

**WHILE THE EARTH REMAINETH, SEEDTIME AND HARVEST, AND
COLD AND HEAT, AND SUMMER AND WINTER, AND DAY AND
NIGHT SHALL NOT CEASE. GENESIS 8:22**

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“The Berean Voice” is an outreach ministry or *integrated auxiliary* of Faith Christian Fellowship, a church located in Holmes County, Ohio. It is operated by a board of directors and ultimately answers to the elders of the church.

As a non-profit ministry it is our goal to be working 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.

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PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 35 TO LEARN ABOUT THE CURRENT NEEDS OF OUR MINISTRY.

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~ The Berean Voice Board

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FROM THE EDITOR

We, as a board, thought it would be wise to share some details about our ministry in order to answer some of the questions that have been coming in regards to who we are and the purposes and goals we are trying to accomplish with this magazine and through our ministry as a whole.

For a number of years several brothers from our local church, Faith Christian Fellowship, have been giving care, assistance, and discipleship to individuals struggling with emotional and mental health issues of varying degrees. The longer we have been interacting with individuals about these issues, we have become increasingly aware that **much** of the so-called, *help*, which is offered to our conservative, Anabaptist churches is questionable at best and definitely not from God in some of the worst cases. We have discovered that much of this *help* is actually coming out of the world's philosophies as they endeavor to respond to man's problems of the soul.

We understand the New Testament teachings to show the church to be primarily functioning at a local level, rather than being universal or global in its day-to-day operations. We also understand God's Word to teach that the proper outworking of the church should be as a body, with godly leaders giving guidance and oversight. With this in mind we have been sharing our concerns about the above mentioned influence of worldly ideas and methods, primarily with church leaders.

More recently, this dialogue has been shifting from mostly a private matter, to more and more of a public discussion. Due to this more public interaction, our church decided to create a ministry arm of the church to give more structure to the different aspects of outreach which were developing. It was with this in mind that "The Berean Voice" (TBV) was started in the Spring of 2015. After putting the ministry arm into place and giving it a name, there was a board of directors selected from our church body and from our sister church, "Shining Light Christian Fellowship", which is also from Holmes County, Ohio. This board is responsible for the direction, oversight, and all day-to-day operations of the ministry.

Our Magazine

One of our goals was to develop a doctrinal newsletter or magazine in order to address numerous subjects that seem to cause question, contention, and confusion. Therefore, we will endeavor to print articles that are relevant to current issues which are facing the church today, using the New Testament of God's Word as our primary resource. While we do not plan to focus on, or emphasize any specific group from history, as having all the answers, we do plan to publish articles which are written from a traditional Anabaptist worldview, since we recognize that perspective to be the most consistently accurate, common-sense understanding and literal application of the Scriptures.

Our goal is that most of the articles would be *originally-written* for our magazine, but if we end up not having enough content to fill any given issue, we will look for other material which has already been published elsewhere.

In order to help us with organizing the articles and to help the reader better understand the focal point of each one, we plan to use a category system in which will place each article under a specific category. While this is the system we will be using, we will not be using all categories in every issue. We will use them on an as-needed basis per publication.

Website

In an effort to reach more people around the world, we have developed a website for our ministry: (www.bereanvoice.org). This allows us to place recorded audio messages online for individuals to listen to or download, according to their needs. This site is still in its infancy with a lot of work still needing to be done. We appreciate your patience with us regarding this matter.

Other Resources

Another one of our goals is to develop a growing list of recommended resources—books, booklets, CD sets, etc. These products will be topic specific for a number of key subjects which are relevant to current struggles of the church. We plan to make this material known through our website and magazine as it becomes available.

~ C L Wenger



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Ye Shall Never Fall

~ E S Gutwein

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“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” II Peter 1:3.

Recently, I have been memorizing this Bible verse. As I read the surrounding Scripture, I am deeply impressed by Peter’s message. Several statements stand out which we could look at, but one that seems especially important to me is found in verse 11— “If ye do these things, ye shall never fall.”

Do we really understand what “ye shall never fall” means? The Bible promises that if we follow its teachings we will never fall spiritually. Do I believe this? Do you? What does it mean to fall? And what is it that we need to do in order to avoid falling?

Let’s read the text first (II Peter 1:1-11). And as we read, notice the words “through” and “whereby”.

“Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us ‘through’ the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you ‘through’ the knowledge of

God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, ‘through’ the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: ‘Whereby’ are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world ‘through’ lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither *be* barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. ‘Wherefore’ the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abun-

dantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

The first *through* is found in verse 1. “To them that have obtained like precious faith with us *through* the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ”. This tells us that true faith does not happen apart from righteousness. We cannot say that we have faith and are Christians if we deny God’s righteousness or if we do not live according to His holiness. A person of biblical faith is a person of righteousness—Jesus Christ’s righteousness.

Another important teaching which we see in verse 1, is that the Christian faith is *obtained*. We are not born with it. We cannot say we are Christians simply because we were born into a Christian home, or because we were baptized in a Bible-believing church. Faith must be obtained by personally accepting God’s righteousness and then living by it. Faith is not inherited; but rather faith is obtained: by personal choice, by personal repentance, and by a personal acknowledgment that we were born with a sin nature—in complete and absolute need of redemption. We must be born again by God’s Spirit in order to be a part of His Kingdom and to spend eternity someday with Him.

The second *through* is found in verse 2. It says: “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you *through* the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord”. Grace is the kindness God shows us to save us from sin and hell and to fill us with power to live a godly life. Peace speaks of tranquility, harmony, and rest in the soul. This verse tells us that if we want grace and peace, we will find it *through* getting to know God. The more we know God, the more grace and peace we will receive. The only way to know God today is by reading His Word and allowing His Spirit to teach us from the Scriptures. The Bible is the only book that reveals who God is. The more I absorb God’s Word, the more I know Him.

The third *through* is found in verse 3. It says that “all things that pertain unto life and godliness” are given to us “*through* the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue”. The Bible says that we have been given absolutely all we need to live a godly life.

This tells us that we have no excuse for living the Christian Life without having victory over sin. God has provided everything—all the instructions and all the power—in order for us to live victorious and abundant Christian lives (John 10:10). Through His Son, His Spirit, and His Word, He has given us absolutely everything we need to know in order to live above bitterness, above unforgiveness, above immorality, above every sin which we could possibly consider.

It seems too good to be true, but it is true! The Bible says that we are “more than conquerors through him that loved us” (Romans 8:37). We must believe it. We do not need to be saved *just by the skin of our teeth*, so to speak. We have been rescued to live full, abundant lives that radiate God’s glory and love to others. Am I living this way? What about you?

This verse says it again. All these things come *through* knowing Jesus Christ. Essentially, everything we need for an abundant Christian life is found in the Holy Bible, the written Word of God. We are deprived of nothing. The Bible informs us how to be saved, how to find forgiveness for our sins, and how to forgive others. It teaches us how to relate to our parents, our children, our siblings, our neighbors, our enemies, and our government. It shows us how to deal with real-life problems. No matter how young we are, how old we are, who we are, what job we have, or where we find ourselves in life (1 Corinthians 7:20-22), the

Bible has everything we need. If we read it, believe it by faith, and obey it, we will find this to be the solution to all of life’s problems.

Going back to 1 Peter 1, the word “whereby” in verse 4 also means *through* (or *through which*), and it refers to the previous verse. *Through* God’s Word we receive great and precious promises *through which*, in turn, we share God’s nature. This is pretty amazing! God loved the world so much that He gave us every resource and all the power we need for our daily life. And not only this, He also enables us to share in His divine nature. We are able to reflect God’s love, holiness, and righteousness in practical ways. Mankind was created in God’s image, then sin marred that reflected image. But today we can be restored to again reflect

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others.**

God's divine image and character, by having a changed heart and life through a relationship with His Son, Jesus Christ.

As we read through these verses, we notice that Peter is trying to impress us with the idea of *building up* or *adding on* as we move from verse to verse. Faith comes *through* God's righteousness as we understand His Word. After faith comes grace and peace, plus everything in God's Word that enables us to live a godly life. Along with this comes God's great promises and the sharing of His divine nature.

We read in verse 5: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue..." As we keep reading, we continue to see this idea of adding on, building up, and moving forward in maturity. In fact, he concludes the whole letter with the same thought: "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (3:18). The Christian life is much more than simply getting saved. It involves constant growth, constant upward movement, and constant renewal. Romans 12:12: "...be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God".

So, to our faith we must add virtue; to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity or love.

Verse 8 is another of those astounding statements which we must believe by faith, since it is humanly impossible outside of God's enabling power— "If these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ". If faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, and so on, are in us and abound, we will be diligent and fruitful in knowing Christ. In other words, there will be no hindrance in getting to know Jesus, nor in bearing godly fruit.

Do I want to know Jesus? What about you? If our answer is yes, then these things need to be a part of our life. Verse 9 is clear that if we lack these things, we are blind and shortsighted. In fact, we have forgotten the great miracle of cleansing that God performed in our life at conversion. When we fail to grow in our Chris-

tian life, when we fail to add on to our faith, when we fail to "build up ourselves on our most holy faith" (Jude 1:20), then we lose purpose in life, we lose victory, and possibly we may even lose our faith in the end. Constant diligence is of the essence.

In fact, verse 10 brings this out. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall". It is a promise. If we are diligent, we will not fall from the faith. If we are diligent, we will be fruitful and more than conquerors. And in the end (verse 11), "an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"; as Revelation 21:7 also says, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son".

Why do we keep search- ing every- where other than God's Word for the answers to our many problems...?

Through His Word: God has revealed Himself, He has given us all the instructions and advice we need to get through life, He has given us the power to be more than conquerors, and He has given us great and precious promises for this life and the next. What else do we think we need? When we experience trouble or grief in life, why do we turn elsewhere for advice, comfort, or help? Why do we keep searching everywhere other than God's Word for the answers to our many problems, when that is where they actually are?

Once, after being abandoned by many followers, Jesus asked His disciples, "Will you also go away?" And Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:67-68). When we have trouble in life, when we fear, when we think we are starting to fall away, then we should come to Jesus, the Christ of the Bible. He has the words of eternal life.

The next time you are tempted to give up, the next time you feel that your temptations are too overwhelming, or the next time you start thinking that Satan is getting the upper hand in your life, remember that according to God's Word we have this promise—that **IF** ye do these things ye shall never fall. Instead of accepting the lie of Satan that it is no use to keep going or that it is no use to keep trying, let us embrace this **TRUTH** and draw near to God through the reading of His Word and believe what He tells us.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God,
and is profitable for
doctrine, for reproof, for correction,
for instruction in righteousness:
2 Timothy 3:16



The Bible Is the Word of God

~ Harold S. Martin
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Loyal Christians down through the years have accepted the Bible as a book verbally inspired of God (2 Timothy 3:16). The word “inspired” means literally “God-breathed.” Inspiration is the strong, conscious in-breathing of God into the minds of human writers, thus qualifying them to put into circulation the Truth. Inspiration is God speaking through men, and the Bible is therefore just as much the Word of God as if He spoke every single word of it with His own lips. 2 Peter 1:21 says that holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

I believe in the full, verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible. Every part of the Scriptures (in the original documents) is verbally (word for word) inspired by God. Every sentence, every line, every word, every

mark, every point, every penstroke, every dotting of the i, and every crossing of the t, was placed there by God Himself. All Scripture is inspired of God, and if all of it is inspired of God, then none of it is uninspired! We will note seven observations that support verbal inspiration.

1. The Bible’s Amazing Composition

The Bible was written through the instrumentality of men. God is the author, but there were more than 40 human writers. They wrote 66 individual books during a period of sixteen hundred years. The first part of the Bible was written fifteen hundred years before the writer of the last book was even born. These 40 men grew up in thirteen different countries. They lived on three

different continents and spoke three different languages. Some of the writers were kings; others were fishermen. Some were statesmen, herdsman, shepherds, doctors, men of learning, men without learning, men from every condition of life.

What would you naturally expect from a book written in such remote periods of time, under such varying circumstances, by so many different persons—but absolute contradiction and discord, and a total lack of unity? But the marvel of it all is that out from these many differing circumstances has come the Bible, which is one whole complete unit from Genesis to the Revelation. The writers lived far apart in time and space, yet every part of the Bible fits perfectly in place. The Bible has only one theme. It deals everywhere with man's complete ruin in sin and God's perfect remedy in Jesus Christ. There is one central message, one code of ethics, and one plan of salvation. Surely God was the Author who spoke through many human writers.

2. The Bible's Claim to Inspiration

The Bible claims to be the Word of God. Expressions such as "The Lord commanded," or "The Lord spoke saying," are used more than two thousand times in the Old Testament alone. If you open your Bible to the Book of Leviticus (at random anywhere in the Book), and read the very first verse of the chapter before you, it likely says, "And the Lord spoke unto Moses, saying." It does not say, "Moses spoke, saying."

The Bible claims to be divinely inspired (2 Timothy 3:16), and the Apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 14:37, "The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord." If I did not believe that God had written the Bible, I would not want it around our home. More than 2,700 times there is in the Bible a claim to inspiration—and if the Bible is not the Word of God, then there are 2,700 lies within its pages. I would not want a book fostering so much falsehood around our home for our children to read. We must either accept the Bible for what it claims to be, or set it aside as unworthy of our confidence.

3. The Bible's Unending Appeal

Books that are two thousand years old are scarcely read by the general public today. Only one out of two hundred books published this year will still be published seven years from now. But the Bible's popularity has steadily grown throughout its history of more than three thousand years. Century after century it continues to renew its youth. The Bible's appeal is an exception to the law of best sellers. It defies all competi-

tion. More than forty million copies in 1,700 languages are published every year. The Bible is read from the last tiny island in the South Pacific to the cold snow-hut of the Eskimo in Alaska. The Bible speaks of all nations; it is valued by all races; it is loved by many groups of people. Such a book is without parallel in human literature and is nothing less than a miracle.

4. The Bible's Scientific Accuracy

The Bible was written in a non-scientific age. Its writers were not scientists. The Bible is not a textbook on science, but when it touches on a scientific subject it is always accurate.

Job lived in a day when all the wise men believed and taught that the earth was supported on a platform, resting on the backs of elephants which were standing on the shell of a mighty turtle that was standing on the coil of a great snake. They believed that the earth quaked when the elephants shook themselves. That is what the learned men of Job's day believed. How did Job know to utter a strictly scientific truth when he said, "God hangs the earth upon nothing" (Job 26:7)? Job was writing better than he knew because God was speaking through him.

Isaiah lived in a day when all persons believed the earth was four-cornered and flat. They even told Columbus (a little more than 500 years ago) that he would get to the end of the earth and drop off. How did Isaiah know that the earth was round, and not flat, when he said, "God sits upon the circle of the earth" (Isaiah 40:22)? The fact is, that scientists have not yet caught up with the science of the Word of God. Don't ever let a learned scientist lead you to believe that the Bible is unscientific and out of date. The Bible is always ahead of date.

5. The Bible's Miraculous Preservation

The Scriptures say, "Forever O Lord thy word is settled in heaven" (Psalm 119:89). You may as well try and keep the sun from shining as to stop the forward march of the Bible. And yet when we consider the persecution and hatred toward the Bible down through the centuries, we marvel that it exists at all. The Bible is not only the most loved Book in the world, it is also the most hated Book. The Bible teaches things that are distasteful to human beings, and as a result, they have either rejected it or attempted to explain away its meaning.

Thomas Paine wrote in his book *The Age of Reason*, "Fifty years hence the Bible will be obsolete and forgotten." But the very press on which that book was

printed was afterward used to print thousands of Bibles. Lenin, the founder of modern Communism, said one time, "I expect to live long enough to attend the funeral of all religion." But Paine and Lenin have passed on to the eternal world. The Bible is still here!

Before the invention of the printing press, Bibles had to be copied by hand. They were scarce and expensive. Bibles were chained to tables in the churches, and people paid a sum of money to read them for a short period of time. Besides the scarcity and expense, there was bitter persecution.

For centuries, in many countries, it was a criminal offense to be caught reading the Bible. Bibles were burned to light the streets of cities at night. They were torn to shreds and buried at sea. But empires have risen and fallen; kings have been crowned and uncrowned; civilization has changed—yet the Bible has never been destroyed. Men may spurn the Bible, they may burn it, they may abuse it, they may misuse it—but while their bodies are crumbling back to the dust of the earth—the Bible will continue on its forward march. These words of God will never pass away.

6. The Bible's Fulfilled Prophecy

Human beings simply do not know what is going to happen next. The most striking characteristic about the Bible is the fact that it predicts in plain language events that will take place in the future history of mankind. And then God confirms what He says by bringing them to pass. The Koran of the Muslims and the sacred books of other pagan religions contain no prophecies whatsoever, but every last prophecy of the Bible that was to have taken place to the present time, has been literally fulfilled.

Many examples could be given, but we take time for just one. Jesus and the two malefactors were hanging on the Cross. The Sabbath was approaching and the soldiers were ordered to break their legs. They went to Calvary and they broke the legs of the two malefactors, but when they came to Jesus, they stopped! They didn't break His legs. Why? You say, "Because He was dead already." Why did they not say, "We'll be sure this blasphemer is dead, we'll break them anyhow"? Why? Because more than 4,000 years ago, God said of Jesus Christ, "Not a bone of him shall be broken" (Exodus 12:46). The Roman soldiers could not have broken the bones of Jesus any more than they could stop a planet from its flight in the heavens. When God speaks, it will be carried out.

7. The Bible's Transforming Power

Many thrilling stories could be told about the transforming power of the Holy Bible. God changes the lives of human beings through His Word. Drunkards have been made sober; harlots have become pure and decent; thieves have been made honest and upright. The Bible has lifted ignorant, superstitious savages from the depths of satanic bondage and transformed them into men of God. The cannibal tribes of the South Sea Islands have been transformed into gentle peace-loving people.

Every page of God's Word speaks of His Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. Christ is the center, the end, the core, and the circumference of all the Scriptures. Anyone who studies the Bible, and believes its contents and sincerely accepts the Christ whom it reveals—will experience a complete change of life. The Bible is the only Book in all the world whose teachings have the marvelous power to make bad people good, completely changing their characters.

The Bible changes the lives of people. It was the Bible's transforming power that enabled an early Christian named Ignatius to say (while on his way to be devoured of beasts), "The closer I get to the lions, the nearer I get to God." When Polycarp was given a chance to renounce his Saviour, he said, "Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me wrong. How can I renounce my King and my Saviour?" He didn't get that testimony from a cheap novel; rather, he got it from the clear teachings of God's Word. The Bible had transformed his life! That testimony was the outgrowth of an experience with the Christ who is revealed within the pages of the Bible. Certainly a Book that lifts men and women up to God like the Bible does, must have come down from God!

Each of us had better become serious about the message of the Bible. Soon this life will be over and we will stand before God. His written Holy Word, the Bible, will be the textbook of Heaven. We can spurn the Bible here, but we are going to meet it over there. Jesus says in John 12:48, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him on the last day."

A Bible Helps Tract #T8

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HOW SHOULD THE CHRISTIAN VOTE?

~ C L Wenger

It is that time again, election year. The media is bombarding us with any tidbit of interesting information they can get their hands on. Recently, for example, one of the candidates suddenly stumbled, then abruptly departed the public event they were attending. This spawned all sorts of media discussion about many numerous details in an effort to not miss anything. There were videos of the stumble. There was discussion about what “the stumble meant”. Some folks tried to use the *misstep* to question whether this individual was in good enough health to be the country’s next leader. The opposing side even published an updated medical report for their candidate, verifying that he *was* in excellent health.

And so it goes. Any little misstep or any possible misuse of words is examined and re-examined for any potential clue regarding a myriad of possibilities. For some of us, perhaps we choose to not read the daily newspaper or maybe we are endeavoring to live our lives separated from the world. However, it has been my observation and experience that even for those who are leading a sheltered life, there still seems to be an awareness about issues that are current in politics, especially regarding matters which have the potential to cause a negative impact on our lives as Christians.

My Childhood Memories

As I reflect back on my childhood, when I attended a conservative Christian school, I recall that we were quite sheltered from the national news. But, somehow it became known that there was a woman running for the Democratic party as a vice-presidential candidate. I remember there was concern and even something more akin to fear that seemed to settle on our hearts. “What would the future hold if a woman was elected as vice-president?” was the thought that troubled some of our immature minds.

I can also remember other major events that happened during my growing-up years, which even though we were leading quite sheltered lives, still mysteriously

became known within a very short time after they occurred. I remember the day President Ronald Reagan was shot. I remember the day terrorists flew jets into the World Trade Center’s twin towers. I remember the day the U.S. invaded Iraq for the first time. Somehow, when major events take place which are perceived to have a potential to be life-changing for us, the news seems to travel “lightning fast”.



Conservative vs. Liberal

Where does this leave us, God-fearing, Bible-believing Christians, as we find ourselves in the midst of another election year? Some of the potential outcomes may prompt our hearts to tremble. Should we do as the more mainstream “Christians” would promote—get involved with politics and try to persuade as many as possible to vote for the most “Christian” friendly candidate? Should we be responsible citizens and vote, as some would say, “for the lesser of the two evils”, since neither one is exactly “made to order”?

What will happen if a liberal is elected as the next president? What about a candidate who freely encourages those in the audience to rough up or beat up anyone who dares to publicly disagree with his presented message? How might he respond toward Christians who might not conscientiously agree with his ideas and agenda? What will the outcome be if this country would move even further to the left, or develop even more liberal views on issues such as LGBT rights and minority entitlement? What will the final end be if the person elected continues to advance the federal government overreach on a whole host of issues—medical care, privacy rights, religious freedoms, etc.? What will

happen if the “wrong” person gets elected as president and appoints more liberal judges to the Supreme Court and to the Federal bench? What will happen if more “religious rights” are taken away from this country?

I agree this all seems to be troubling—at least I tend to be tempted to worry about the future at times, as I suppose is normal for most of us. So again I ask, “What would God have us do?” I believe there are a number of Scriptures that come into play here. But first let us consider some practical questions and observations. Should we get involved politically and vote, to ensure that the “right” candidate gets elected? Or maybe the more important question is, “Does God **expect** us to vote, so we are doing our part to guarantee that His ‘chosen’ candidate ends up in the White House?”

Working with God or Against Him

If our thoughts are going down these lines, then let us ask some more compelling questions. If we would vote and then someone other than the one we voted for gets elected, does that mean we did not have a clear voice from God about which one was His chosen? Another question could be asked: “What happens if two ‘Christians’ vote, after they spend time seeking God’s will regarding whom they should vote for, and then they each vote for a different candidate; which one is actually voting for God’s ‘chosen’?”

Now let us look at it another way, if we pray and seek God’s will for His “chosen” candidate, and then we vote accordingly, but someone else ends up being elected, does that not leave us with one of several concluding possibilities? (1) We really do not understand how to clearly hear God’s “voice”. Or (2) Satan ended up getting the upper hand this time and God is really not in charge, “yet”. Or (3), here is the worst and final possibility, we were actually working against God, since the Bible says that God sets up [elected officials] who He will and takes down who He will. (Daniel 4:32)

Here some may say they do not pray about God’s elect, but rather just use logical reasoning and vote for the one they think is the most qualified. Hopefully as we continue on through this article we will see that the very “**act**” of voting by Christians is a violation of

principle based upon who we are—dual-citizens with our primary loyalty being to another country.

Two-Kingdom Principle

I would like to propose possibly a very extreme thought for some of you, depending upon your upbringing, your church affiliation, or your Biblical worldview. In the Gospels, Jesus talks about His disciples not fighting because His Kingdom is not of this world. The unspoken message here is that Jesus’ disciples are a part of another kingdom, which is why they would not fight for this earthly kingdom. (John 18:36)

This is a very clear departure from the normal response of God’s people which is visibly shown all the way through the Old Testament. Here Jesus is saying that His people would not participate in certain methods that are *normal* for the society, because they are a part of a *different* society. They are to see themselves as “strangers and pilgrims” and function in that manner (Hebrews 11:13; 1 Peter 2:11). Or to put it into a paraphrase of Jesus’ words in His High Priestly prayer, Christ’s followers *should be in the world, but not of it* (John 17:15-16).

Another point to consider is the teaching of Paul in Romans chapter 13, where we are told that the elected leaders of this world’s society are actually “God’s ministers”, put in place to do His will in bringing order to the society and to keep the peace, both internally and externally. It is clear that the elected leaders of this world’s societies are expected by God to “bear not the sword in vain”, in order to keep the peace and to punish the evil doer. Without a clear understanding of the *two-kingdom principle*, there is cause for a lot of confusion regarding the believer’s place and responsibility within the society and their relation to the government of that society.

Rebellious Christians

Another issue that also comes up in the midst of this prevailing confusion is that of living in a manner of being anti- this world or, more often, being anti- government or anti- elected officials. This **anti-** behavior usually comes out of the difficulty of understanding how believers should be “in the world, but not of it”. These individuals have a tendency of not wanting to err

Hopefully as we continue on through this article we will see that the very “**act**” of voting by Christians is a violation of principle based upon who we are—dual-citizens...

on the side of being *of the world*, so they instead focus on being *against* and then many end up becoming *anti*-the world. While the Scriptures would teach the concept of being separated from the world and separated unto God, this in no way gives excuse for believers to develop a rebellious lifestyle towards the elected officials. Actually, if believers respond in this manner *against* the government of the society in which they are living, God says they are, in reality, **working against Him** (see Romans 13:1-2). Finally, as we look at this issue, Jesus himself clearly taught that He expects His followers to pay whatever taxes that the host country has established, because that physical currency is actually the currency of that earthly kingdom—“render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's” (Matthew 22:15-22).

A Christian Nation

A Christian is literally one who follows Christ. A believer usually is referred to as one who believes in Jesus as revealed in the New Testament. Ever since Constantine, Emperor of Rome, claimed to have become a Christian and then tried to draw the church and the state together as one, there has been ensuing confusion on this issue. From time to time throughout the ages (both in history past and more recently) there have been elected officials who have made a public profession of their faith as a Christian. Their confusion as to what exactly defines a true Christian has allowed for them to use this verbal profession to achieve and promote political means or agendas.

When someone claims to be a Christian, many would feel that it is wrong to question that claim. No longer do people remember that Jesus said “by their fruits ye shall know them” (Matthew 7:20). In their misguided and confused thinking, they hold up certain evidences which they claim prove that God is working on their behalf. There have been numerous glory stories told about God’s divine intervention on the modern-day battlefield. There has been story after story shared as testimony about the hand of God overruling in certain policy changes that were just about to take place which would have had significant negative repercussions.

Their confusion as to what exactly defines a true Christian has allowed for them to use this verbal profession to achieve and promote political means or agendas.

There have been books and magazine articles written detailing many of these different life stories. In fact, after hearing about the proclaimed faith of one of the past presidents, a Christian brother was heard to say, “this man is our brother because he ‘believes’ in Jesus.” With all this apparent *evidence* and public display of *proclaimed* faith, what are believers supposed to think and how should they respond? According to Romans 13, God is with these elected officials and is actually working through them and will, yes, even at times intervene through events that seem miraculous indeed.

But this is where the confusion comes in. If God is using them and working through them, does this not mean that we as the church should also be involved in the government, through counsel, participation, and voting? Some of our more mainstream evangelical friends would surely think so. They do not understand the two-kingdom principle, therefore it is difficult for them to realize that God is working through the elected officials and yet He would expect His people to function as dual citizens, with their primary loyalty being to Jesus’ kingdom which is “not of this world”.

Dual Citizenship

This kingdom that Jesus is talking about has its own king, its own government, its own elected officials (the church & its leaders), its own citizens (believers), its own constitution & laws (God’s Word—New Testament), its own currency (treasures & rewards), its own language, and its own agenda (living holy lives). And yet, just like an individual could be a dual citizen of Canada and the USA or of the USA and Mexico, if the time were ever to come that the two countries in question would be at odds with one another or worse yet if they would go to war with each other, that individual with dual citizenship would need to decide to which country he is going to be loyal. He would need to choose the one over the other.

In like manner when we understand the two-kingdom principle of the New Testament, we treat it the same as a dual-citizenship situation. We see that while we are “in the world, but not of it” we therefore are actually citizens of both a physical and a spiritual kingdom at the same time. We also realize that we will either be primarily loyal to this *earthly kingdom* or we

will be loyal to the *heavenly kingdom*. Since God tells us that “whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4), we understand that it is impossible to be ultimately loyal to both. We also see that our choice of loyalty will, in the end, affect our eternal reward and destiny.

Ambassadors to a Foreign Country

The perspective of being ambassadors is a concept that is perhaps even more true to the clear teaching, emphasis, and example of the Scriptures on this matter. In Ephesians 6:20, Paul understood the primary focus and function of his life was to be an ambassador of the Gospel, during a time period that he was experiencing hardship placed upon him by the elected officials of his day—officials who were elected to be governing over the society in which he was residing.

Additionally, in 2 Corinthians 5:20, as Paul is detailing the outworking of the Gospel message going forth to a world of need, he refers to believers as being “ambassadors for Christ”. This is where we as believers enter into the picture. It is clearly stated in the context of the teachings found in God’s Word that His will is for all people to be reconciled to Himself and that Biblical plan is to be shared with the world by His people as they are acting as ambassadors.

Now ambassadors are clearly citizens of their *home* country even when they are sent to a *foreign* country to reside there and function as a representative for their home country. Then, for the duration of their stay in the *host* country, they are allowed to live there. They can go shopping for their everyday needs. They can go about their normal lives in whatever manner they desire, so long as they are not violating the prescribed normal functions of their host country.

On the flip side, they do not have citizens’ rights. They do not take part in the politics of their host country, nor do they try to tell their host country how they should govern, or it most certainly would be seen as being a conflict of interest. But there will, at times, be the need for discussions about how their home country would feel about certain situations in the host country, but never in a lobbying manner.

Another key point that we also should keep in focus here is that, as a representative to their host country for their home country, an ambassador must at all times, live his life consistently according to the wishes of his home country. If it would become known that he is not being true to the goals and values of his home country then he would very soon lose the respect of **both** his home country and his host country. Thus

there is an absolute necessity for him to walk circumspectly and carefully in his everyday life.

This gives us a very beautiful picture about how the New Testament would teach us as believers to function as though we are “in the world but not of it”. This would also explain how we are to see ourselves as “strangers and pilgrims” while we are living in our host country. We also clearly see that we are to be representatives for God and the Gospel message while we are going about our daily lives and rubbing shoulders with the citizens of this earthly kingdom. The point is well taken that as ambassadors, we really have no rights of the host country while we are living here. As we look at this issue through these Biblical lenses, I trust the many different points of confusion are being cleared up, one by one.

Historical Examples

There are many examples showing the Anabaptist church, of one persuasion or another, getting involved with the government and politics of their time period. Looking back at where they were standing on convictions and practiced beliefs, we can understand perhaps why so many of these groups and individuals crossed that line. For many of them, they had slowly been taking the road of compromise for years, for decades, and some even for several generations.

I have heard different folks lift up the German Mennonites of the 1930’s and 1940’s as an example for us to consider. There are stories of Mennonite men who served in Hitler’s army and fought on the battlefield. There are numerous letters examined which purportedly were sent by Mennonites directly to Hitler sharing their appreciation and cooperation with his government and policies. And there is also an infamous photo on the internet showing young ladies wearing some type of head gear (who folks claim were Mennonite), who were supposedly attending a Hitler rally.

Typically, these circumstances are shared somewhat hesitantly because it seems to be a blight on the history of the Mennonites and Anabaptists. But they really are not a relevant example of Anabaptist history, for a number of reasons. (1) The German Mennonites did not come out of the majority of Anabaptists who had long since settled in the New World in order to **continue** living out their two-kingdom concept; rather they were descendants of the remnants that had remained behind in Europe after the majority of Anabaptists had departed. (2) The Mennonites who were living in America had not come out of the group that was still living in Europe during the 1900’s, rather their ances-

tors had all emigrated one to two hundred years earlier. (3) These two groups were not fellowshipping back and forth, neither were they in any manner influencing each other. Therefore, the Mennonites in Germany were in NO way a reflection on the Mennonites or the Anabaptists as a whole, but rather they ended up as they did due to their own unique beliefs and practices.

During the second and third generation of the Anabaptist movements in Switzerland, Germany, Holland, and even in England, the persecution had been so intense regarding the key issue of the separation of church and state, that any individual or group which still held to this concept was forced to move on to other lands in order to survive physically. Anyone who stayed behind was able to do so only by going quiet and no longer living out this principle or, in other words, starting to compromise on truth in order to escape persecution. Therefore, the two-kingdom principle had died out in Europe many years before. These groups that were still left in Europe would have been Mennonites in name only, in regards to some of the clear Biblical doctrines their forefathers had died for all those many years before.

Other examples that could be examined would be the Mennonites in Russia, the Mennonites that moved to Paraguay or Mexico, etc. Again, these groups really are not good examples because most of them had also adopted a lifestyle of compromise in order to survive. One clear example of this would be the Mennonites in Russia. When they and the leaders of Russia met to discuss the possibility of them moving to that country, one of the stipulations was that they could come if they agreed to not proselytize the natives. In other words, they could come to live there and enjoy religious freedom if they would agree to never evangelize their neighbors with the Gospel.

While there may have been some unique situations throughout this time-period in history, in which these facts may not have been true, according to all the church history which I have read, this was the general overall reality—compromise on doctrine in order to have religious freedom.

Conscience in Crisis

One real-life situation which would come much closer home and could be an example for us to carefully consider would be the pacifist groups of colonial America. Many different peace groups had moved to this country, especially to the colony of Pennsylvania, in order to have freedom of religion. These groups were able to enjoy this privilege primarily because the

Quakers (who were peace loving), had been instrumental in getting the colony of Pennsylvania established as a haven of rest for those who had suffered persecution for their faith in other countries.

These groups which had moved to America usually settled together in certain localized areas. Therefore, in the beginning it was almost as if each group did not have the problem of being *in the world*. Rather, in their local society or area, it was only *the church*—there was no one else for miles around. Others who would be considered *of the world* would have settled in some other localized area. So it seemed logical for the church groups to establish some of their own elected officials, in order to keep things organized and to settle civil disputes in their midst. Thus, due to this and other reasons, as we read through the history of early colonial Pennsylvania we see that there were Mennonite sheriffs, judges, and other elected officials.

Another aspect that came into play here was the fact that since the Quakers (who were against the use of force) had been the ones who developed Pennsylvania, they naturally organized themselves into the assembly or the legislature which had oversight of the whole colony in all civil matters. This was enjoyed and appreciated by the numerous different groups that were peace loving. Thus, when elections were held to elect officials for each successive term, the different Anabaptist groups would go out in force to ensure that the next group of elected officials would be partial to their views.

This all seemed to be going along smoothly until the storm clouds of war started to appear on the horizon, first the French and Indian War and then the Revolutionary War. There was a strong push, by those who were *of the world* (both within Pennsylvania and from surrounding colonies) for Pennsylvania to develop its own militia in order to carry its own weight in defending against the rising wave of unrest. The Quakers held on to their elected positions tenaciously and tried everything in their power to appease the opposition, even by finally agreeing to enact policies that required the peace groups to pay fines in order to allow them to remain exempt from participating in the raising of a militia for their society.

As time moved on, this concerted effort by the peace groups, to force their views onto an unregenerate society, kept developing into more and more public unrest. Eventually this unrest grew to such outrage in the society that they voted the Quakers out of office and elected officials who were in favor of developing a militia. Once these officials had become the majority,

they enacted laws which forbade anyone from being elected in the future who opposed using force in order to keep the peace.

This period of time, with its major upheaval for the peace groups in America, has been referred to as a time of “The Conscience in Crisis”. Prior to this series of events there had not been much clear teaching on the two-kingdom principle among the Anabaptists. Also, there had not been much teaching on the differences between pacifism and nonresistance; in fact, these two terms would have probably been understood to mean the same thing during that time period. The churches were very ill-prepared indeed, to sort their way through this quagmire of ensuing confusion. Many believers lost their way spiritually and ended up leaving the church, especially among the youth and younger Christians.

Thus ended this involuntary experiment of trying to have a “Christian” government. From this we can discover that while a country may try to function according to Old Testament principles, there is absolutely no way for there to be a New Testament Christian nation on this earth. In fact, that term (Christian nation) is actually an oxymoron, meaning that by definition they are two terms which are diametrically opposed to each other and can never be put together without destroying the meaning and function of one or the other.

Conclusion

Now we come to some concluding thoughts on these matters. In Romans 13, we are told that the rulers are “ministers” of God to carry out His justice on evil. Jesus tells us that we are to “pay unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” and “unto God the things that are God’s”. Timothy tells us that we should make supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks for kings, and all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life (1 Timothy 2:2).

We see that God is not only telling us that He is in control of every event that unfolds around us and around the world, but that He is also concerned that we should be able to continue to serve Him. He is so concerned about us in this whole matter that He tells us specifically what we are to do—pray. He wants to help us live for Him in the midst of any worldly society, even though it may be governed by ungodly individuals.

How should we then vote? Should we vote Republican or Democrat? Should we vote conservative or liberal? Should we even care or should we stay completely out of the political scenario? I believe the Scriptures teach us to be concerned about politics and the government of our *host* country, but not through active involvement. God clearly defines **how** we should interact. We should pray, pay our taxes, obey the enacted policies in all possible ways, respond humbly and with respect when we need to “obey God rather than man”, and ultimately realize that God will “set up who He will and take down who He will.”

I believe we should vote on our knees. I believe that we should operate as ambassadors, while we endeavor to be “in this world but not of it.” I believe we should be representatives **to** our *host* country **for** our *home* country. I believe we should think and behave like the dual-citizens which we are, in all reality. Ultimately, I believe we should stop and consider how far-reaching the two-kingdom concept is and carefully live our lives consistently in tune with God’s Word in every area, both privately and publicly.

May God help each one of us to find His will and way as we endeavor to humbly and firmly stand for Truth according to His Word. Let us not compromise in the face of the many challenging pressures we face from the worldly society in which we are living. Let us be ambassadors of *real* answers to the multitude of confusing issues which the society of our *host* country struggles with, on a regular basis. Let each of us always remember that we are **not**, primarily, citizens of any worldly kingdom but rather, as children of God, we are citizens, first of all, of His heavenly kingdom.

May we all intercede with our Sovereign heavenly Father, that we may “lead quiet and peaceable lives, in all godliness and honesty. May God bless each one.

**Thus ended
this involuntary
experiment of
trying to have
a “Christian”
government.**

Resources Used for this Article

- Twas Seeding Time - John L Ruth
- Conscience in Crisis - Richard K MacMaster
- Samuel L Horst - Robert F Ulle
- The Earth is the Lord’s - John L Ruth
- Various biographies about William Penn and other individuals from that time period.
- Various history books, articles, and documentaries on: Pennsylvania, Colonial America, World War I, and World War II.

COUNSELING ISSUES

“While we believe that the clear evidence of scientific research supports the idea of using as little medicine as possible, whether it be for the heart, for the head, or for any other part of the body, for that matter, we want to be clear that we are not giving medical advice, but rather we are printing this article as food-for-thought *to be further examined by each individual in conjunction with their spiritual authorities*. Also, while the research for mental health issues would show better long-term outcomes without using psychoactive drugs than when using them, and while it is known to be very dangerous to start taking these drugs, it is also known to be very dangerous to stop taking them. **NEVER DECREASE OR DISCONTINUE PSYCHOTROPIC DRUGS WITHOUT THE ASSISTANCE OF A MEDICAL PROFESSIONAL.**”

~ The Berean Voice Board

Impaired



The World's Method - Pills

Enlarged



God's Method - His Word

Impaired or Enlarged?

~ H Stephen Ebersole

Edited with permission

As I briefly observed my seat mate while we were buckling up prior to take off, I thought she appeared middle-aged and somewhat frazzled. She certainly did not seem to be the talkative type. “It will probably be a very quiet ride,” I mused to myself. However, when the stewardess asked her what she wanted to drink, her answer stirred my interest and suggested otherwise.

“May I please have two vodkas and a tomato juice?” she responded. “I’d like to make myself a Bloody Mary.”

Breathing a prayer, I ventured, “May I ask you, what does drinking an alcoholic beverage do for you?”

Making a guilty grimace my seat mate replied, “It takes all the tensions away that I have when I travel and need to face the crowds. In a few minutes I’ll get this warm, pleasant sensation inside and all my worries and troubles will just melt away.” As a dreamy look crossed her face she continued, “You see, I have a disorder called agoraphobia—I lock up with panic and tension when I’m in a crowd.”

She went on to tell me her story. As a teenager in Peru, she had been traumatized by being kidnaped and then held hostage for ransom. She had come through

the experience without physical harm, but inside she still had many emotional struggles.

It really felt like I was venturing further into dangerous territory, but I decided to risk it anyway—“Ma’am, I have a question. I’m a minister of the gospel and last night I preached from Proverbs 31. I was speaking about the subject of what people turn to for a solution when their emotions overwhelm them. I warned them about the dangers of strong drink and how it impairs the individual’s judgment. I’d like to know from your experience if this is true?”

Opening my Bible, I offered it to her so she could read Proverbs 31:4-9. She slowly and thoughtfully read the words,

“*It is* not for kings, O Lemuel, *it is* not for kings to drink wine; nor for princes strong drink: Lest they drink, and forget the law, and pervert the judgment of any of the afflicted. Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish, and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts. Let him drink, and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more. Open thy mouth for the dumb in the cause

of all such as are appointed to destruction. Open thy mouth, judge righteously, and plead the cause of the poor and needy.”

After reading the passage she asked, “Now what was your question again?”

I explained that we all need something to turn to when our emotions bottom out and tie us up in knots, or when we feel that life is almost more than we can handle. “So here is my question, ‘Is it true that alcohol impairs and distorts our judgment—that while making us feel we can handle our problems, it actually blinds us to the larger reality of life, and keeps us from feeling other people’s suffering?’”

“It most certainly is true,” she replied, “And what’s more, I really shouldn’t be giving myself this little liberty today. It’s just that I need the courage to face these two airplane flights and all these people.”

But then she turned toward me with another question, “Are you telling me, that in all your life you’ve never had a drink of beer or whiskey? That’s really amazing!”

“That’s true,” I said. “Our people have been taught to never even taste the stuff. But I’ll admit, that a number of our people are on different types of psychotropic medications.” Then I went on and risked yet another question, “Tell me, do you have any experience with psych meds; you know, the kind that people are given to help them deal with their emotional problems? You see, the reason for my asking is that many of our people are told by doctors that they *need* medications in order to handle difficulties of life. I’d like to know if that also affects people negatively?”

“I sure do have experience,” she responded. “My struggles have taken me down that road as well. I have had about all the drugs which are available that are supposed to help people with emotional issues. And I have to say that they aren’t much different than alcohol. They take effect in different ways, but they are actually designed to do the same thing. In fact, because of my experience I’ve become an advocate for individuals who are being medicated against their will.”

She went on to explain how some people use medications to control other people who should actually be allowed to work through their negative emotions, with compassionate support. “Tell your people not to go down that road! There’s no one out there who really needs medications” she asserted, “except for those who are on them and just can’t stop taking them right away. Tell them that medications will impair their judgment of life.”

Will we impair our brains?

And so this conversation raises even more questions. Many doctors and even conservative ministers encourage people struggling with emotions to turn to prescription medications for the mind. May we consider the negative impact of this? What do the experts know about these medications? What are the long-term effects of taking this route for our emotional and men-

tal struggles? The following is a brief summary of these findings.

First, though, let us ponder what Lemuel’s mother told him almost 3,000 years ago. Consider the words she chose to describe the effects of alcohol. “Forget, pervert, forget, remember no more.” It does not say, “Give your brain enlightenment and balance.”

Like my seat mate on the plane, a person who uses alcohol to self-medicate can tell you that he chooses to drink because it makes him feel better about his problems. The tensions he feels inside temporarily melt away. Social awkwardness and other inhibitions disappear and the person feels good about himself for a while. He will often admit that it does not *change* his reality but rather it makes him *feel different* about his reality. In fact, using strong drink often makes reality much worse, but his negative reality no longer troubles him, while he is under its influence.

Sadly, it is true that the new distorted reality also narrows an individual’s perception about other people’s problems—troubles and needs are of no concern to him. Lemuel’s mother warned him that his ability to decide cases of judgment would be affected, especially where human suffering was involved. The sharp edge of living with eternal realities also fades; the will of God as written in the law subsides. Or to put it another way, the conscience is dulled and God’s still small voice becomes quieter still.

A psychology team put it this way. “*If people do feel better when drinking alcohol or smoking marijuana it is because they feel better when their brain is impaired. Psychiatric drugs are no different. The people who take such drugs may feel less of their emotional suffering. They may even reach a state of relative anesthesia. But to the degree that they feel better, it is because they are experiencing intoxication with the drugs.*”¹

This thought often surprises people, because we have been led to believe that medications are actually *medicine*. In reality, medications that target the brain do not bring balance to any brain chemistry, nor do they fill some void in the neural pathways. Rather, drugs that are designed for the brain are actually created to **change** the normal brain chemistry, based upon clinical theories, not research facts.

The following is a quote from foundationsrecoverynetwork.com. “*Every type of drug, no matter how potent or addictive, has some type of effect on the person using it. These effects can range from mild to severe, and can include both physical and psychological [or spiritual] symptoms. While each drug is different, one common effect of drug use is impaired judgment. Every drug side effect has the potential to be dangerous, but impaired judgment can be especially risky to a person physically, psychologically and socially. It is essential to use drugs with extreme caution, knowing that they can impair a person’s judgment in multiple and sometimes unexpected ways.*”

Another quote from the same source: “*The NIDA (National Institute for Drug Abuse) also describes the changes that occur in a person’s brain while on drugs. The chemicals in the drug disrupt the communication system of the brain, changing the way it processes information by either acting like the brain’s natural neurotransmitters, or by causing the brain to release too many neurotransmitters.*”²

Choosing this remedy for emotional or mental suffering is sometimes described as closing out communication between the two worlds we all experience. Each of us has an ongoing dialogue between the sensations we gather from our bodies and what we tell ourselves in our minds about our world. When our bodies fail to respond the way they should, or when we become aware that our bodies are not doing what we want them to, we choose a corrective choice. For example, if we feel dizzy, or shiver, or get the impression that we are not making sense to others, we stop and choose a response in order to correct that specific problem.

When the brain is impaired by alcohol or mind-altering drugs (prescription or street), that self-dialogue and correction is minimized or stopped altogether, depending upon the substance type and the level of ingestion. An alcohol-impaired person becomes decreasingly aware of his staggering steps or his self-centered conversation. He not only stops seeing the full reality around him, but he also stops sensing it within himself. It is common for the alcoholic to resist treatment because he has lost perception about how the alcohol is affecting his actions. Not being aware of his actions, he is naive about his addiction to the substance. When he finally becomes sober he finds that he has “wounds without cause” (see Proverbs 23:29-35). This same self-blindness is also experienced, to one degree or another, across the whole spectrum of psychoactive medications.

How much of this impairment are we responsible for? Only God knows and only the judgment will reveal how He feels about all of this. What is the soul (mind) accountable for when the brain is under an impairment brought on by alcohol, psychiatric medications, or any other psychoactive substance?

If Lemuel had resisted his mother’s direction and chosen to self-medicate, he no doubt would have allowed the oppressed in his kingdom to suffer. He would have chosen a life with few inhibitions such as described in Proverbs 23:29-35. He would have come back to reality after a night of little or no self-awareness and wondered what all he had done during his drunken stupor. How much of this would he have been responsible for?

Another question about the impaired mind is this: “When our world is made smaller, what happens to our self?” Is it not true that a smaller world makes a larger self in comparison? Do any of us need to have a world where our personal story becomes more and more important and other people’s worlds matter less and less?

Is it not right to treat emotional distress the same way we do physical suffering?

This is a question that is often asked.

When a person breaks a leg or suffers from a serious cut we readily seek medical assistance. Part of the remedy is to relieve the pain of the wound. So why would we imply that there are cautions in regards to seeking medical help for the emotional struggles of a broken heart, a malfunctioning mind, or for fears that seem to rage out of control?

Even more closely related to the situations of emotional agony are the physical conditions which affect our emotions. When a blood sugar condition is out of balance we know it will bring a mental instability. When hormones are involved or when there is a thyroid problem, we do not hesitate to seek medical help, even if it may involve chemical medications. We should make it clear here that when some physical organ of the body is not functioning properly, we believe the Bible supports finding medicinal relief.

So why not address emotional pain such as fear, worries, anger, distress, or grief from the same perspective? God’s Word clearly makes a difference. We all know of Luke, the beloved physician. Paul gave Timothy a medicinal remedy for a stomach problem. God’s Word gives place for physical remedies for physical problems. But in these cases the medicine enables or enhances the **functions of the body**.

Is this also the case when treating the mind with medications? Are minds helped because brains are enhanced or enabled? Do people find their way out of fear or guilt because their brains are sharpened by the drugs? The words of Scripture would show, and even many professionals would agree, that this is not the case. The facts of Scripture, science, and research clearly detail that in most cases, emotional *help* which is received through substance use or prescription drug use is, in reality, experienced as help because the brain is hindered and impaired, not because it is enhanced or enabled.

This is why we see mind issues as an entirely different matter. The mind (heart or soul) uses the brain in this life, but the mind is first and foremost *spiritual* in nature. The brain is considered to be a physical organ, but the mind is not. God directs us to give care to our minds, but that care is supposed to come through biblical, spiritual enhancement. The command to be sober teaches us to establish boundaries on our thought life in order to experience peace and Christian victory. The biblical direction to speak to ourselves through songs is to help establish our mind’s activity.

Promises in both the Old and New Testament focus on God’s ability to bring peace to hearts that are in turmoil. “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Psalm 119:165). “And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever” (Isaiah 32:17). The activity of true biblical worship is a wonderful mind stabilizer.

Jesus has both comforted and commanded us with His words, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). We also know the promise, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Galatians 5:22-23). “And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7).

This brings us to the other option regarding the seeking of help for emotional needs.

Will we enlarge our hearts?

“O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged” (2 Corinthians 6:11).

The Apostle Paul is a great encouragement, perhaps most of all because of the tremendous spiritual legacy he left in his writings. We marvel at his example. When he met Christ on the Damascus road and surrendered to Jesus as Lord, he gave his life unreservedly to spreading the Gospel. Because of this choice Paul suffered unbelievable rejection and persecution. Several passages highlight what he endured, but one passage reveals the effects of the suffering—what that suffering did to his heart.

This is recorded in 2 Corinthians 1:3-8.

“Blessed *be* God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, *it is* for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you *is* steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so *shall ye be* also of the consolation. For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life.”

In 2 Corinthians chapters 4 and 11, Paul gives us more insights into this account. He was repeatedly traumatized, one time even to the point that the persecutors thought they had solved the problem of Paul once for all, as they left him for dead. But through this all, Paul believed that his suffering was for a grander purpose. “Our light affliction”, as he calls it, and which he tells himself is “just for a moment”, he understood as happening for the purpose of working “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”. In chapter 12 we have Paul’s thoughts recorded about a very private time in

his life when he struggled, asking for a certain distress to be taken away. After repeatedly praying for God’s deliverance the answer was “No.”

“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he [God] said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

In short, Paul turned to God for his comfort. Then to give him comfort, God did not *dull* or *impair* Paul’s perception, but rather helped him see the big picture and gave him strength to endure through his distress. When Paul embraced the big picture and received comfort from God, his heart and world were enlarged. Through this experience, he was then able to connect with hurting people from many different walks of life.

When we hurt or go through what the flesh does not want, God often does something for our spiritual man that He could not do any other way. We may be brought to the edge of eternity where we may see God’s purposes more vividly. We may be brought to a fuller grasp of God’s grace and what it does for us. Thus our hearts are enlarged. By going through suffering we are brought into a more complete understanding of what others may be going through.

In 2 Corinthians 6, Paul again details what he went through for the church at Corinth. The list is intimidating—one could almost expect to hear him say at the end, “I am all worn out! I have no more patience for you!” But Paul rather exclaims just the opposite, “Our mouth is open to you, Corinthians, we are hiding nothing, keeping nothing back, and our heart is expanded wide for you! There is no lack of room for you in our hearts...”

One of the blessed outcomes for us is that our view of our *self* changes when our heart is enlarged to care for others. Is it not wonderful when our self-focus shrinks to lesser importance? When our needs, our hurts, and our thoughts are not the center of our attention anymore, but rather our emphasis is on what God is doing in the lives of others?

We all experience suffering

All of us suffer. We live in a fallen world. People betray us. Events disappoint us. We may receive wounds, big or small, from both the church and the world. Sometimes, after we suffer long enough, the hurts and disappointments seem to add up to a great sense of disillusionment. No one would argue whether or not the suffering is real.

“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not

only *they*, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, *to wit*, the redemption of our body.” (Romans 8:22-23)

During some seasons of life, many of us will struggle so much with pain that we wonder whether or not we will lose our ability to reason. Sometimes it seems like the hurts and wounds are so deep and last so long that we can no longer control our thoughts. Everything gets jumbled together until it seems almost as though we can no longer think clearly.

Maybe our struggle is depression. We feel so bad that we do not even want to get out of bed, much less face the public or our church family. The struggles of the mind affect our ability to face life with vigor and vitality. Job 3 is a good passage to read when we feel badly about life.

It is helpful to remember that it is God who created us for living on this earth. We did not create ourselves. We did not choose to live in a fallen world. God understood what we would be dealing with, even from the very beginning of time. The God who made us also assures us that we will not face temptations or struggles greater than we can bear (1 Corinthians 10:13). Just like He created us with controllable sexual desires or the ability to regulate our anger, so He also created us with the capacity to endure suffering.

Additionally, it is helpful to remember that Jesus understands whatever we face. He went through great human suffering and struggle. In eternity past He told the Father, “I delight to do thy will.” Then when He walked on this earth and finally faced the cross in a physical body, He cried out in an appeal asking for a different path. “Oh my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me...”

In conclusion, which will we choose?

Impaired? Enlarged? Which will we choose? There is no doubt that God will have us suffer during our earthly journey. And the suffering isn't only physical; some of the most challenging times we experience are in our emotional journey. We actually need this suffering, as it honors God, strengthens us, and helps us to more readily relate to others. But we still have a choice.

One option obviously leads to a narrowed view of life and a limited ability to serve others. The Bible teaches us that by choosing to see life from an eternal perspective, and to see God as being involved in our lives, that this helps us to see beyond ourselves and reach out to God and others. This also helps give us the ability to make a difference for eternity.

Which way will we choose? God's way or the world's way?

More responses from our readers

- continued from page 35

Dear brother in Christ, Greeting to you in the risen name of our Lord and Saviour Christ Jesus!

Recently, I have received the magazine "The Heartbeat of The Remnant" Volume 20/issue 1, Summer 2016 for which I thank you very much. Also, previously I did receive these magazines July/Aug 2010 until July/Aug 2013. I found these materials are very inspiring, heart touching, thought provoking and have opportunity to learn several Kingdom Truths in my life of which I never came across in the Protestant church history.

Praise be the Lord! for the Berean Voice vision to continue these publications for which I am truly rejoiced. I would be most obliged if you could kindly add my name and address in your new mailing list and continue forward this publication.

May God's choicest blessings be upon each one of you as you expand His kingdom and glory.

In His grace, David, from Australia

Dear Sirs:

What a delightful breath of fresh air to get The Heartbeat of The Remnant again!

Thank you! I hope to see it often! May the Lord lead and guide you as you seek to be faithful witness for Him in the growing darkness.

Keep looking up! Sarah, from the USA

I was beyond excited to find this magazine once again in my mailbox. Thank you SO MUCH for deciding to go forward and bring it back into print. This was one of my favorite publications from its inception. I live in ___ [a big city]. To say that there is a lack of godly literature and influence would be quite the understatement. May God bless your every effort, and please know how grateful I am!

Gail, from the USA



FINDING AND MAINTAINING A GODLY PATIENT - PHYSICIAN RELATIONSHIP

~ Wolfgang Miggiani, MD

July 31, 2016

Since ancient times, there has been an uneasy relationship between worldly physicians and the Great Physician. Before man's fall there was no disease or death, so there was no need of physicians. Even after the fall, God laid claim to be our primary source of physical (as well as spiritual) healing. King Asa of Judah is criticized for *relying* on his physicians: "... yet in his disease he sought not to the Lord, but to the physicians" (2 Chronicles 16:12). At the same time, Scripture endearingly refers to Luke as "the beloved physician". What then are the factors that make physicians and the services they provide acceptable in the sight of the Lord? Under what conditions should a Christian patient consult with a physician? Once we understand this, we can formulate the proper, God-given role of a physician in a Christian's life and wellbeing.

First, some definitions: In the Bible, the Greek word for physician is **iatros**, which describes someone who heals, or makes whole. And so, for example, a *Ped-iatric* is a doctor who heals children and a *Ger-iatric* is one who heals the elderly, and so on. The origin for the word **patient** comes from the Greek word, *paskhein*, meaning to suffer. So in other words, a patient is one who suffers.

It is in the definition of physician itself that we see the source of the conflict. In it, the claim is made for one person to heal another in order to make them whole.

Deuteronomy 32:39 says: "See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no [false] god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." Clearly, God does not tolerate that which far too many physicians have been accused of in the past—playing God.

Origins of Conflict

People in many cultures and religions have recognized the fact that when human physicians play God, problems arise. Many of

you are familiar with the fact that the Hippocratic Oath, taken by new physicians as a rite of passage into the profession, has been a cornerstone of Western medical ethics. In its original form, Greek physicians of the time made an oath to Zeus, specifically prohibiting euthanasia and assisted suicide ("Neither will I administer a poison to anybody

when asked to do so, nor will I suggest such a course.") and abortion ("I will not give to a woman a pessary to cause abortion."). From it also comes the concept of "do no harm" ("I will use treatment to help the sick according to my ability and judgment, but never with a view to injury and wrongdoing.").

Those of you who are students of history may be asking yourself, "What gives? I thought the Greeks, though they considered themselves enlightened, led lives of debauchery." You would be correct that Greek law and custom allowed abortion, infanticide, suicide



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and euthanasia. Plato explicitly advocated abortion and even infanticide as not only an option, but also as a duty of the state. Socrates, Plato's teacher, is famous for ending his own life by drinking a concoction of poison hemlock.

What you may not know is that Hippocrates belonged to a group of like-minded people called Pythagoreans, who believed that life began at conception. It is likely that the life-affirming pillars of the Hippocratic oath were not originally Greek, but were a reflection of the Jewish recognition that God is the giver and taker of life. The ancient Hebrew historian, Josephus stated, "For that man [Pythagoras] is in fact said to have transferred to many of the customs of the Jews to his own philosophy." It is therefore safe to say that the life-affirming concepts of the Hippocratic oath are consistent with, and likely originated in, a Biblical worldview.

You also may not know that the Hippocratic Oath, a core principle of medical training, essentially unchanged for almost 2,500 years, was abandoned shortly after World War II. The horrors of the war, many perpetrated by Nazi and Japanese doctors, led many to question the existence of God—how could He permit such things? People turned even more strongly toward Humanism—man can fix man's problems, therefore, God is not needed (even though this thinking was actually the source of the problem). Not seeing, or choosing not to see, the fallacy of the argument, that God is somehow responsible for the sins of man, humanists advocated yet another humanist solution to the Darwinian/Humanist tragedy of World War II.

And so was born the "Declaration of Geneva".

With good intentions, in the original declaration of 1948, medical school graduates pledged themselves to:

- 1) Hold "the health and life of my patient [as] my first consideration."
- 2) Have "... the utmost respect for human life from the time of its conception;"
- 3) Treat patients without regard to religion (among other protected classes).
- 4) "... not use my medical knowledge contrary to the laws of humanity, even under threat."

At first glance this sounds very reasonable, but here is what has happened in the short span of time since the declaration was adopted:

- 1) In 1968, as a response to advancing technology and also with an emerging acceptance of euthanasia, especially in Europe, the following change was made: "the

health ~~and life~~ of my patient [as] my first consideration." (A patient's "life" was no longer of primary importance.)

2) In 1984, as a response to hormonal birth control that can act as an abortifacient after conception, and the acceptance of abortion, pledgers were no longer required to respect life "from the time of its conception." This phrase was stricken.

3) In 1994, as a response to the acceptance of homosexuality and the rejection of Christianity, "Religion" was removed (replaced with a weaker wording, "creed") and "Sexual Orientation" was added to the protected classes of people.

4) In 2005, pledgers were to still respect the "laws of humanity", though no longer "even under threat." This made the declaration merely a suggestion. Besides, to a humanist, the "laws of humanity" are whatever the humanist decides: In 1945 a humanist Nazi doctor decided that legally experimenting on Jews (who were considered sub-human by him and the state) for research to potentially save human (Aryan) lives, respected the "laws of humanity". Only 70 years later, in 2015, the United Nations, while respecting the "laws of humanity" as it saw them, declared abortion to be a basic human right. In other words, whatever is legal is good.

How does this square with God's word?

The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations. (Psalm 33:11)

Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. (Hebrews 13:8)

Therefore, in summary, the practice of medicine that is acceptable to God, is that which follows the immutable truths of God and which conforms to His Word, not those which conform to the deceitful and deceptive heart of man (Jeremiah 17:9) which constantly changes, in like manner as the wind.

Reason vs Faith

Modern medicine is, more and more, founded upon "evidence-based" research. Just because a doctor delivers 5,000 babies does not mean he or she delivers them well.

How many maternal infections and other complications (including death) were there?

How many babies died and how many were injured?

These are good questions to ask, but it lends itself to a reductionistic way of thinking—all questions and

answers can be reduced down to logical and scientific reason. There is no room for the supernatural. Everything follows the “laws of nature” without exception.

Marx called faith the “opium of the masses”. Freud called it an illusion that impeded the truth from being discovered. They question, “So Jesus healed the slave’s ear that Peter cut off, just by touching it? That means either Jesus was privy to some unknown technology that can do such things, obeying the laws of physics and biology, or the gospel writer was mistaken or just downright deceptive.” Needless to say, this is another example of humanistic thinking. If man can simply “tweak” these laws of nature, and how they relate to one another, any problem can be solved, they think. This is also the most common ditch in which many physicians find themselves.

On the other side of the road lies the ditch of those who rely primarily on testimonials, traditions (also known as rituals or superstitions), or blind faith.

What does the Bible say about blind faith?

The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going. (Pro 14:15)

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Heb 11:1)

So in other words, it is prudent to ask questions, to research and find answers for any current medical problem we may be experiencing. God, in His sovereignty, will reveal answers how, when, and as He wills.

Some people believe the more that is revealed through science, the smaller God becomes. It is evident to the truly curious mind that, in fact, the opposite is true. For every question where the answer is discovered, a dozen new questions should appear. So the more that is known, the greater the expanse of the unknown becomes. The more that is unknown, the more faith is required. From God’s perspective, the more faith that is required, the more He is glorified.

A good physician is a dualist; faith and reason are not mutually exclusive. We rely on evidence-based medicine, but we humbly seek out the wisdom and traditions of the ages that have yet to be proven or disproven. We accept that there are super-natural miracles of God. Taken as a whole, this approach is called the practice of the “Art of Medicine” (as opposed to the humanist’s “Mechanics of Medicine”).

Practical Considerations

What if your doctor is not a practitioner of the “Art” of medicine, but is rather a “mechanic”? Here are some practical considerations: First, learn from the ex-

ample of King Asa, and seek the Lord. He is the source of all healing. *We physicians can treat illnesses, but only Jesus can heal*—both spiritually and physically.

If your appendix needs taken out, having a good mechanical practitioner might not be a bad idea. On the other hand, you are better off receiving advice on child rearing from your pastor, than from your pediatrician.

Here are some final practical questions to ask when faced with medical decision making:

- What do the tests cost?
- Is there a cheaper alternate?
- What is the goal of the test? Doing an AFP prenatal test to detect a Down’s Syndrome baby has limited value if you will not submit to the recommended solution—killing that baby.
- Will the outcome of the tests alter our treatment plan? Sometimes tests are performed only to satisfy academic curiosity. Testing for West Nile Fever will not change anything if the patient is compensating well, since it is a self-limited virus. On the other hand, testing for Strep is worthwhile in certain cases, because if positive, other symptomatic family members should be treated as well, in order to avoid complications.
- What are the potential side-effects?
- What are the possible complications? Sometimes the risk of the procedure or a side effect of the medicine is worth it because of the anticipated benefit. Sometimes it is not. A CT scan of the abdomen and pelvis has the equivalent radiation of about 100 normal X-rays. It may be better to wait or it may not be.
- What will happen if we do nothing? (Remember the admonition to “do no harm”)
- What is the natural course or the prognosis?

In Conclusion

It is possible to maintain a working relationship, in a Godly manner, with your doctor, even if he or she does not share your Christian worldview. We must humbly recognize that in their field of expertise, even worldly physicians have much to offer. The catch is that we must intentionally consider how extensive (or limited) that field is, and whether or not the advice being given by the physician falls within their field. It is only after seeking the wisdom of the Lord, that we can discern whether or not to use the advice they have given, in our decision making.

Finally, we must ultimately submit to God and accept that not our will be done, “but Thine”.

PARENTING THAT NURTURES A SERVANT MENTALITY

~ By Aaron L Martin

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Children come into this world thinking only of one thing: me, me, me! As infants they require almost constant care. They are takers, not givers. Instead of serving others, they need to be served. As they cry out for help in the middle of the night, never once do they stop to consider whether or not they should be serving others.

All of us come into this world with a taker's mentality. It is unavoidable and perfectly normal for infants to require so much care since this is God's created method for a child's survival during this helpless period of life. However, do we want our children to continue going through life being takers and then end up being a drain on society once they reach adulthood? Absolutely not! Somewhere, somehow children must learn that they are here to be of service to God and others. Their mentality must take a 180-degree turn.

I believe the concept "that children should serve" was much better understood a few generations ago when most families had a small farm. There was always work that children could help with around the farm, and they were welcomed into these homes because of their asset to the family. This concept is still alive in some parts of the world but it is mostly foreign in our modern American culture. Today it is rare for children to grow up on a farm. For those who do, most of the work is actually done by heavy equipment, instead of manual labor like it used to be.

Nowadays, most children are raised in city apartments or subdivisions, where there is very little for them to do. The parents work away from home, and the children are left to be entertained by their babysitters, school teachers, friends, electronic games, television, internet, etc. These children grow up expecting their parents to continue providing for them, even to pay their way through college. Many graduate, hardly pre-

pared to care for themselves, much less to serve others. Is it any wonder that our government continues to provide more and more aid to its citizens?

This is a morbid picture of our American society. While I am not pointing this out to criticize or make anyone discouraged, I see a need to bring this to our attention so we as parents can realize that we have a great responsibility placed on our shoulders. Teaching our children to work, to be responsible for themselves, and to serve others is a difficult challenge, especially in the society in which we live. We as parents need to realize this challenge and cry out to God for wisdom (James 1:5). If we want change, we need to utilize a plan which is different than that of the world around us.

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Teaching our children to work.

"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Ephesians 4:28).

God wants us to work with our hands. Manual labor was not a result of the curse, rather God **created** us to work with our hands. This is a concept that must be taught to our children.

The Bible says very little about teaching our children to work. Is this because it is not necessary for our children to learn to work? No. I believe this is because it was an understood concept in Bible times. Think about it. Most families had their own small farm, with no modern farm equipment, so there was plenty of work for the children to do. Today, however, most of us fathers hold jobs away from home. This is not an ideal way to teach our children to work.

Therefore, we need to plan things for our children to do, like normal daily chores, gardening, raising chickens, cutting firewood, woodworking projects, home repairs, etc. Also, when we are able to be at

home, we need to make the most of our time which we spend with our children. We must include them in our work. I regret the many times that I sent my children out of my way (out of the shop, the garden, or the office) because they were constantly underfoot.

We need to find ways to include our children in our work even if it makes more work for us at the moment. If you are in the shop, they can hold your wrenches. If you are in the garden, they can carry your tomato stakes or garden tools. If they are too young to pull weeds, perhaps they can carry them to the wheelbarrow as you pull them out.

Sometimes we may need to create some work for the sole purpose of involving our little ones. They also need to be included, feel needed, and learn a good work ethic at an early age. When our youngsters are learning to help, we should give them as much praise and encouragement as we can. We all like to hear compliments for a job well done. It is an incentive to continue working with “all of our might” (Ecclesiastes 9:10). This is especially true for children. The Apostle Paul used this method many times in his epistles when writing to young Christians, and so should we.

Not only can our children learn from us by watching, but when we work side by side it also creates opportunities for our child to open up about their life, share their problems, or perhaps just ask for some advice. It may be a difficulty with a friend, a serious moral struggle, or perhaps just a hunting story, but no matter what it is, our children need these opportunities to share their hearts. If we are constantly sending them off to play somewhere else so we can get the work done quickly, we are sending them down a road that will end up taking them far away from us—a road that will someday take them to a place of giving their heart to someone other than to us as their parents.

Teaching our children to be responsible.

“It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth” (Lamentations 3:27).

Our children not only need to learn to obey and do as they are told, but they also need to learn to be: self-motivated, responsible for themselves, and able to make their own decisions. I remember when I was a boy, my mother would give me a small section of the garden where I could plant a garden of my own. I was responsible to make my own rows, plant my own vegetables, weed, fertilize, mulch, and water at my discretion. If my garden was neglected and grew up in weeds, I bore the consequences. I also remember a time when I was in the primary Sunday school class and lost my

book. Not only was it humbling for me to admit that I had lost my book, but my teacher required that I pay for the expense of the new one. It is good for our children to learn the lessons of real life at an early age in this way. Not only should carelessness have consequences, but good behavior should have rewards as well.

Sometimes our children want to do things differently than the way we as parents prefer them to be done. I think it is good if we can allow our children room to be creative and make their own decisions (especially as they grow older), even though we know they will be learning some lessons the hard way. For example, I remember questioning my mom about whether it was necessary to fold my clothes and keep them organized in my dresser drawers. She said that if I wanted to, I could pile them in my drawer without folding them. I tried that method for a while, but decided it was better to do laundry the way mom had been instructing me. This method can at times be more effective than if we would require strict adherence to the way we have always done it. Sometimes, especially as our children are nearing adulthood, they need to start learning life’s lessons for themselves.

Teaching our children to serve others.

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

I believe in this last point we are finally getting to the heart of the matter. Teaching our children to be hard workers and to be responsible for themselves is not enough. They must also learn to be servants. This really is the goal. If our children learn the traits of hard work and personal responsibility only to end up becoming selfish millionaires, we really have accomplished nothing, biblically speaking. We have only set them on a path of being successful while they are headed for eternal destruction. We must go on to teach our children **why** they must work hard and be responsible for themselves—so they are able to serve God and others. See Ephesians 4:28.

As parents, we must show the way through leading by example. We must be convinced that this is our reason for being here. No amount of words, reasoning, teaching courses, Sunday school lessons, and lectures can take the place of what we teach by our own example. This is how Jesus taught., “If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you,” John 13:14 -

15. Peter also clearly defines it, “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps,” 1 Peter 2:21.

Do our children see us willingly giving up our time for others, or do they hear us complain loud and long about the sacrifices we are required to make? Fathers, do you complain to your family when it is your turn to study for a Wednesday evening topic, or when it is your turn to go to the jail service Friday evening, or when the neighbor calls and asks if he can borrow your lawnmower? Life will require many sacrifices.

God will give us many opportunities to serve. Are we looking for those opportunities? Do we view serving as a privilege or as a drudgery? Shame on us when we try to avoid opportunities for service. Shame on us when we brag to others about how we always “get out of” sacrificing our time or money. How wonderful it is when we willingly accept the opportunities God gives us to be of service! This was Paul’s attitude in 2 Corinthians 12:15, “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you...” Also, read Philippians 2:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:8; and 2 Timothy 2:10.

We need to teach our children not only to share their toys and do their jobs, but also to do so willingly and joyfully. We really have not taught our children to share their toys *from their heart*, if they only do so when we insist that they do. We have not taught them the joy of serving if we allow them to grumble and complain as they go about their work. They need to be taught that giving, sharing, and serving brings joy when choosing to do so willingly.

Look for ways to teach this foundational concept to your children. For example, let us say older brother has been out sweating in the garden. Send little “Johnny” out with a glass of cold water and let him experience the joy of giving! When you give your children some candy, teach them that it brings joy to their heart when they share with others. We need to repeat this lesson until our children learn to respond this way on their own accord, without us reminding them. When your children begin to learn this concept, be sure to support their good behavior with much well-deserved praise! Instill in them a desire to serve, by explaining that we are happy because God is happy. Teach them that they are “laying up treasures in heaven” when they give their treasures away down here. Explain that when we hoard our treasures for ourselves, they only make us more miserable.

As our children get older, we should take them along with us when we have opportunities to serve.

Volunteer work projects, school cleaning, mowing the church yard, and helping a neighbor start their car are all wonderful opportunities to serve. Do not leave your teenagers behind to get the work done at home. Take them along so they can experience the joy of service as well. When you take your children along to work projects, be sure to keep them involved in the work. They won’t learn this if you let them run off to play with their friends.

Remember to stay involved yourself. If you go only for the food, fun, and fellowship, your children will learn to do the same. Another pitfall is for parents to send their children off to work projects, children’s ministry, youth chorus, etc., while they stay at home to get the work done or to enjoy a relaxing evening. Go along with your children whenever you can. Be involved yourself as the opportunity affords.

Perhaps your child is old enough but not mature enough. Do not assume that they will learn to be mature away from home if they are not learning it at home. When we send our children away for service opportunities, it should be done as a sacrifice on our part, not as a way to have a break from parenting. Depending on our child’s level of maturity, we may need to make sure there is an older person along to whom they are accountable. This should be clearly communicated to your child as well as to their “guardian.” As parents we should regularly stay in touch with our children when they are away from us by calling, emailing, texting, etc.

At some point, we will need to give up our children to whatever service God is calling them. This should be our goal as parents and should be done willingly, even though it may be the most painful sacrifice we have ever made. God will reward us, in His way and in His time, just like He did with Hannah of old.

Last of all, but certainly not least, pray for your children (Philippians 1:9; 2 Thessalonians 1:11). Pray that God would instill in your children the desire to serve. Pray that he would convert them from a life of selfishness. Intercede for them in your *prayer closet* as well as in their hearing. I remember my parents regularly praying for each of us children by name in family worship. There is only so much that we as parents can do to influence our children’s decisions. God must perform His work in their hearts, and they must personally choose to respond to His calling for their lives (Psalm 127:1). May God add His blessing as we endeavor to raise our children for His service.



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Heaven Tourism

~ Alvin Clair Auker

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In 2004, a car accident critically injured six-year-old Alex Malarkey. After two months he emerged from a coma, permanently paralyzed but with stories detailing out-of-body experiences and several trips to heaven. A number of years later, in 2010, a major evangelical book publisher released his story titled, *The Boy Who Came Back from Heaven: A True Story*, listing Alex and his father as co-authors. The book rose quickly to the bestseller list and sold over a million copies.

Then, in January, 2015, the 16-year-old Alex wrote an open letter to Christian publishers and bookstores, stating that he did not die nor did he go to heaven, but rather had made up the story to get attention. The publisher quickly pulled the book off the market.

This book is only one of many in a genre, sometimes called “heaven tourism,” which has become popular in recent years. Several have sold millions of copies, and some have even been made into movies. Typically, in these stories someone dies (or at least is thought to have died), then miraculously revives to tell about a supposed visit to heaven. A similar book describing a man’s experience in hell also became a best-seller, although it was not as successful as the more popular “heaven tourism” books.

What should serious Bible believers do with such accounts? Do these books belong on our shelves? Should we be surprised when one is eventually declared to be fake? Do we find support for these stories in Scripture? Does the Bible give us any examples of people dying and then coming back to life with stories of heaven or hell? Are there any cases of so-called “near death” experiences which reveal divine Truth?

The Biblical Model

The Bible tells us of only a few saints who were privileged to see into heaven and tell what they saw. Micaiah’s glimpse of heaven (2 Chronicles 18:18-22)

was a brief prophetic vision, not a death experience. Although Stephen was near death, he was actually still alive on this earth when he saw heaven (Acts 7:55-56); he did not go to heaven and then come back.

In Ezekiel chapters 1 & 2, Isaiah chapter 6, and Revelations chapters 4, 6, & 21, the authors wrote more extensive descriptions of heaven. But here again, these were not death experiences but rather visions of divine revelation given by God for the specific purpose of being recorded in His Holy Word.

The Old and New Testaments tell of several individuals who died and were later raised to life, such as Lazarus. Of these, we do not read anything about their heavenly experience, or that they told of it to others.

A very interesting example is that of the Apostle Paul. He told of being caught up to the third heaven and hearing unspeakable words in paradise (2 Corinthians 12:1-4). Did he die or just see a vision? We really do not know, because Paul himself said that he could not tell whether he was in the body or out of the body. Either way, what we see as noteworthy is he declared that the words which he had heard were “not lawful for a man to utter.”

God did not give him a license to build a multi-million-dollar ministry from his sensational story, (Titus 1:11; 1 Peter 5:2). In fact, God gave him a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble about it (2 Corinthians 12:7). So rather than glory in his personal experience, Paul gloried in the power and cross of Jesus Christ.

Supposing somebody today were to actually have a genuine vision of heaven, why would they not follow Paul’s example and humbly keep quiet about it, choosing rather to glory in Christ?

To answer our earlier question, we see no example in Scripture of a person dying and returning with a story from other realms. Furthermore, in at least one case

a saint who had a heavenly vision was forbidden from telling their story.

Thus on the basis of Scripture, we conclude that God has sealed up many details about the future. These are secret things that belong to Him. The things that belong to us are the things He has chosen to reveal through His Word. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 29:29).

We may also conclude that taking people out of this world and sending them back again is not God’s method of revealing truth about heaven and hell. We learn this not only from the absence of Bible examples, but from the mouth of Jesus Himself.

The Teaching of Jesus

In Jesus’ account of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), after both men died, the rich man who was in hell’s torments looked up and saw Abraham and Lazarus “afar off”. After the rich man’s plea for water was denied, he had this following conversation with Abraham:

- Rich man: “I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send [Lazarus] to my father’s house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.”
- Abraham: “They have Moses and the prophets; let them [your brothers] hear them [Moses and the prophets].”
- Rich man: “Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.”
- Abraham: “If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

In Abraham’s answer we notice two pertinent truths.

1. First, a human returning from death with a story would be **ineffective**; according to Jesus it would not convince the skeptic.

Let’s apply this truth to these back-from-heaven-or-hell books. Are they claiming to convince people that the Bible is true? If so, they are built on a premise that has no foundation in Scripture. As **Jesus** narrated the story, He **quoted Abraham as declaring that this method would not work.**

2. The second truth in Abraham’s words is this: God’s written Word is His chosen method for revealing the truth we need to prepare for the life to come. “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.”

Applying this second truth, do these books claim to be a “**new**” **source of divine revelation**? If so, they again are on an unscriptural footing. We have Moses and the prophets and even the very words of Jesus and His Apostles in the New Testament; let us read them! What more do we need?

End-Time Deception

This brings us to the greatest danger of these books: accepting them as reliable eyewitness accounts opens the door to deception. Where **they contradict each other** and where **they disagree with God’s Word**, what will the reader choose to believe – God’s originally revealed truth (as found in the Scriptures) **or** someone’s claim about God speaking personally to them, revealing new truth?

If we look to some other book in order to prove that the Bible is true, are we not giving that book equal authority to, or greater authority than, God’s own Word? And are we not getting it all backwards? **We should rather be using the Bible to prove all other writings to be true or false**, in the same manner that the noble Bereans did with the messages they heard (Acts 17:11).

But if we accept another book as a new revelation from God, we are putting that book on a pedestal where we cannot criticize **it** on the basis of the Scriptures. After all, if it comes from God then surely it cannot be wrong.

God warns us about new revelations that disagree with His Word. “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8). If we are to reject even an angel from heaven who preaches contrary to the original revealed truth of God’s Word, should it even be a question for us about what we should do with a story told by a person who claims to have returned from heaven?

Angel Enthusiasm

On the subject of angels, let’s briefly consider a related issue. Recently stories have circulated about individuals seeing visions of angels showing revealing scenes of the spirit world, of heaven or hell, and giving direct spiritual advice and commands. Although these



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were not “death experiences,” we can apply the same principles to these accounts as well. Is this God’s method of revealing truth about the eternal realms and spiritual truth? What should we do with the details which do not line up with God’s Word?

There is a sobering reason God warns us about angelic messages. Referring to false teachers, He says, “Satan himself is transformed into an ‘angel’ of light. Therefore, it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness” (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). As former angels from heaven, Lucifer and his hosts are experts at masquerading as “angels of light.” If they can convince people that they are bringing new revelation from God, then **the door to deception is again left wide open.**

This is not to judge the motives of the authors of any of these books. We realize that some individuals may sincerely believe that they saw heaven, a heavenly vision, or a heavenly messenger. While we are not prepared to categorize each story as imagination, hallucination, or demonic deception, **we can be sure, based on God’s Word that we cannot and should not accept them as “truth” which is from God.**

There is a part of us that likes a sensational story. The natural man wants to see and feel before believing, just like Thomas (John 20:25). But when we follow feelings instead of faith in the facts of God’s Word **we will always be led astray.** Do we crave the sensational because our faith in God’s Word is weak, or is it because we do not love His Word as much as we should? Maybe the Scriptures seem too dull, opening the door for us to think that we must look for something new and exciting.

Whenever we see or hear a sensational account, especially one that claims to be proving the Bible as true or one that claims to be revealing divine truth outside of the Bible, red flags should go up in our minds. Let us throw all the dangerous books onto the Acts 19:19 pile where they belong and get back to the Bible.

Do we want to tour heaven? God’s Word gives us some qualifying requirements in order to tour heaven someday in the future. Our robes must be washed and made white in the Blood of the Lamb, and our lives yielded to lordship of Jesus Christ, shown by walking in clear obedience to His commandments as revealed in the Scriptures. No book should persuade us that some-

one could bypass the only Way to the Father (Jesus as revealed in the Bible).

Then for a true picture of heaven, we should read the passages which are written about heaven in God’s Book. Here we have the firsthand account of the best eyewitness of all, the One who came from God to be “the exact representation of the Father”, and who now dwells forever in the heavens. What better testimony could there be than that?

Reading and believing the Bible will strengthen our faith and sharpen our vision of heaven, making it more real to us than a story of mere human experience, imagination, dreams, or visions ever could.

In the Biblical descriptions of heaven, we see a common theme:

1. Everyone privileged a glimpse of heaven is overwhelmed and speechless by the dazzling glory of God that permeates it.
2. When the Scriptures tell of someone who was allowed to see the glory and mystery of heaven and future life eternal, usually they did not go around sharing those details with others.
3. The Biblical accounts detailing the future heavenly glory were given to godly men for the specific purpose of writing them down in order to be included in the canon of Scripture.

Would we like to see and experience a bit of heaven on earth? By faith we can, when “we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). As an unknown poet once wrote:

*Every morning, lean thine arms awhile
Upon the windowsill of heaven,
And gaze upon the Lord.
Then, with the vision in thy heart,
Turn strong to meet thy day.*

When we live this way, we have a true story to tell. Not a fantastic story about some “sensational” experience, but the good old Gospel story. Not **a story to bring wealth and fame to us**, but **a story to bring glory to the One** who put this treasure into earthen vessels.

Then when by His grace we reach our eternal destination and see His glory, not as in a glass but face to face, the experience will be indescribable by any earthly language. Our stay will not be temporary, but forevermore. Not as tourists, but as children in our Father’s house.



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Creative Clutter or Untidy House

~ MaryAnn Smucker

“And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it” Psalm 90:17.

It was one of those balmy summer mornings when the sun shone brightly and the green grass was beckoning the children to come out and play. Fresh breezes drifted in through the open windows and the singing of birds filled the morning air. Meanwhile, in our school room, the table was in disarray, with bits and pieces of paper, rubber stamps, and a variety of markers, cutters, and glue all scattered around, since we had been making homemade greeting cards. Along the edge of the kitchen counter, my son had all his farm animals lined up as if in a parade, and on the other side of the kitchen there was another display of trucks and tractors. Playing farm in the kitchen where Mom was working seemed to be his favorite past-time.

I had the kitchen table cluttered with fabric, patterns, scissors, fabric weights, and markers as I was preparing to sew summer dresses for my five daughters. Before long I was busily cutting them out. As usual, when I cut dresses, I was allowing the scraps to fall to the floor, to be picked up later on once I was finished. This offered my daughters a great opportunity,

since they loved to pick through those fabric pieces, looking for something they could use to make a cap for their dolls or as a gift wrapping for a small present to give to one of their siblings.

It was in the middle of all this “creative clutter” that a dear friend dropped by. As I quickly glanced at my surroundings I hesitated to have someone walk into my house when it appeared so “untidy.” There was no time to clean up and organize the mess so I greeted her at the door and invited her in. Since I was still feeling embarrassed by the mess, I began making apologies for my “untidy house.” Suddenly, I felt smitten. By apologizing for the creative mess in my house, I was indicating that our homes should always give an appearance of everything being in its proper place.

I remembered a choice I had made about fifteen years earlier, when I had been doing a weekly cleaning job for a good friend of ours. She was a sweet, loving mother whose husband insisted on a tidy house and saw to it that she had the necessary help to keep it that way. They didn’t have a large house, but it was the parlor that left an impression on me. Every week, I needed to polish all the furniture in the parlor, clean the large oversized windows that looked out over the backyard, and the patio doors that beckoned one to relax on the large balcony. The hardwood floors also needed to be shined and the large area rug vacuumed.

The room seemed perfect – at least it felt that way to me. A fireplace along the one wall spoke of cozy family evenings. The furniture was neatly placed so that everyone could relax and enjoy reading books together or have great times of family togetherness. The large patio doors allowed sunshine to enter the room giving it a cheery appearance. Nothing ever seemed out of place there. In fact, the room had such a neat appearance that it scarcely seemed worth my time to clean. It felt as though I was merely performing a weekly ritual.

One day I learned that the children were not allowed in that room unless the family was hosting company. This room was for guest accommodations only, which seldom occurred. How could such a lovely room be closed off from the family’s enjoyment? It was then that I made a choice. I decided then and there, that if the Lord ever blessed me with a family, I would want my home to be a place where good memories could be made. A place where we could enjoy normal household chores, do science experiments, play games, read books, and relax together – a place where we could live. I wanted my house to have a lived-in feel, which could be enjoyed by family and friends.

Many years have passed since that day and I have continued to draw my own conclusions about having a tidy house. I have come to realize that there is a difference between being a careless, sloppy housekeeper or one whose house is a creative mess because her family lives there.

I am always intrigued by a creative mess. It speaks to me of a family living together, doing projects together, doing experiments together, even cooking and baking together. Now this morning when my friend dropped by, I was making apologies for the mess. I couldn’t believe what I had just done and felt smitten in my heart. My attitude was no different than my friend’s whose children could never play in the parlor.

While there is a proper time to clean the house, tidy drawers, and organize closets and shelves, there is always the need to leave room for a creative clutter. A time when the house is not always tidy since our family **lives** there. We read books, kick off shoes, play with toys, cook, bake, and eat. Then there is the laundry – if you would step into our house on laundry day, you would see laundry baskets of clothes, ironing waiting

to be done, and piles of laundry still needing to be washed.

Does our creative clutter hinder us from being hospitable? Are we embarrassed when our friends see our counters, tables, or rooms all cluttered with some sort of creative project? Let us never be ashamed in these situations. Sometimes, in fact, I have discovered our guests seem to be more comfortable in the midst of a creative clutter than if our home would be completely tidy, with everything neatly in place.

At the same time, there is also a need to teach our children to clean up after themselves. There is so much that they can do to help keep the house in order, which includes sweeping floors, wiping counters, dusting furniture, doing dishes and folding laundry. As we include the children in these chores it will be a means of keeping our house tidy. But, when we are working together in the kitchen, we should not be afraid of the creative clutter – dishes strewn across the counters, flour spilled on the floors, and little ones with sticky fingers.

Remember, you have been cooking and baking together – making memories. If someone drops in on you in the midst of this creative mess, welcome them into your house and be sure to tell them that you and the children have been enjoying your time together cooking.

If we find ourselves feeling frustrated by an untidy house, maybe it is time to check our attitudes and do an evaluation on whether our house really is untidy or whether it merely has that “lived-in” appearance – a place where we can feel at home as a family, relax together, and enjoy one another. With it in this condition, I think we should feel good about welcoming guests in and allowing them to feel at home in the same way our family does.

Being a keeper at home and a joyful mother of children takes a personal commitment and sacrifice. As we yield ourselves to the Lordship of Christ and allow Him to radiate from our lives, we find ourselves taking on new perspectives about life. Colossians 3:13 encourages us in that “whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him”. When we do this, He gives us grace to enjoy our daily “creative clutter”.

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ourselves feel-
ing frustrated
by an untidy
house, maybe
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check our
attitudes...**

Reuben's Dilemma

~ C L Wenger

“Oh, bother”, said Reuben to himself, “why am I not allowed to be like the rest of the youth?” It was a Monday morning and he had just finished telling his dad that at the youth gathering the previous night it had been announced that the following Friday evening their youth group would all be going to the local county fair for the annual tractor pull. Although the youth did not normally go to the fair, for some reason it had become a tradition over the years to go to the tractor pull each year. They seemed to think it was a time of innocent enjoyment which could be attended by the group as a whole.

As Reuben and his father had discussed the upcoming event, there had been a fair bit of back and forth dialogue between them. It had become more and more clear that they were on opposite ends of the issue—almost as if they were going in two different directions. “Are you sure that William’s dad is going to let him go?” Reuben’s dad had finally asked. “I find that hard to believe. But even if he and all the rest are planning to go, I still won’t allow you to go, and that is that. We can’t keep arguing about this; I do not want you to go.”

“This is just so unfair”, Reuben muttered to himself. “I am old enough to drive, so why can’t I make my own decisions?” Many thoughts seemed to tumble about in confusion as Reuben continued to think about all the many details over and over, trying in vain to find a way out of his conflicting options. In the midst of this mental anguish, God’s still, small voice tried to remind him that he really should honor and obey his father. “But it just isn’t fair” was the thought in reply, which came back with a vengeance, trying to drown out God’s voice.

And so that week went by with hardly a waking hour passing that Reuben did not replay the many conflicting thoughts over and over in his mind. “If only my dad wasn’t so difficult.” “If only I was part of another family.” “It just isn’t fair.” “All the rest will be going,

what will they think of me?” “They will probably think that I’m some holier-than-thou, do-gooder...” But God’s still, small voice kept quietly persisting day after day, hour after hour, reminding him that the Scriptures clearly teach that children must honor and obey their father and mother. Even though it did not make sense and even though everyone else would be allowed, there just was no exception to this simple command of God.

Friday night came and went with Reuben going about his daily routine, all the while feeling frustrated, discouraged and confused. He really did want to follow the clear teachings of Scripture and he knew that God expected him to yield to the direction of his father, but oh, the struggle!

As time passed on into the next number of weeks, there really did not seem to be any negative outcomes resulting from the stand that he had taken, albeit a grudging one. To his surprise, nobody seemed to resent the fact that he had not gone along and no one appeared to treat him any differently than before. With the passing of time, gradually this dilemma became less and less of a current issue for Reuben.

This was actually just another challenging issue in his life, which had seemed to become somewhat of a lifestyle pattern. You see, over the years, for one reason or another, somehow the idea of being submitted to authority had seemed to pass Reuben by. He was developing into what we would consider a rebellious teenager. Time and again throughout his teenage life, there were issues that would seem to appear out of nowhere, about which Reuben and his father just did not see eye-to-eye on. These situations were never really resolved, but rather seemed to just pile up inside of Reuben, causing more and more frustration and confusion.

As the months turned into years and the years slowly passed by, Reuben had many more challenging situations to face as God continued to take him through the school of life. For some reason it seemed that Reu-

ben was what some would refer to as a *slow learner* in this spiritual school of life. Some might even go so far as to say he was hard-headed, which would also probably be true, although the Bible would have labeled his condition as “stiff-necked” or “hard-hearted.” It seemed that he went through the same type of test in life, over and over again. He appeared to be blinded to his own part in each situation. All he could see was the fact that his father seemed to be opposed to a number of things that he (Reuben) wanted to do.

Years later, after he matured into adulthood and had a family of his own, God finally was able to start getting through to him on some of these matters. As he looked back over his life in an effort to figure out why things seemed to always be conspiring against him, Reuben realized that all along he had allowed a rebellious attitude to reside in his heart. Without realizing it, this heart issue had developed into a root of bitterness which he carried with him wherever he went and it was through these lenses that he tended to see all of life. This caused him to be blinded to his own fleshly desires which were being fed and controlled by the “old man.” Even though part of him wanted to serve God, it was not until he took full responsibility for his actions and behaviors that he started to realize that peace and joy come from a complete surrender to the Lord.

Another key point that also started to make sense was the issue of peer pressure and how that affects who it is that has the heart of an individual. For some reason, throughout his growing up years, Reuben had never fully given his heart to his father. This in turn made it very easy to give his heart to his peers, which in turn caused the influences of his friends to hold great sway over his desires. This is, by the way, what is referred to as *peer pressure*.

Thus the peer pressure of his friends caused Reuben to struggle tremendously when they were all going to go to the tractor pull that one Friday night. Since he had given his heart to his peers, they were the ones who were able to control his desires. Through this we can easily see why there was so much frustration and confusion. We can also understand why Reuben and his father had so many problems getting along and communicating—Reuben had given his heart to the wrong source (his friends instead of his parents).

This issue, regarding who has the heart, is a foundational issue in the lives of youth today. Whomever they give their heart to, will usually control their desires. Whoever controls the desires of their heart will ultimately control their life and, in the end, their destiny. God talks about this in His Word, where Jesus says in Matthew 6:21 that “where your treasure is there will your heart be also,” and then in Matthew 12:35 he says that whatever fruit we bring forth spiritually is directly controlled by the kind of heart we have. Finally, in Proverbs 4:23, we are told, “keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

In conclusion, young people, “remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth” Ecclesiastes 12:1. No matter what your age, if you are able to read and understand this article, then you are old enough to start giving

your whole heart to your parents “as unto the Lord,” since it is God who has commanded that you should honor and obey your parents.

If you do not give yourself completely to your parents, as being your God-given authority, then you will not be able to obey them from your heart, and you will not be able to honor them. Also, when you come to the *age of accountability* and God’s Spirit starts speaking

to you about giving your heart to the Lord and being born again, it will be much more difficult and challenging to yield your will and give Him your whole heart. This will, in turn, cause many years of undue spiritual struggle, difficulty in walking in spiritual victory, and much confusion regarding your assurance of Salvation.

But, if you practice giving your heart to your parents throughout your childhood and into your teenage years, then when God’s still, small voice starts speaking to you in your age of accountability, you will be prepared to more easily yield your heart to the Lord. If this yielded lifestyle is normal for you, then you will not have near the struggle and heartache as you go through your teen years and into adulthood.

As a Christian, after your conversion from the *old man* to the *new man*, it will be much easier to walk in victory, to have peace and joy in your heart, and to have the issue settled in your spirit that “you **have** eternal life”.

May God take away the “scales” from our eyes so we may see this concept clearly.

Whoever controls the desires of their heart will ultimately control their life

Our Readers Respond

"We appreciate all the responses we received, please send us yours!"

On Page 22 of the last issue it reads: "Our children are also born (Calvinistic) sinners". It should rather read... "Our children are also born with the fallen human nature." They are "safe" because sin is not imputed until they become accountable.

D. L., from the USA

P.S. Thanks for the "Food for Thought"

Thanks, brother, for bringing this mistake to our attention. We understand "the age of accountability" the way you have explained it. The failure was ours, that we did not catch this and correct the wording. ~ The Board of TBV

Dear friends

I am so pleased to find a copy of The Heartbeat of the Remnant in my mailbox again! It is good spiritual food for us who live in the far North without any connection to an Anabaptist church. There is none here.

I am a 58-year-old man, married to May S. since 1982. We have two children. I have been reading Anabaptist literature since 1970's, and some years ago I wrote a book about Anabaptist theology and history, in Norwegian: Is your faith worth dying for?

Please continue to send me your magazine:

Bjorn, from Norway

Thank you for the defense of the gospel in a time where compromise is so rampant. Many live by feeling rather than by faith. When how I feel or the way I see it becomes more valid than the Holy scriptures.

LeRoy, from the USA

Praise the Lord for bringing the Heartbeat of the Remnant back into print. It was instrumental in my first years as a Christian in helping me establish that the Bible means what it says.

God give you grace and wisdom in writing unapologetic articles which counter this world's philosophies, false religions, and anti-Christian sentiments and lifestyles. Luk.6:22-23

As for the donation list below, we have been driving hard at paying off our mortgage for the purpose of using the money which God has entrusted to us as stewards. We are 3

-4 months away from no longer being servant to the lender, at which time we would be very blessed if we could enter into this ministry with you, if in like manner as the previous Heartbeat of the Remnant you write biblically and spiritually accurate articles. So for the time being, not to discourage you from sending out another subscription to a non-paying person, we will click the not at this time circle, with full intentions on supporting you in the near future, should the magazine's content be in the former fashion.

Godspeed,

Jake, from Canada

Greetings in Jesus name. Thanks so much for doing this again. I truly loved this magazine except for the emphasis on Anabaptist! I totally agree with your emphasis. We need to worship God, not the people who tried to follow God.

I would appreciate healthful "down to earth" healthy food. We do house our spirits in our earthly bodies. So we are responsible for what we eat. Also I'm not a "health nut" just desire more down to earth healthy and fordable cooking. I-we heard some people say about more than one woman: "She cooks more expensive than her Husband can afford." We as wives need to be in subjection to our Husbands and also their income. I do like the stories and also the emphasis on our influence as older woman. We sometimes feel we aren't needed as much with the empty nest syndrome. But we do need each other.

We don't have any magazines in the church similar to pathway of the Amish. My son could relate to the emotions, and He felt better, but, our daughter said she can't relate! So would encourage down to earth family articles promoting family life as God intended, with emotions. Teen years are an emotional time and also a time they are building life long eternally consequences decisions. It always a time to build convictions, but youth is a special vulnerable time.

Our daughter said she feels like leaving and going like the world and then coming back! I was glad I had read every one intends to come back but hardly anyone does.

Keep on keeping on

Peter, from the USA

~ continued on page 20

A big thank you to all who have so graciously responded to the re-start of this publication. There has been much encouragement and a number of suggestions sent in for consideration towards the betterment of the magazine. Additionally, many of you have sent financial support towards the work of the ministry. Thank you all and may God richly bless each one!!!

For the last issue we printed 5,000 copies, with bulk mailings of 1,454 copies going to 91 addresses in the USA and 303 going to 19 foreign addresses. Additionally, 2,346 copies went to individual USA addresses and 293 went to foreign individual addresses. These numbers reflect the to-date changes that have been made to the list since the printing and initial mailing.

Current Needs

- Finances for the printing of this issue and the next—we do not have enough to cover even this printing.
- Finances for start-up costs—there are still quite a few costs associated with the magazine start-up that have yet to be funded. They have been covered by individuals until more funds become available.
- Finances for our other outreach efforts—currently we are working towards transcribing and printing a CD message series, on counseling and mental health issues. This will be an approximate 250 page, soft cover book available for distribution.

With our ministry being multi-faceted and with the way we are structured as a non-profit organization, **there are a number of points about which it would be important for our readership to become aware.**

- Legally we cannot exchange money *for* services or product—all funds must be directed and received towards the work of our ministry as a whole, not be considered a subscription cost.
- The magazine should be considered a Christian resource, outreach tool, instead of a subscription publication, therefore, we cannot establish a per-issue cost.
- For one reason or another, a large majority of individuals are not able to support the work of this ministry financially, thus the monetary burden is placed upon those who can give. Please pray about this need.
- Numerous individuals are utilizing the magazine as a *free* Christian resource, yet it still is costing someone to produce and mail the publication. Therefore, it is important to re-think the magazine—not as a subscription publication, but rather as a ministry outreach.
- There are numerous brothers and sisters on the mission field who receive encouragement and Christian interaction through this magazine.
- There are numerous brothers and sisters all over the world who do not have a local church to attend. They find the magazine a great source of encouragement, edification, and support in their Christian walk.

The Berean Voice Financial Report

10/18/16 Beginning Balance \$3,615.00

2016 INCOME TO DATE

<u>Item</u>	<u>Amount</u>
For Where Most Needed	\$655.00
Donations for “The Berean Voice”	\$3,068.00
Funds for “The Remnant” Magazine Outreach	\$16,705.00

2016 EXPENSES TO DATE

<u>Item</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Postage	\$498.00
CDs, Albums, & Labels	\$120.00
Equipment and Software	\$809.00
Telephone	\$180.00
Office Expenses	\$538.00
Website Development & Maint.	\$186.00
Staff Expenses & Editor's Salary	\$6,612.00
Books & Literature	\$419.00
Remnant Publishing & Mailing	\$5,616.00
Miscellaneous	\$78.00
Ministry Start-Up Expense	\$3,921.00
Professional Fees	\$715.00
Berean Voice Travel Expense	\$50.00

Total Income \$24,043.00

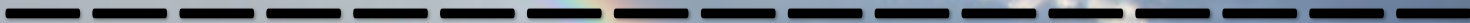
Total Expenses \$19,742.00

Remaining Balance \$4,301.00

Percentage of Income Spent 82%

The Heartbeat of the Remnant
c/o The Berean Voice
P O Box 279
Shreve, Ohio 44676

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I DO SET MY BOW IN THE CLOUD, AND
IT SHALL BE FOR A TOKEN OF A COVENANT
BETWEEN ME AND THE EARTH. GENESIS 9:13

