Gnostic teaching that they had a deeper insight into truth than the average Christian. They claimed that the bridge between a holy God and sinful humanity was attained by a large company of angels and not by faith in Jesus the Son of God. Timothy

was to teach the truth about Jesus being “the only Mediator between God and man” (1 Tim. 2:5).

The words, “I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus,” reveal that Timothy was itching to leave Ephesus and try and find greener grass at some other place. Ephesus was a large and wicked city, marked by the worship of pagan idols, and preaching there surely was not easy. Paul was pressed to say to Timothy, “Stay where you are.”

There are many occasions in life when it is far easier to move on than it is to remain in a difficult situation. And there are times when it is proper to go to another area—but Satan is good at disguising a situation so that it appears to be the will of God that we move on. Many times, we must learn to persevere faithfully where we are!

As Timothy matured in the Christian ministry, he became more of a trusted teacher in the churches of Asia Minor. Timothy had become more than a mere assistant to the Apostle Paul. Timothy himself was called upon to teach the truth and defend the faith in many places—including the great city of Ephesus.

Ephesus, you may remember, was the home of the goddess Diana, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. She was the mother of gods, an ugly, repulsive statue of a woman. It is believed that the Apostle John, after his exile on the isle of Patmos, also lived in Ephesus. Portions of the 35-foot-wide main street in ancient Ephesus are still clearly visible. The church at Ephesus was the church which, in the Book of Revelation, had left its first love (Rev. 2:1-7).

4. Timothy Was A Faithful Leader (2 Tim. 1:3-6)

Paul begins the last section of the lesson in this article (verse 3) by telling Timothy that he often offered prayers of thanksgiving to the God of his fathers, grateful for Timothy's ministry.

Paul had come from a long line of God-fearing people whose piety had helped set the stage for his own conversion. Even though his parents had not taught him to be a Christian, they had brought him up in the ancestral faith that revered the true God of Israel. Paul's Jewish parents worshipped God according to the light that they had, and Paul was still serving the same God. Paul had not introduced a new religion; he was simply called to preach the fulfillment of God's plan, which began in Old Testament times.

Serving God “with a pure conscience” (verse 3) does not mean that Paul was perfect, but he was sincere in his service for the Lord. “Conscience” is the faculty within, which refers to our conduct to a moral standard. By an act of the will, each of us chooses what shall be the basis for deciding what is right and what is wrong. When we once choose the standard, conscience demands that we do the right and shun the wrong, but conscience does not give us the proper concepts of right and wrong. For the Christian, the Bible

is our standard of right and wrong. Our conscience will let us know if we don't live up to that standard.

Timothy was the overseer in the church at Ephesus (on the west coast of Turkey). Paul was in prison in Rome. When Paul had left the elders at Ephesus (on a visit not too many years earlier), they all wept much and fell on Paul's neck and kissed him (Acts 20:37). Paul and Timothy had labored together in the Gospel; they had rejoiced together, and wept together, and prayed together. Their affection for each other was warm and tender, and when the two had parted, there were tears of sorrow. Paul remembered those tears, and now, as the hymn writer says, “Often for each other flows the sympathizing tear.” In verse 4 (of 2 Tim. 1), Paul says, “I remember those tears; and I'd love to see you again.”

In verse 5, Paul remembered not only Timothy's affection and the emotional parting they had sometime before—but also he remembered Timothy's “unfeigned (sincere) faith.” Timothy had a genuine, honest, wholehearted trust in God. And the major source of that genuine faith came from his mother Eunice and his grandmother Lois. Paul was grateful for the disciplined teaching Grandma Lois and mother Eunice had passed on to Timothy. It is interesting to note that Paul commends Timothy for the fact that his faith was the same as his grandmother's!

In verse 6, Timothy was instructed to “stir up” the special gift that was affirmed to him through the laying on of the hands of the elders (1 Tim. 4:14). The “gift” was not the gift of gab or the ability to get along well with people. It was the gift of clearly communicating the Word of God—the gift for preaching and teaching the Word of God. That gift was bestowed by the Holy Spirit, recognized by the church, and consecrated to the Lord by the laying on of hands.

Timothy stuck with the Apostle Paul down through the years. Paul wrote what are called “the Prison Epistles” late in his ministry, and in at least three of those letters, Timothy is still listed as being with him (Phil. 1:1, Col. 1:1, and Phlm 1:1).

When Paul was in his final imprisonment—in the last letter he ever wrote (the letter known as 2 Timothy)—he encouraged Timothy to come and be with him before the cold of winter arrived (2 Tim. 4:9–13,21). Timothy was to bring a warm coat, some books, and the parchments—and within a short time, he was most certainly on his way! The Bible does not record whether the two ever saw each other again. It may be that on the way to see Paul, Timothy himself may have been thrown into jail, and this would explain the reference to Timothy's imprisonment mentioned in Hebrews 13:23.

There are some practical lessons for us to remember:

1. Grandparents can have a great impact on the lives of their grandchildren.

Leslie Flynn tells of a boy whose parents never darkened the door of a church, but during his childhood, he spent several summers on the farm with his godly grandparents—who not only took him along to church services but explained the Gospel to him at opportune times.

In his early years of adulthood, he testified (in the church where he had become a member) that the witness of his grandparents led him to Christ.

2. The gift of communicating God's Word needs to be nurtured, developed, and stirred up:

- by studying much and adding the fuel of new information
- by getting inspiration from fellowship with other Christian workers
- by repeatedly and thoughtfully reading the Word of God

Teachers and ministers of the Word are to, from time to time, “stir up” the gift. The Greek word translated “stir up” is taken from the figure of a fire. No matter how well a fire is established or how high the flames rise up—the fire will die down and become mere glowing embers—unless it is stirred up and new fuel is added from time to time.

3. Character is more important for God's servant than physical stamina.

Timothy was a faithful laborer in the Lord's vineyard and a close companion of the Apostle Paul. His strongest traits centered upon his genuine care for others and his loyalty in helping Paul. There is some evidence from the New Testament references that Timothy had a naturally timid character, and had to deal with nervousness (1 Cor. 16:10) and an over-concern about his youthfulness (1 Tim.4:12).

Yet Paul commended Timothy to the Philippians as a man of proven character. He was faithful to Paul—like a son to a father (Phil. 2:22). He followed Paul's teachings and manner of life (2 Tim. 3:10).

It is my prayer that the Lord will help each of us to have the same genuine care for others—and the same loyalty to God's Word as Timothy had.

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A Christ-Centered Courtship Series

The Preparation Sleep

Paul Hershberger

Millersburg, Ohio

A Christ-centered Courtship is a series of messages on godly courtship preached by Paul Hershberger. He preached these messages several times at different locations over the last ten years. Recently, we had them transcribed and abridged for reading clarity. After printing all five articles in The Heartbeat of the Remnant, we will publish them in a booklet. This is the fourth article of five.

There are five goals for this series:

1. To turn the hearts of the fathers to their children.
2. To turn the hearts of the children to their fathers.
3. That parents would get a burden to lead their children into the perfect will of God for their lives.
4. That young people would get a burden to seek God, find fulfillment and purpose in walking with God, and mature in their manners and character.
5. That young men and women would rise up to be godly fathers and mothers with a vision to raise another godly generation.

We discussed Satan's Snares for male and female in the last issue. Today's topic is about waiting on God's timing and plan for marriage.

The Preparation Sleep.

In Genesis 2:21, we read that Adam slept a deep sleep. God did surgery on him, and there was no anesthesiologist there to help with the surgery. Adam just slept a deep sleep.

We're not talking about a dormant sleep, where we are unaware of our surroundings, but rather a germinating sleep. Germination has two components. The first component is dying and losing our identity. The second component is springing forth a new life. Preparation sleep is a sleep that is willing to die to self and lose its identity and its agenda. And yet, through this dying process, a new life can spring forth. Christians have the blessed opportunity to die to ourselves so that we can have fresh germination coming out of our lives. When we die to ourselves, new life springs forth.

"And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought

them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man" (Genesis 2:19-22).

In Genesis 2:20, Adam became aware that there was no helper suitable for him. As all the animals went by, he began to realize his need. Each animal had a male and a female, but he was the only one like him. God's advice for Adam was, "You need to go to sleep." And as Adam slept that deep sleep, he was wholly yielded. As Adam slept, God prepared for him a helpmeet. Adam did not interfere with this process. He wasn't giving advice: "Make her this way or that way." This was all God's doing, and Adam was yielded and in a deep sleep with no plan of his own. Today, this also applies to Eve. In Adam's day, Eve wasn't created yet. Today, Eve is alive the same as Adam is. In other words, today, we have males and females. If Eve doesn't go into this preparation sleep as well, Adam will have difficulty going into a preparation sleep if Eve tries to get his attention. Eve needs to go to sleep in the same way as Adam does.

Young men and women, it is important that you yield your future and marriage to God. If you try to take your future into your own hands, you will likely fail. God has a purpose and plan for each one of you. It is possible that God's plan for you is not marriage. But God does have a plan for you.

As we consider preparation sleep, let's look at the life of Jesus when He was young. We want to look at four points from His life and make practical applications.

Jesus was a maturing, godly young man

"And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth. This was right after they had been at the temple. And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. Now, his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast" (Luke 2:39-42).

In this scripture, Jesus is twelve years old. If you are twelve years old or older, I urge you to sit up and take note. Jesus was twelve, and here's what it says about Him: "And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon Him." What an example of a maturing, godly young man. He "waxed strong in spirit." That means the power of the Holy Ghost was strong upon Him. He was "filled with wisdom"—the wisdom of God! "And the grace of God"—the divine influence from God that helps one live a godly life, was upon Him, too.

Jesus began preparing for His life ministry at a young age. Sometimes, we think childhood is a time for playing. I'm not against children playing, but youth must consider what life is about long before adulthood. If you plan to wait until the time for marriage to get serious, you've missed a tremendous opportunity. Prepare yourself for marriage so you are ready to be married when that day comes. Then God's face will shine upon you and bless you, and your life will be fulfilled and fruitful. There's a preparation that goes on during this sleep.

Jesus sensed the call of God

"And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the saying which he spake unto them" (Luke 2:42-50).

At twelve years old, Jesus was already deeply interested

in the Word of God. The calling of God was very clear to Him. When his parents came looking for him, he said, "Why did you look for me? Don't you know that I need to be about My Father's business?"

Young men and women, do you sense the calling of God? Is the Spirit of God speaking into your lives, moving, and giving direction? If we live a shallow Christian life, we won't sense the moving of the Spirit of God. But if we get close to God, the Bible says He'll draw nigh to us.

Do you understand the Bible, and can you give answers to what you believe? It is important to lay your own foundation. You can't build on Mom and Dad's foundation. If you grew up in a godly Christian home, you are blessed. But don't be lazy; develop your own convictions. Find out for yourself what the Word of God says. Talk to Dad or Mom if you don't understand something. Lay a foundation so you are ready to be married when the day comes.

Jesus was subject to his parents

"And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart" (Luke 2:51).

The example of Jesus is clear: "I must be about My Father's business." But He laid down His will and waited. He went home with his parents and "was subject to them." He waited for eighteen years. Jesus continued actively pursuing His relationship with His Father in heaven in those eighteen years. He prepared for His ministry while He waited.

Sometimes, we wonder why we have to wait. We can't see any purpose, and it feels like we're being held back. But God works in our hearts while we wait and prepare for what's ahead.

Jesus continued to increase and mature

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). Waiting and "preparation" sleeping didn't hold Jesus back. As we consider His ministry and all the difficult things He faced, we know he prepared. How could He have such wisdom to have the correct answer to every question or give the right response? He prepared, and He walked with God.

Learning to walk with God

We, too, want to grow in wisdom, stature, and favor with God. To do so, we must learn to walk with God. We learn to walk with God by:

Bible reading

2 Timothy 2:15 says, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." Constructive daily Bible reading is like constructing a building. It takes time. In the same way, we can't become a Bible scholar in one year. We don't read our Bibles just to survive for the day. If we're reading to survive today, we are not laying bricks in our spiritual

building. We need to lay some bricks. If we lay a few bricks every day, after some years, there will be quite a structure if we do it with a plan. Constructive daily Bible reading doesn't need to be huge but should add up.

Prayer

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

Pray and intercede for other people. Thank God for what He has done for you. If God answered specific prayer requests, thank Him for it. Pray about specific needs in your life. "Lord, what are areas of need in my life? Take one or two of these areas, and seek God for grace to overcome them. If you do this for several years, God will abundantly bless your preparation.

Take time to praise and thank God. "By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Hebrews 13:15). Thankfulness coming out of our hearts and lives is important. God inhabits the praises of His people. When we are downcast, one of the best things we can do is sing. Rejoice in the Lord; bless His name.

Learn to hear the voice of God

Learn to discern God's will and leading. Young people often struggle in this area. But as we learn to walk with God, we keep growing one step at a time. We read our Bibles, study, meditate, and memorize verses. We pray, fast, and seek the Lord. We praise Him and give Him thanks. We intercede for others and ask Him to help us. As we do these spiritual exercises, we begin to know the voice of God. He'll begin to lead us in ways that we can understand. But we must take a step at a time and keep going. Don't just aim at survival. Prepare for life.

Die to areas in your life

You need to die to your flesh so you can have that germination come forth into newness of life. Our flesh shrinks back from the idea of dying and says, "That's not pleasant. I don't enjoy that." Our flesh doesn't enjoy it, but dying to self brings forth new life. We can experience a springing forth in a new life as much as we are willing to die to ourselves.

Developing a Christlike character

Developing a Christlike character can be one of those areas in our lives where we struggle the hardest. But let's not shrink away from it. We have the grace of God on our side, and he wants to give us inner strength so we can overcome areas of need in our lives.

Consider the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. This

is a good place to start developing a Christlike character. Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance. I still go back and look at that list, asking, "Ok, how am I doing?" If I claim to have the Spirit of God living in my heart, I should have these things coming out of my life. Let's keep pressing on into the Kingdom.

When developing a Christlike character, let's ask: What spirit comes from me? Do I have a loud spirit or a quiet spirit? A harsh spirit or a gentle spirit? A critical spirit or a forgiving spirit? A proud spirit or a humble spirit? A selfish spirit or a servant spirit? Unkind or kind? Crude or mannerly? Tough or compassionate? Rude or respectful? Do I need to work on my character?

Yield your life to God's service

Art thou bound unto a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife. But and if thou marry, thou hast not sinned; and if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned. Nevertheless such shall have trouble in the flesh: but I spare you. But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord. But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife. There is difference also between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman careth for the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit: but she that is married careth for the things of the world, how she may please her husband" (1 Cor. 7:2-28, 32-34).

If you are unmarried, it may feel like "God has no purpose for me." God has a purpose for everyone. In fact, if young people cannot be content and fulfilled in serving the Lord as a single person, they are not ready for married life either. Contentment is caring about the things of the Lord.

It goes with this preparation sleep. If your mind is focused on, "I've got to get married!" or "I wonder whom I'll get married to," you will be distracted and won't be able to prepare for God's plan for your life. These areas in your life need to go to sleep. In God's timing, He'll cause it to spring forth in newness of life.

Find fulfillment in serving the Lord, walking with Him, and being content. Find contentment in serving others by starting at home. Also, find contentment and fulfillment in the church.

What kind of partner do I need?

This may seem like a different topic, but this, too, is a part of preparation. Ask yourself: "What kind of partner do I need?" When considering a partner, you need:

1. One with a vision.
2. One that is virtuous.
3. One that has a godly character.
4. One that is under authority.
5. One who is in love with Jesus.

This is fairly broad and yet all-encompassing. This is the kind of partner you want.

Parents, talk to your children. Don't wait till there's a request from a young man. Or perhaps your son says, "Well, Dad, uh, I really sort of feel drawn to this girl." Fathers, don't wait, but prepare for it. Talk about it with your children. And yes, you may ask them to wait. You may want to help them go to sleep. Give them direction on it. This conversation needs to happen when they are a bit older. Maybe around 20 or 21, this conversation could begin.

Parents, pray about this matter. Sometimes, we clearly sense God's direction for our child in marriage. Other times, we may not be sure and need to ask God for direction. Pray for your children before they seek marriage. We're not looking for them to just "fall in love" one day.

When am I ready for marriage?

Here are some questions to consider:

1. Am I mature? Have I learned to walk with God? Am I steady and stable and established in the faith? Or do I have major ups and downs?
2. Do I have a godly character? How do I treat others? How do I treat my parents and my siblings? How do I treat my coworkers? Am I quiet, gentle, forgiving, humble, a servant, kind, mannerly, compassionate, and respectful?
3. Am I under authority? This one is important. Have you dealt with your strong nature? Are you willing to be compatible, like Ephesians 5:21 says about "submitting one to another"? Have you learned to honor and respect your father? Are you under authority?
4. Is Jesus my all in all? Am I married to Christ? Do I find satisfaction in Him?
5. Am I content with my lot in life? Am I willing to live with less than Mom and Dad have? You cannot start in the same place in life where your parents are today. Do I desire material things, always reaching for more?

Young men

Study Titus 2:6-8

1. Young men, can you spiritually lead a wife and children? Can you do what Ephesians 5:24-27 says about washing them with the Word and guiding a home spiritually?
2. Are you able to financially provide? Can you take care of the household? When you marry, it's not just yourself but your wife and children to provide for.
3. Are you an overcomer in moral purity? Are you walking in victory?





The Googlification of Medicine

By Vincent “John” Waldron, MD
Gladys, Virginia

“So, what brings you in today?” I asked Ben, a 40-year-old man who was sitting across from me.

“Well,” he answered. “I have a few different symptoms. The biggest one is that I am always tired, but I’ve also been gaining weight, and my knees hurt some in the mornings.”

I mentally began to go through what doctors call a differential diagnosis – things that can cause the cluster of symptoms that a patient has. I usually let the patient explain what symptoms he is experiencing and then ask questions to try to hone in on the specific diagnosis.

Ben went on for a little while longer. Then, he proceeded to pull out a piece of paper. “So, Doctor,” he told me. “I’ve done some research into my diagnosis, and I think these are tests that I need to have done to work things up.”

I looked at the list. It was pretty long and included some things I probably would have ordered anyway, like a blood count and thyroid level, but also some very odd things like a Vitamin B1 level and a DHEA level. He also wanted a CT Scan of his head, chest, and abdomen.

“This is a lot of testing,” I said. “I’m not sure we need to do all of it. Can we talk a little bit more about your symptoms and then try to hone in on what testing would be best to sort it out?”

Ben was not impressed. “I have done my research!” He told me firmly. “These days, with the internet, you can find out things that your doctor wouldn’t tell you about – maybe things he doesn’t even know to test for. The problem is that I need YOU to order these things for me so my insurance will cover them. Otherwise, I wouldn’t even be here.”

With that, we’ll leave Ben and his uncomfortable doctor behind. There have always been patients who brought in articles from magazines telling the reader, “Six things your doctor won’t tell you about your health” and listing testing that should be done. It does seem to have gotten worse.

A lot of patients know more than their doctors. They can search for their symptoms on the web and find out all sorts of things that could cause those symptoms.

Beyond that, artificial intelligence is smart. Chat GPT, an artificial intelligence platform, was able to pass the three parts of the US Medical Licensure Exam.¹ It didn’t do terribly well— it only got just above a passing grade, but I suppose that’s good enough that it could open an office across the street from mine and start seeing patients.

In some ways letting patients have access to this level of information is a good thing. Doctors aren’t some sort of high priests who are given special rights to access the Holiest of Holies of medical information. More than that, doctors are anything but perfect, and you have only to read online reviews to see that they don’t listen well, botch procedures, and struggle with difficult diagnoses.

It can be challenging, though, when patients believe that they know more than their doctor. I have always said that if you know more than your doctor, either you need a healthy dose of humility or a new doctor— or maybe both.

Get Wisdom!

Proverbs 4:5-9 says, “Get wisdom, get understanding; forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth. Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee. Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding. Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her. She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.”

Proverbs 18:15 speaks of getting knowledge, but it indicates that before we seek knowledge, we should make certain that we have wisdom and understanding.

The author of the book of Proverbs was Solomon. We know that early in his reign he had a dream in which God appeared to him and offered him whatever he desired. In his humility, Solomon asked for an understanding heart, so that he would be able to wisely lead such a great people (I Kings 3:9,10).

When we look at knowledge, it is simply a group of

4. Are you disciplined to say no to yourself? Are you willing to sacrifice for the good of others? Marriage brings sacrifice. Can you surrender to others?
5. Are you willing to give up your independence? Are you ready for marriage? Marriage is about two people, not just yourself.

Young women

Study Titus 2:4–5.

1. Do you have a meek and quiet spirit? A spirit that is restful and content?
2. Are you able to become someone’s helpmeet? Can you be the rib at his side?
3. Are you willing to take on his identity, goals, and visions? Are you willing to do that?
4. Do you enjoy being a keeper at home? Have you learned homemaking skills?
5. Do you love children? Are your young siblings a bother to you? Will you love your children?

In Summary

In Luke 2:51 Jesus “went down with them [His parents] and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart.” Even though we can’t see the future, God will bless us when we submit ourselves. At the age of 12, Jesus clearly sensed that call of

God. “I must be about my Father’s business.” But He submitted Himself and went home.

Now, it is eighteen years later. “Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased. And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age...” (Luke 3:21–23).

Jesus sensed that clear call from God at age 12. Yet He submitted Himself to His parents, who didn’t understand, and He prepared during the next 18 years. Now heaven opened, and God said, “Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased!” What more could we desire? Nothing else will matter if we get to heaven one day and hear those words.

Jesus prepared over eighteen years for His three years of ministry, but it was the most effective three years of ministry anybody ever has had and will ever have. He prepared!

God has a plan for each one of our lives. Can we yield to His leading and timing? Let’s germinate, dying to ourselves and springing forth into the newness of life. Let’s be in a germinating sleep. We may not understand it all, but let’s prepare, germinate, grow, and increase in the grace of God. My young brother and sister, just take one step at a time, and God will bless your life.

Proverbs 18:15 speaks of getting knowledge, but it indicates that before we seek knowledge, we should make certain that we have wisdom and understanding.



facts— blocks of information that need to be assembled into some sort of coherent pattern. Wisdom and understanding are the tools with which we make sense of the knowledge that we have acquired.

Wisdom lets us judge the accuracy of the sources of “knowledge” as well. It helps us to ask the question, “Is this person trying to sell me something? Do they actually have any scientific studies that indicate that what they say is true?”

These are two questions that I ask when I look at a website. Are there links to products that are being sold to me, and is the advertising clearly separated from the articles? More than that, are there links to studies that support what is being claimed? If there are, how big were those studies? If a study has only 12 people in it, it is not large enough to give accurate information.

Robert Harris made an acronym CARS, that helps sort out whether information on a website is valid. Credibility, past Accuracy, Reasonableness, and Supporting information are all important to look at to see if we should value the information on a website.²

Unfortunately, many people who claim to have the answers to living long and healthy lives are actually trying to sell books, supplements, and a variety of other products. One prominent doctor who promotes better health through the use of supplements (that he sells) has managed to accrue enough money through the process that he stated in a 2017 affidavit that he was worth in excess of 100 million dollars. This doesn’t mean that he has nothing to

offer, but it does say that he has some bias towards recommending things he is selling.

The American Medical Association has guidelines for doctors to sell products out of their offices ethically. Those guidelines say that the products should serve a particular urgent need (say, crutches at an Orthopedic office), have scientific validity for their use, and that doctors should offer information about other ways that patients can get the same products elsewhere.³ More than that, doctors should reveal to their patients any financial interest that they have in the product that is being offered to the patient.

Confirmation Bias

Most of us read in order to confirm the things we already believe. I see this when people read the Bible— somehow, people can read the Bible and completely ignore Scriptures that contradict their behaviors in terms of political involvement or modesty of dress but believe that they are following all things of the Scripture.

In the same way, each one of us can find stories and information that reinforce our beliefs about doctors and medicine. If we believe that doctors are simply after money and are unethical and prescribe medicines that are toxic to patients, we can find articles that confirm that. On the other hand, if we look for stories that tear down alternative medicine theories, we can find those articles too.

The important thing is that we approach the question looking for real answers and understanding that science doesn’t know everything.

As an example, we do not have good treatments for

people who have Long COVID symptoms. That doesn’t mean that many people who suffered through COVID months later aren’t suffering from things like mental fog and fatigue, but it does mean that there is not a single medication that has done better than sugar pills in studies to get rid of those symptoms.

In the absence of scientifically proven treatment plans, many clinics have developed their own treatment courses, using a mixture of supplements and even hyperbaric oxygen treatments. Are these helpful? I don’t know, but I do know that those marketing them will confidently claim that they have an extremely high success rate in curing people if they are simply willing to follow (and pay for) the treatment plan.

More than that, when people are researching their symptoms, they tend to choose what diagnoses they think are likely based on their underlying personality types. Some people are prone to catastrophize— that is, they immediately believe the worst possible outcome of any given scenario they are presented with. These people will type in their symptoms and will come to the conclusion that they have cancer with only days or weeks to live. As God told Hezekiah, it is time for them to set their house in order.

On the other hand, there are plenty of people who have optimistic personalities. They type in their symptom list and come to the conclusion that they have a mild viral illness and will feel better in a few days.

The whole point of having a medical provider review things is that the practitioner can (hopefully) sort out the likely things from the unlikely ones. They don’t deal with the emotional overlay that patients do, so they can objectively decide how many tests to order and what type of tests to order in order to come up with a diagnosis.

Doctors Can Identify Dangerous Situations

I remember seeing a patient years ago who came in to see me with what she thought was a sinus infection. She was in her 20s and said that she had a pounding sensation in her head and a lot of pressure.

She didn’t really have any drainage or fever and none of the typical symptoms of a sinus infection, but sinusitis seemed like the most likely diagnosis that she could come up with.

I took one look at her and didn’t like what I saw. For one thing, she was extremely pale. For another, her pulse rate was quite fast – 130 beats a minute at rest. When I examined her, I found nothing that indicated that she had a sinus infection.

“Jenny,” I told her. “I need you to go to the hospital and get a stat blood count. I’m afraid you are really anemic— although I don’t know why. Wait at the lab and I will talk to you once I get the results back.”

It was perhaps 20 minutes later that I got an urgent call





from the hospital laboratory. “Dr. Waldron,” the voice on the other end said. “We have a critical lab result for you...”

Jenny’s hemoglobin was 4.6 (normal is between 12 and 16), and she ended up getting a transfusion. What she didn’t get was treatment for a sinus infection.

Chest pain is a classic symptom that can point to an underlying heart condition. At the same time, it could simply indicate esophageal reflux (acid in the esophagus) or inflammation in a rib or muscle. I probably see a couple of patients every day who have this symptom.

The majority of them need a simple treatment, but a few of them need to be sent urgently to the hospital for a complete heart evaluation. I don’t know how an online search engine will know which direction to indicate for a person to seek after reviewing their symptoms.

At best, an online resource will refer a user to seek emergency services or their local doctor.

Not All Doctors Are Equal

Roughly 50 percent of doctors finished in the bottom half of their Medical School class. Just because someone didn’t have top marks in Medical School doesn’t mean that they don’t have adequate knowledge to treat an ailment. Perhaps the most important knowledge that a doctor needs is to know when he doesn’t know.

It is still challenging for patients to know whether they are dealing with someone who will help them. When you meet a doctor, you tend to judge them based on their “bed-side manner.” Most of us look for someone who exudes confidence and seems to know what they are doing.

Confidence does not equal competence, and there are many doctors (and people in other fields) who have high levels of confidence in themselves but are not really competent to take care of the situation at hand.

Here is where doing some research can help. First, your doctor has online reviews, and those reviews will indicate something about the level of care they provide for patients. Second, if what your healthcare provider tells you seems really odd, it is easy to do a little research on the condition that you are supposedly dealing with and see if the symptoms line up and if the treatment seems reasonable.

It is important to realize that humans are not like vehicles. What I mean by that is that there is no scan tool that healthcare providers can hook up and generate all of the error codes and then fix the things that generate those codes.

Even if healthcare providers are certain of the diagnosis, some patients do not respond to the first or even the second treatment that is available. That doesn’t mean that the diagnosis or the treatment was wrong, but that people are not clones of each other and some respond better to one type of treatment than another.

Maybe someday we will have some type of genetic testing that tells us right off what the perfect medication or treatment plan is for a given illness, but that day seems a long way off.

A final thing to mention is that good doctors will not feel threatened by their patients asking questions or doing research. There are times when a patient will ask me about a new treatment that I am not familiar with, and I need to do my own research.

Those scenarios are not upsetting for me but rather a learning opportunity. “I’m not familiar with that,” I will tell my patient. “Let me do a little research and talk to some specialists that I trust, and I will call you later this week and let you know what I find out.”

Sometimes I investigate and find that the treatment is

expensive and seems to provide mixed or little benefit, but sometimes it is an improvement over the past ways of doing things. Doctors need to learn and adjust their style of practicing medicine as we learn new things about diseases and how the human body responds to them.

Humility is Needed

The longer I practice medicine, the less I feel that I know. It isn’t that I have developed dementia, but rather that I realize that there are numerous diseases that we don’t have good treatments for. The human body is amazingly complex. There are 36 trillion cells in the human body, and normally, they all work together perfectly; the problem is figuring out what to do when they don’t.

The Dunning-Kruger Effect is something that affects many fields in which people with limited knowledge and skill significantly overestimate their abilities in that field. Studies have shown that 65 percent of Americans believe that they have above-average IQs.⁴ Statistically, this isn’t possible. Fifty percent of any group of people will have above-average IQs, and the other 50 percent will be below-average. That’s how the IQ scale is set up.

While this effect is present for doctors, it is also present for patients. “Doing your research” is not the same thing as spending four years in Medical School, another three years in a residency training program, and continuing to stay abreast of developments in medicine through a variety of educational courses. We all would do well to listen better and realize our limitations.

The fact that your mother’s cousin took milkweed extract and felt much better from similar symptoms to yours is interesting. Whether the milkweed extract helped them get over their illness, whether there was a placebo effect, or they were just going to get better anyway, regardless

of what they took, is up for debate.

True Wisdom

I have mentioned wisdom already, and I would finish with that. True wisdom is realizing that healing comes from God. Psalms 103:3 says of God, “Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.”

Healing doesn’t come from antibiotics or chemotherapy. It doesn’t come from taking the right supplements or even eating a healthy diet. Healing comes because God touches us, right down to the tiniest parts of our cells and immune system, and makes things whole again.

I do believe that sometimes He works through medicine, but other times He works through the effective, fervent prayer of righteous men and women. (James 5:16)

With all of our knowledge, it is easy for us to get puffed up with pride and believe that we need no one else. We live in a world that is teeming with knowledge and a world in which wisdom has taken a back seat.

We must choose the source of our information carefully and realize that we don’t know everything. Maybe the reason why the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom is because it is the first step to us laying aside our pride and realizing that we are a tiny part of Creation. Only then, can we humbly listen and learn and receive healing.

¹ *Performance of ChatGPT on USMLE: Potential for AI-assisted medical education using large language models - PMC (nih.gov)*

² *Evaluating Internet Research Sources*

³ *Sale of Health-Related Products | AMA-Code (ama-assn.org)*

⁴ *65% of Americans believe they are above average in intelligence: Results of two nationally representative surveys - PMC (nih.gov)*

Joy in the Crevices

Sheryl Zeiset

Tanzania, East Africa

A few years ago, I was wallowing in emotional and physical burnout, trying to adjust to life outside of the African village we had called home for eight years. Depression and fear were a regular part of my life. As I slowly crawled out of the hole I was in a hole I never realized I had fallen into until it was too late for an easy remedy, I began to notice beauty.

In those intense years of ministry and language learning in the village, spending time on beauty seemed like a waste of time. And honestly, we lived in a village with very little beauty to offer, the only brightness being the vibrantly colored clothing the women wore. The mud houses, the flat landscape, and dust everywhere were daily life for most months of the year. Though I'm a lover of peace, quiet, and beautiful things, I made very little space in my life for any of it, even the things I could have done in that environment.

We now live in an easier place; the Southern Highlands of Tanzania. Here, there is fresh air and sunshine the whole year long. Flowers... of all kinds, and a lovely house with smooth floors and freshly painted walls. And it's now that I realize how important beauty is to the soul and how important it is to actually notice the beautiful things in my life and create beauty at every possible moment.

Being a mother and homemaker, no matter where in the world God has placed us, is a beautiful thing in itself if we really see it for what it is. It's easy to complain about the daily mundane things that make up my life, the constant dust, or the fact that I'm cooped up in our compound week after week. But I have been surprised with joy. Here are a few things I love to do to keep life fresh and inspiring:

Writing

I especially like to write about the goodness and faithfulness of God. True joy comes from Him, not my circumstances. I've believed that for years, but it's just recently that I've actually experienced this reality. My focus is so easily honed in on the things that I wish would be different, thinking that without the uncertainty and difficulties,

I'd be happy. I now realize that difficulties have very little to do with the amount of joy found in my heart. Instead, we can allow difficulties to teach us what true joy is and where it comes from.

Keeping a reasonably clean, pleasant house

I try to get rid of the extras and replace the dirty, the dingy, and the ugly with something that is beautiful and lovely. Get rid of the limp, ugly curtain in the schoolroom and replace it with a fresh yellow one (yes, even if it does take a few dollars to do so, I remind my penny-pinching soul).

Clearing off all horizontal surfaces

One of my goals is to clean off all flat surfaces in my house and leave only pleasant, tasteful things. I function so much better if my house is a restful, orderly place. Even though with five children, restful and orderly are relative terms, I'm learning that the rush and mess and noise of a family are beautiful too. It makes the clean floor all the more amazing and thankworthy because it's a rare experience.

Doing something fun with my children

I like to plan something fun to do with my children, such as a fun science project or an outing. Our favorite is outings to the flower gardens, which are grown here in town along the roadside as a showcase to give other people ideas of how to grow and care for flowers. Tucked into corners here and there, I find all the common flowers I was used to seeing in the States. It's delightful and even more fun when some of the children share my love for growing things.

Serving food tastefully

Even rice and beans can be served in pretty bowls instead of the messy pots they were cooked in. Raid your local market and you will be surprised with what you can find in glassware and other beautiful dishes that brighten your table.

Speaking cheerfully

Speak cheerfully—to the laundry lady, the house helper, or the neighbor. I can't spend a lot of time in ministry with people other than my children, but there are always people



I now realize that difficulties have very little to do with the amount of joy found in my heart. Instead, we can allow difficulties to teach us what true joy is and where it comes from.

coming around that I can touch with a smile, kindness, or any help they need. It's easy to be peeved over the fact that the produce vendor can't remember NOT to come in the morning while I'm teaching school, and her voice at the door interrupts us again. And what do math facts, bread dough, and dirty floors really have to do with joy? How does the noise of life and cantankerous personalities blend with the eternal? It's all mixed up in my heart, often with the dusty realities on top and threatening to spill over, but if I give in to peevish attitudes, that is a true joy killer.

Spending time appreciating the beauty of nature

This rests my mind and draws my heart to God. Though I've never lived in the Garden of Eden or places of equal beauty, there's always something to notice, something as small as a patch of green grass struggling to survive the dry season (which is a season of trial for me here in this country). It's cold (45 degrees or colder in the morning). The green growth and refreshing rains are over. Everything green is dying or has long been dead. Even the house roofs have lost their color as the dust covers every possible surface and threatens to suffocate the inspiration out of humans as well. Even the mountain in view from my kitchen window has lost its beautiful patchwork of gardens and fields. It stands bare and sober, waiting with bated breath for rain—just like my heart. But I've delighted in one little patch of earth in our back yard that I keep watered. There are peace lilies, roses, hibiscus, and other bright flowers blooming, and succulents growing in delightful little pots. I lug heavy buckets of water to that spot and sometimes take all five of my children on the city buses to visit yet another flower garden in search of more flowers. It's not a waste of time for me, as that little spot in my backyard during this dry season refreshes my heart over and over again!

Practicing gratefulness

With a very busy husband, I don't have a lot of time with him, and he doesn't have a lot of carefree time with the children. However, I'm making it a habit to notice the small things that do happen, like looking out my kitchen window and seeing him sitting on a mat with the girls, just enjoying them. I stand and watch, thanking God for that moment. It could have gone unnoticed, especially if my heart was full of peevish ungratefulness. Noticing the tiny flashes of joy throughout my day eventually makes my life seem full of joy, though in reality, my life has plenty of trials and challenges.

Life here in town is easier in so many ways, but we've been bombarded with many challenges working with the government, which has consumed Tim's time and energy.

Even though we hadn't lived in the village for over four years, we were doing a lot of support work for our fellow missionaries there and making trips back to where we still felt was our home. But all of us have been banned from that village and have had to work hard to even obtain the necessary documents needed to simply stay in the country.

Recently our compound in the village was taken over by the local army, just weeks after two Tanzanian missionary families moved in. When Tim traveled back to communicate and to hand over the keys out of respect for the ones who were forcing us to do this, he was insulted with hours of irrational anger and mistreatment, along with a lot of demands. Of course, our hearts were broken about seeing our house used for army training rather than for those precious new missionary families who were leaving their homes in town in order to take on the work there.

My husband is exhausted, both physically and emotionally, yet this morning he left for another trip back to the village to "heap on coals of fire" by giving the angry army officer a solar panel and a transformer on top of the other things he demanded. It's our reasonable service. And yes, my heart had tears in it as I stood at the window and watched him go. I know that he's only subjecting himself to more mistreatment, and that hurts my heart. But I also know that it's only through these things that God teaches me joy. As I surrender things dear to my heart, I'm emptied of my own desires. There's nothing to hang on to anymore and nothing to fight for. So, there's plenty of room for God to fill my heart with what he wants in there—Joy.

Yes, life hasn't brought a lot of serendipity my way. There have been a lot of tears, but that's not my focus anymore, as I purposefully bring beauty into every possible crevice of my life and delight in the surprise of joy. My quest is to allow my home and this tiny space on this earth to be a place where God's kingdom comes. It can't be all about happy things, peace, and serendipity, because that isn't given to me. It's got to be all about something really good going on in my heart and how that affects everything that my hands touch. My heart can be declaring the works of the Lord as I see him using trials in my life to build my faith and the faith of others looking on. In that way His kingdom comes into this small place, in this little crevice of life, in this space, empty of inspiration, except for His amazing grace, which turns trial into joy.

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Crown Him with Many Crowns

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Coshocton, OH

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen” (Rom. 11:33–36).

What an exuberant and expressive exclamation written by Apostle Paul! As we look at a new hymn and hymn writer again, let's keep our minds alert and hearts open to see the hand of God at work.

Matthew Bridges was born at Malden, Essex, in England, on July 14, 1800. He began to publish verses in 1825 and continued until he had published two small volumes of hymns—*Hymns of the Heart* (1848) and *The Passion of Jesus* (1852). From here, I will continue with the story by giving a brief history of the church life of our hymnodist.

The hymn writer we are studying in this article was a part of the Anglican Church of England. Around the middle of the 19th century, he became dissatisfied with the church group he was with and found himself following the leading of John Henry Newman in what was called the Oxford Movement. According to hymnologist Albert Bailey, this movement centered on, “Claiming for their Anglican Church lineal descent from the original Apostolic Church.” In pursuit of this, the organization's followers studied the ancient history of the church, its doctrine, and especially its liturgy. In doing so, they discovered a wealth of Greek and Latin hymnody from the earliest centuries of the Christian church.

As sadly, we find many factions in the Christian church today, so also was the scope of things going on in the mid-1800s. The Oxford Movement seemed in some ways to be a competition between the old and the new way of doing things. In the case of the figure in our story today, it seems he saw a more stable path forward in keeping the old traditions of the mother church, yet he also seemed to have a real, living faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now,

I want to interject here that I trust his decision was made in all good conscience toward God, even though we look on today from an Anabaptist viewpoint and question his reasons for doing so.

We will continue with our story here. Matthew Bridges converted to Roman Catholicism and, wanting to share in the rich hymnic tradition of the Protestant Church, began writing original hymns. Mr. Bridges' hymns are marked by spirituality and genuine power. One of his hymns we love and enjoy is “Rise, Glorious Conqueror.” Undoubtedly, his greatest hymn is “Crown Him with Many Crowns.” It first appeared in his book *The Passion of Jesus*, and was originally given the title “The Song of the Seraphs.”

There is an interesting background connected to this hymn, including how there came to be 12 verses. Understandably, only a portion of those verses are being sung today. The selection of verses depends on the hymnal.

Matthew Bridges originally penned the song in 1851. He wrote six stanzas, all based upon Rev. 19:12: “... and on His head were many crowns.” The edition by Bridges continued until the 1870s when a devout Anglican clergyman named Godfrey Thring came along. Godfrey was concerned that this popular hymn allowed catholic theology to be sung by protestant congregations. His concerns centered perhaps on Bridges' original second verse, where he referenced the Blessed Virgin Mary. In light of this, Thring wrote six new stanzas and published it in his *Hymns and Sacred Lyrics* in 1874.

The 12 stanzas have been mixed and matched down through the years. Interestingly, of the six verses most commonly appearing in hymnals today, three were written by Bridges and three by Thring. The hymn, as published in the *Hymns of the Church* songbook, completely omits original verse 2 and uses verses 1, 3, 4, part of 5, and part of 6 out of Bridges' original six verses. The stanzas we sing in that book are highlighted in the selection of verses below. Also included as well are the six couplets by Thring.

Crown Him with Many Crowns

—Bridges

Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne;
Hark! how the heavenly anthems drown all music but
its own;

Awake, my soul, and sing of Him who died for thee,
And hail Him as thy matchless King through all eternity.
Crown Him the Virgin's Son! The God Incarnate born—
Whose arm those crimson trophies won which now His
brow adorn!

Fruit of the mystic Rose as of that Rose the Stem:
The Root, whence mercy ever flows—the Babe of
Bethlehem!

Crown Him the Lord of peace! Whose power a scap-
ter sways,
From pole to pole, that wars may cease, absorbed in
prayer and praise:

His reign shall know no end, and round His pierced feet
Fair flowers of paradise extend their fragrance ever sweet.
Crown Him the Lord of love! Behold His hands and side—
Rich wounds, yet visible above, in beauty glorified:

No angel in the sky can fully bear that sight,
But downward bends his burning eye at mysteries so bright!
Crown Him the Lord of years! The Potentate of time—
Creator of the rolling spheres, ineffably sublime!
Glassed in a sea of light, where everlasting waves
Reflect His throne—the Infinite! Who lives—and loves—
and saves.

Crown Him the Lord of heaven! One with the Father known,
And the blest Spirit, through Him given from yonder
triune throne!

All hail! Redeemer—Hail! For Thou hast died for me;
Thy praise shall never, never fail throughout eternity!

Crown Him with Many Crowns

—Thring

Crown Him with crowns of gold, all nations great and small,
Crown Him, ye martyred saints of old, the Lamb once
slain for all;
The Lamb once slain for them who bring their praises now,
As jewels for the diadem that girds His sacred brow.
Crown Him the Son of God before the worlds began,
And ye, who tread where He hath trod, crown Him the
Son of man;

Who every grief hath known that wrings the human breast,

And takes and bears them for His own, that all in Him
may rest.

Crown Him the Lord of light, Who o'er a darkened world
In robes of glory infinite His fiery flag unfurled.
And bore it raised on high, in heaven—in earth—beneath,
To all the sign of victory o'er Satan, sin, and death.

Crown Him the Lord of life Who triumphed o'er the grave,
And rose victorious in the strife for those He came to save;
His glories now we sing Who died, and rose on high.

Who died, eternal life to bring and lives that death may die.

Crown Him of lords the Lord, Who over all doth reign
Who once on earth, the incarnate Word, for ransomed
sinners slain,

Now lives in realms of light, where saints with angels sing
Their songs before Him day and night, their God,
Redeemer, King.

Crown Him the Lord of heaven, enthroned in worlds above;
Crown Him the King, to whom is given the wondrous
name of Love,

Crown Him with many crowns, as thrones before Him fall.
Crown Him, ye kings, with many crowns, for He is King
of all.

Matthew Bridges lived his latter years in the province
of Quebec, Canada, then returned to England before his
passing from earth on October 6, 1894, at the ripe old age
of 94. Although we don't find many details about his life,
he has left one of the greatest hymns in our hands today.

A great part of this song's enduring quality is the tune it
is paired with. This refrain was written especially for this
song by Sir George Job Elvey in 1868 and was given the
name of *Diademata*. In Greek, the word *diademata* means
“a royal crown”—a fitting name for this stirring melody.
Hymnology scholar J. R. Watson agrees with this when
he observes, “*Diademata* makes a magnificent setting for
the text, march-like and joyful without ever becoming
mechanical or strident.”

May our congregations continue our practice of corpo-
rate, whole-hearted singing, lifting our voices in praise to
the Lord in the assembly of the saints! Crown Him, our
Lord Jesus Christ, with many crowns, for he is worthy!

Sourced from: *A Treasury of Hymn Stories*, hymnary.org, umc-discipleship.org, FBC

Crown Him with Many Crowns

1 Crown him with ma - ny crowns, the Lamb up - on his throne.
2 Crown him the Lord of life, who tri - umphed o'er the grave,
3 Crown him the Lord of love; be - hold his hands and side,
4 Crown him the Lord of years, the po - ten - tate of time,

Hark! how the heaven - ly an - them_ drowns all mu - sic but its own.
and rose vic - to - rious in the_ strife for those he came to save;
rich wounds, yet vi - si - ble a - bove, in beau - ty glo - ri - fied;
cre - a - tor of the rol - ling_ spheres, in - ef - fa - bly su - blime.

A - wake, my soul, and sing of him who died for thee,
his glo - ries now we sing who died and rose on high,
no an - gels in the sky can ful - ly bear that sight,
All hail, Re - dee - mer, hail! for thou hast died for me;

and hail him as thy match - less king through all e - ter - ni - ty.
who died e - ter - nal life to bring, and lives that death may die.
but down - ward bends their bur - ning eye at my - ste - ries so bright.
thy praise shall ne - ver, ne - ver fail through - out e - ter - ni - ty.

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