

the Banner *of Sovereign Grace Truth*

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Paul's Plan for Christian Living

Holding Hands, Holding Hearts

Final Judgment Upon Secret Sins



A Periodical for Young and Old

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THEME ISSUE: DATING AND MARRIAGE

This issue contains three articles on Christian dating and an opening meditation on God's plan for marriage. May God bless these articles to many teenagers and young adults, as well as to parents as we seek to prepare our young people for dating years and to counsel them through these critical years.

As we enter a new decade, may our greatest concern be to fall more profoundly in love with Jesus Christ, our perfect Bridegroom, altogether lovely Immanuel, and the chief among ten thousand. In 2010, may we be able to confess with Samuel Rutherford: "I have a lover, Christ, and yet I want love for him. I have a lovely and desirable Lord, who is love-worthy, and who beggeth my love and heart, and I have nothing to give him. Dear brother, come further in on Christ, and see a new treasure in him: come in, and look down and see angels' wonder, and heaven and earth's wonder of love, sweetness, majesty, and excellency in him.... No pen, no words, no image can express to you the loveliness of my only, only Lord Jesus."

—JRB



Paul's Plan for Christian Living in Marriage in a New Decade

(Colossians 3:12–17)

This is the substance of a wedding address given to a couple who wanted me to preach on Colossians 3:12–17. As we begin a new year and a new decade, Paul's plan for Christian living is pertinent to all of us.

Dr. Joel R. Beeke
Meditation/Family Guidance

God's plan for Christian living in marriage is offered in Colossians 3:12–17. If you follow its advice, you will live in the riches of God's grace, your problems in marriage will be properly addressed, and you will bring God glory.

In verses 1–4, Paul declares that because true Christians are risen with Christ, they should hide themselves in Christ, setting their hearts and affections on things above and anticipating glory with Him. In verses 5–11, Paul explains the negative perspective of this Christian life, saying that when believers are risen with Christ, they must put off (i.e., get rid of) old vices. In verses 12–17, he offers the positive view of Christian living, telling believers what they must put on. So, what's needed in Christian marriage and in life itself as we enter a new decade is to turn away from sin toward God. The text describes three ways to do that:

1. Adorn yourselves with the virtues of Christ

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness (Col. 3:12–14).

In verses 12–14, Paul names seven virtues that we must adorn ourselves with to follow God's plan for Christian living. Putting on these virtues doesn't mean clothing ourselves with them in the morning and taking them off each night. The aorist tense used here indicates the permanent acquisition of these virtues. We are to adorn ourselves with these virtues on an abiding basis; we must put them on and never take them off. We must put them on as "the elect of God," holy and beloved in God's sight for the sake of Christ.

Paul then names the Colossian believers as: (1) elect of God—i.e., chosen by Him from all eternity, (2) holy, meaning set apart for God, and (3) beloved, especially by God. These titles are a clear contrast to what the Judaizers said of the Colossian Christians: "You are nothing but sinners because you do not observe our Judaic decrees." God says of the Colossian Christians, yes, of all His people: "You are elect of Me, holy, and beloved." What a blessing it is when two Christians, particularly a husband and a wife, may rightly claim the graces of God and lay hold of such titles. They may then show forth the Christian virtues of obedience in the second table of the law in their relationship to each other as the fruit of Christ. God's people learn these seven virtues at the feet of Christ.

Paul presents these virtues in three sets of couplets, followed by a virtue that serves as the capstone of them all. The first two virtues: "bowels of mercies" and "kindness," are nearly synonymous. "Bowels of mercies" reflects the connection in the Greek mind between tender emotions and the stirring of inner physical organs. It means having a tender heart or tender feelings of compassion. As Christians, we are to have bowels of mercies like those of Christ, our sympathetic High Priest, who is afflicted in all our afflictions. Dear friends, when your spouse is sick or distressed, show compassion through tenderness and understanding. Last month I asked a group of elementary school children, "How many of you like your mom to show you tender feelings of sympathy when you are sick?" Every hand went up! We are not really different when we grow up. When our spouse is hurting physically, emotionally, or spiritually, we must show bowels of mercies.

We must also be kind like Christ. Kindness is broader than compassion; it is goodness or kindness extended to the distressed

and suffering in all times and situations. Kindness is a fundamental ingredient of a good marriage. Most of marriage is not like honeymooning in the Alps or the Caribbean; it is made up of small acts of daily kindness, such as offering prayer for each other, putting toast in the toaster for each other, asking each other how the day went, and giving each other a silent smile. These virtues are foundational for a good marriage. They place us *beside* each other and cultivate loving intimacy.

The next two virtues, humbleness of mind and meekness, place us *below* each other. No virtue is more important for Christian living than humility. When Augustine was asked, “What are the three greatest virtues needed for Christian living?” he answered: “Humility, humility, humility.” That virtue is essential in marriage as well. Most marital problems start by looking down on each other, while most marital joys start by looking up to each other. When you respect, love, and admire each other, you experience the truth of the saying: “A good marriage is where both partners feel they got the better end of the deal.”

We must also be humble like Christ. Philippians 2:5, 7 tells us: “Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus, [who] made himself of no reputation.” We must humble ourselves before God and each other. We must remember that we as marriage partners are both poor sinners. We must therefore refrain from trampling upon each other and instead lift each other up. So, bow before each other. “Submit yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (Eph. 5:20).

Be meek like Christ. Meekness is not weakness or spinelessness, contrary to what others may say; meekness is the willingness to suffer rather than to inflict suffering. By nature, we tend to forget kindnesses and remember injuries, but meekness remembers kindnesses and forgets injuries. Meekness does not revenge itself; it forgives. Yoked to Christ, meekness rewards good for evil. Meekness strives, in Christ’s strength, to put another’s needs before your own. Instead of asking, “How can my spouse be a better husband?” or “How can my spouse be a better wife?” meekness asks, “How can I be a better husband or a better wife?”

The fifth and sixth virtues are longsuffering and forbearance. To be longsuffering like Christ is to hold out under provocation and injustice, not giving way to resentment or retaliation. How patient Christ was in bearing all His sufferings! How longsuffering He is in bearing with us and our sins! Let Him be your pattern in marriage. When something your partner does provokes you, wait before you speak. Be swift to hear and slow to speak.

We must also forbear and forgive like Christ (v. 13). Forbearing one another means holding out when burdens heap up around you and being thoughtful when your partner acts thoughtlessly.

To forgive like Christ is to forgive unconditionally and immediately. Verse 13 does not mean: “Complain until pardon is asked and amends are made to satisfy you, and then at last condescend to forgive.” No, it means: “The moment you have a complaint against your partner, graciously forgive. Bury the matter at once in genuine forgiveness.” Bury the injury in the spirit of Spurgeon, who said, “When you bury a dead dog, you don’t leave its tail sticking up out of the ground.” A longsuffer-

ing, forbearing, forgiving spirit squelches quarrels before they catch flame.

An inner-city missionary ministered to a prostitute in London. After much prodding, he got her to admit that she had freely left a loving, virtuous home. When the missionary suggested that she return home, she said, “That is impossible. My father would not even look at me, and my brother would throw me out.” The missionary persuaded the woman to write to her family. Two days later she received an envelope marked: *Deliver Immediately*. Inside was the message:

*Ready to forgive,
Your father and brother*

So God is to us. Every day He sends us the letter of His Word. From Genesis to Revelation He tells us, as it were,

*Ready to forgive,
Your Father in heaven and your
Elder Brother at His right hand*

Just as Psalm 86:5 says, “For thou, Lord, art good and ready to forgive,” so you must always be ready to forgive each other.

The capstone of all these virtues is, not surprisingly, love (v. 14). Colossians 3 and 1 Corinthians 13 tell us that love is supreme. Love heads the list of the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22. Love is the lubricant that enables other virtues to function smoothly.

Colossians 3:14 literally says, “above all these things, have *the love*,” the steady, intelligent, purposeful, committed *agape* love of God that flows out of faith. This love gives sacrificially without any thought of return. There is nothing more beautiful in this life than a loving relationship that flows out of the love of Christ. Paul calls love “the bond of perfection,” or completeness. Love is the grace that holds all other graces together and motivates the individual believer to the perfection of glory. In marriage, love is the bond of perfection; it is Christ-like love that so unites a husband and wife that they might together be formed for the perfection of glory.

Put on these seven virtues, Paul says, don’t be stirring up your own character—for by nature we don’t have these virtues no matter how nice other people judge us to be—but by submitting to Christ, whose bowels of mercies and kindness, humbleness of mind and meekness, longsuffering and forbearing, and loving spirit is your example. By the Spirit’s grace, adorn yourselves as husband and wife with the virtues of Christ.

2. Rule yourselves by the peace and Word of Christ

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord (Col. 3:15–16).

Colossians 3 next says that the peace of God must rule in your heart and in your marriage. That means, first, that you have “peace *with* God.” The peace of God cannot rule your marriage if you do not know peace in your inmost soul through the cleansing blood and forgiveness of Jesus Christ.

Second, you must be at peace with God's ways and providence. You must submit to His divine will. As the Reformed liturgy for marriage says, "You are to receive whatever befalls you in this holy state of marriage with patience and thanksgiving, as from the hand of God, and thus all things will turn to your advantage and salvation."

Third, you must live peaceably with each other. Do not offend your partner, and if he or she offends you, be patient and forgiving. Let the spirit of peace *rule* in your hearts, Paul says. The original Greek word used here literally means, "Let this peace umpire your hearts." Let the peace of God arbitrate every situation of potential discord. The umpire in Greek games ended all debate. His verdict was the final word, much as it is today in any organized sport. So Paul says, resolve all matters by the peace of God. You might ask, "What should I do if my husband or my wife slights me, or forgets me, or neglects me? Should I humble myself? Should I yield?" Pride says, "Don't give in." But the peace of God says, "Yield, surrender, and give in." The peace of God says, "Choose to forgive rather than seek vengeance."

In marriage, you cannot afford to be angry at each other. Without the peace of God, your plans for a happy marriage will burn up in your hands. Without the peace of God, you will think hard thoughts, speak angry words, and perform hostile actions. That will bring you into spiritual darkness, sap your strength, and rob you of the peace of God. Instead, let the peace of God rule in your hearts and flow into your lives. As Spurgeon says: "Set peace in the chariot and let it hold the reins, for anger will set the world on fire."

Ephesians 3 says God calls you to this peace for your sakes as well as the church, which you are called to as one body. So, when you are having problems in marriage, cry out, "Let Thy peace, oh God, rule over me, rule in me, rule through me, to Thy glory, to our mutual happiness, but also to the prosperity of the church, the body of Christ." Only then will you be useful and fruitful with each other in God's church.

And only then can you also be truly thankful, as verse 15 says. In the present imperative Paul says, "Be ye ever thankful," meaning you should live thankfully every day, whether in prosperity or adversity. When peace rules, thankfulness ensues and murmuring ceases. Be thankful to God, be thankful to each other, and be thankful for the church.

God's plan for godly living commands us to live in peace and gratitude. It also calls us to live centered in God's Word (v. 16). Verse 16 is inseparable from verse 15. Thus the inward, subjective peace of Christ is built on the objective Word of Christ.

Verse 16 tells you to let the Word of Christ dwell in you *richly*. The holy Word must enter into you so that you may enter into it. To richly dwell on Christ's Word means that you must understand it, believe it, search it, memorize it, meditate on it, love it, and live it. You must drink it in. You must abide in it. You must let God's Word occupy your entire being, govern your entire life, and move your will and affections. Let the Bible be your most familiar friend. Let it strengthen you in temptations and trials. Let it guide you through the stormy waves and winds of this life and lead you at last into the safe harbor of heaven.

So, study the Bible together, "teaching and admonishing one

another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (v. 16b). The three ways to do this are by teaching, admonishing, and singing. *Teach* each other by studying the Bible together. *Admonish* each other in love from the Bible. And *sing* its truths together, especially through the psalms. Let your home be filled with praises to God.

3. Motivate yourselves by the name of Christ

And 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 (Col. 3:17).

To motivate ourselves by the name of Jesus means at least three things:

- Let everything you do be in relation to Christ and His truth. This is a comprehensive way of life that teaches us that we are truly free only when we abide in Christ.
- Do everything under the authority of Jesus as your Savior and King. Never live independent of Him. Remember that without Him you can do nothing. Seek to know His will through His Word and His example, then strive to follow it in obedience.
- Strive to live for Christ.

*All for the Master, all without reserve,
All to the utmost of our manhood's might;
Each pulse, each throb of heart and thrill of nerve,
Each hour of busy day and silent night.*

Let Christ be your Guide in all of life. Be saturated with the spirit of Christ. Only then will you be able to say, "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain."

The famous ornithologist, John James Audubon, lived for one purpose: to produce accurate drawings of every North American bird. He traveled endlessly, underwent hardships of nearly every kind, and spent all his time and money toward this goal. It consumed his life. Likewise, you should make Christ your goal. Spare yourself no hardship to seek Christ, find Christ, know Christ, live for Christ, live out of Christ, and live like Christ. Let all you do be subservient to this one thing: "That I may finish my course with joy, glorifying Christ in life and in death."

Let Christ be the purpose for which you live. Do not make each other your ultimate purpose in life, for if you do, you will end up deeply disappointed. Instead, let your goal be to live to God's glory, "giving thanks to God and the Father by Christ."

Dear friends, follow Paul's plan for Christian living. Adorn yourselves with the virtues of Christ. Rule yourselves by the peace and Word of Christ. Motivate yourselves by the name of Christ. And remember, we need this plan not only in our marriages but also in our personal relationship with God and with each other. Do not rest short of coming to the perfect Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, repenting at His feet, believing on Him, and entrusting your entire life to Him. Strive, by the Spirit's grace, to adorn yourself with the virtues of Christ. Rule yourselves by the peace and Word of Christ, and motivate yourselves by the name of Christ in your life, your marriage, and in the new decade.

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A Just War

Matthew 23

Throughout His public ministry, Jesus spoke out against the scribes and the Pharisees. Christ sums up His case against them in Matthew 23 as He teaches multitudes and His disciples at the temple on the Tuesday of Passion Week.

Christ begins with an important disclaimer. When the scribes and Pharisees “sit in Moses’ seat,” propounding what is taught in God’s Word as delivered by Moses, they are to be obeyed. Jesus’ quarrel is not with Scripture or with the things commanded in the law of God. He affirms what Paul later says: “The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good” (Rom. 7:12).

Sanctimonious Sins

What Christ opposes is the hypocrisy of religious leaders who, despite their confessional orthodoxy and zeal for the law, “say, and do not” (Matt. 23:3). They impose impossible duties on others while exempting themselves, Jesus says. And they perform their devotion in public “to be seen of men” (v. 5), using “supersized” tefillin, or phylacteries, and making the *tsit-tsit* (fringes on their ritual garments) as long as possible as they compete for the best seats at banquets or the synagogues and hail one another loudly in the marketplaces, crying, “Rabbi, Rabbi!” (v. 7).

This indictment of religious exhibitionism makes us wonder what Christ would say about the celebrity status of many Christian leaders in America today. Christ calls for a different kind of leadership—one that involves self-denial and abasement. He says, “He that is greatest among you shall be your servant.... He that shall humble himself shall be exalted” (vv. 11–12).

Seven “Woes”

Christ then denounces seven specific sins of the Pharisees: spiritual obstructionism; the love of money concealed in a pose of piety; aggressive recruitment of others for their party; ethical hairsplitting and specious

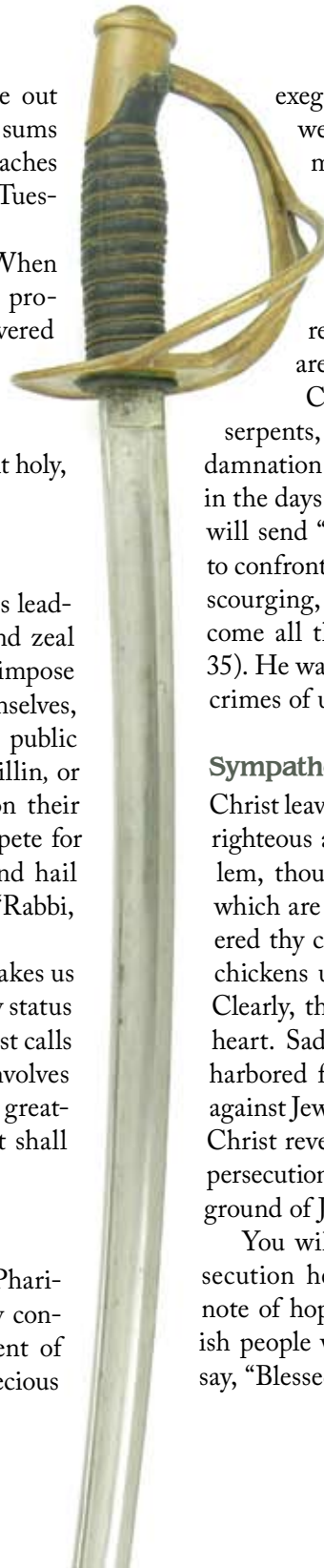
exegesis; majoring in minors while omitting “the weightier matters of the law” (v. 23); and promoting a righteousness that is merely external while leaving the corruption of the inner man untouched. Finally, Jesus faults the Pharisees for their devotion to deceased saints and prophets, and He indicts their fathers for resisting and killing the prophets. The Pharisees are no different from their fathers, Jesus says.

Christ concludes with a fearful question: “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (v. 33). He predicts what will happen in the days of the apostles, when He, as the risen Christ, will send “prophets, and wise men, and scribes” (v. 34) to confront unbelieving Jews. They will face persecution, scourging, crucifixion, and death, “that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth” (v. 35). He warns the Pharisees that the punishment for the crimes of unbelief will soon overtake them.

Sympathetic Love

Christ leaves Jerusalem with an exclamation that mingles righteous anger with tender love: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (v. 37). Clearly, the unbelief of His people has broken Christ’s heart. Sadly, Christians throughout history have often harbored feelings of hatred, suspicion, and resentment against Jewish people—quite the opposite of the love that Christ reveals here. There is a long history of Christian persecution of the Jews, excused or explained away on the ground of Jewish unbelief.

You will find no sanction for such racism and persecution here. Rather, Jesus ends His sermon with a note of hope, speaking of a coming day when the Jewish people will embrace Him as Messiah and Lord and say, “Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord”



(v. 39, quoting Ps. 118:26). This promised conversion of the Jews has been cherished by Christians for centuries. The Westminster Larger Catechism teaches that when we as Christians pray “Thy kingdom come,” we are praying, among other things, that “the gospel [may be] propagated throughout the world, the Jews called, [and] the fullness of Gentiles brought in” (Q. 191).

Solemn Warning

The sins, woes, and love described in Matthew 23 warn us to beware of the scribes and Pharisees, who were models of religious pride—pride of knowledge, pride of accomplishment, and pride of reputation.

Pride is a devastating sin. Most sins turn us away from God, but pride directly attacks God. It lifts us above and against God, seeking to dethrone Him by enthroning ourselves. God hates pride (Prov. 6:16–17). He hates the proud with His heart, curses them with His mouth, and punishes them with His hand (Ps. 119:21; Isa. 2:12, 23:9). Pride was the first sin in paradise and the last we will shed in death. “Pride is the shirt of the soul, put on first and put off last,” says George Swinnock.

Pride is complex. Jonathan Edwards says, “It takes many

forms and shapes and encompasses the heart like the layers of an onion—when you pull off one layer, there is another underneath.”

To fight the sin of pride, believers should remember four things:

- *I am a sinner* who always needs to watch and pray against pride.
- *I am a servant* of the living Christ, who was a model of humility. What a contrast between a humble Christ and a proud Christian!
- *I am small* compared to God, compared to the great saints of God in ages past, and compared to what the Puritans called “the four last things”: the solemnity of death, the certainty of Judgment Day, the vastness of eternity, and the fixed states of heaven and hell.
- *I am a saint* set apart to God (Rom. 6:10).

Declare war on your pride—justly. Count it your greatest enemy. Learn to say every day: “I am a sinner, a servant, a small one, and a saint.” With the Spirit’s help, this exercise will help break down the pride of the scribes and Pharisees within you.



Study Questions

1. What basic faults did Jesus see in the scribes and Pharisees?
2. Why should we know the errors and dangers of an outward religion that lacks inner reality?
3. Define hypocrisy. How does being hypocritical differ from being a hypocrite? Do even believers sometimes act hypocritically? Do they ever become hypocrites? Explain.
4. What dangers does Pharisaic Christianity present to church leaders? To ordinary church members? To the unchurched?
5. Why are we prone to become like the Pharisees even in the very act of condemning them? Do we all have some Pharisaic religion in us? What steps can we take to root it out?
6. What encouragements can we find in Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem?
7. Why does God hate pride with such vehemence? What makes this sin stand out from other sins?
8. What areas in your life do you particularly need to fight against pride? By the Spirit’s grace, what steps can you take to fight pride in those areas? Be as specific and ruthless with yourself as possible.



The Unjust Steward

NEW TESTAMENT BIBLE STUDY ♦ PROFITING FROM THE PARABLES (12) ♦ DR. GERALD BILKES

Lately, we've heard in the news about quite a few financial scandals. Certain CEOs or CFOs mismanaged funds and accounts and brought about the collapse of whole companies with ripple effects at home and abroad. Sadly through all this, terms like "loan sharks" and "writing off debt" have become household terms. Yet, mismanagement is not a recent thing. It happened in biblical times as well, and, in our parable, usually known as the parable of the unjust steward, Christ uses a case of financial mismanagement to illustrate and drive home important gospel lessons.

The Lesson of Pharisaic Covetousness

The story line is relatively simple: a rich man had a steward managing the affairs of his estate. This particular steward clearly was used to operating with huge sums. For example, 100 measures of oil (v. 6) would have amounted to 800 or 900 gallons, and was about the equivalent of three years of wages for an average breadwinner. Likewise, 400 measures of wheat (v. 7) was equivalent to about 1100 bushels and about seven and a half years of labor. So, clearly, this steward was comfortable around large sums of money—as it turned out, too comfortable.

Here lies the first lesson Jesus wishes to teach. While around such large sums of money like this day in and day out, his sinful heart drew him into a pattern of mismanagement (v. 2). Whereas he was to serve his master, the money that slid through his fingers actually became too strong for him. Since he could not serve both masters, the point quickly came when he switched his allegiance from his master to the money. It's important to notice that when they originally heard it, the

Pharisees derided the parable, since they also were "covetous" (v. 15). Thus they conveniently dismissed what Christ was uncovering in their hearts.

Covetousness is closely connected to self-righteousness and pride. For example, the older brother of the previous parable was both covetous and self-righteous. We often think the Pharisees thought too much of the law, but in reality, they didn't think enough of the law. Jesus said to them: "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass than for one tittle of the law to fail" (v. 17). Pharisees do not see their guilt and the impossibility of ever being saved by their own actions. Their view of God was too low; their view of themselves, too high. Their view of sin was not serious enough; their view of the law not radical enough.

When God converted the Apostle Paul, He did it by applying to his heart the force of the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet" (Rom. 7:7). Paul came to see how covetous he really was. He began to learn the lesson that he really was the unjust steward of God's gifts, and that God was going to bring him to account. He came to learn that he had nothing coming to him but the wrath of God, and that if things were to be well, he would have to cry for mercy. He, the Pharisee, needed to become like the publican of whom Christ teaches us later in Luke 18:13.

The Lesson of Gospel Prudence

We don't know how long the steward mismanaged his master's estate, but finally word reached the owner and charges against the steward were in the works. The man realized that his days of being a steward were numbered and the parable reveals how

he reflected on what he should do. He decided to ingratiate himself to some of the debtors of his master by reducing their debts. It is debated whether he had *permission* to do this, but what's clear is that for this short time he still had the *ability* to do it, and so he did. In the last few moments of his tenure, he wrote off significant portions of debt. This apparently did not escape the notice of the master, and the parable ends with surprising words of commendation from his master, that "he had done wisely" (v. 8). Christ is not necessarily condoning what he did as *proper*—scholars debate whether it might have been or not; but more importantly, Christ is noting that it was clearly *prudent*.

Christ confirms this when He says in verse 8 that "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." This unjust steward showed more realism, foresight, and ingenuity in his everyday affairs than many professing Christians. This then is the second lesson Christ wishes to highlight. The steward prudently realized:

1. That the end of his stewardship was certain and real.
2. That the end of his stewardship would bring nothing but misery and shame.
3. That the only possibility of hope was to do what he had never done.
4. The only way out was to be "received" by others.

Jesus explained all of this in verse 16: "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time, the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." What this steward was doing at a human level pictures what it looks like to press into the kingdom of God. Since his one and only hope is to "be received" by others, he as it were "pressed" himself into the homes of others.

To press into the kingdom means to repent and believe in the promise of God in Jesus Christ, that He alone is a perfect satisfaction for sin and a complete righteousness. It includes disavowing all means, methods, or schemes of thinking to be righteous before God apart from grace.

The Lesson of Gospel Grace

I believe there is one more lesson Christ is teaching in this parable. It flows from the similarities between the steward of our parable and the prodigal son in the immediately preceding parable. Just like the prodigal "wasted his substance" (15:13), so too, the steward was accused of "wasting his goods" (16:1). The prodigal came up with a plan to address his misery (15:17–19); so too the steward (16:3–4). The prodigal's plan worked in his favor (15:20–24); so did the steward's plan (16:8). The prodigal was received back into the father's house (15:27); likewise, the steward expects to be received into other houses (16:4). I believe Christ is urging all of us to see how we have

wasted God's gifts through our unjust stewardship; how we need a gospel prudence to seek the only way of escape; and if we do this, we too will hear the Master's commendation in the end. We too will be graciously welcomed into favor.

Many have been confused by verse 9. Christ says: "Make yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness: that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." I believe what Christ is saying is this: "Even though many use money wickedly and even worship it as a god, my disciples ought to live in such a way that they and others around them will enjoy true and lasting friendship through Jesus Christ." How many faithful Christians do not heed this command of Christ by giving tangible support to ministry and missionary causes? Through these means, blessed by God, sinners come to know Jesus, the "friend of publicans and sinners" (Matt. 11:19). These everlasting habitations of which Christ speaks refer to the mansions Christ is preparing for His people. There the whole company of the faithful will join together in blessing God from whom all blessings ultimately come. Calvin put it like this: "We should deal humanely and benevolently with our neighbors, that when we come to the tribunal of God the fruit of our liberality may return to us."

Study Questions

1. People have often commented on the fact that the way we handle our money is a real indication of our heart. What was the steward's heart problem and how does it relate to the Pharisees' heart problem (v. 15)?
2. Read Luke 12:15 and Colossians 3:5. Describe how subtly covetousness works in our hearts and how dangerous it is.
3. Like the prodigal, who had some apprehension of the possibility of being received back, this steward had some apprehension that he might be welcomed and received by others. How does this carry over when it comes to repentance?
4. Apply the three lessons of our parable to the life of Paul. How did he learn them? Read Acts 9, Romans 7, and Philip-
pians 3.
5. The elder brother of the previous parable also had friends (Luke 15:29). Discuss the differences between gospel friendship and Pharisaic friendship. How important is it to show the friendship of Christ to lost and perishing sinners? How can this be done?



Final Judgment Upon Secret Sins

JONATHAN EDWARDS (1703–1758)

But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile (Romans 2:8–9).

When the Day of Judgment comes, the wicked shall rise to the resurrection of damnation. When that day comes, all mankind that have died from off the face of the earth shall arise—not only the righteous, but also the wicked. “And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2). “And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works” (Rev. 20:13). The damned in hell know not the time when the Day of Judgment will be; but when the time comes, it will be made known. It will be the most dreadful news that ever was told in that world of misery. It is always a doleful time in hell. The world of darkness is always full of shrieks and doleful cries. But when the news is heard that the Day appointed for the judgment is come, hell will be filled with louder shrieks and more dreadful cries than ever before.

When Christ comes in the clouds of heaven to judgment, the news of it will fill both earth and hell with mourning and bitter crying.

We read that all the kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him, and so shall all the inhabitants of hell. Then must the souls of the wicked come up to be united to their bodies and stand before the Judge. They shall not come willingly, but shall be dragged forth as a malefactor is dragged out of his dungeon to execution. They were unwilling when they died to leave the earth to go to hell. But now they will be much more unwilling to come out of hell to go to the last judgment. It will be no deliverance to them; it will only be a coming forth to their execution. They will hang back, but must come. The devils and damned spirits must come up together. The last trumpet will then be heard; this will be the most terrible sound to wicked men and devils that ever was heard. Not only the wicked that shall then be found dwelling on the earth shall hear it, but also those that are in their

graves. “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28–29).

Then must the souls of the wicked enter their bodies again, which will be prepared only to be organs of torment and misery. It will be a dreadful sight to them when they come to their bodies again, those bodies that were formerly used by them as the organs and instruments of sin and wickedness and whose appetites and lusts they indulged and gratified. The parting of soul and body was dreadful to them when they died, but their meeting again at the resurrection will be more dreadful. Thus shall they rise out of their graves, and shall lift up their eyes and see the Son of God in the clouds of heaven in the glory of His Father with all His holy angels with Him (Matt. 25:31). Then shall they see their Judge in His awful majesty. This will be the most amazing sight to them that ever they saw and will still add new horrors. That awful and terrible majesty in which He will appear and the manifestation of His infinite holiness will pierce their souls.

Then must they appear before their Judge to give up their account.

They will find no mountains or rocks to fall upon them that can cover them and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. Many of them will see others at that time. Some were formerly their acquaintance, who shall appear with glorious bodies, with joyful countenances and songs of praise, and mounting up as with wings to meet the Lord in the air, while they are left behind. Many shall see their former neighbors and acquaintances, their companions, their brothers, and their wives taken and they left. They shall be summoned to go and appear before the Judgment Seat. Go they must, however unwilling. They must stand at Christ’s left hand in

the midst of devils and wicked men. This shall again add still further amazement and will cause their horror still to be in a further degree than ever. With what horror will that company come together!

Then shall they be called to their account. Then shall be brought to light the hidden things of darkness. Then shall all the wickedness of their hearts be made known. Then shall be declared the actual wickedness they have been guilty of. Then shall appear their secret sins that they have kept hid from the eye of the world. Then shall be manifested in their true light those sins that they used to plead for and to excuse and justify. And then shall all their sins be set forth in all their dreadful aggravations. All their filthiness will be brought to light to their everlasting shame and contempt. Then it shall appear how heinous many of those things were that they in their lifetime made light of. Then will it appear how dreadful their guilt is in thus ill-treating so glorious and blessed a Savior.

And all the world shall see it! Many shall rise up in judgment against them and condemn them: their companions whom they tempted to wickedness, and others whom they have hardened in sin by their example shall rise up against many of them. The heathen that have had no advantages in comparison of them and many of whom have yet lived better lives than they shall rise up against them. And they shall be called to a special account: the Judge will reckon with them, they shall be speechless, they shall be struck dumb, their own consciences bearing testimony against them and shall cry aloud against them. For they shall then see how great and terrible a God He is against whom they have sinned. Then shall they stand at the left hand, while they see others whom they knew on earth sitting at the right hand of Christ in glory, shining forth as the sun, accepted of Christ and sitting with Him to judge and condemn them.

Then the sentence of condemnation shall be pronounced by the Judge upon them.

“Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41). This sentence will be pronounced with awful majesty. There shall be great indignation; and dreadful wrath shall then appear in the Judge—in His voice with which He shall pronounce the sentence. What a horror and amazement will these words strike into the hearts of the wicked on whom they shall be pronounced! Every word and syllable shall be like the most amazing thunder to them and shall pierce their souls like the fiercest lightning! The Judge will bid them depart from Him. He will drive them from His presence as exceedingly abominable to Him. And He shall give them the epithet *accursed*: they shall be an accursed company, and He will not only bid them depart from His presence, but into everlasting fire, to dwell there as their only fit habitation. What shows the dreadfulfulness of the fire is that it is prepared for the devil

and his angels. They shall lie forever in the same fire in which the devils, those grand enemies of God, shall be tormented! When this sentence shall be pronounced, there shall be, in the vast company at the left hand, tremblings, mourning, crying, and gnashing of teeth in a new manner—beyond all that ever was before. If the devils—those proud and lofty spirits—trembled many ages beforehand at the bare *thoughts* of this sentence, how will they tremble when it comes to be pronounced! And how, alas, will wicked men tremble! Their anguish will be aggravated by hearing that blessed sentence pronounced on those who shall be at the right hand: “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 25:34).

Then the sentence shall be executed.

When the Judge bids them depart, *they must go*. However unwilling, yet they must go. Immediately upon the finishing of the judgment and the pronouncing of the sentence will come the end of the world. The frame of this world shall be dissolved—the heavens shall be dissolved, and then the earth shall be set on fire. As God in wrath once destroyed the world by a flood of water, so now shall He cause it to be all drowned in a deluge of fire; and the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and “the elements shall melt with fervent heat” (2 Peter 3:10); and that great company of devils and wicked men must then enter into those everlasting burnings to which they are sentenced.

In this condition, they shall remain throughout the never-ending ages of eternity.

Their punishment shall be then complete, and it shall remain in this completion forever. Now shall all that come upon them that they so long trembled for fear of, while their souls were in a separate state. They will dwell in a fire that never shall be quenched, and here they must wear out eternity. There is no reckoning up the millions of years or millions of ages; all arithmetic here fails, no rules of multiplication can reach the amount, for there is no end. They shall have nothing to do to pass away their eternity, but to conflict with those torments. This will be their work forever and ever. God shall have no other use or employment for them. This is the way that they must answer the end of their being. And they never shall have any rest, nor any atonement, but their torments will hold up to their height and shall never grow any easier by their being accustomed to them. Time will seem long to them, every moment shall seem long to them, but they shall never have done with the ages of their torment.

Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), often called the last Puritan, was a well-known preacher and author during the Great Awakening. This article is abridged from “Sermon VII” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 2, reprinted by The Banner of Truth Trust, www.banneroftruth.org.

Father to Son

TEN THINGS I'D LIKE MY SON TO KNOW BEFORE HE STARTS DATING

The book of Proverbs begins with a father giving practical advice to his son about what he wants him to know about life and love. This is profoundly important since fathers, in particular, are told in Scripture to bring their children up in the fear and admonition of the Lord (Col. 3:21; Eph. 6:4).

When it comes to the subject of relating to girls and women, what should I be encouraging my sons to do? Well, in this “open letter” to my son who, by grace, is a believer, I would like to suggest the following words of advice:

1. *It's worth the wait!* There's no doubt about it, physical intimacy is one of the Lord's choicest gifts (outside of salvation, of course). However, the Scriptures constantly remind us that the best way to enjoy intimacy is to experience it strictly within the covenant framework of marriage. This is the main point of Solomon's Song of Songs—since the refrains “Stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please” form a thematic backbone to the entire book (Song 2:7, 3:5, 8:4).

2. *God's will for you is...to be holy.* One of the things that really tripped me up when I was single was the question of which particular person the Lord wanted me to marry. I hate to think how many hours I wasted fretting over this particular question. Then one day I came across 1 Thessalonians 4:3 and

I realized that the Lord was more concerned with how I was relating to members of the opposite sex than necessarily with whom I should spend the rest of my life.

Don't get me wrong. Choosing a spouse is the most important decision you'll ever make, apart from placing your trust in Jesus. But what we find here is one of the few places in the Bible where the specific expression “God's will” is used. The text tells us that God is supremely concerned that our behavior with members of the opposite sex is above and beyond reproach. We need to be holy and treat a woman with respect and honor.

3. *Find an accountability partner.* As Protestants, confessing our sins to a priest is something that we rightly avoid. However, I wonder whether we have inadvertently thrown the proverbial baby out with the bath water. James 5:16 is very clear that if we're struggling with sin then we should confide in another Christian who is walking closely with the Lord. We should share our struggles with him and make ourselves accountable. It's a humbling thing to do, but it's the means through which James says the Lord will bring healing, which I understand to be spiritual as well as physical.



4. You can't fool God. There are two things in particular that I want to say to my son here. First, God knows everything about us—even what is going on in the recesses of our own hearts. I want him to know that if he believes that he can secretly cherish lust in his heart towards a woman, then he shouldn't expect the Lord to listen to any of his prayers (Ps. 66:18).

Second, he needs to realize that just because the Lord is merciful and forgiving it doesn't mean that He won't chastise us when we stray. In fact, the exact opposite is the case! We're told in Hebrews 12:4–13, "For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." Elsewhere, the apostle Paul reminds us that while there is always forgiveness for sexual sin, we should not presume that we won't experience unpleasant and painful consequences if we break God's commandments in this area (1 Thess. 4:3–8; Heb. 13:4, as well as 2 Sam. 12:13–14).

5. Make a covenant with your eyes. While Job raised this particular point almost as an aside (Job 31:1), it's a vital precaution in the battle that every man faces against sin. The Lord Jesus went even further and said that we should cut off whatever part of our body leads us into sin (Matt. 5:27–30). Obviously, the problem is ultimately not with the body part itself but arises from our hearts and the environment around us. Internet pornography is certainly a challenge these days, and if my son is to be pure he needs to police his use of the internet and take every precaution not to succumb to this particular vice, even if it means that he locates his computer in a common area of the house or stops using the internet entirely.

6. There is always a fresh start with God. One of the great dangers when it comes to this particular topic is that we can feel defeated by the tragedy of our own sin. While I don't want to detract from my exhortation for him to be morally pure and holy (1 Pet. 1:15–16), I want him to recognize that some of the Lord's greatest servants have fallen into sexual temptation (e.g., David and Bathsheba). But that is not the end of the story. There is always the possibility of forgiveness and restoration following true and heartfelt repentance (Ps. 51; 1 Tim. 1:15).

7. Get off the couch and go to war. I believe that David got into trouble long before he saw Bathsheba bathing upon her roof. David erred when he stopped doing the good works he was supposed to be doing. The writer of 2 Samuel says, "After the year was expired, at the time when kings go forth to battle, David sent Joab, and his servants with him, and all Israel.... But David tarried still at Jerusalem" (11:1). That is, when real leaders were fighting the Lord's battles, God's man had stayed at home and was sitting around on his couch (2 Sam. 11:2).

This inactivity made him all the more susceptible to falling into sin. As a Christian friend once said to me, "Idle hands are the devil's workshop."

8. Be good at running away. Resisting sexual temptation requires only one basic response—to run away. Joseph's example in Genesis 37 and Paul's advice in 1 Corinthians 6:18 come down to the same thing: "Flee!" While this might seem quite simple, it actually takes an enormous amount of courage and strength. Plus, it's what the Lord God Almighty says is our only course of action.

9. It could happen to you. One of the dangers of being raised in a strong Christian family is that it is very easy to develop a self-righteous attitude towards those who fall into sin. However, what I want my son to realize is that falling into sexual sin, or any sin for that matter, can happen to us all. So, as Paul says, "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). The book of Proverbs also tells us that pride comes before a fall and a haughty spirit before destruction (Prov. 16:18). Therefore I want my son to always appreciate the truth, "There, but for the grace of God, go I."

10. When you are tempted, take God's "exit." The Bible says that temptation is not so much a matter of "if"; it's more a question of "when." The thing that I want my son to remember, though, is that God will always provide a way out when he experiences temptation. 1 Corinthians 10:13 is helpful in this regard. It says that he will only be tempted by things everyone else has been tempted by before—he's not unique—and that God in His sovereign providence always provides means of escape if he will but look for it and take it.

Obviously, there is much more that I would like to tell him before he goes out on his first date. But I believe that these ten points are a good foundation upon which to build a discussion that prepares him for the spiritual challenges that he will face.

What's more, rather than being a legalistic ten-point plan, I want to relate my concerns to him in the context of a relationship based on love and grace. It is precisely because my son is forgiven and restored through Jesus Christ that I want him to live this particular way; it's not as though he has to do these things to make himself acceptable to God or even me. As the Lord Jesus does so perfectly, I want my son to gain encouragement and strength from the fact that he should live this way out of grateful response to what has first been done for us. It is only when we see our lives in the light of the cross that we can have the freedom to live in the way we were originally designed.

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To my daughters

My lovely girls! In no time at all, it seems, you have grown into young women. It brings me so much joy to know that, by grace, you know Jesus Christ, that you love Him and want to live in obedience to Him.

As Christians we are marked by the way we love and care for one another: it is the same way Jesus loved us. This way of living is distinctly different from the rest of the world. In all our relationships His Spirit works in us to help us be obedient to God and to minister to one another, building each other up in our walk with Christ. This other-centeredness is the starting point for what I want to say to you about dating.

Dating is wonderful. It's exciting and special to be spending time with someone you are attracted to, getting to know them better and growing in love. God made men and women to live in relationship with Him and also with each other, and marriage is part of His plan for the lives of most of His people. In our culture dating is seen as anything from a casual fling to the search for Mr. Right, but I'm convinced that Christians ought to regard it as part of the journey to marriage. What the Bible says about marriage, then, will help you understand what God expects of you in a dating relationship.

First, as a Christian woman, you should date a Christian man: a man who trusts and follows Jesus, who is prayerful and is developing a sound knowledge of the Bible, and who regularly serves others in his church. Look for a man who shares your heart *for* God, because one day he might share your heart *with* God.

When you begin regularly spending time with him you can discover more about his character. Galatians 5:16–26 is the finest list of character traits I know against which to compare the man who might become your husband. Ask yourself what sort of fruit he bears—the fruit of a sinful nature, or the fruit of the Spirit—and let that help you decide whether you should continue dating him.

Some people talk about the importance of “compatibility” in dating and marriage, and how they think it's essential to find someone who likes the same things as you. Remember that what really matters is a shared faith in Jesus, a desire to obey God, and a willingness to help each other grow as Christians.

My advice is that you don't begin a dating relationship unless you are interested in it leading to marriage. Of course, not every relationship will lead to marriage. But you should expect that it might, as you grow closer in your commitment to each other and as your lives become more entwined. So wait until you are, in age and character, mature enough to marry, before you start dating. And when you have reached that point in your life, remember that to begin a relationship with no real intention of

Sheryl Sarkoezy

growing in commitment—what we call, “playing the field”—is heartless and doesn't demonstrate the love that God wants you to show toward a Christian brother (for that is what he is until he becomes your husband).

For now, God has placed you in the care of your father. When you marry, that responsibility will be passed to your husband. You can show your respect for this by seeking your father's consent and blessing before you begin dating, and allowing him to meet the man and get to know him.

Once you are dating and growing in commitment to this man, remember the Bible is very clear on the place of physical intimacy between men and women: it belongs in a marriage relationship. This is so out-of-step with the way the world views physical relationships between men and women; in our society, not only is sex outside of marriage permitted, it is often encouraged. You know this from what you see in the media every day. It may be difficult to resist the pressure of our culture in this area of your life. This is another reason why you should date a Christian man—he will have a shared understanding of God's purpose for marriage, and the blessing of physical intimacy within it, and you will be able to help each other act in a godly way.

Steer clear of tempting situations when you are with a man, whether you are in a relationship or not. The obvious thing here is to avoid being alone together in secluded places, but also be aware of how the hormonal changes in your body each month affect the way you respond to a man's touch. Find a trusted, Christian, female confidante to whom you can be accountable about the level of physical contact you have with your boyfriend.

Dress and speak and act modestly. Think about who will be attracted by the clothes you wear and the way you behave—and make sure it's the right sort of man! This is important both when you are dating and when you are not, and particularly if you are out on your own, or at night, or somewhere unfamiliar. If you are dating, take care not to tempt your Christian brother to sin because of the way you dress or act. And, by the way, expect him to show the same respect and concern for you.

Finally, show how beautiful you are by your speech and behavior. Mirror the love of God to all those around you, building them up in the Lord. Trust in Him to work out His good purposes for your life in all things.



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Holding Hands, Holding Hearts

Biblical Principles Make Better Encounters—and Marriages.

Richard Phillips
talks to
Peter Hastie

There's a real need in the church today for biblically informed teaching about how men and women should date. Living in a culture where the ideas behind sinful practices create all sorts of unhelpful expectations and practices, we need a vision of how young Christian men and women can form healthy relationships that will ultimately lead them to a fulfilling marriage. Rev. Richard D. Phillips and his wife, Sharon, have written a helpful book, *Holding Hands, Holding Hearts* (Presbyterian and Reformed, 2006) which sets out from the Bible how believers can approach this difficult but exhilarating time in their lives.

Since the terms “dating,” “boyfriend” and “girlfriend” can't be found in the Bible, is it possible to have a Christian approach to dating?

Well, although the modern social convention of “dating” doesn't appear in the Bible, that doesn't mean the Bible has nothing to say about it. Indeed, the approach that my wife and I took when we wrote the book, *Holding Hands, Holding Hearts*, is that we need to look at dating in the light of what the Bible says about the institution of marriage. We believe that the best way to consider dating is to begin by thinking about the purpose of marriage and the nature of the marital relationship.

Once you have done that, you are then in a position to consider whether present dating practices are consistent with the kind of relationship to which they are meant to lead. As far as I can see, dating is a social phenomenon which is a well-established part of our culture. We are stuck with it whether we like it or not. So, it seems to me that Christians need to consider it in a way that's biblically wise and appropriate to the Bible's teaching on marriage.

Okay, but if dating is a relatively recent social convention and the Bible doesn't deal with it specifically, why is it such an important subject for you to write about?

Well, I am not convinced that saying, *I Kissed Dating Goodbye*, is a sufficient response in today's world where dating is a well-established practice. I can understand the book itself and agree with its basic thrust, which is aimed mainly at teenagers. However, I am really writing for young adults, not teenagers.

The problem for young adults today is that they are living in

an entirely different world from the one of only a generation or so ago. When I was serving as a pastor in Philadelphia, few of our urban singles were from Christian families, and for the most part they were unable to look to their fathers for Christian counsel on this subject. That's why I argue in my book that I believe that the church needs to step in at this point and provide the social network that families used to offer in the past.

Further, it explains why I'm not prepared to say to young adults that they should abandon dating as some Christian authors suggest. If the social context in the US was quite different, then it would be another story. However, dating is the social convention that exists today and so my aim has been to help young adults to reflect biblically upon it. What we want to do is reform the practice of dating so that it will be biblically fruitful. So that's our approach.

Why did you call your book *Holding Hands, Holding Hearts*?

When I was studying at Westminster Theological Seminary I was on the staff of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia. I was the singles pastor and we had 200 to 300 single young adults in their twenties to early forties in our church. We had a Friday night meeting where I would preach as well as coordinate small group Bible studies. From that experience I found that we had the need to present biblical teaching on marriage and dating. The book arose out of the seminars that we put together to help our singles.

How we arrived at the name of the book is interesting. We had a good friend, in fact my wife's room-mate when we were dating, and we were talking about the whole concept of a man wanting to hold a woman's hand. We realized that men view this quite differently from women. And she made the comment, “When he asks to hold my hand, I want to know what that means.” So we would say, “When you're holding a woman's hand, you're really holding her heart.” And that was one of our catchphrases to help men understand what was really going on in a relationship with a woman. So the title became quite a natural introduction to our whole approach. Men are not just holding women's hands; they are also holding their hearts.

What do you actually mean when you say that a guy is holding the heart of a young woman?

What men want in dating is the warmth of feminine feeling and companionship. This is the way that God has made us. It's not sexually sinful to desire feminine warmth. It's a natural, wholesome thing for a man to hold his girlfriend's hand.

However, for the woman, holding a man's hand is not about a fleeting fulfillment of existential needs; it goes far deeper than the pure physical sensation. This means that Christian men need to think very carefully about their obligations to the woman they are dating. One of the themes I major on when I am speaking about dating is the man's spiritual responsibility. The biblical idea of headship means that a man must accept the responsibility for the effects on a woman of the time she may spend with him. So, rather than just taking hold of her hand because he enjoys it, he must take the responsibility for the emotional and spiritual experience that a woman has when she's with him.

Sometimes, those who write on this subject have a particular agenda. Do you have one? Is your aim to get all singles married or to consider marriage?

Yes, I definitely have an agenda. My agenda is to get Christians to think and act biblically about their relationships. In this particular case, I am concerned about the romantic relationships between unmarried men and women. I want Christians to consider how they should conduct themselves in this situation and reform their attitudes and behavior in the light of Scripture.

My agenda is to focus on God's agenda and that means that I need to remind people that marriage is God's regular ordinance for the blessing of men and women. I am not saying that adult singleness is abnormal, not at all. But I do want to say that God's regular pattern is marriage. I know Christians often talk about the gift of singleness, but the reality is that most single adults don't regard it as a gift at all. For most of them it is a trial.... After all, the Lord did say, "It is not good for the man to be alone." God wasn't joking; adult men should desire marriage. I like to say that dating should be with an eye to marriage. Naturally, this doesn't mean that you show up on your first date in a wedding dress or a tuxedo; that's hardly appropriate. Nevertheless, Christians should definitely date with an eye towards marriage, and that's the emphasis in our book.

And so I say to guys, "If you are not seriously interested in marriage, then don't date. And please don't take out the women in my church because I know that they're looking for a husband. And, well they should be."

I know some people think it's rather odd for a woman to be dating with an eye to marriage. I've sometimes heard them say, "Oh, you know, Suzy's only here because she's looking for a husband." And I would say, "Well, I don't think that's the only reason, but what do you expect of a twenty-five-year-old Christian woman? From a biblical point of view it's perfectly reasonable for her to want to be married." So rather than this embarrassment over ulterior motives in dating, I want to put it all out on the table and de-embarrass the whole situation by reminding everyone that it's a godly thing for young adult Christians to be seeking marriage. It may not be for everyone; nevertheless, it's God's regular provision and men should be dating with an eye to marriage.

At the moment there are some prominent evangelical leaders in the United States who are encouraging young people to get married as soon as possible. Do you have any advice on that score?

I think we have to be responsible in giving this sort of advice. However, I can understand why some may be giving it. In the US today we have a problem with Christian men. We have plenty of women who really want to get married; it's the men who are the problem. Women are maturing more quickly than men today and they are looking for a husband.

So I want to challenge young Christian men in their twenties or older, "Why are you not stepping up to the plate to be married? Why aren't you ready? Why is your life in a holding pattern? Why are you forestalling what God says is 'good?'" Too often I hear the lame excuse, "Richard, I'm just not ready for commitment." Well, I want to ask guys in their twenties, "Why not? Why are you not developing your Christian character?" Now notice, I am not saying that guys should get married to overcome their immaturity. The immaturity itself is a problem and they need to get to work on that immediately. Obviously, part of their immaturity is their attitude to marriage.

So what is the main issue that concerns you with young adults at the moment?

It's people who say to me, "I want to date, but I'm just not interested in marriage." When they let me know what they're thinking, I usually say something like, "Well, don't ask out any woman in our church; or if you do, make it clear where you stand. The likelihood is that she will say, "No."

Men today need to realize that the women in our churches are not just there for their emotional "feel good" experience or their convenience. That's selfish. Our men need to embrace biblical manhood which involves nurturing and protecting women. One of Adam's tasks when he was placed in the garden was to tend and protect the things in his care—and that included his wife. If a man is living biblically, then he should make sure that those around him feel cared for and safe. No Christian woman should feel vulnerable in a relationship. She must never feel exploited or uncertain of a man's intentions. She must feel secure.

When I went out on a date with my wife, I was up-front with her from the beginning. After we had been out together for a while and things looked promising, I said to her, "Would you mind if we talked about our relationship?" Actually, she really appreciated that I took this initiative. I said, "Sharon, I want you to know that I really admire you and find you very attractive. If you are willing, I would be happy to continue our relationship in the hope that it would lead to something more. We're not there now, and it's only early days, but I would like to continue our relationship because I believe it could lead to something permanent. Is it okay if I continue to date you with an eye towards marriage?" How do you think she felt about that? Well, I can tell you; she was thrilled!

So tell me, how did you develop a doctrine of dating? You said you worked back from the institution of marriage. Why did you do that?

We started with marriage and worked back because marriage is God's design for the exclusive love relationship between men and women. Our aim was to identify the biblical dynamics of that relationship and then back-track them into dating.

For instance, marriage involves a lifelong relationship that is bound by a covenant. Therefore a dating relationship needs to progressively build commitment and trust. When you're on a first date, the level of commitment is low and needs to be explicitly so. But then as you develop a more exclusive relationship there needs to be greater clarity and definition. For instance, as the relationship deepens I need to tell my girlfriend that from now on I don't intend to take out other women and that I am trying to get to know her better and build more trust between ourselves. I think men need to lead in this regard.

However, the problem men face is that they want intimacy—another dynamic in the relationship—and they tend to give only as much commitment as necessary to get the intimacy they crave. Obviously, this is terribly destructive for women.

Women, on the other hand, want the commitment, and they give the intimacy to the extent that they have to gain commitment. Now the Bible teaches that the intimacy level needs to be appropriate to the commitment level. I really believe there should be no real sexual intimacy short of marriage. I cannot see a biblical case for what Americans call "making out." It's a desire for intimacy in ways that are entirely inappropriate to the level of commitment.

When dating couples become sexually intimate they short-circuit the process of their emotional and intellectual growth together. They become less concerned about communicating with each other because they have physical intimacy on their minds all the time.

When my wife and I were dating, we would go from the restaurant to the park and sit there and talk about all kinds of things. We'd even talk about people walking past us, you know, and say things like, "Look at those shoes!" and laugh about it. We would also talk a lot about the Bible and our attitudes to a large number of issues. We used to memorize Scripture together, talk about Dr. Boice's sermons, laugh together, and tell our stories. It was a wonderful way to grow together intellectually and emotionally.

A man needs to lead in this process. Women have such a great desire to secure commitment that they can be tempted to sell intimacy to get it. However, if a woman does this it changes everything; it certainly affects the way she relates to the man from then on. When a Christian man says to a woman, "You know what, you are a precious child of God and I am going to bring out the very best in you and develop our commitment. We are going to wait for the intimacy," the woman feels completely secure and loved. This is a thrilling and blessed way to date; and it's biblical.

What are the key ideas of marriage that should establish the parameters for the dating relationship?

Genesis 2 sets out three fundamental dynamics for marriage—commitment, intimacy, and interdependence—which will necessarily have some bearing on the dating relationship.

First, marriage is a relationship that is defined by its covenant commitment. This means that in a dating relationship the level of commitment that leads to marriage needs to be proactively managed as the couple move forward in their friendship. I believe

that there should be clearly defined levels of commitment as you are dating. A first date is a first date. That is what it is. We are at dinner getting to know each other. The man needs to specify that. There should be no intimacy. A woman who goes out to dinner with a man twice should not be making meals for him, right? She should not be sewing for him. She should not be coming over to his apartment to clean it. This is completely inappropriate. She is being exploited by her God-given desire and God-given right for commitment from a man. The level of commitment needs to be properly managed during the dating process so that it is not exploited.

The second dynamic is intimacy. Intimacy should correspond to the level of commitment. I don't think that couples who have been on a date once should get together for intimate prayer and open up their hearts to one another. I don't think it's wise to share your inmost thoughts with someone who has not yet made a deep commitment to you. As the commitment in a dating relationship increases, there will be more open sharing of past history, heart attitudes, and hopes for the future, along with an increased amount of time spent in shared interests.

The third dynamic is interdependence; the building of a shared life. For instance, when my wife and I were dating, and we had a fairly long engagement, I would come and stay with her and her parents. She also began to take an interest in my life. She started following the interests I have and I started to develop an interest in the things in which she was involved. I got to know her circle of friends, and our lives began to overlap. So, there needs to be a development of commitment, intimacy, and sharing of interests. And one of the things that I point out in our book is that the man has to take the initiative in opening the way for progress in each of these areas.

Why is the man meant to be the initiator?

He's the initiator because that's the pattern that God established when He created the man and the woman for each other. It all goes back to the blueprint in Genesis 2. Adam is given responsibility to care for everything. Eve is his helper, but the primary responsibility is his. Now it's important to realize that while a man has a certain authority in the marriage relationship, this does not extend to dating. The Bible does not command girlfriends to submit to their boyfriends. If a woman says to me, "I went on a date last night with a guy and he told me to submit to him, what should I do?" my advice would be, "Run! It's totally inappropriate in a dating relationship." To me, male headship in dating is spelled "responsibility." A man must place his girlfriend's wellbeing above his own. He must ask himself at all times: "Am I acting in this woman's physical, spiritual, and emotional best interests at all times?" His job is to care for her; not command her.

How does a guy do that on a date?

In Ephesians 5 Paul says that Jesus purifies and perfects His church through His Word. This means that Christian men must speak to their girlfriends (and their wives) in ways that build



them up. I am always troubled when I hear of men who are dating women and they are critical of the way a woman looks and dresses. My immediate reaction is: “What is this guy going to be like in marriage?” Again, some men are demanding or demeaning of women. That doesn’t fit in with the biblical image of marriage, where the man is supposed to minister to the woman’s heart.

Women have a special role in dating too. The woman was made to be a helper for the man. I think this means that in a dating relationship the woman should be asking herself, “How can I help him, especially if he feels awkward in social settings?” Well, here’s the woman’s opportunity to help him out so that he is better able to cope.

But there are limits in dating. A man does not have authority over a woman while he is dating her, although he does have responsibility for her welfare. Again, women are not called to submit in dating, but they do have a responsibility to help their boyfriends in ways that will encourage them. The point is that when a couple is dating there will come a time when it will be appropriate to look forward to marriage. And when that happens, the dynamics of the marriage relationship will have more and more influence in the way their relationship develops.

Should a Christian man ever date a girl who doesn’t share his faith?

No; when a Christian man dates he should have an end in view, which is marriage. If a man has no intention of marrying a woman, he shouldn’t be dating her. Dating is a modern social construct that is meant to lead to marriage. Men should not be having exclusive emotional relationships with women who are not their wives or with women who they are not seeking to make their wives. If you don’t want to marry a non-Christian, then do not date one. Women, particularly, should not date non-Christian men. I know non-Christian men are sometimes more attractive and appealing, but it’s a matter of faithfulness to the Lord.

In what ways does the reality of sin make it difficult for a man and a woman to have a helpful dating experience?

The fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 has had different effects on men and women. When they fell into sin they suffered alienation from God and alienation between themselves. God cursed them both in different ways.

The curse on the woman took the form of a wrongful desire towards men. God said, “Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.” That curse, which God has imposed on women, has the effect of them having an unwholesome infatuation with men. The actual word, “desire,” is also found in the Song of Solomon, and there it means infatuation. However, the same word is used in Genesis 4:7 where God says to Cain, “sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire.” In this case it refers to a desire to control or master. I think what this means is that sin affects women in such a way that they become unwholesomely infatuated with men and possess a desire to control them. This is one of the reasons why the New Testament tells women to submit to and respect their husbands. Submission in Christ is the remedy for this pattern of feminine sinfulness.

Now the man has a different set of problems due to the curse. God curses the ground because of his disobedience. This means that men’s struggles are directed outside of themselves to the world

around them. They have an infatuation with things in the world external to their relationship with a woman.

Let me give you an example: what is every woman’s magazine about? That’s right, men! They are all about how to have better sex, how to look more beautiful, how to be thinner, how to make better food, etc. And what is the subtext of all these magazines? How to catch and control a man!

Now, think about men’s magazines. What are they about? Almost every men’s magazine is about stuff out in the world: computers, money, cars, mountain biking, sailing, and business. If women feature in these magazines, it’s almost always as possessions or objects. So, the effect of God’s curse because of sin is that the male-female relationship has been corrupted terribly. God has designed marriage from the fall so that marriage is absolutely impossible without Him. My heart goes out to non-Christian people who are desperately trying to stay married. They can’t pull it off truly successfully without being reconciled to God and asking Him to overcome these tendencies in their hearts.

How does idolatry affect the dating relationship?

It only intensifies the tremendous struggles that are already taking place between the man and the woman. We all have this tendency. Pastors see it a thousand times over—a husband who is neglecting his wife’s emotional needs who, in turn, is nagging and trying to control him. He then pulls away from her because of her desire to manipulate him. I call it the death spiral of a relationship. It is God’s curse on the sinful patterns in both their lives. The only solution to the conflict is for both of them to submit to Christ and fulfill His desires for them both within marriage.

Now idolatry puts this solution beyond them both because, instead of yielding to Christ and living for His glory, the idolater says to the other party, “You have to serve my god!” Now let’s say a man worships prestige. How will this play out in the relationship? Well, the man is going to do whatever it takes to get the woman to follow his god. He will pressure her, cajole her, even threaten her so that she will follow his desires.

Again, what happens if the woman worships the idol of pleasure? Well, she is going to insist that he has to make more money to keep her happy. She needs amusements, better clothes, and more expensive holidays to feel fulfilled. And this spells trouble down the road.

What are you going to say to your two sons about whom to date?

When Sharon and I were doing the book, we did a chapter on attraction from Proverbs. And you know what we discovered? Men are attracted by a woman’s beauty and sensual appeal. But a man needs to be wise and realize that marriage is more than having an outwardly beautiful woman to whom he can make love. The character of the woman is the chief thing. She should have the inner beauty of godliness. So, she needs to be a growing Christian who manifests many of the biblical virtues such as kindness and generosity. Proverbs talks about these qualities a lot. Watch out for the sharp-tongued woman, right?

What else would you suggest?

I would tell him to check out whether she works hard and has a heart for ministry. Does she have a well-controlled tongue? Does she carry herself well—is she a noble woman? If she is physically

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Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? Either a vine, figs? So can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh. Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. —JAMES 3:12–13

The Consistent Parent and Teacher



What would you think if you saw a grape vine producing figs, or raspberry bushes with apples hanging on them? Wouldn't you be confused?

This is the point that James, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is making here. If our children or students hear contradictory words in our speech, or witness that our behavior is not in agreement with our talk, or see conflicting actions in our lives, what are they to think? We will confuse them. James writes earlier in chapter 3 of our tongue: "Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be" (3:9–10).

What is a child to think if he is told that sitting still and listening during the church service is very important because that is how God speaks to us, and yet the same child hears his parents negatively critiquing the sermon and criticizing the pastor while traveling home after the service? Which is true: what his parents told him before church or what he heard after the service? One thing was heard about how we should live, but another was absorbed regarding how life actually is lived. One thing was "taught" but another was "caught."

We can severely confuse our young children by our contradictory words or actions. Teens readily detect our inconsistencies; it is as if they have built-in radars for such inconsistencies! What is taught and what is "caught" in the following examples?

- The elementary school teacher who informs her students that she will conduct a desk neatness inspection because neatness and organization are important traits for successful living, but she cannot find the notepad in her own messy desk drawer in order to write down the names of students who must stay in during recess to clean their untidy desks.
- The high school teacher who just completed teaching the parable of the Good Samaritan and the importance of denying ourselves to show love, care, and concern for others; but he steps around the girl who dropped her books and notebook binder in the doorway as she was leaving class and is embarrassedly trying to pick up her papers that flew all over the hallway.
- The father who has strongly disciplined his son for talking behind his back after his son told some friends about a mistake that his dad had made; but this same son hears his father freely criticizes country and church leadership decisions.

- The parents who tell their children that personal prayer and reading sound religious books are very important, but the children never see their parents in personal prayer and Bible study.
- The teacher who stresses with her students that Sunday and church worship are the most important events of the week, but her students regularly see and hear her more excited about Saturday's activities than Sunday's worship.

Do you see the problem? If we, as our children's and students' most influential role models, send inconsistent and conflicting signals, what will this produce? How safe would our driving be if conflicting signs were posted, or traffic lines and stop signs could be disregarded whenever the driver decided to do so? In a world of increasing public sin and open temptation, we must provide consistent, faithful examples for our children and teens. Know that inconsistent parents or teachers will consistently have problems with their children's or students' behavior. Our talk and walk must be consistent.

How did Jesus distinguish the wise from the foolish builder in the closing application of His Sermon on the Mount? "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock" (Matt. 7:24). The wise builder was consistent. What such a man hears in church or reads at the family table is lived out in his daily life. He lived consistently. He was sincere and true. Such examples will stand, even when storms shall rage against them. But "everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand" (Matt. 7:26). What he heard and professed was not lived out in real life. He lived an inconsistent life. He was hypocritical and double-tongued. Such examples will end in ruin.

Dear parent or teacher, be a wise builder. Be consistent and faithful. Set a clear example. In so doing, by God's grace, the house of your hopes and prayers for your children or students will stand, despite the storms that may come against it. Do not be foolish by living inconsistently in talk and walk. By doing so you build on sand. If God does not miraculously prevent it, all you build will collapse.

"Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom" (James 3:13).

Are you a consistent parent, a faithful teacher?

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Last month I described how the sons of Cain and the Babelites used technology to subvert a God-centered world view. They succumbed to the deification of technology or what Neil Postman referred to as “technopoly.”

However, we must realize that this is a common human pattern. As Derek Kidner notes: “Cain’s family is a microcosm: its pattern of technical prowess and moral failure is that of humanity.”¹ We may fall prey to technopoly, too. So how do we know if we are suffering from its ills?

DISENGAGEMENT

While technological developments such as cell phones and the internet are lauded as a means of fostering greater connectivity in our world, ironically they have often delivered the exact opposite.

Technology frequently disengages us from our real, three-dimensional world and connects us to an unreal, two-dimensional, virtual world. By disengaging us from the context of our real world, technology can subtly rob us of meaningful interaction with our neighbor.

I remember the first time I encountered someone wearing a cell phone earpiece. I was waiting in line at Starbucks and this man in front of me seemed to be talking to himself. At first, I thought he was mentally unstable and cautiously backed away from him. But then I saw the device protruding from his ear. The man proceeded to carry on a cell phone conversation during the entire time he was in Starbucks. My guess is that he never even noticed the other humans around him. He was entirely disengaged from his real world surroundings. He was there, but wasn’t there. Social scientists have coined the phrase “absent presence” to describe this phenomenon.

This type of technologically induced disengagement has real spiritual implications. Jesus commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves (Luke 10:27) and to share the gospel with every creature (Matt. 28:18–20). We can’t love our neighbor and we can’t share the gospel if we refuse to engage with our world.

In our culture we are plugging in and tuning out. This is exactly what Satan wants us to do: he wants us to neglect our neighbor. Think about it—if the good Samaritan was wearing an iPod and text-messaging his friend on a cell phone, do you think he would have noticed the wounded man in the ditch?

DISTRACTION

The primary way technology distracts us from what is really important is by entertaining us. As Neil Postman has pointed out, technology enhances our opportunities to amuse ourselves to death. Technology has exponentially increased our ability to entertain ourselves.

Of course, entertainment is not inherently evil. It is a legitimate form of recreation. It becomes harmful, however, when it is sinful or when it dominates our lives and distracts us from focusing on the truly important things, like our relationship with God. When it dominates, it creates what the French sociologist and theologian, Jacques Ellul, referred to as “empty time.” It causes people to “lose their sense of reality and to abandon their search for truth.”²

Satan loves to distract us. He is quite pleased to satisfy our minds and consume our lives by offering us endless sources of entertainment. He wants to fill our lives with empty time. He understands that distractions and diversions work in his favor. He knows what the French theologian Blaise Pascal knew, that all “the major forms of diversion are dangerous to the Christian life.”³

The last thing Satan wants you to do is to fulfill the admonition of Paul to “set your minds on things above” (Col. 3:2). One of the ways he keeps you from doing this is through the distracting power of technology.

Battling with Technopoly

Anthony Selvaggio

DISEMBODIMENT

A third symptom of technopoly is disembodiment. God has created us as unified beings possessing both a body and soul. This vital union of body and soul is what defines us as human.

Technology, however, has made it possible to divide this union. The philosopher Albert Borgman notes that technology allows us to receive information solely through our eyes and ears while the rest of our bodies become both “immobile and irrelevant.” Borgman notes that the end result of this process is a “disembodied person.”⁴ Never before in human history have humans had the ability to separate their consciousness from their bodies.

The reason why this disembodiment is spiritually dangerous is because it makes us both less human and less humane. It allows us also to separate our actions from our bodies.

When humans are able to separate their bodies from their actions, they are more likely to engage in sinful and destructive behavior because they can distance themselves from the consequences of their actions. In other words, technological disembodiment leads us to engage in activities which we would never engage in if our whole being were present. A prime example of this is the practice known as “cyberbullying.”⁵

CRUELTY

Schoolchildren now trash their classmates in virtual internet communities. They cavalierly ruin the reputations of real people by

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beautiful, that’s fine. I have to tell you, though, that American women who are beauty queens are often quite selfish because they have been treated like queens their whole lives. So being attracted to one as a future spouse could have a serious downside.

Christian men often get themselves into trouble when looking for a wife because they approach the issue the wrong way. They say, “Here are the women that I am most attracted to physically,” and then they start to look for Christian virtues. I say reverse that. Take the pool of women who have the most Christian virtues, and then ask, “Of these women, which one am I most attracted to?” I am not denying the physical chemistry; I’m just saying let’s get everything in the right order. Does she have integrity? Is she godly? Is she industrious? Is she kind? Does she relate well to people? Do you trust her to raise your children well? Will she handle your finances faithfully? Then I’d tell my son, “You’d better prioritize these things. Look for the group of women who are the most virtuous and then ask out the prettiest one.”

What are you going to say to your daughters?

I will tell them that this man’s spiritual leadership is going to be the key thing in their family life so they need to know about his life and doctrine. Is he a committed, doctrinally sound Christian? Is he growing in the Lord? Or is he someone who makes a profession of faith, goes to a worldly mega-church, and whose life shows no real difference from unbelievers?

If they say, “But Dad, he’s a Christian,” I’ll say, “Unless he is showing real biblical commitment and is growing in Christ-likeness, don’t marry him!” I regularly say to the women in our church, “Don’t date someone who is not doctrinally sound. If you date someone who doesn’t believe in God’s sovereignty and our

their disembodied actions in a virtual world. They display a level of cruelty in this virtual world which they would never express in a real-world encounter.

Why is this occurring? Because the internet allows them to separate their bodies from their actions. It is true that technology is a tool to build and create things, but it can also become a tool to destroy things. Technology can destroy our communities through disengagement, our relationship with God through distraction, and our sense of morality through disembodiment.

In next month’s article, we will explore ways to resist the destructive power of technopoly.

1. Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1967), 78.
2. Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Random House, 1964), 337; as quoted in Marva Dawn’s *Unfettered hope* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 18.
3. Blaise Pascal, *Pensees*, trans. A. J. Krailsheimer (New York: Penguin, 1966), 764; as quoted in Dawn’s *Unfettered Hope*, 19.
4. Albert Borgman, *Crossing the Postmodern Divide* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992), 106; as quoted in Dawn’s *Unfettered Hope*, 4.
5. Anne Marie Chaker, “Schools act to short-circuit spread of Cyberbullying,” *The Wall Street Journal*, January 24, 2007, D1.

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absolute need for grace, that’s going to affect the way you raise your family.” I mean that. It is also important to make sure that the man you date has biblical virtues like self-control, kindness, and industry. The problem is that women are usually attracted to confident men. That’s fine, but let’s start with men who are committed Christians, who are doctrinally sound and who manifest the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Once you have established that he is a man with all these characteristics, then you can pick the most handsome or confident one among them.

I would tell my girls that the reason why they need to choose a godly man is that he is the husband to whom they will have to submit. If they marry a man who is an inconsistent Christian (even though I have cautioned them about this), they need to understand that after they are married I am going to tell them that they need to submit to him. There are Christian women who make this mistake all the time. They are so keen to get married that they start dating a guy who has made a false profession of faith or is an immature Christian. Then when they are married they come to me and complain. And I have to say to them, “Now you need to submit to your husband.” Remember, this man is going to be the father of your children. You need to be able to rely on him to provide for you. Whatever you do, don’t marry some guy who is happy-go-lucky and a fun person who is not moving forward and doesn’t have the capacity for hard work.

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Christianity stands or falls on one stupendous event—the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If He is now no more than a handful of dust and bones lying somewhere in Israel, the Christian faith lies buried with Him. Here is a booklet that can be a means to strengthen the faith of countless Christians—and give them a dynamic means of sharing their faith with others.

(PB, Evangelical Press, 40 pgs.) Retail Price: \$2.40 | Our Price: \$1.00

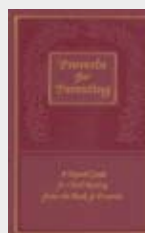
Also available, package of 10 \$24.00 | \$7.50



Stars in God’s Sky—*Faith Cook*

In her typically engaging and enthralling style, Faith Cook shows us how God graciously works in individuals’ lives. Among others, here we find the encouraging short stories of John Foxe, Fanny Guinness, John Gifford and “Grimshaw’s men,” Paul Greenwood, and Jonathan Maskew. “Those who turn many to righteousness shall shine like the stars of heaven for ever and ever” (Daniel 12:3).

(PB, Evangelical Press, 160 pgs.) Retail Price: \$15.99 | Our Price: \$12.00



Proverbs for Parenting: A Topical Guide for Child Raising from the Book of Proverbs—*Barbara Decker*

An indispensable tool for parenting, this book arranges the proverbs into over seventy realistic, helpful topics. Topics covered include trust in God, obedience, honesty, anger, self-control, temper, arguing, boasting, complaining, love, friendship, happiness, discretion, faithfulness, stewardship, work, and many more.

(HB, Lynn’s Bookshelf, 326 pgs.) Retail Price: \$16.95 | Our Price: \$13.00



The Westminster Directory for Public Worship

Mark Dever and Sinclair Ferguson

The Directory for Public Worship forms the basis of the Presbyterian system of church government and practice. Here it is discussed by Sinclair Ferguson and Mark Dever. They demonstrate that from the pens of the Puritans flowed a supremely biblical, God-centered, and Christ-exalting focus on worship, preaching, and ministry.

(PB, Christian Focus, 127 pgs.) Retail Price: \$10.00 | Our Price: \$7.50



Exploring the Bible: Obadiah—*David Field*

Obadiah uses key biblical themes such as mountains and brothers, the kingdom of God, and the day of the Lord. He challenges his hearers and readers by what he says about malice, pride, and complacency. He encourages God’s people with the promise of their sure inheritance. He raises wider matters of justice, spiritual warfare, and the international spread of the kingdom of God. Furthermore, like all the prophets, Obadiah points us to the kindness and justice of the Lord Jesus Christ and to the greatness of what He has done for us.

(PB, Day One, 128 pgs.) Retail Price: \$9.00 | Our Price: \$7.00



Charles Darwin’s Religious Views: From Creationist to Evolutionist—*David Herbert*

The intent of this book is to demonstrate how Darwin’s rejection of the Bible led him to adopt the naturalistic assumptions that were foundational to his belief in evolutionism. Well-researched and written in an engaging style, Dr. Herbert brings to life the spiritual journey of one of history’s most controversial figures.

(PB, Joshua Press, 174 pgs.)

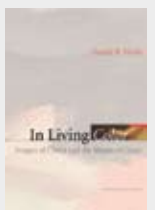
Retail Price: \$20.00 | Our Price: \$15.00



Get Outta My Face! How to Reach Angry, Unmotivated Teens with Biblical Counsel—*Rick Horne*

Written for Christian parents, teachers, and youth workers, this book is about reaching angry, unmotivated, disinterested teens with biblical counsel. It addresses teenagers' sins and how to bring them, by the Spirit's grace, to God-given desires and godly actions. Far from dismissing or sugarcoating sin, this approach opens wide the door to evangelizing the unsaved teen and to helping the Christian teen grow in holiness and wisdom.

(PB, Shepherd Press, 176 pgs.) Retail Price: \$13.95 | Our Price: \$10.50



In Living Color—*Daniel Hyde*

While man has universally and perpetually desired the visual in his relationship with God, this book clearly explains that God has given His people the Word and sacraments as manifestations of His presence until Christ comes again, visibly and corporeally—in living color. This is the classic Reformed exegesis of Scripture as expressed in its confessions. Foreword by Joel R. Beeke.

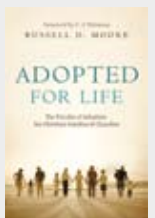
(PB, Reformed Fellowship, 192 pgs.)
Retail Price: \$13.00 | Our Price: \$10.50



The Case for Life—*Scott Klusendorf*

The Case for Life provides intellectual grounding for the pro-life convictions that most evangelicals hold. The author first simplifies the debate: the sanctity of life is not a morally complex issue. It's not about choice, privacy, or scientific progress. To the contrary, the debate turns on one key question: What is the unborn? From there readers learn how to engage the great bio-tech debate of the twenty-first century, how to answer objections persuasively, and what the role of the pro-life pastor should be.

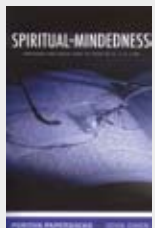
(PB, Crossway, 256 pgs.) Retail Price: 15.99 | Our Price: \$12.00



Adopted for Life: The Priority of Adoption for Christian Families and Churches—*Russell D. Moore*

Adopted for Life is a popular-level, practical manifesto for Christians to adopt children and to help equip other Christian families to do the same. Moore shows that adoption is not just about couples who want children—or who want more children. It is about an entire culture within evangelicalism, a culture that sees adoption as part of the Great Commission mandate and as a sign of the gospel itself.

(PB, Crossway, 232 pgs.) Retail Price: \$15.99 | Our Price: \$11.00



Spiritual-Mindedness—*John Owen*

This book began life as a collection of meditations on Romans 8:6, written for the author's own benefit during a time of illness. Alarmed by the subtle power the world exercises over the mind, Owen shows us how to live by raising our thoughts above all earthly objects and setting them on "things above, where Christ is" (Col. 3:1).

(PB, Banner of Truth, 258 pgs.)
Retail Price: \$12.00 | Our Price: \$9.00



The Psalms of David in Metre (Pocket Edition)

The psalms of David in metre without other hymns or paraphrases. Page size: 4¼ x 3 inches. The General Assembly of the Church of Scotland approved the text of this Psalter for use by the church in 1650. This Psalter has been in continuous use since its initial publication, and has remained unaltered, except for some modernized spelling, from its original wording.

(HB, TBS, 311 pgs.) Retail Price: \$7.00 | Our Price: \$6.00



Let's Study Matthew—*Mark E. Ross*

In this easy-to-understand book, Mark Ross guides the reader through the 28 chapters of Matthew's Gospel and helps us to apply its teaching to our daily lives. He shows us that in the person and work of Jesus Christ the long-expected kingdom of God has arrived, and life and salvation are offered to all the nations of the earth. As the writer says, "What a message this is—what drama, what pathos, what love, what glory, what longing fulfilled, what hope and promise for us today!"

(PB, Banner of Truth, 329 pgs.) Retail Price: \$16.00 | Our Price: \$12.00



The Life of Rowland Hill: 'The Second Whitefield'

Tim Shenton

This is a large and great book on a larger-than-life and great preacher of two centuries ago. Tim Shenton shows that Rowland Hill (1744–1833) was a kind of Luther figure in his own day—spiritual yet earthy, practical yet eccentric, energetic yet controversial, colorful yet black and white in so many of his convictions, profoundly loved and admired yet despised and hated, kind yet frequently sharp with his tongue. Here is biography at its best. Shenton marvelously brings Rowland Hill to life in a balanced and objective way, neither minimizing his remarkable set of gifts nor hiding his destructive blemishes.

(HB, Evangelical Press, 702 pgs.) Retail Price: \$39.99 | Our Price: \$30.00

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Trusting God in the New Year

FOR OUR CHILDREN

by Diana Kleyn

Last week we brought home our new dog. After several visits to the animal shelter, we chose Maia, a Golden Retriever mix. We know very little about her other than that she was a stray and that she is about two years old. When it was finally time to take Maia home, she didn't want to get into the car. A shelter employee had to pick her up and place her on the seat. We tried to soothe her, but her whole body trembled and she kept her tail between her legs. When we stopped for gas, she suddenly jumped out the open window! She didn't run far and we soon caught up to her. We wished we could make her understand that we wouldn't hurt her and that we want to take good care of her.

When it comes to trusting God, we often behave like Maia, except that we have no excuses. Maia did not understand what was happening to her. She didn't understand when we told her we were taking her out of the noisy, overwhelming animal shelter to a peaceful home where she would be loved and cared for. She tried to run away because she was afraid. Perhaps she has been mistreated in the past and no longer trusts people. It is no wonder that she trembled and tucked her tail between her legs!

But what excuse do we have for not trusting God? God has given us the Bible, which is full of sincere invitations to come to Him. He promises to care for us—not only for our bodies but also for our souls! Yet we worry and attempt to take care of ourselves without asking for God's help. We try to run away from God and even ignore our need for salvation.

This month is the beginning of a new year. We are not sure what the year will bring. Will we enjoy good health, a loving family, kind friends, good grades at school, and a place to worship the Lord? Or will we face trials, disappointments, and difficulties? Most importantly, will we seek the Lord above all and enjoy communion with Him? We know we will have happy days and sad days; that is part of life here on earth. What is

crucial, however, is whether we will trust God no matter what. God has given us many reasons to trust Him. He tells us that He is faithful and will not disappoint us: "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations" (Deuteronomy 7:9). He gives us warnings, telling us what will happen to us if we do not trust Him: "He that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36b). God does not enjoy sending people to hell; several times in the book of Ezekiel God says, "For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord GOD: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye" (Ezekiel 18:32). He informs us that He is pleased when we do trust Him and that the angels rejoice when a sinner believes in Christ: "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10). His Word gives us many examples of people trusting in God and how they were blessed: "Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded" (Psalm 22:4–5).

Do you trust the Lord for *everything*? Do you ask Him to take care of you each day and to keep you from sin? Do you ask Him to wash away your sins and make you clean within? Do you ask Him to make you a light for the Lord Jesus? Do you trust Him for your daily needs as well as your soul's needs? Or do you *distrust* God and try to run away from Him like Maia ran away from us? Do you think God takes pleasure in sending people to hell? Do you think God is not willing to help you in your daily life? Children, these are Satan's lies. You are trembling and cowering in fear but you need to study the Bible: it is God's own Word. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to see God's love and grace. God Himself says, "Say to them that are of a

fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompence; he will come and save you” (Isaiah 35:4). When Jesus lived on earth, He spoke these words: “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

Maia has been with us for nine days now and is beginning to relax. She is finally eating more, and even wags her tail a little when we pet her. We are happy when we see these signs of trust. In a much greater way, the Lord is pleased when His people trust Him because that trust brings Him glory. He is glad to help and to save lost sinners. He loves to comfort trembling

souls. If He gave His only begotten Son to suffer and die for rebellious enemies, don’t you think He would be pleased if these lost, guilty sinners turn to Him for salvation, trusting that He alone can save them? We honor Him when we put our trust in Him, but we dishonor and insult Him when we run away from Him and try to work out our own problems. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to the Savior and to fill you with His love. Ask Him to give you the grace to trust Him not only for 2010, but also for eternity. “O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him” (Psalm 34:8).

Diana Kleyn is the author of several books for children.

Unbelief Put to Shame

A widow and her two daughters lived in New England. All three earned their living by sewing. One winter day, the three of them were trying their best to finish a large order for one of their customers. There had been no time for trips into town for food and fuel. They had hoped to finish the project in two days, when they planned to deliver it to the customer and collect payment so they could buy food as well as wood for fuel. However, a winter storm blew in that night. Not only would they not be able to deliver their sewing on time, but they would not be able to get the food and wood they needed. Their neighbors lived quite a distance away—too far to safely go for help in such a storm.

The daughters became more and more worried when the storm showed no signs of letting up, but the mother said, “Don’t worry, girls. The Lord will provide. We have enough for today, and by tomorrow the storm may be over.” With this encouragement, they settled down to finish their work.

The next day came, and with it no sunshine, but only more wind and snow. The storm still raged, and still there was no sign of help. By noon, the last of their food was gone. What would they do? The girls became very anxious, but the mother repeated, “Don’t worry, girls. The Lord will provide.”

The girls had heard that the day before, and were not comforted. They did not share their mother’s trust in God, so they could not share the confidence she felt. “If we get anything today God will have to bring it Himself, for nobody else can get here if they try,” said one of the daughters impatiently.

They sat down again to their sewing, the daughters to fret about their situation, and the mother to roll her burden on the Lord.

About a mile away, Mr. Matthews sat in his cozy living room with his daughter comfortably sitting by his side. The fire crackled cheerily, and father and daughter were glad to be safe and warm on this stormy winter day. Mr. Matthews seemed lost in silent meditation, and Mary was reading her new book. At length the father spoke. “Mary, I want you to get me a large sack. I must go and bring some wood and food to the widow Cooper and her daughters.”

“But Father, it is too dangerous to go in this weather!” protested Mary. “The road is all snowed in! You will lose your way and die in this storm!”

The man sat in silence a few moments and said firmly, “Mary, I must go.”

She knew him too well to know that nothing she said would change his mind. While she got the burlap bag for him, she felt a bit uneasy to see him put so much food in it and exclaimed, “Leave enough for us!”

He patiently answered, “Mary, give what you think God wants you to give.”

Mary packed several days’ worth of food while her father loaded the sled and harnessed the oxen. Then Mr. Matthews climbed into the sled, wrapped a thick blanket around himself, and away they went. The oxen obediently made their way to the widow’s home, wallowing through the drifted snow, dragging the sled with its load of wood and food.

About four o’clock in the afternoon, the mother put down her work to stoke the fire. There was not enough firewood to last the night. She peered out of the window into the storm and saw the oxen pulling up to their house: she knew the Lord had heard her cry. “Thank the Lord! Help is here!” she exclaimed.

Her daughters were astonished. Enthusiastically, they greeted the snow-covered, red-cheeked man. They brought him a hot drink and pulled a chair close to the fire. “How did you know we needed help?” they asked.

“The Lord impressed it upon me, Mrs. Cooper, that you needed some wood and food.”

“He told you the truth,” answered the widow, “and I will praise Him forever!”

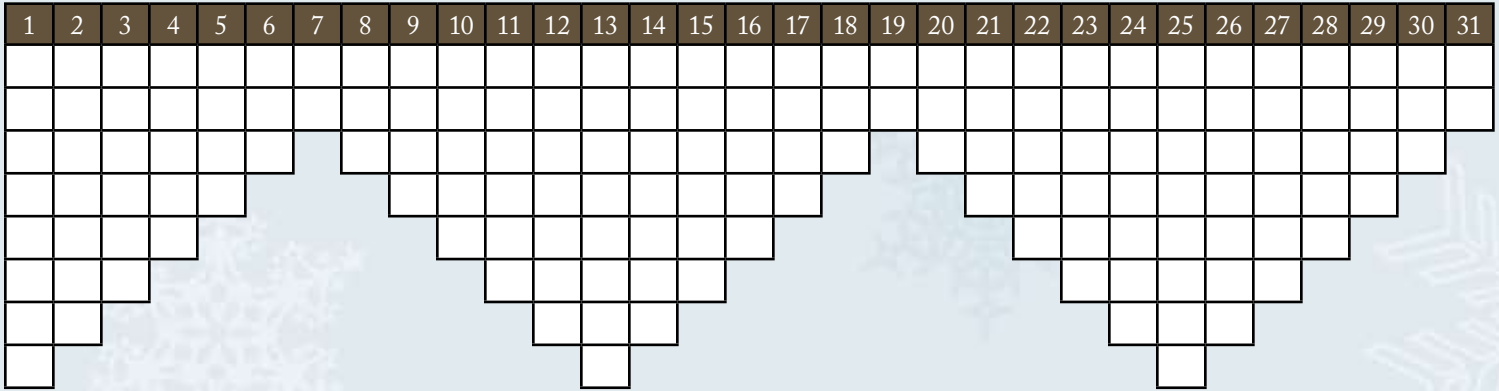
After Mr. Matthews left, the widow turned to her unbelieving daughters. “What do you think now, girls? Does God provide?”

They were speechless. The girls never forgot this wonderful day when the Lord proved that He is merciful and trustworthy. Thankfully, the Holy Spirit changed their hearts. From that day they learned to trust in Him who cares for His needy children in times of distress, and who, from His boundless stores, supplies the wants of those who trust in Him. “For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper” (Ps. 72:12).

Taken from *The Wonders of Prayer: A Record of Well Authenticated and Wonderful Answers to Prayer*, ed. D. W. Whittle (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell, 1885).

Puzzle

Look up the texts to find the missing words. All the answers go downward.
When you are finished you will find Proverbs 3:5a running across the top.



1. "He that _____ in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about" (Psalm 32:10).
2. "And hast not withholden the _____ of his lips. Selah" (Psalm 21:2).
3. "Yea, I will _____ thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10).
4. "Trust also in him; and he _____ bring it to pass" (Psalm 37:5).
5. "_____ art my help and my deliverer" (Psalm 40:17).
6. "Written not with _____, but with the Spirit of the living God" (2 Corinthians 3:3).
7. "_____ good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psalm 84:11).
8. "Trust ye in _____ LORD forever" (Isaiah 26:4).
9. "He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, _____ everlasting life" (John 5:24).
10. "God shall help her, and that right _____" (Psalm 46:5).
11. "O thou of _____ faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matthew 14:31).
12. "Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that _____ the voice of his servant" (Isaiah 50:10).
13. "Thy faithfulness _____ unto the clouds" (Psalm 36:5).
14. "_____ thyself also in the LORD" (Psalm 37:4).
15. "Lo, this is our God; we have _____ for him, and he will save us" (Isaiah 25:9).
16. "Strengthened with might by his Spirit in the _____ man" (Ephesians 3:16).
17. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on _____" (Isaiah 26:3).
18. "Oh _____ great is thy goodness" (Psalm 31:19).
19. "They that trust in the LORD shall be _____ mount Zion" (Psalm 125:1).
20. "But _____ all those that put their trust in thee rejoice" (Psalm 5:11).
21. "Trust in the _____; and do good" (Psalm 37:3).
22. "None of them that _____ in him shall be desolate" (Psalm 34:22).
23. "_____ not your heart" (Psalm 95:8).
24. "_____ your heart unto the LORD God of Israel" (Joshua 24:23).
25. "And he was _____ with the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12).
26. "That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have _____ life" (John 3:15).
27. "He forgetteth not the cry of the _____" (Psalm 9:12).
28. "I am the door: by me if any man _____ in, he shall be saved" (John 10:9).
29. "And he took them up in his _____, put his hands upon them, and blessed them" (Mark 10:16).
30. "Though [your sins] be _____ like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).
31. "It is better _____ trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man" (Psalm 118:8).

Thanks again to all who answered last month's quiz!

Daniel Beeke	Wynonna Klaassen	Irene Stam
Emily Beeke	Jacob Koppert	Ellen Steenwyk
Joanne Beeke	Rachel Koppert	Kaitlyn Stubbe
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Please send your puzzle answers to:
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Here are the answers to last month's quiz.

"A" Star:	"R" Star:	"G" Star:	"W" Star:
1. appeared	9. righteous	17. gracious	25. walketh
2. arise	10. riches	18. great	26. world
3. angel	11. region	19. gospel	27. witness
4. awake	12. rising	20. guide	28. works
5. ashamed	13. righteous-	21. Gentiles	29. watchman
6. armor	ness	22. grace	30. will
7. abideth	14. risen	23. giveth	31. while
8. at all	15. rejoice	24. glory	32. words
	16. raiment		

A Visit to a Den of Thieves

One stormy night, a shabbily dressed man pounded on the door of a man who often preached the gospel on the city streets. The stranger was obviously uneasy; he shuffled his feet and looked over his shoulder repeatedly. He asked, "Are you that street preacher that comes out to the bad parts of town?"

"Yes, I am. What can I do for you?" the man asked, as he invited his visitor to come inside.

"Well, sir, my friend's been asking for you," replied the stranger. "He's dying and he's real worked up about it."

The preacher hesitated. The night was dark, cold, and miserable. The wind howled and the rain came down in sheets. His visitor was no gentleman: he was dirty, unkempt, and looked as though he was no stranger to crime. However, it did seem as though he was telling the truth. Praying silently for protection, the preacher agreed to go with the stranger. Dressing warmly, he stepped out into the blustery night. His guide led the way in silence, and soon the preacher was in unfamiliar territory. They passed dilapidated apartment buildings and dingy storefronts secured with sturdy bars. At last they made their way through a narrow alley which led into a muddy courtyard. The stranger stopped and stated, "I'll have to blindfold you now."

Noticing the preacher's alarm, he quickly added, "It's not a trick, I promise. It's just that no one can know where we live."

There was no one else in sight. Who would help him if something happened to him, the preacher wondered? Trusting God, the minister agreed to be blindfolded. A large bandana was placed over his eyes, and then he was led through some more alleyways. When they stopped, his guide knocked at a door. Chains rattled and a key turned in the lock. A heavy wooden door opened a crack. The guide warned, "Watch your step." To the left of the big door, they descended through a trap door into a cellar. The foul smell was almost suffocating and the preacher coughed. Someone removed the bandana from the preacher's eyes. Along one wall an ailing man lay stretched upon a rickety bed covered with an old patched blanket. The man opened his glazed eyes and spoke in a raspy voice. "I'm glad you've come. I'm afraid I'm dying. I heard you talk once about the blood that saves from sin. I wanted to send for you before, but my pals didn't want a preacher around. I said you wouldn't snitch on us 'cause you're a good man, so Jim said he'd fetch you. Now, will you tell me something about the blood that saves from hell?"

The preacher glanced around the dirty, cramped den. A group of men sat around a table. By the glimmer of a dim lamp, two more were playing cards. The situation was

so bizarre that the preacher was unsure what to say or do, but he focused on the dying man's desire to hear about "the blood that saves," and he began to explain the gospel. "Yes, certainly, 'the blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son cleanseth us from all sin' (1 John 1:7b). But I must tell you, my friend, that the blood of Christ will not save you unless you are ready to confess and forsake all sin. His name was called Jesus, for He came to save His people from their sin. This is a blessed message, if you are willing to hear it."

The men ceased their card-playing, and all their attention focused on the bold preacher as he went on to tell them that they must repent and be converted or they could never enter the kingdom of heaven. "There is no possibility of being saved from hell without being saved from sin. Do you understand me?"

After some minutes of silence the dying man finally answered, "Yes, I heard you. I've been very wicked and lived a bad life. I'm afraid I'm dying and must go to hell." Then, as if forgetting that the others were present, he told his visitor about a terrible deed he had committed years before. He was afraid there could be no forgiveness for something so awful. It was a solemn scene: a man lying on the brink of eternity with a burden of sin upon his conscience from which he could not escape.

Again, the preacher sent a silent prayer heavenward asking for wisdom and courage, and the blessing of the Holy Spirit. Then, in the simplest language possible, he explained that God sent His beloved Son to purchase redemption for lost sinners, so "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:15). As a drowning man will grasp a life raft, so this poor wretched man laid hold on the glad good news. He drank in the preacher's words and at last seemed satisfied, resting upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The preacher also warned the others to leave this horrible place, and try to find some honest employment. Impressed by the solemn warning they had just heard, the men promised they would try. The preacher was again blindfolded after the visit, and led from the den. He was very thankful to find himself safely home again. He met many unique people and met with other unusual events after this, but the memory of that frightening visit to the den of thieves remained with him till his dying day. The street preacher never saw any of these men again. Eternity alone will reveal whether this faithful man's words were blessed to any of the thieves' hearts that strange, cold, rainy night.



Adapted from *Trophies of Grace: or, Leaves from a Colporteur's Diary*, by James Chalmers (Glasgow: John Thomson & Co; Rutherglen: James Chalmers, n.d.).

News and Announcements

ANNOUNCEMENT OF UPCOMING MEETINGS

The Lord willing, the Synod Prayer Service, Theological Seminary Committee, and Synod meeting will be held respectively on April 16–18 in Franklin Lakes, New Jersey. The Office-bearers' Conference will be held on April 16 at 3:00 p.m. The Synod Prayer Service will be held on April 16, at 7:30 p.m.

April 17, 8:00 a.m.

Theological Seminary Committee Meeting

This committee will meet in the Franklin Lakes church to assess progress of the seminary, discuss future plans, and interview applicants.

Men who believe they are being called to the ministry of the gospel and desire to be admitted into the Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary should contact either the president, Mr. Jake Sinke (jakesinke@bellnet.ca), or secretary, Rev. Don Overbeek (don.overbeek@auracom.com) of the Theological Seminary Committee, or the president of their own consistory for further information on the procedures and requirements in order to obtain a consistory attest.

April 18, 8:00 a.m. Synod Meeting

The Synod meeting will be held in the Franklin Lakes church. Consistories and Synod-appointed committees are reminded that all material for Synod should be forwarded to Mr. Bill Tanis, Sr. via e-mail (wjtanis@gmail.com) or on computer disk by March 3 for distribution to the consistories.

OBITUARIES

FAASSE, Mrs. Ruth Adriana, passed away on November 16, 2009 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She was born November 19, 1919. Ruth was preceded in death by her parents, Clayton and Mary VanDyke, her sisters, Lois (Wheland) and Marianne, her father and mother-in-law, Martin and Johanna Faasse, Sister and Brothers-in-law, Richard LaBotz, Jack & Tina Pyp, Anthony & Ada Boshoven, Cornelius & Jeanne Karelse, John & Margaret (DeWinter) Faasse, Sieger (Harry) Klooststra, Geraldine Faasse, John DeVries, Adrian Kaan, and Clinton Peck. Surviving are her husband of 66 years, Adrian; Son—Dr. Martin & Roelie Faasse; Sisters—Jane Peck, Nellie Kaan, Laura (Dan) Breuker, Josephine Brandt; Brother—John VanDyke; Sisters-in-law—Wilma LaBotz, Anne Klooststra; Brother-in-law—Martin Faasse; Grandchildren—Drs. Mark & Ranya Faasse, Jonathan & Kristin Faasse, Sarah Faasse; Great-granddaughter—Carolyn Faasse; Two special friends in Christ—Wilma DeVries & Jean Malloy. (Dr. J. R. Beeke, Isaiah 49:14–17; Rev. 21:4a).

STOUTJESDYK, Mrs. Louise Adriana (DeMaagd), age 85, passed away November 18, 2009, Grand Rapids Michigan. She was preceded in death by her parents, Louis and Lillian DeMaagd; brothers, Matthew and John DeMaagd; sister, Cornelia Wielhouwer; brothers-in-law/sister-in-law, John Bazen, James Berman, Jeannette Engelsma. Surviving are her husband, John; Sons—John A. (Carol), Steven J. (Laurie), Mark S. (Christine); Sisters—Edith Bazen, Jeanette Berman, Elizabeth VanRee; Brother-in-law/sisters-in-law—Dorothy DeMaagd, Marilyn Stoutjesdyk, Martin & Shirley Stoutjesdyk; 12 grandchildren; 6 great-grandchildren. (Rev. J. B. Zippo).

HERITAGE SPRING RETREAT

The Heritage Spring Retreat, hosted by Burgessville HNRC, will take place from May 24, 2009 (5:00 p.m.) to May 27 (11:00 a.m.), D.V. at the Brantford Circle Square Ranch, just outside of Brantford, Ontario. All 18 to 30-year-old singles and married couples are welcome. This year's theme is entitled "Contending for the Faith" and will include several topics and workshops that will challenge and assist you in living out this theme in the world today. Registration and further details will be provided. Visit www.HeritageRetreat.ca and submit your e-mail address so that you can be notified via e-mail.

2010 HRC YOUTH CAMP

We have again reserved Camp Michiwana, located in Hastings, Michigan for this year's Youth Camp. Please reserve June 29th to July 2, 2010 for a special time of fellowship growth, and instruction in God's Word.

Obituary notices, church events, and marriage and anniversary notices will be printed free of charge and under no obligation of a gift received. Other announcements and/or requests will be approved by the editorial committee on an individual basis as received.

TEACHERS NEEDED

Rehoboth Christian School in Copetown Ontario, is soliciting applicants for a Secondary French teaching position (Grades 9–12) to begin in September, 2010. For more information about Rehoboth, check out our website at www.rehoboth.on.ca. Applicants please send a cover letter and resumé to the attention of Mr. Jack Westerink—Principal, 198 Inksetter Road P.O. Box 70, Copetown, Ontario L0R 1J0, tel. 905–627–5977, fax 905–628–4422, e. jwesterink@rehoboth.on.ca

Providence Christian School invites applications for the position of Principal/Teacher for the 2010/2011 school year. Providence Christian School is situated in a beautiful, southern Alberta rural community, minutes from Lethbridge. PCS has grades K–12 with about 120 students attending and 12 staff members. We offer a four-day school week, competitive salaries, a growing, committed school community, and a dedicated team of teaching staff. The successful applicant will be in charge of administration and staff leadership, and will be expected to teach approximately half time at the junior high/high school level (subject areas are negotiable). We encourage qualified experienced teachers who demonstrate leadership skills, submit to God's Holy Word and the Reformed confessions, and are committed to educating children and youth in the Reformed Christian perspective to apply. Please send your resumé, references, statement of faith, and philosophy of Christian education to: Mr. J. Kikkert—Principal, Providence Christian School, Box 240, Monarch, AB T0L 1M0, or for more information call 403–381–4418 or e-mail: provchr@telusplanet.net

Jordan Christian School is accepting applications for possible teaching positions beginning in September 2010. Located in a rural setting in the Niagara Peninsula, near St. Catharines, Ontario, we are a small K-12 school. If you are energetic and versatile, committed to children, qualified to teach from a Reformed perspective, and you are interested in joining our teaching team, we would look forward to receiving your application. Please send us a copy of your resumé, along with your statement of faith and philosophy of education. We review all applicant documents in the event of upcoming openings and contact you as our specific needs become known. Please send your applications to the principal, Mark Fintelman, jschool@talkwireless.ca or the Education Committee secretary, John Berman, john@tremontwood.com. Jordan Christian School, 4171 15th Street, Jordan Station, ON, L0R 1S0.

OPEN WINDOWS

BI-MONTHLY CHILDREN'S PUBLICATION

This Christian bi-monthly full-colour magazine for children ages 4 to 12 is filled with fresh ideas to open children's minds for a new look at the Bible, history, and the world. *Open Windows* also contains colouring contests, crafts, a look back in time and book reviews that will get even the most reluctant readers reading. An excellent tool for evangelism, outreach, school libraries, and home-schooling. Annual subscription is \$17.50

Make cheques payable to
FREE REFORMED PUBLICATIONS
Send cheque with your order to:

Open Windows, 69 Albert Street,
S51, Mitchell, ON N0K 1N0



NATIONAL NEWS....

Gallup Poll: Conservatism on the Rise in America

For the first time since 2004, conservatives outnumber moderates and liberals. The Gallup organization shows 40 percent of Americans describe themselves as politically conservative, 36 percent moderate, and 20 percent liberal. David Almasi, executive director of The National Center for Public Policy Research, said people have seen a liberal administration at work during the past 10 months. "This could be a wake-up call for the liberal politicians," he said, "who think that they had a blank check to do whatever they wanted for the next two to four years." (*Citizen Link*)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS....

Israel—Non-Arab Christians Seek in Vain for Burial Sites

In Israel's third-largest city, Haifa, it was not possible for the Russian Orthodox relatives of a 65-year-old woman who died to find a Christian cemetery for her. Their plight (for five days, the body of Nadejda Edelman was stored at a hospital morgue) is common to Christians of foreign ancestry throughout the country. When Edelman passed away in Rambam Medical Center in this northern Israeli city, it took almost a week to find a grave for her. On July 1, Edelman was buried outside of Haifa in Emeq Hefer Local Council Cemetery—a "secular" site for persons of no faith tradition. There was no cemetery available for Russian immigrant Christians, and Israel's Arab burial societies tend to be uncooperative, advocates said. "It would be only natural Christians would be buried in Christian cemeteries, yet the Arab local councils usually decline our requests," said Dr. Ilya Litvin of Haifa, a member of advocacy organization called Sophia. In Israel's Arab Christian cemeteries, the heads of local councils are the only ones entitled to make the decisions, but many of them are Christians by birth only; they belong to Communist parties and in reality have little sympathy for religious sentiment, advocates said. "They claim that there is a severe shortage of graves there and little possibility for expansion, yet I believe that it's just politics," Litvin said. "They don't really care about us—we are not Arabs." (*Compass Direct News*)

Seminaries in Peril—Government Evaluation Threatens Training of Swedish Pastors

A recent evaluation by the Swedish government threatens theological education throughout the Scandinavian country. The Swedish National Agency for Higher Education reported that state-supported schools must favor religious studies over theological education. Schools that aim to train ministers for church service must shift resources toward general religious studies. This move may leave prospective pastors unprepared for church ministry. This shift in focus means several theological schools currently training pastors fail to meet the new standards for accreditation.

The Church of Sweden broke away from the state in 2000, yet the bulk of prospective ministers still train in theological schools at major Swedish universities. The national education agency worries about the implications of confessional education at Sweden's most prominent schools, including Uppsala and Lund. Now the growing Muslim population is asking for equal recognition in state universities. Additionally, the growing number of elementary and high schools started by Christians, Muslims, and Jews has upset the traditional order in Sweden. A short time ago, Sweden remained homogeneous and optimistic about the possibilities that science and secularism could build a model society.

Then religion became a sensitive subject, prone to misunderstanding. Still, the recent report caught the educational community by surprise. "The present situation is completely new, since it is no longer only the free theological schools that are questioned," an Agency spokesman said. "For the first time since the foundation of higher education in Sweden, the very presence of theology at Swedish universities is seriously questioned by government sources." (*Christianity Today*)

Polygamy Legalized?

A note from Thabet Megaly, formerly from Egypt, who is a Christian evangelist to Islamic believers and works in the Greater Toronto Area.

Polygamy is now before the court in Canada. It's not anymore only a matter of the Mormon Church. But it's all about Islam religion. We know that Sharia Law (Muslim Law referring to the Quran) allows the Muslim man to marry four wives in addition to any number of slave women for sexual pleasure (Quran, chapter 4, verse 3). Islamic leaders want to apply Sharia in Canada. And they will try to do it step by step. Please, take action to keep this nation free and vote against Polygamy.

Go to <http://www.word.ca/> and vote.

Christ is the most sparkling diamond in the ring of glory.

—Thomas Brooks

BOUND COPIES OF "BANNER OF SOVEREIGN GRACE TRUTH"

Once again, we make available to our *Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth* readership the possibility of purchasing bound copies of this periodical. Please place a check in the box corresponding to the option(s) in which you are interested and forward to the subscription manager by January 30, 2010.

- Enclosed please find \$30.00 for the binding of the 2009 issues of the *Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth*. My ten issues are enclosed.
- Enclosed please find \$50.00 (\$30.00 for binding and \$20.00 for a set of ten issues) for a bound copy of the ten 2009 issues of the *Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth*.
- I would like to pre-order a bound set of 2010 issues of the *Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth*. Please put my name on reserve, and I will forward you \$50.00 upon receiving the bound volume in early 2011, D.V.

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CORNER FOR TEENS

THE REFORMED FAITH (2)

BEGINNINGS



REV. MARK KELDERMAN &
MAARTEN KUIVENHOVEN

“Those who forget the past are doomed to repeat it.” This adage holds true in examining the Reformed faith as well. As Reformed people, we need to return to the point from which we came. Time and time again, Jesus reminds the seven churches in the book of Revelation to return to their beginnings in the gospel.

Our Reformed heritage did not occur in a vacuum. It is firmly rooted in the history of the church and in the history of sixteenth-century Europe. There were a number of factors that helped it begin. In the world of academia, there was renewed interest in the study of Greek, Hebrew, and Latin. This meant that there was renewed interest in the study of the Bible in its original languages. It also meant that there was a renewed interest in education, not only for the nobility but also the lower and middle classes of European society. Politically, the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire were vying for power in Europe and this gave opportunity for the Reformers to develop their ideas. Economically, there were new developments in trade, and the rise of the middle class allowed for a more rapid spread of biblical teaching. Technologically, the printing press provided new opportunities to print the Bible in contemporary languages so that the people could understand the Bible for themselves. It was in this environment that men emerged who found glaring contradictions between what Scripture taught and what the church taught. This sparked a desire in the hearts of some men to reform the church, to bring it back to its biblical foundations. These men are known as Reformers.

Who were the Reformers? The two most well-known Reformers were Martin Luther (1483–1546) and John Calvin (1509–1564). German-born Luther came under deep conviction of his sin when he was a Roman Catholic monk, but could find no way out under the seemingly relentless judgment of God. Luther had no spiritual freedom, but he continued to persistently read the Scriptures. The light began to dawn as he read Romans 1:17, “The just shall live by faith.” Through this Scripture, he realized that freedom from the pollution, guilt, and punishment of sin came through Jesus Christ. From that point on, Luther was a changed man and he saw the church in a different light. He saw that people were being held in spiritual darkness because they had no knowledge of the gospel and of the Bible. He realized the power of the pen and he began to write and to preach unceasingly about the gospel and against the abuses of the Roman Catholic Church. He is most well known for his book called *Bondage of the Will*.

John Calvin was born in Noyon, France. At the time of his conversion to Protestantism, he was a young lawyer-in-training. His conversion led him to abandon a career in law and take up the study of theology. His most influential work is *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, in which he gives an orderly treatment of biblical doctrine. After his conversion, Calvin took up ministry in Geneva and remained there for a good portion of his life, fulfilling the role of pastor, preacher, and teacher to hundreds of men and women. These two men were given a desire to reform the church and they worked tirelessly to spread the truths of the gospel around the world.

What did these men teach that impacts what we believe today? There are five terms that can be used to conveniently describe in short compass what they taught. The first is *faith alone*. This was made real to Luther in his spiritual struggle. It meant that a person is saved by faith alone in Christ, destroying the notion that man could earn salvation through his works. The second term is *Scripture alone*. This term is foundational because the Reformers viewed Scripture alone as the basis for knowing God and building their faith. The traditions of the church were examined in light of Scripture, and if unbiblical they were done away so that Scripture remained the authoritative voice. Another term that was important to the Reformers was *grace alone*. To the Reformers, this was the unmerited favor of God shown in Christ Jesus to sinners, which excluded the works and merits of human attempts for salvation. Another important term was *Christ alone*. The Reformers wanted to exalt Christ as the only Savior given for sinners. The final term that the Reformers lived by and taught was *glory to God alone*. The Reformers wanted to emphasize that God alone is worthy of glory in salvation and in life.

In the next article we want to flesh out some of these key terms and others as they form the body of Reformed doctrine that we hold. In the meantime, have you considered these key terms as central to your own spiritual life?

Rev. Mark Kelderman is pastor of the Heritage Netherlands Reformed Congregation of Burgessville, Ontario. Maarten Kuivenhoven is a theological student at Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Feel free to email either of them: makelderman@execulink.com; kuivenhoven.maarten@gmail.com

From Our Mailbag



INHERITANCE PUBLISHERS

From a prisoner:

Some time ago I wrote and requested copies of the sermons you publish. Subsequently, I received a packet of sermons. Some time later I also received a larger booklet.

I am a prison inmate serving a life sentence for first degree murder. Since coming to prison, over thirteen years ago, I have been convinced that the Reformed faith is what the Bible teaches. Sadly, the Reformed persuasion is not strong in prison. At times it has seemed like I was the only one holding to the uncompromised truths of the Holy Scriptures. Still, through faith I have learned to cling to God's unchanging promise to build a church for Himself. I know that He is always at work.

Ministries such as yours encourage me. I knew when I received your booklets that there were others in the world that still believed the truth. After reading your booklets I am convinced that historically speaking, God has blessed the church with a wealth of gospel blessings through ministers such as those I read.

If additional copies of these booklets are available, I would like to make them available to others at this prison. Hopefully, by the spreading of the gospel, the Lord might use these writings to bring others to faith and truth.

I will continue to pray that God will use this ministry and provide for it according to the riches of His grace.

PURITAN REFORMED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

From a missionary in South Africa:

By God's grace, our Missions to Zimbabwe and Sudan went well. We distributed tons of Bibles and school books. Food and medical supplies were delivered to desperately needy people, some Bible colleges were supplied with library books, and several schools were set up and equipped with Christian textbooks, Training Courses, etc.

We praise God for the Puritan Resource Center. I look forward to seeing it. Thank you so very much for all that you do to help revive the Puritan emphasis on head and heart, doctrine and devotion. I have put it before our Mission and family that this must be our priority, too.

Please do ensure that I am on your mailing list and

e-mail for any updates that you may put out for the Seminary, Reformation Heritage Books, and the *Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth*.

REFORMATION HERITAGE BOOKS

From a friend in Denmark:

I write to ask you if you will allow me to translate your "Building on the Rock" series into Danish. I plan to select some of the best stories from each book to be translated and published in one or two books. The books will be published in one of the Lutheran or Pentecostal Trusts in Denmark, if you agree and if they are willing. There are sadly no Reformed churches or trusts in Denmark.

From a missionary and professor:

Today, I received with gratitude, a copy of the book, *Meet the Puritans*, sent to me at the request of friends I met while raising support for our work with Mission to the World.

I am currently on furlough from our work in Zambia where I teach in two theological colleges, one led by the Evangelical Fellowship of Zambia and the other led by the Reformed Baptist movement in Zambia. *Meet the Puritans* will be useful to me as I prepare and give lectures in historical and systematic theology to my students.

Allow me to say that I am grateful for your work in promoting an experimental Calvinism. This is especially important in a day when we are threatened by new perspectives on Paul and a developing Reformed sacramentalism; both movements will bring a rise in nominalism and death to our churches if they gain influence, but I pray God that they won't.

From a chaplain in Afghanistan:

I would like to take you up on your offer for more Bibles. During our Thanksgiving celebrations, the soldiers took to those Bibles more than they did the turkey and dressing. We have exhausted our supply and have requests for more. So, if you still have some available, we sure could use them.

From *The Banner of Sovereign Grace Truth*
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PERIODICAL
POSTAGE PAID AT
GRAND RAPIDS, MI

SUFFER ME TO COME TO JESUS

Suffer me to come to Jesus,
Mother, dear, forbid me not;
By His blood from hell He frees us;
Makes us fair without a spot.

Suffer me, my earthly father,
At His pierced feet to fall;
Why forbid me? help me, rather;
Jesus is my all in all.

Suffer me to run unto Him;
Gentle sisters, come with me;
Oh that all I love but knew Him,
Then my home a heaven would be.

Loving playmates, happy and smiling,
Bid me not forsake the cross;
Hard to bear is your reviling,
Yet for Jesus all is dross.

Yes, though all the world would chide me,
Father, mother, sister, friend—
Jesus never will forbid me!
Jesus loves me to the end!

Gentle Shepherd, on Thy shoulder
Carry me a sinful lamb;
Give me faith, and make me bolder
'Till with Thee in heaven I am.

—ROBERT MURRAY M'CHEYNE

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