



BUILDING FIRM FOUNDATIONS

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All Scripture texts are taken from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

“Buy the truth and sell it not.”

Proverbs 23:23

Before you go any further, read this....

HOW TO GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS BOOK.

THERE are two ways of reading God's Word. One is to skim over it like "a galloping horse viewing flowers." The other is to savour it like a ten-course Chinese dinner.

The richness of God's Word cannot be fully appreciated by hurried and superficial reading. Like good food it must be chewed over slowly, digested, and assimilated into the system.

"No time" seems to be a common excuse for those who adopt the "galloping horse" method. But no matter how busy we are, we all can find time for at least one good "sit down" meal each day. If so, why not the time for a good "sit down" meal of God's Word?

All our lunches, dinners and breakfasts will sustain our bodies for seventy to eighty years, more or less. Finally they lose their effect. God's Word, the Bread of Life, is able to nourish our souls for eternity. Is that not reason enough for every true child of God to take one good spiritual meal a day?

Read then BUILDING FIRM FOUNDATIONS together with your King James Version

Bible. One reading a day is the least for a start. READ, PRAY and GROW! Read with a humble thankful heart, like the Psalmist who wrote:

*“O how love I Thy law!
It is my meditation all the day.”*

DID YOU KNOW?

It takes 70 hours and 40 minutes to read the Bible at “pulpit rate.”

It takes 52 hours and 20 minutes to read the Old Testament and 18 hours and 20 minutes to read the New Testament.

Each day as you read this book, begin with prayer, then read the Bible passages prescribed, and finally the day’s reading. May God increase your love for His Word.

Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

FAMILY WORSHIP IS FOR EVERY HOME.

MAKING A START

IF YOU WANT God's blessing for your home, start Family Worship T-O-D-A-Y!

STEP 1. Find a **PLACE**: sitting lounge, around your dinner table, or in your bedroom.

2. Make **TIME**: just as we all make time for dinner or breakfast. Family Worship is no less important. You need 15-30 minutes each day to feed your souls.

3. Find a **LEADER**: father, mother, or someone who can lead in worship. Leaders may rotate with profit.

4. Begin with **PRAYER**: "Lord, we gather together as a family to seek Your blessing. Though few in number, we know that You are with us. Teach us to sing to Your praise, and to read Your Word with understanding. Bless us as we worship together. We pray this in our Lord's precious name. Amen."

5. **SING**: Suggest: **RPG Anthem**, choruses and devotional hymns.

6. **READ GOD'S WORD: RPG*** portion for the day. Let the leader give a short exhortation from God's Word.
7. **MEMORISE:** Memorise one verse a week. Test and encourage one another.
8. **PRAY TOGETHER.** Let each member pray. Teach children how to pray. **LEADER** to close in prayer: "Our Father in Heaven, we praise You and bless Your holy name. We thank You for Your Word. Help us to remember what we have read and heard. Help us to be doers of Your Word and not hearers only (Pray for individual needs of members).
(In the morning) Grant us safety and guidance for this day. Keep us in Your paths of righteousness and peace.
(At night) Grant us peace and good rest for this night. Refresh us for tomorrow. We pray this in the name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.
- The above is a suggested **ORDER**, for a start. Modify and enlarge to meet your own needs. May the Holy Spirit guide you in this spiritual exercise.

**RPG (Read Pray Grow) Daily Bible Reading Guide is available from Banner Publications, 19 Tanglin Road, #05-01 Singapore Medical Centre, Singapore 1024.*

Prayer changes things!

God answers prayer!

Jesus said, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint."

AIDS TO PRAYER ("Beginners' Guide")

MORNING. Heavenly Father, Thank Thee (or You) for keeping me through the night. Thank Thee for this new day. Thank Thee for life and health, for home and loved ones.... for the opportunities and challenges of this day. Grant me the strength and guidance to do all things well and to the glory of Thy holy name. Guard my eyes, my ears and my lips from sin. Lead me in the paths of righteousness. Make this a peaceful and successful day. Cleanse my heart from sin, and keep me pure for Thy use. So, use me Lord to do Thy good will throughout this day. I pray this in the name of the Lord Jesus my Saviour. Amen.

NIGHT. Heavenly Father, Thank Thee for Thy presence with me through the day. Thy grace and sustaining power have been wonderful. (Thank the Lord for particular mercies and help received). Thank Thee for preserving me in my going out and coming in. Thank Thee for safety and peace, for opportunities of witness. (Think of any particular sins committed, and confess them to the Lord). Please forgive me the sins and

offences of this day. Be merciful to me, O Lord, and wash me in the blood of the Lamb. Grant me a good night's rest. Renew my strength for tomorrow. I pray this in Jesus' precious name. Amen.

FAMILY WORSHIP. Heavenly Father, we gather to worship Thee and seek Thy face. Thy Word has promised, where two or three are gathered together in Thy name, Thou wilt be with them. Come now O Lord to bless this gathering. Bless our singing, our study of Thy Word, our fellowship, and our prayers. Open our eyes that we may behold wondrous things out of Thy Word, Teach us O Holy Spirit to understand what we read. Help us to love Thy Word, to remember what it says, and to do it. Grant us the joy of worship. Speak to us through Thy Word. Draw nigh to us as we draw nigh to Thee. We pray this in our Lord's precious name. Amen.

NOTE. The above are "starters" to help younger believers. Enlarge and modify according to your particular needs. Every believer should learn to pray. There is no need to be shy. Simply speak to God as child to father. Speak sincerely and in faith. God hears and answers prayer!

JOSHUA 24: 14-18

PSALM 100

Seek ye the Lord while He may be found,

Call ye upon Him while He is near.

A FAMILY ALTAR IN EVERY HOME

A CONSPICUOUS feature of heathen Chinese culture is the prominent family altar. In their superstitious darkness these idol worshippers are mindful not to neglect or displease their deities. While we feel sorry for their ignorance we cannot help but admire their zeal.

Surveying the homes of Christians, conspicuous in most is the absence of a family altar. By this I do not mean a physical structure or a mounted crucifix, but the absence of regular daily Family Worship. The zeal of idol worshippers puts us to shame. Let every Christian home set up its family altar. Let there be Family Worship (FW) every day! Let me give you ten good reasons:

1. FW calls the family together daily to seek the Lord, "for them that honour me, I will honour ..." says the Lord. (1 Sam 2:30) What blessedness and what honour!

2. FW builds firm foundations upon Jesus Christ the Rock of our salvation and our eternal security, so that we shall never fall.

3. FW strengthens bonds and sweetens

family ties as nothing else can do.

4. FW is the best means of removing frictions and dissolving misunderstandings within the family.

5. FW equips children spiritually for the day when they leave the parental shelter to face the world on their own.

6. FW sheds abroad the love of God to guests visiting with the family.

7. FW complements the Pastor's ministry and reinforces what has been learnt in Church.

8. FW in one home will encourage other Christians to also make a start in their home and come into a position of blessing. Let us provoke unto love and good works.

9. FW equips us for the tasks of each day and the problems of life which come our way.

10. FW gives spiritual strength to cope with life's disappointments and discouragements, and ensures victory over circumstances.

At Pentecost the new converts had FW daily, "from house to house ... with gladness and singleness of heart." King David said, "As for me, I will call upon God ... evening, and morning, and at noon will I pray."

God waits to bless your home at Family Worship.

START TODAY! DON'T DELAY!

PSALM 11

1 CORINTHIANS 3: 11

If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

IF THE FOUNDATIONS BE DESTROYED

THE FAMILY is under attack. In many “progressive” communities, the battle is all but lost. Traditional values of marriage and home are assailed from every quarter by Satan’s devices disguised as “women’s lib”, unisex philosophy, homosexual lifestyle, the doing-what-comes-naturally mentality of our present permissive age. The pressure against Christian homes mounts by the day.

Family fragmentation has assumed more than epidemic proportions. In America men change wives like cars – once every four years. Married couples hold together only as long as circumstances compel. Marriage is increasingly seen as an outdated and somewhat inconvenient licence for man and woman to live together respectably. Marriage or no marriage, many live together anyway.

In all this social revolution, the media have been more than ready to glamorize the trend while the establishment tacitly connives. Two decades

ago it was co-ed cohabitation. This decade homosexuality. Who is there to voice a protest? Governments and social agencies sense the decay but temporize with stop-gaps. The established Church (having lost its way) offers only pious platitudes. High Churchmen encourage homosexuals by declaring that AIDs is not a God-sent punishment.

The very foundations of civilization are being destroyed. Of society at large what can we say or do? The world had long ago killed God's prophets and crucified His Son. To the world we offer no new solution but the Gospel. Our present concern is not with the world, but with the believing Church of Jesus Christ. Believers are under pressure to conform and go with the crowd. The pressures are subtle and unremitting. They are well-nigh irresistible. The believer's home is under siege. What is the answer?

The situation is serious but not hopeless. The night is darkest before the dawn. The current moral corruption is symptomatic of the end times, before our Lord's return. We know that He is in control, and He bids us "Occupy till I come." The forces of evil in the world may be overwhelming, but we arise to meet the challenge undaunted, because "Ye are of God ... and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." (I Jn 4:4)

Prayer: Lord Jesus, defend Thy people. Preserve us from the "spirit of the age."

JOHN 8: 31-32

2 TIMOTHY 2: 14-16

Study to show thyself approved unto God.

STUDY TO TEACH

DEAR PARENTS, as pastors to your families, you must know certain basic doctrines of our historic Christian faith which was once delivered unto the saints. Someone will say, "But I am not a theologian. That is the job of the pastor." Quite right, and yet as a godly parent you will find it stimulating, challenging and edifying to know the basic Christian doctrines. Then you will not be misled or deceived by the false doctrines flooding the world today. It will also equip you to be a better teacher to your family.

Many sincere and loyal Christians in liberal churches are being held captive by false teachings preached by false teachers. This would not have happened if they had known the Word of God well. To such believers our message is John 8: 31, 32. The loyal disciple must continue in the teaching of our Lord. "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." Every believing parent who is well grounded in the truth will not be shackled by erroneous doctrines and practices. Know the truth and the truth shall make you free!

What are the doctrines that parents ought to know? We suggest here a minimum list to which

your pastor may wish to add: DOCTRINES OF GOD, MAN, THE BIBLE, SIN, HEAVEN AND HELL, JESUS CHRIST, HIS DEATH AND RESURRECTION, SALVATION, THE NEW BIRTH, THE HOLY SPIRIT, PRAYER, STEWARDSHIP, THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT, APOSTASY IN THE CHURCH, RETURN OF JESUS CHRIST.

Various useful books on these topics are available such as the Westminster Confession of Faith and Shorter Catechism, A Summary of Christian Doctrine by Louis Berkhof.

For further advice your pastor should be consulted.

These are perilous days. Every believer must be equipped to face the threats and dangers ahead. The Church of Jesus Christ generally has been subverted. The remaining faithful believers must return to the Word in a new and meaningful way. Study to show thyself approved unto God. Teach yourself to teach others. DO IT YOURSELF!

Thought: Your best Teacher is the Holy Spirit.

Prayer: Lord, instruct and guide me in Thy truth.

PSALM 127

MATTHEW 7: 24-27

His power can make you what you ought to be!

WE NEED GODLY HOMES IN A GODLESS AGE

IN EVERY AGE God has His chosen few to stand against the tide. At no time has God been left without faithful witnesses on earth. In Noah's day, God spared not the old world, but saved Noah and his family. Noah walked with God. By faith he moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith (Heb. 11:7).

The days of Noah are upon us. "For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matt 24: 38, 39)

The spirit of the age is a "replay" of the pre-flood situation; men and women are concerned principally with pandering to one another's physical and carnal appetites. Moreover, we see from Genesis 6 that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of

the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually and the earth was filled with violence. That is so today.

For us believers we have Noah as our example and warning. God has saved us as He had saved Noah and his house. God purchased our salvation at great price, and while we have received it freely – “by grace ye are saved” – yet we are not free to live as we please. Our Youth Fellowship’s motto “Saved to Serve” well expresses the role we are called to play.

In the present godless age, every saved person has a vital part to fulfil, as a witness to the faith of the Gospel. Every home where the name of Jesus Christ is named must set up a clear and convincing witness for the Lord. Young couples (and older ones too) are mindful of setting up adequate homes, catering to the physical, material and social needs of its members. Building on the Rock, Jesus Christ, is usually left to the last as an after-thought, or altogether conveniently forgotten.

This sort of neglect is fraught with the gravest peril. “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.” Building apart from the Lord and apart from His Word is building on sand – which means “DISASTER AHEAD!” The Church of Jesus Christ must arise. Every believer resolve and build! The answer to the perils of this present godless age is:

EVERY HOME A GODLY HOME!

Question: How godly is your home? What are you doing about it?

GENESIS 3: 15

JOHN 1:14

It may not be Christmas, but the message still applies.

HAVE A HOLY CHRISTMAS!

FOR BELIEVERS the commemoration of our Lord's first coming to earth must be a spiritually uplifting and holy event. It should be a time of communicating to the unbelieving world the message of salvation in Jesus Christ. Every church should seize the opportunity for Gospel outreach. Every home too should make a serious effort to share the gospel with neighbours and friends.

Is this how you plan to spend this Christmas? Or are you merely going along with the world, joining in a dizzy round of senseless merry-making and meaningless celebrations? The unbelieving world sees Christmas as a golden time for boosting income by Christmas sales, Christmas shows and Christmas parties. Christmastide has become the major commercial event of the year.

Here is an interesting report from England. Before the advent of Christmas carols, the celebration of Christmas had become so worldly, depraved and rowdy that it was unsafe to venture on to the streets of London and other big cities. Things became so bad that the Government had to

ban Christmas celebrations by an Act of Parliament!

The people of England had forgotten the real meaning of Christmas. They had all but banished Christ from Christmas and desecrated the day with senseless and wanton revellings, drunkenness, debauchery and depravity. Decent people found it safer to remain indoors while riotous activities continued outside. The situation became so shameful that in 1644 a law was passed making it illegal to commemorate Christmas in any way whatsoever! Imagine the disgrace it must have caused the name of Jesus.

What can we do as believers to ensure the sanctity of our Christmas? We can do something both in church and at home. Let us invite unsaved friends and relatives to a Praise Service where they may hear the Gospel, some maybe for the first time. The same can be done at home.

Our faith must make us different from the world. It must make us effective witnesses for the Lord. Will you help your Pastor and Elders to make this a blessed holy Christmas? *Let us honour our Lord at Christmas!*

Keynote: Therefore whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God

ISAIAH 9: 6

LUKE 1: 26-35

Chastity is the best policy!

GOD'S CHOSEN HANDMAID

AS WE APPROACH another blessed Christmastide our thoughts naturally turn to the Bible account of our Lord's birth. Not all our readers are familiar with the facts surrounding His origin. So let me first of all begin at the beginning. I can think of no better introduction to this all important topic than to quote John's Gospel 1: 1-3.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made." Our Lord Jesus was the Word, the Son of God, the express image of God's person, upholding all things by the word of His power. (Heb 1:3)

Our Lord Jesus is in fact the Almighty Creator come to earth in human flesh. The question is: How was He to appear among men? God did not send Jesus "out of the blue" like a spaceman or a being from outer space to land mysteriously at some spot on the earth. In His unsearchable wisdom, God sent Jesus to be born as a baby,

through the normal channel of birth. What God needed was a woman qualified to be the vessel or handmaid to bear Jesus and to bring Him up in a proper home environment.

There must have been thousands of eligible young women in Israel at that time, but God chose Mary. Why did the Lord handpick Mary of all people?

Mary was from a humble home in a remote village Nazareth. She was probably not a university graduate from Jerusalem nor was she highly educated. She had no outstanding qualification or accomplishment in the world's esteem. She was no beauty queen and had won no beauty contests. Men would have highly valued those qualities.

But those were not qualities which God looked for. In God's esteem Mary was the one. She was espoused or engaged to Joseph, but not yet married. To her, God despatched the angel Gabriel with a message: Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS — the Son of the Highest.

We shall look further into the life of Mary, for she has important and timely lessons for all our young ladies and girls.

Question: Can you say, I have found favour with God?

Prayer for Girls: Lord, teach me to be like Mary, pure and undefiled.

ISAIAH 7:14

LUKE 1: 30-38

Flee fornication!

FAVOUR WITH GOD

GIRLS TODAY seek the favour of men. This is their common ambition and failing, even among Christian girls. For many a young upcoming lassie, it has been their undoing. To you, young ladies, let me say this: Arise! Cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day: not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness ... (Rom 13: 12, 13) Put an end to all lustful, sexy and carnal activities, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ. Strive to please Him, not men! Let me quote from Horatius Bonar's classic hymn:

*Go labour on; 'tis not for naught;
Thy earthly loss is heavenly gain;
Men heed thee, love thee, praise thee not;
The Master praises, what are men?*

Nazareth lay on the trade route from Capernaum to the sea with many caravans and traders frequenting the town. It would have been fashionable for young girls to visit the night spots and to get a taste of high and fast living. Some would have joined in the loose lifestyle of the day, as they do today. Christian girls, seek not the favour of men! The only thing that matters is favour with God. *Strive for His approval; strive at all costs to guard your virtue.*

Mary is your best example. She guarded her virtue. She cherished her chastity. She treasured most of all the favour of God. She was a virgin: Luke said so, she herself confessed it, the angel Gabriel confirmed it. Seven hundred years earlier the prophet Isaiah prophesied it. The sinless holy Son of God was to come to earth through a human mother. God chose a godly, virtuous and chaste maiden – The Virgin Mary. That was God's plan.

Now there are Churchmen and traitors to the Church of Jesus Christ who have sold their souls to the Devil. These no longer believe in Jesus as the Son of God. They do not believe that Jesus was any more than a mere man. Therefore they deny His virgin birth and His resurrection. The same Churchmen do not believe in chastity and holy living. Two of the most notorious are bishops of the Church of England.

But God is true, men are liars. Let all who love the Lord Jesus seek favour with God, not men.

Thought: Cast off the works of darkness: rioting, drunkenness, illicit sex.

Prayer for Mothers: Lord, help me instruct my daughters to be chaste like Mary.

PSALM 138: 1-6

LUKE 1: 37-56

Chastity begins at home.

BUT MARY WAS A WOMAN

IF IT WERE POSSIBLE to conduct a poll for the greatest woman the world has ever seen, the Virgin Mary would doubtless emerge the clear winner. But there is no necessity to do that. The world's vote is of no importance. We know that she was uniquely blessed of God. Elizabeth her cousin, inspired by the Holy Ghost, spoke words of truth in her salutation: Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

Why was Mary "blessed among women?" For the ladies and girls in our RPG family, wherever you are, Mary has pertinent and valuable lessons for you. Let us see her outstanding qualities and learn from them.

1. Mary was pure and righteous.

Yesterday we considered at some length how Mary guarded her chastity. Already engaged but not married, she kept herself chaste and undefiled, so that eventually she could present herself to Joseph "holy and without blemish". Let Mary's life speak to our daughters and mothers. Chastity is not dead! Let all who love the Lord proclaim it, promote it and protect it!

2. Mary was honest and frank.

Her first reaction to Gabriel's message was one of bewilderment. Then she asked a very honest, frank and open question, showing her child-like innocence: How can I be pregnant, seeing I have never slept with any man? May all God-fearing girls keep themselves pure for their wedding day.

3. Mary was full of faith.

She did not doubt or protest at Gabriel's message. But in faith she believed and accepted her chosen role. Therefore she could magnify the Lord and rejoice in God her Saviour. She acknowledged her low estate, her sinful condition and her need of a Saviour. Mary went on to perform her role as God's handmaid, nevertheless a woman. She was not God's mother or Queen of Heaven as some have wrongly elevated her.

4. Mary was a woman of prayer and praise.

She well recognized her low fallen condition, a recipient of God's mercy and grace, like you and I. She worshipped God with her famous "Magnificat". But in some churches she is worshipped in dark idolatrous superstition.

Thought: *Let Mary be the handmaid of God, not Queen of Heaven or Mother of God.*

Question: *Is Mary being worshipped or prayed to in your home?*

PSALM 127

LUKE 1: 13-20

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.

“YOUR PRAYER IS HEARD”

HOME without the sounds of noisy children is somehow incomplete. Zacharias and Elizabeth were both well past the age of fertility and they had probably long dismissed all thoughts of having a child. Little did they dream that their home was shortly to be transformed by the arrival of a son. Then they would no longer be silent, lonely and childless.

In the East men not uncommonly marry a second wife if their first fails to conceive. Zacharias did no such thing. He remained faithful and devoted to Elizabeth. They were both “righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” (verse 6) For years they had prayed for a child but without any result. Nevertheless they were not bitter or disheartened. Zacharias continued serving the Lord in the office of a priest.

Here is a word of encouragement to infertile couples. You have a good example in Zacharias and Elizabeth. They accepted their childless state as from God. They did not let the matter mar their marital harmony or their service toward God. To

them, as well as to all of us, "Godliness with contentment is great gain."

But God had chosen this old couple for a special honour. They were to bear a son who was to be the forerunner of the Messiah. He was to be called "prophet of the Highest," to prepare the way of the Lord, to preach the message of repentance and salvation, and to point people to the Saviour, Jesus Christ. He was also to be God's instrument to baptize our Lord before He embarked on His ministry. Read again the angel Gabriel's message to Zacharias. "Your prayer is heard. You will have a son, John. He will perform a special function to prepare the way for the Saviour."

What is your prayer, my friend? Are you praying for a son or a daughter? To those with children, What is your prayer for your son? for your daughter? John was filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb. When he preached he feared no one, not the Pharisees or the Sadducees. Not even Herod, whom he rebuked. For the truth, John lost his head. *What does it matter?*

God chose Zacharias and Elizabeth for His purpose. He has a purpose for you as well, and a purpose for your son or daughter. Have you consecrated yourself for His service? Are you praying for God to use you?

Thought: "For with God nothing shall be impossible."

Prayer: Fulfil Thy plan and purpose in my house, O Lord.

HOSEA 11:1

MATTHEW 1: 18-25

Actions speak louder than words!

AN UNSUNG HERO

IN THE NATIVITY STORY, Joseph, the husband of Mary, remains very much in the background, but that does not lessen his importance. From the little that is recorded about him, we draw a few observations:

1. *Joseph was of the line of David.* This fulfils the prophecy that our Lord would come from the house of David.

2. *Joseph was a just man.* While espoused to Mary he respected her chastity and gave her due honour. When he discovered that Mary was expecting a child, he was naturally dumbfounded. He must have agonized within himself, asking questions such as, "How could this be? It is impossible, knowing Mary and her chaste character. And yet the fact must be faced – she is pregnant. What shall I do?"

3. *Joseph was a godly man.* He was evidently in close touch with God, a man of prayer, a man worthy to be visited by God's angel.

4. *Joseph was an obedient man.* The message of the angel was clear. Mary's child was conceived of the Holy Ghost. That dissolved a tremendous doubt in his mind, and lifted the load off his chest.

Therefore there was no question of “putting her away”. Obediently, Joseph proceeded with the marriage and took Mary into his home.

5. *Joseph was a virtuous man.* Respecting the prophecy that Jesus was to be born of a virgin, Joseph preserved her virginity for the duration of her pregnancy and did not know her (i.e. have marital relations) until after the child was born. Thereafter, by implication, Joseph and Mary lived as normal husband and wife and became parents of four sons and at least two daughters (Mk 6:3; Jn 7:5). *Mary did not remain a virgin for life.*

6. *Joseph was a man of faith and action.* Read Matthew 2: 13-15, how God’s angel warned Joseph of impending disaster from the evil King Herod. Joseph wasted no time but took Mary and Jesus by night and fled to Egypt for safety.

From the above what is your opinion of Joseph as a husband and father?

Question: *The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary remained a perpetual virgin. Is this recorded in the Bible?*

Thought: *Husbands can learn much from Joseph.*

MICAH 5:2

LUKE 2: 1-7

O come to my heart Lord Jesus!

AN UNLIKELY BIRTHPLACE

CHRISTMAS CARD depictions of the manger scene generally give it an unreal aura of beauty almost suggestive of glamour. Of course it must be conceded that colours on paper, minus the sounds and smells, hardly do justice to the real thing. In a recent trip to the Holy Land we were shown a genuine manger. Then we were better able to appreciate what Mary and Joseph experienced after they found "no room for them in the inn".

Bethlehem was perhaps never so crowded, as many had returned for the census ordered by Augustus Caesar. The well-to-do were able to find their lodgings in the hotels and inns. I suppose the particular innkeeper would have admitted those who could pay. He was not impressed by the lowly couple from Nazareth. For them, there was no red carpet welcome, especially seeing that Mary was advanced in pregnancy.

The innkeeper missed a unique opportunity. If only he had known, he might have gone down in history (like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea who buried Jesus) as one who had

shown hospitality to the Son of God. What a pity, you might say. But let us ask ourselves, If the Lord should come to our house incognito, in the person of a homeless stranger, a servant of God, a missionary, would you also say "Sorry, there is no room in my house?"

The birth of Jesus in Bethlehem has another lesson for us. Circumstances bend to fulfil the purposes of God. Joseph and Mary were Nazarenes. But the prophecy of Micah required the Messiah to be born in Bethlehem, some 90 miles south of Nazareth. By God's timing, two events coincided to fulfil Micah's prophecy. First: a heathen king Augustus Caesar issued a decree for a census to be taken in all the Roman dominions. Joseph, of the line of David, was required to register in David's city, Bethlehem. Second: Mary's pregnancy reached full-term just at the same time. Ordinarily no expectant mother would travel at that late stage, but the Roman law was severe and inconvenience notwithstanding, Mary moved as commanded.

The ultimate outcome: Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem! The prophet Micah predicted it 700 years earlier.

Question: What hospitality can your home offer this Christmas? (Think of someone who is away from home or perhaps homeless).

Prayer: Lord, come and live in my heart and in my home.

MATTHEW 2: 1-11

LUKE 2: 8-20

Jesus came once...He is coming again!

A UNIQUE BIRTH

NO BIRTH in all the world since the beginning of time was like the birth of Jesus Christ. The event and the place were foretold many hundred years earlier.

He was born in the lowliest of circumstances, but in the highest heaven angels gave glory to God and a special star shone overhead. He lodged among animals in a cattle shed while distinguished visitors came from afar to worship the newborn babe.

His birth was contrary to the laws of life. His death was contrary to the laws of death. He was born to die so that the dead might live again.

His life work lasted a mere three years but it has never stopped changing men's lives for almost 2,000 years ever since. He received no higher degree from anybody yet His teachings amazed everybody. He wrote no book but the books written about Him exceed all other books.

He had no earthly possessions yet he fed thousands with food to spare. He built no church but the churches built in His name exceed any other kind of building. He had no money but the funds given to His church are unsurpassed.

After almost 2,000 years He remains the central character of human history, the pivotal point around which world events revolve. The years of time are reckoned from the event of His birth: BC, Before Christ; AD, Anno Domini, the year of our Lord.

But the most startling event in His life was His resurrection from the dead, a happening which His enemies tried in vain to stop. Now the last remaining Great Event of the Ages is His return to earth from Heaven, where He ascended 40 days after His resurrection.

His birth will not be repeated, for He comes again no longer a babe but as Judge of all mankind. Everything about Jesus is unique – His birth, life, death, resurrection – and RETURN.

Every home where Christ is Lord must be prepared for this CLIMACTIC EVENT, which will be unannounced, sudden and with awesome finality.

Question: Is your home ready to meet the Lord? Are you constantly warning your family?

Keynote: The Lord's coming is near, even at the doors.!

PSALM 84

LUKE 19: 1-10

Where Jesus is, 'tis Heaven there.

RECEIVING CHRIST INTO YOUR HOME

THE TOUR GUIDE announced: This is Jericho where Jesus saw Zacchaeus up the sycamore tree. For the forty-four of us, first-timers in the Holy Land, it was a "love-at-first-sight" encounter as we scrambled down the coach and excitedly surveyed the famous tree, camera shutters merrily clicking!

Zacchaeus, too, must have scrambled down the sycamore tree in double-quick time when the Lord called to him. It was his happiest day, to have Jesus come into his home and into his life. Full of faith, Zacchaeus yielded his life and his possessions for the service of God. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. What joy and peace must have filled that home from that day forth.

So should every believer's home be filled with the joy of salvation. A Christian home should be a foretaste of Heaven on earth. When we arrive in Heaven we shall dwell forever with God. But before then our Lord promises that He will dwell with us on earth. If so should we not practise the

presence of Christ in the home now? Can this be so? Indeed very much, if we would only let God's love fill and transform us. Then our homes will be different, "because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Rom 5:5)

Dear Reader, Is your home filled with the love of Jesus so that it is patently different from an unbeliever's home? It ought to be because of one great fact, that "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom 5:8) Christ went to the cross and gave his life for us while we were yet enemies, unclean, unloving and unworthy. That is reason enough to make our homes different.

Let us all as believers receive our Lord into our homes and let His love be clearly evident by these tokens:

Slow to anger, swift to reconcile.
Slow to suspect, swift to confide.
Slow to criticize, swift to praise.
Slow to condemn, swift to commend.
Slow to speak, swift to hear.
Slow to provoke, swift to encourage
Slow to resent, swift to appreciate.

Keynote: Christ is the Head of your House.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, please abide with us!

PSALM 5

HEBREWS 10: 19-25

GOOD BOOK before good food!

ENTER DAILY INTO THE HOLIEST

THE WAY into the holiest is open to every believer everyday. There at the mercy seat our Saviour patiently and longingly awaits His dear children. And yet few will come. They will rather stray into the broad way that leadeth to destruction. Is it because they have not experienced the blessing of the mercy seat? Let these words from Hugh Stowell's hymn draw us near to that holiest place.

*From every stormy wind that blows,
From every swelling tide of woes,
There is a calm, a sure retreat –
'Tis found beneath the mercy seat.*

In our world racked by greed and lust, unrest and strife, what every Christian home sorely needs today more than anything else is a revival of godly piety. Not a superficial, psycho-emotional workup but a humble, sober and sincere return to the God of our salvation; a decisive departure from sin in any form; a re-ordering of our life and its priorities, so as to give Jesus His rightful place as Lord and Master of our life.

There must be reversal of priorities and values. Feeding soul must come before body. God's word must be yearned for more than physical food. Hence "Bible before breakfast" makes good sense. Working overtime for our daily bread may be unavoidable in today's competitive society, but one must know when to call a halt to this relentless race, and make time for the Prayer Meeting.

The world is sick with filth and corruption, with greed and mammon worship. But these come in disguise as entertainment and recreation, as rare opportunities and investment portfolios. What defence and protection has the young believer against these and a host of other alluring temptations? Hoping that our young people will somehow escape these snares and pitfalls is not good enough. Mere praying is not good enough either.

The Saviour awaits! The way into the holiest beckons to you and me! Every believer is invited to enter in by this new and living way. Therefore let us all draw near with a true heart, individually and collectively; let us assemble as a family daily and by ourselves singly. But we must not forsake this assembling. And let us come gladly, each day, without slackening.

*Keynote: My voice shalt thou hear in the morning,
O Lord; in the morning will I direct my
prayer unto thee, and will look up.*

DEUTERONOMY 6: 1-9

1 PET. 2: 1-5

Feed soul before body!

A HOLY PRIESTHOOD

ALVIN TOFFLER in his book *Future Shock* predicts that the trend of the future is for parents to relinquish their parental responsibility to experts to raise their children. Other prophets of gloom claim that the traditional family is near the point of extinction. Working parents are too preoccupied with their own lives to have any time for their children, so the argument goes.

As believers and people of God, what do we say to these? Has God's ordained basic pattern for society outrun its usefulness? Has the traditional family become irrelevant? Our answer is: God's standards for the family and pattern for society remain unchanged. They are essential for the survival and well-being of the race, now as before. In the face of godless and decadent trends the time-honoured establishment of home and family are even more relevant and important than ever.

Christian parents, your responsibility to your children is paramount. It takes priority over career, pleasures, hobbies or anything else. God commands believing parents to be priests or pastors to their children. To do this effectively, they

must love the Lord with heart, soul and might. Then they must teach God's word diligently to their children, setting them the example by faithfully obeying the same word of God in their own lives.

Like people, like priest; like parents, like children! As God's instruments, Christian parents must equip themselves thoroughly in God's word, or they will not be able to instruct their children. But the most effective lesson is the life they live. Parents who neglect their God-given responsibilities do so to their own great regret in later life, for delinquent parents breed delinquent children.

Once a preacher was describing how some parents fail to pray with their children at night and similarly begin the day without committing the family to God. A little girl listened attentively, then turned to her mother and innocently whispered, "Mummy, is he talking about you?" Taken unawares, and pierced by the child's question, the mother was convicted of her sin. That night she repented in tears on her knees and began to pray with her child morning and night faithfully ever afterwards.

Memorise: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. (Deut 6:5)
Memorise this verse with your family.

1 SAMUEL 2: 26

LUKE 2: 40-52

Godly parents, godly children.

AN EXEMPLARY CHILDHOOD

TODAY'S CHILDREN, in many ways, are different from those of a generation ago. Generally they are more mature, physically better developed, more independent, and intellectually more advanced than their elders. This is probably a reflection of the phenomenal progress in science and technology, in modern communications and educational methods. Television and audio-visual techniques have speeded this revolution in child development. All these are positive benefits of the contemporary scene.

On the negative side, childhood and youth offences have also taken a sharp turn for the worse. Respect for law, for life, for parents and elders is strangely lacking in some of the most advanced communities. It is becoming a regular news feature, to read of children mugging other children, young people killing their parents, defying the law, beating up teachers, and committing a host of previously unheard-of violent offences.

To you who read these lines, it must raise the question, Why is this so? Is there something wrong with the system? There is no simple answer

to the childhood and juvenile problems that plague society today. But we venture to suggest two major areas of blame: breakdown in discipline, at home and in school. The ultra-liberal system in school and institutions of learning has spawned a generation of lawless, permissive, self-willed young people. In our present discussion, however, we shall dwell primarily on the issue of the home.

Child development requires discipline, firstly from God, and secondly from parents (who stand in the place of God). Consider the childhood of our Lord. He was God the Son. Nevertheless, he went through the ordinary process of development as a son of the house. Verse 51 tells us something very significant: Jesus was subject to His parents. He was obedient and submissive. He accepted the rugged life of a simple carpenter's son in a small town. He shouldered the responsibility of hard work and home chores, supporting Mary and Joseph as a filial son. They could rely on Him for cheerful cooperation and the discharge of duties with a willing mind. Jesus was no stranger to hard manual labour.

The result: Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. What a far cry from today's epidemic of juvenile delinquency and crime.

Quiz: Whose fault is it when a young person goes astray? The parents'? The child's? The school's? Society's?

Prayer For Parents: Lord, grant me wisdom to train up my child.

PROVERBS 22: 1-6

EPHESIANS 6:4

Like father like son

TRAIN UP YOUR CHILD

ONE SCHOOL of psychology teaches that children should be left to develop their own personalities. Parental correction and punishment is frowned upon for fear of "psychological trauma." This sort of teaching is the surest way of nurturing a child's self will and bringing out the worst in his character. Let us not forget that in every child there is the fallen depraved nature of Adam, and spontaneous, uninhibited development carries a very high risk of juvenile delinquency.

King Solomon the wise whose experience of life was probably unrivalled has a different teaching for us. He says, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." How true and refreshing! Even a trainer of dogs knows it. A puppy untrained grows up to be unruly, undisciplined and untrainable. A child is no different.

What about corporal punishment? Is there a place for it? Modern child experts and psychologists say, No. They disagree with Solomon who has much to say about the use of the cane. We

need to quote just two verses from Proverbs. "He who spares the rod hates his son; but he who loves him chasteneth him betimes." (Prov 13:24) "Folly is bound in the heart of a child: but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." (Prov 22:15)

The use of corporal punishment, naturally, must be governed by definite guidelines, otherwise more harm than good will result. 1) The punishment must be fair. 2) It must match the offence. 3) The child should be told why he is being punished. 4) Always give prior warning that a certain offence will carry a certain punishment. 5) Impress on the child that it is for his own good. 6) Be firm but not harsh, unreasonable or vindictive. 7) Be consistent and keep to your word.

Here is the testimony of a very successful Christian: "Our family of eight grew up with more than liberal doses of corporal punishment, under strict but godly parents, and we are all the better for it. All eight are believers, and all are well established, each in his or her own profession. Father was the disciplinarian, mother the moderating factor. We look back with warmth and gratitude for their upbringing."

Question: At what age should corporal punishment end?

PSALM 90

1 PETER 1: 24, 25

In Christ we look to the dawn of a New Age.

“SO TEACH US TO NUMBER OUR DAYS”

THE SETTING SUN signals the end of yet another day, but this day is not just another. It is the last of the year. Silently, almost solemnly, the dying moments of the old year slip away, forever beyond recall. Sadly we count its last minutes, cheered somewhat by the approaching dawn of another year. But how many more New Years will come our way? The ageing of years causes us to ponder.

The ticking of the clock seems to say “Quick, quick! Quick, quick!” What flies like time unremitting and unrelenting, day in day out, year in year out! Its unerring flight sweeps all before its urgent path. Moses, the man of God, had seen more of life than most. He bore the burden of human tragedy for forty years – two million fallen by the wayside, to rot beneath the desert sand.

Reflecting, Moses uttered his famous oft-quoted lines: “So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” – a fitting prayer for New Year’s Eve or any eve. Life’s clock

is fast running out! Our destined days on earth will soon be over. Shortly the counter will stop and our earthly sojourn will end.

“So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom!” New Year’s Eve calls for sober self-appraisal and examination. How have you spent your old year? Are you satisfied? Will 1988 be a re-run of 1987? How many more New Years do you expect to see? No matter how my old year has been, one thing is sure: my New Year must not repeat the shortcomings of the old. Every year lived for Jesus must be better than the year before! And our years here are not unlimited.

Number, then, your days, my friend! Be wise. “Whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away!” (James 4:14) If we cannot be sure of tomorrow how can we be sure of next year? Wisdom demands, therefore, that we order our lives and live for God as though each day could be our last. Live for God and leave nothing undone which He has given us to do, so that when our clock ticks its last, we shall have no regrets.

*Only one life 'twill soon be past!
Only what's done for Christ will last!*

Thought: The evening of our day is nearer than we think.

Prayer: Lord, make me wise in godly living.

A YEAR CROWNED WITH GOODNESS

“**H**APPY NEW YEAR” for the unbeliever is but an empty wish. Far from ensuring happiness, the New Year merely hastens on his ultimate doom, without God and without Christ. No amount of New Year wishes can improve matters for him.

For the believer, every year is a good year. You and I enter the New Year with confidence that “another year with Jesus is better than the year before.” With Him in charge and ourselves following in His steps, it cannot be otherwise.

Like the Psalmist, the New Year is an occasion for praise unto the Lord. He alone deserves the glory and we alone have the desire to praise Him, for those who know Him not, praise Him not. Praise waiteth for Thee, O God, in Zion only: it is in His church and among His people that true praise is heard and offered. Let all his saints bless and adore Him, the God of our salvation. New Year is a time for praise!

We praise Him for good reasons: Who but our God hears our prayer? O thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee do I come! For our God is ready to hear

us, and to grant us our petitions. Our God is able to do for us "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." (Eph 3:20)

We praise Him for He is a God who pardons our sins. "As for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away." (v3) Our sins oppress and bind us, and in our helpless state we are ready to despair. But God in Christ reached down and took away our sins, washed us in His own blood, and made us new. Our Lord, "when He had by Himself purged our sins sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high." (Heb 1:3)

We praise Him for He welcomes us with fatherly love. "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple." (v4) The New Year brings us one year nearer that day, when we shall dwell with God forever!

We praise Him for His power. Our prayers would be futile if the one we pray to had no means of granting our requests. But our God, "by terrible things in righteousness will answer us." He is our only confidence, the God of our salvation. He has our interests at heart. To those who put their trust in Him, He says, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye." (Ps 32:8)

Thought: "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness."

Prayer: Guide me O Thou Great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land.

PSALM 39: 1-5

EPHESIANS 5: 15-17

An inch of time, an inch of gold.

REDEEMING TIME

TIME is like money but with a difference. It comes to every person – man, woman and child – free. You cannot buy time or sell it. You cannot accumulate time or refuse it. Every day God's TIME BANK credits each one of us with 24 hours of time, equally. Think of it as money: \$1,440 every day (1440 minutes each day) to your account. One rule governs this precious gift: you must spend all of it in one day. No balances are allowed, and no overdrafts. How shall we spend the \$1,440?

The answer is: in good buys and wise investments. Every dollar must be carefully spent, and to good purpose. For the way we spend our time may affect others and certainly it will affect our own lives for eternity. How do you spend your time each day? Have you ever written out a budget or time-table for your 24 hours, allotting the minutes and hours to the tasks and demands of the day? Do a little "time-accounting" and see how your 1,440 minutes are spent each day and it is likely to give a few rude shocks.

Time once past is beyond recall. How then can we "buy back" or redeem time? For this is what the Apostle Paul exhorts us all to do. "See then

that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil." What is Paul saying to you and me? Paul sees the evil and corruption of the times and exhorts believers to "walk circumspectly" or to live lives of maximum usefulness for God. Our \$1,440 must be spent with eternity in view.

Look into your own life and see how many dollars you have carelessly or thoughtlessly thrown away. You may have done it for years, perhaps for all your life. The Apostle says, "Buy back those precious hours! Redeem the time!" For years you have wasted hours daily doing useless, inconsequential or even harmful things: aimlessly killing time, reading worldly books and magazines, watching TV for hours, polluting the mind, indulging in questionable pastimes, and doing a host of other unprofitable things. With a little judicious time-accounting it will become clear where you may buy back many valuable hours.

Let every minute and every hour be used for God! Cut out every harmful, unprofitable pursuit and transfer the time to godly and spiritually edifying activities. "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." Fill your day doing God's will. Do it while the year is still young!

Thought: Yesterday is a cancelled check. Tomorrow is a promissory note. Today is the only cash you have. Spend it wisely!

MATTHEW 24: 24
2 TIMOTHY 4: 1-5
These are the "last days."

PERILOUS TIMES HAVE COME

WISDOM demands that we be informed and alert to the momentous events taking place around us. Parents in particular ought to be knowledgeable in the area of the great apostasy that has infiltrated and taken over the major denominations of the Church. On the surface we see the semblance of a Church with impressive teachers (pastors, elders, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, popes, etc). They teach and preach from the Bible, sing the same hymns, make the same prayers, talk the same language — up to a point. External appearance may be identical, but there the similarity ends. Beneath the facade is a fatal flaw.

Not every "Christian" Church is Christian. Not every "Christ" is genuine. Not every pastor or elder or bishop is a true servant of Jesus Christ. Who says so? Our Lord Himself. A major sign of His Second Coming (which is near) is the appearance of "false Christs and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." (Matt 24:24)

What our lord is saying is this: "One major event which must take place before I return is the sign of the COUNTERFEIT CHURCH AND FALSE LEADERS. Many will be deceived and led astray, but DO NOT FOLLOW THEM!" In 2 Timothy 4 further warning from the Lord tells of Church leaders getting tired of the old truths. These will not put up with sound doctrine, but for their own selfish ends they will gather together false teachers, spreading error and human ideologies.

Parents, godly fathers and mothers, I write expressly to you! If you treasure your faith and that of your children, heed God's words. Recognize the perils of false teaching everywhere: Churchmen denying the all-sufficiency of Holy Scripture, the atoning blood of Christ, the inerrancy and infallibility of the Bible, the Deity of Christ, His bodily resurrection, the Second Coming and other major doctrines. False teachers in the Churches are eroding the very foundations of the Church.

If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do? Truly we live in perilous times.

Thought: Parents, you can save your homes from the peril of false teaching.

Prayer: Lord, teach me Thy truth that I shall not fall.

DANIEL 7: 13-14

MATTHEW 24: 3-14; 32-42

Jesus says to us, "Watch!"

SURELY I COME QUICKLY. AMEN

OUR LORD'S LAST WORDS from heaven demand our careful and prayerful attention. In the final chapter of Revelation He says, "And behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be ... Surely I come quickly. Amen." (Rev 22: 12,20)

My dear reader, are you fully aware of this last great unfulfilled promise of our Lord? It will be the one **DECISIVE CLIMACTIC EVENT OF ALL TIME**. The Bible mentions it over 1,500 times. The direct prophecies are numerous. Daniel's vision accords with the Apostle John's. Jesus shall return in the clouds of heaven. Matthew's Gospel chapter 24 lists seven major signs. Do you know them? Let me list them for you.

1. False Christs, false prophets, false Churches, preaching false doctrines (worship of idols, Mary, saints; denials of Christ's deity, virgin birth, resurrection, etc.)

2. Wars and rumours of wars. Nation rising against nation, kingdom against kingdom. This global phenomenon increases, intensifies.

3. Famines. Africa, India, Bangladesh.

4. Pestilence. Strange diseases: drug addiction, AIDS epidemic.

5. Earthquakes. In the last six centuries, increased 20 times.

6. Israel (fig tree, v32) reborn, 1948.

7. Days of Noah. Eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. Preoccupation with physical carnal appetites. Genesis 6: Earth corrupt, filled with violence, wickedness of man very great, and every imagination of the thoughts of his heart evil continually. The "Days of Noah" are already with us.

Parents as spiritual leaders of their families have an obligation to guide and instruct in this vital and urgent doctrine of the Second Coming. For when the Lord comes, it will all be over, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye." (1 Cor 15:52) There will be no time then to think or to make amends.

The time to prepare is NOW, before He comes. Parents, heed the Saviour's loving call: Be zealous therefore, and repent. (Rev 3:19) Watch: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.

Thought: Shortly, we shall be entering the year 2,000, the turn of a century, and the turn of a millennium!

Prayer: Lord, quicken me by Thy Almighty Spirit. Keep me ever ready and watchful.

MARK 1: 35

MATTHEW 6:26-31

Feed soul before body!

THE HARD STRUGGLE FOR 'QUIET TIME'

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE is one life-long struggle, until we arrive Home. The greatest Christian, St. Paul, describes his personal experience in terms such as "so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; I press toward the mark; I have fought a good fight...."

If the Apostle had to struggle, how much more must we. In the fast-flowing current of the world, our spiritual boat of life will be swept into the ocean of godlessness unless we keep rowing hard upstream all the time. This applies to every believer without exception. The world around us constantly seeks our friendship, so that the prince of this world may add us to his numbers. Our homes can become spiritual citadels, where our members may daily take refuge and renew their strength. That is, if we will order our homes accordingly.

We have spoken of the utter necessity of daily Family Worship to counteract the day's pollution of the outside world. Today's reading centres on

the need for individual communion with God. This has to be on a daily basis also. Our Lord says, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret. Personal and private communion is the ordained channel of intimate access to God.

The time of the day helps. The best is early in the morning, at a predawn hour. Our Lord did his Quiet Time (QT) in the morning, “rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.” Can we do as He did? Not Easy! Remember His words: “the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

So we struggle – against the world, against sin, and against the flesh. The spirit is ever willing. The flesh is always weak! The battle is QT vs the Rest! The Rest includes the cosy warm bed, the Daily News (hot off the press), the morning radio broadcast, the demands of another busy day.

Most times the outcome is sad defeat. Why? Simply because we have not given equal time or priority to QT. There is time for morning cleaning up, breakfast, newspaper, etc. Why not also for QT? Treat QT as a priority item and give it “prime time”. That is half the battle won!

Thought: If you put the Lord first in your life, QT will be no problem.

Prayer: Lord, help me discipline my life.

PSALM 5

MARK 1:35

Have you tried the predawn hour?

BEST TIME FOR GOD

While it is true that prayer may ascend to God any time of the day, and at all times “without ceasing” (1 Thess 5:17), nevertheless we should not neglect the best time of the day for our prayer devotion. The Psalmist’s words echo the experience of many godly men: “My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.”

The best time to converse with God is in the early morning before the world comes knocking at the door. Unless you have this prior appointment with the Lord which you determine to honour, your morning will be so crowded out that the Lord will be brushed aside. Then we find ourselves attending to the affairs of the world, concentrating our morning thoughts on everything and everybody, but the Lord is left out altogether.

Should we thus belittle the God of our Salvation?

God deserves our first thoughts, for He first thought of us. We were in His thoughts long before we were born. He thought of us “before

the foundation of the world." He planned our redemption before we fell. If we were thus esteemed by God, occupying even His first thoughts, should we not also devote to Him our first thoughts? O let us awake daily to the light of His countenance and the sweetness of His presence. Refreshed with sleep, recharged with His health, let us greet our Saviour each day with the best hour, and let His beauty fill our souls. Thus invigorated we may safely face the world.

All through life George Whitefield was an early riser. His day began at four o'clock and he would retire punctually at ten in the evening. If friends were present, he would courteously end the proceedings, saying, "Come gentlemen! It is time for all good folks to be home." He wanted to be sure of his morning appointment with God.

Will you also give Him your best hour?

Question: "Cutting short a party makes one unpopular." What do you think?

Prayer: Lord, You gave me your best. May I give You my best!

PSALM 119: 89-97

2 PETER 3: 14-18

God's Word abideth forever!

THY WORD FOREVER SETTLED IN HEAVEN

THERE is a common misconception that only the less well educated and uninformed continue to believe in the Bible as the complete inspired and infallible Word of God. It is true that the overwhelming majority of academics and the upper strata of society no longer believe in the Bible. Nevertheless there are a significant number of important and well educated people, scientists, businessmen and politicians whose faith in the Bible remains unshaken in the face of attacks of science and learning so-called.

President Reagan has this to say of the Bible: We're blessed to have its words of strength, comfort and truth. I'm accused of being simplistic at times with some of the problems that confront us. But I've often wondered: within the covers of that single Book are all the answers to all the problems that face us today, if we'd only look there. "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but the Word of our God shall stand forever." It is my firm belief that the enduring values, as presented in its pages

have a great meaning for each of us and for our nation. The Bible can touch our hearts, order our minds, refresh our souls.

We quote below what other great men said of the Bible:

George Washington: It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.

Abraham Lincoln: I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible. Take all of this Book upon reason that you can, and the balance by faith, and you will live and die a better man.

General Douglas MacArthur: Never a night goes by, be I ever so tired, but I read the Word of God before I go to bed.

Not everything in the Bible can be understood, but we can definitely understand enough to gain an entry into God's everlasting Kingdom, if we would be humble enough to believe all that it says. Peter the Apostle warns those who dissect and attack the Bible that they do so to their own destruction.

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let this be the one great objective in your home, through daily study of the Word.

Thought: If believers would give equal time to Bible study as to newspapers their lives will be changed for the better.

Question: How many times have you read through the Bible?

PSALM 119: 105-113

1 PETER 2: 1-3

God's Word – perfect food for soul.

READING WITH DESIRE

THE PERFECT FOOD for newborn babes is milk. The spiritual milk for babes in Christ is the Word of God. Nothing else will nourish and strengthen the new Christian; only God's Word. The Apostle Peter addresses all Christians: learn to be newborn babies, ever eager and desirous to drink in the "milk of the word." It is something all babies love to do. There is no need to coax, or persuade or remind.

So Peter says, "Desire to read the Bible. Love it, for by so doing you will grow." My dear reader, do you see the light? Pray for spiritual appetite. If you do not have it you are suffering from spiritual anorexia. You need to come to the Great Physician for cleansing and healing. When healed you will say with the Psalmist. "O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day. How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Ps 119:97, 103)

A young lady was asked to explain what is meant by devotional reading of the Bible. She said: "Yesterday morning I received a letter from one to whom I had given my heart and devoted my

life. I freely confess to you that I have read that letter five times, not because I did not understand it at first reading, nor because I expected to commend myself to the writer by frequent reading of his letter. I love to read it simply because I am devoted to the one who wrote it.”

To read the Bible with the same desire is to read it devotionally, and to one who reads it in that spirit it is indeed a Love Letter. And that’s what the Bible is, God’s letter telling of His love for us. If you have not read the Bible you truly do not know the depth of God’s love for you and me. Moreover, the Bible teaches us how to love God and one another. And there is no better remedy to the stresses and conflicts causing homes to break up everywhere.

If it is a happy united family that you want, make the Bible the centre of your devotion. Therein you will find the solution to interpersonal tensions, marital disharmony, parent-child problems. No time? Cut down on TV time and use it for Bible study, and see how the Lord will bless!

*How sweet are Thy words unto my taste!
Yea sweeter than honey to my mouth!
I opened my mouth and panted:
For I longed for Thy commandments
O how love I Thy law!
It is my meditation all the day.*

Thought: The family that reads together sticks together.

Prayer: Evermore give us spiritual appetite, O Lord!

PSALM 119: 97-105

MATTHEW 22: 35-40

God's Word – key to success.

PRESIDENT REAGAN ON THE BIBLE

AT the National Prayer Breakfast, 1983, President Ronald Reagan spoke of the real task facing the American nation. We quote:

This task was spelled out in the Old and New Testaments. Jesus was asked, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" He replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. The second is like unto it: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Can we resolve to reach, learn, and try to heed the greatest message ever written – God's Word the Holy Bible? Inside its pages lie all the answers to all the problems that man has ever known.

We think how many people in the world are imprisoned or tortured – harassed for even possessing a Bible or trying to read one. In its

lessons and the great wealth of its words we find comfort, strength, wisdom, and hope.....

We might remember something that Abraham Lincoln said over a hundred years ago: "We have forgotten the gracious hand that preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own we have become too proud to pray to the God that made us."

We face great challenges in this country, but we've faced great challenges before and conquered them. What carried us through was a willingness to seek power and protection from One much greater than ourselves, to turn back to Him and to trust in His mercy. Without His help America will not go forward." The President's prescription for this day of great challenges is to turn to God and obey the Word. "Inside its pages lie all the answers to all problems that man has ever known."

Let every Bible-believing Christian begin afresh to get to know God's Word by daily serious study.

Thought: God's Word: a lamp to your feet, a light to your path. But you must go by its light!

Question: How many minutes do you read your Bible each day?

PSALM 121
PHILIPPIANS 4: 6, 7
God's peace is priceless.

PEACE THAT PASSETH UNDERSTANDING

EVERY BELIEVER'S FAMILY must learn the lesson of believing prayer. I refer to our Lord's promise, "And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." (Matt 21:22) Someone said that the proof of the pudding is in the eating. We may say that the proof of the power of prayer is in the peace of God which passeth all understanding. For this is what Philippians 4:7 tells us. No matter what your problem is, God's Word says, "Be careful for nothing." Be not unduly anxious. Do not panic and lose your head. As one of my patients confessed to me, "Doctor, I can't cope with all my children and their problems. I simply go to pieces."

No, my dear reader. When you come to God in prayer you will not end up in pieces, but He promises that you will end up in peace! Peace that passeth all understanding comes from the God of peace alone. Why don't you give up trying to cope and begin to pray. Praying to the Lord who hears is better than coping with your inner fears.

My thoughts go back to 1942. It was February and the British had surrendered. The battleships "Prince of Wales" and "Repulse" did not live up to their names. The Japanese sent them to the bottom of the South China Sea. Impregnable Singapore fell in two months. Thousands of refugees were ordered to return to Malaysia. The Japanese Military Administration displayed ten decapitated heads along the sea front to convince the people. Return – or else.

To go or not to go: that was the question. Father and I had fled to Singapore for refuge. Now without any means of transport or protection, we were in a dilemma. Stories and reports of Japanese brutality were passed from mouth to mouth. After days of suspense and vacillation, the Word of God in Psalm 121 settled our minds. Read the Psalm again. Every one of the eight verses is tremendously reassuring, ending in a mighty promise, "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth and even for evermore."

The whole family knelt down and prayed together. The peace of God which passed all understanding came over us. Father and I then set off. The trip which today takes three hours took three weeks. But the Lord kept us in peace, the Japanese Army notwithstanding. That is the proof of prayer.

Keynote: Victory by prayer in every believer's home.

Prayer: Teach us to pray, O Lord.

JOHN 6: 5-14

1 THESSALONIANS 5:18

Remembrance – hallmark of gratitude.

THANK GOD FOR FOOD

THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE is one of thanksgiving, for he is a recipient of God's boundless grace and mercy. All that we are and all that we have we owe to Him. Daily and constantly, we receive from Him. It is by His unseen hand that we are sustained, supplied and fed. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

A young child invited to a neighbour's home for dinner innocently remarked when the meal was started without the saying of grace: Do you always go straight at the food without prayer? In our house only the dog does that. But the dog actually expresses his thanks by vigorously wagging his tail! We should show our gratitude by giving thanks before food. Our Lord has set the example at the feeding of the 5,000. He took the loaves and when He had given thanks, He distributed to the disciples.

In China the host at meals honours the guests by inviting them to partake first. Newly converted Mr. Chen was overjoyed with his salvation. He had all the household gods burnt and then invited

the missionary home for a meal. When all had seated around the simple table, Mr. Chen stood up and with beaming face welcomed his guest. Then looking to heaven with eyes closed he said very reverently to the Lord, "Ch'ing ch'ih fan!" (Please partake the food with us!) He then prayed a simple prayer of thanks, as he would in the presence of the Lord.

Every meal calls for the giving of thanks to God, for life and health, for appetite, for provision of the food. The saying of grace should not be long but it should be meaningful and sincere. Parents do well to start praying with their young children, even from the time they are born. Train up a child in the saying of grace and when he grows up he will not depart from it. When children are older let each one offer thanks to God in turn, with all joining in the Amen.

In public, praying before food may be a little inconvenient, but first let the believer pray in his heart for courage to be like Daniel, praying three times a day on his knees in full view of the people. The Master is pleased, what are men?

Thought: In everything give thanks.

Prayer: Lord give me a thankful heart.

*Hymn: Thanks, O God, for home and fireside,
Where we share our daily bread;
Thanks for hours of sweet communion,
When by Thee our souls are fed!*

August Ludvig Storm

PSALM 103: 11-14

LUKE 18: 15-17

"For of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

AS A LITTLE CHILD

Our Lord's teaching concerning the Kingdom of God applies in the matter of prayer. We may adapt Luke 18:7 and say, "Whosoever shall not approach God in prayer as a little child shall in no wise be heard." A little child is utterly helpless and dependent on father and mother. For its needs to be fully met, a little child needs merely to be in a state of helplessness, casting itself without condition or reserve on the all-embracing arms of its parents.

Every parent understands this aspect of prayer. So, I speak to you fathers and mothers. Your child utters not a word, yet his cries exceed any adult prayer. His tearful condition melts your hearts. Indeed, even before he cries you hasten to his aid. The very sight, nay, even the thought of his helpless condition speaks to you more than any cry or word. His very dependent estate moves your heart as a silent prayer, stronger than uttered words or the loudest cry. Your child's welfare is your foremost concern.

God, our Heavenly Father deals with the helpless trusting believer in the same way. You, my friend, are weighed down with an insoluble and unbearable burden. You have been struggling

vainly by your own strength and ingenuity. The harder you try the deeper you seem to slip into the quagmire. You have applied all your resources and stretched your imagination to its limit, with no solution in sight. What is the answer?

Our Lord says, "Be as a little child!" You have to give up your self-reliance and self-effort. Recognize your helplessness and God's all sufficiency. See Him as your Father, watching over you in Heaven, able, willing and ready to meet your every need. Night and day He longs to help – if you would only look to Him. So our Father cares for us, even though we may not be conscious of it, not to speak of thanking Him. He does perfectly what human parents can only do imperfectly. But you must come to Him "as a little child."

Gentle Jesus

*Gentle Jesus, meek and mild,
Look upon a little child;
Pity my simplicity,
Suffer me to come to Thee!*

Charles Wesley.

Thought: Prayer is for little children.

Prayer: Lord, I pray for a child-like trusting heart.

MATTHEW 14: 22-23

MARK 1:35

The secret of praying – pray in secret!

PRAISING ALONE IN SECRET

If our prayer life is to make progress, it is not enough merely to have a definite appointed time each day to commune with God. We must also find a place to be alone with Him. Our Lord said, "When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to the Father which is in secret....." (Matt 6:6) We must make a determined effort to shut out the world with its distractions and interruptions, for the world hates the things of God. (Jn 7:7) We cannot enter into deep and serious communion with God unless we exclude the sounds and sights of the world.

Our Lord set us the example. Even though He lived in constant and unbroken prayer fellowship with His Father, nevertheless He found it necessary at times to withdraw from the multitudes and from the hustle and bustle of life in order to be alone with God. The world and its influences are disturbing and destructive toward our communion with God. If the Son of God found it necessary to be alone with God, how much more we, frail creatures of dust!

In our present state we are exposed to external influences, happenings and circumstances. We cannot avoid seeing, hearing and sensing the things that go on around us. Even our dearest — our spouse and children — they detract. Today the media intrude into our bedrooms and living rooms. The world presses in on every hand. All these influences crowd in upon us and separate us from God. We must take appropriate remedial action to exclude anything that comes between us and God.

But, you say, modern living makes it almost impossible to find a quiet or secret place. Where there's a will, there's a way! Use the pre-dawn hour before the rest of the world gets active! Our Lord rose up a great while before dawn and went to a solitary place to pray. Can we not get up too? At times, can we not also find a solitary place, just to be alone with God?

The Secret Place

*In the secret of His presence
How my soul delights to hide!
O how precious are the lessons
Which I learn at Jesus' side!
Earthly cares can never vex me
Neither trials lay me low;
For when Satan comes to tempt me
To the secret place I go.
To the secret place I go.*

Ellen L. Goreth.

Question: *Do you think it difficult to find a solitary place? Impossible?*

Prayer: *Lord, make me willing to pay the price to make my prayer life more effective.*

PSALM 17: 1-4

JAMES 5: 14-18

God hears and answers prayer.

PRAYING ONE FOR ANOTHER

SELFISH PRAYER betrays spiritual immaturity. Believers ought to pray beyond oneself and for one another. This is the privilege of family members, and is commanded by the Head of the Family, our Lord Jesus. If you, dear reader, have not ventured into the area of praying for others, you are missing out on a blessed ministry which is committed to you.

“But God can do anything and everything.” In fact we read that He is able “to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” (Eph 3:20) If so, why is there a need to pray? Therein lies the mystery: it is God’s ordained means of grace and blessing to His people. Our Lord says: “Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.” (Matt 6:8) Nevertheless, ask, and it shall be given you! That is the secret of prayer.

How long should a believer pray each day? My answer is, More than what you are doing now! Praying is like jogging (or aerobics, or whatever you do to keep fit). The newcomer tires after ten minutes. With practice he happily jogs for thirty

minutes or more. So it is with prayer. Prayer is maintaining open channels to God. It is like a refueling of spiritual strength. No prayer no power! Little prayer little power! Much prayer much power!

One day I timed myself at prayer. After what seemed a very long time my eyes received a rude shock. Only five minutes. Obviously my prayers were childish, weak and meagre in content. Prayer does not come haphazardly. It calls for discipline. One must look beyond oneself. List prayer items systematically: family, relatives, friends, church and its various departments, local and foreign missions, etc. Gradually enlarge the list. Then pray with spirit and with understanding.

In our Church the Midweek Prayer Meeting issues a prayer list under six or seven headings. Various fellowship groups have their lists. These are prepared weekly or fortnightly. Gather your lists and embark on a meaningful ministry of prayer – in every home.

And why not? If every home would have a prayer group under a fervent leader, we will begin to see great things from God.

Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.

Jeremiah 33:3

Thought: *God delights to hear His children's prayer.*

Question: *What is it that hinders prayer in your life?*

PSALM 122

ACTS 1:14; 2:1-4

The praying Church – a growing Church.

PRAYING WITH ONE ACCORD

THE PRAYER MEETING has been called the Cinderella of the Church. People will attend Sunday Morning Worship, Gospel Rallies, Bible Study and 'special' meetings. But most members shy away when it is *only* a Prayer Meeting. "After all I can pray at home. Doesn't God also hear?" If that's what keeps you from the Prayer Meeting you have missed a vital truth which lies at the heart of every Holy Spirit revival.

In Acts 1:4 the Lord, before He ascended to Heaven, gave specific commandment to the disciples not to depart from Jerusalem but to wait for the promised coming of the Holy Spirit. After Jesus had ascended, the disciples tarried in Jerusalem and "all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication" (Act 1:14) until the day of Pentecost when the Holy Ghost came down in full measure.

Here then is the lesson of united prayer. Believers are to *gather in one place and continue in prayer with one accord*. This means praying toward one objective, in one spirit and with one mind. Nothing else will unite a body of believers

as this sort of united prayer. Nothing else will open the windows of heaven for God's revival blessing to be downpoured on His people. Every revival is preceded and sustained by the united prayer of God's people.

The current Church scene around the world is generally one of spiritual lukewarmness and decline. (We do not regard the charismatic phenomenon as true Holy Spirit revival, although it is gathering in large numbers and reporting impressive results). Many Bible-believing fundamental Churches find it difficult to induce more than 5-10% of their adult members to attend Prayer Meeting. No pastor who means business should ignore this state of spiritual apathy. Surely he will be concerned enough to look at the problem in depth, seek out its causes and prescribe a cure. It may well be his own spiritual lethargy!

Let every home seriously consider how it can augment the Prayer Meeting and speed the revival of the Church.

Question: List the reasons why you cannot attend Prayer Meeting.

Prayer: Lord, send us a true Holy Spirit revival by starting a work in my home.

*Hymn: My God, is any hour so sweet,
From blush of morn to evening star,
As that which calls me to thy feet,
The hour of prayer?*

Charlotte Elliott

PSALM 25:1-5

ACTS 20:32-38

Pray before parting.

EVERY PARTING SEALED BY PRAYER

IN OUR HOME from as long as I can remember every parting is sealed by prayer. For every parting is tinged with sadness and the inevitable heaviness of heart. Grandfather (with whom we lived nine months of the year for our schooling) led the family before God's Throne of grace nightly in Family Worship. Nothing was ever permitted to interfere with this most important event of the day.

Grandfather taught us precious lessons in faith, lessons which remain with us to this day. Our Family Worship was a simple and homely affair. There was the singing of Chinese hymns and John Sung choruses, followed by the reading of God's Word. Then came the catechism session. Grandfather used to ask simple questions yet with profound spiritual meaning. Then he would close with prayer before we parted for the night.

Each school day began with prayer. None was allowed to run off to the bus-stop without prayer. If we did not schedule our time early enough, it was our own fault. Grandfather was sure that being late for school was preferable to not having

our time with God. He gave us our most precious heritage – believing prayer. So every morning we left home, armed with prayer and peace in our hearts to face the issues of the day.

School vacations were spent with our parents in Malaysia. Revived under Dr. John Sung's ministry, they faithfully led us in daily Family Worship. Some nights the meetings were long and our school-work was not finished. But Father assured us that God would make up by giving us the extra wisdom. Looking back we can say with all our heart: Thank God for Family Worship and the prayers morning and night. By God's grace we have imparted the same to our children.

Back to our text, and the sad parting between the Apostle Paul and the Ephesian elders. There on the seashore at Miletus, the group knelt down and prayed with tears. "And they all wept sore, and fell on Paul's neck, and kissed him." What a warm and loving parting, again sealed with prayer.

Thought: Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust.

Question: What is your experience in prayer?

*Hymn: 'Tis the blessed hour of prayer,
When our hearts lowly bend,
And we gather to Jesus,
Our Saviour and Friend;
If we come to Him in faith,
His protection to share,
What a balm for the weary!
O how sweet to be there!*

Fanny J. Crosby

ROMANS 8:26, 27

HEBREWS 7:25

True prayer moves heaven!

OUR UNSEEN PRAYER PARTNERS

THE SECRET of prayer is to pray alone in secret (Matt 6:6). It is also to pray together as one body in one place (Acts 1:14). Today we learn another secret: unseen Helpers are praying for us. Our risen and ascended Lord, now at God the Father's right hand "ever liveth to make intercession" for us His children. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered (Rom 8:26).

Picture then in your mind's eye the Almighty Triune God in heaven working on our behalf: God the Father receiving intercessions from God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. This one fact alone must give us enormous comfort and confidence to persevere in our prayers on earth — whether individually or corporately. For when we do so we are in concert and cooperation with the great divine prayer meeting up in heaven.

Why do we need the intercession of God the Son and God the Holy Spirit? Simply because we need them to bolster our little strength. Recall

what our Lord said? "Without me ye can do nothing!" We are frail creatures of flesh, and oftentimes our spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Without Him we would fall. So we need to have our prayers on earth supplemented by divine intercessions in heaven.

Those divine intercessions are necessary also because of our foolishness and defective understanding, so that we do not always know what to pray for. Do you not realize how often your prayers are for inconsequential things? At times we may even pray for the wrong things or for something which is contrary to God's will. If God had answered some of those prayers we might have come to grief! So the Spirit helps our infirmities and foolishness.

Give thanks for our unseen Prayer Partners. Thank God that we can be His prayer partners. Our home can be a house of prayer, and where two or three are gathered together in His name, He is with them in their midst.

*It is Christ.... at the right hand of God,
who also maketh intercession for us.*

Romans 8:34

Thought: *Your home can be a spiritual Power House.*

Prayer: *Lord, help me begin a Prayer Partnership with Thee in my home.*

ISAIAH 58: 13-14

HEBREWS 10: 24, 25

The Lord's Day the best day!

A DAY TO REMEMBER

THE FAITHFUL OBSERVANCE of the Lord's Day by Christian people as a day for worship and witness is a most powerful safeguard against the decay of Christianity. Each week while the world indulges in Sunday sport and pleasure, God's people assembling together signifies that the Church of Jesus Christ lives on. Neglect and desecration of this Holy Day is always followed by the withdrawal of God's blessing.

Let us take a look into history. When Israel forgot her Sabbath, the Lord brought upon the nation the Babylonian invaders who carried the people into exile under Nebuchadnezzar. When France forgot her Sabbath, and replaced it with another day of worship, the nation went under the iron heel of Napoleon. When England forgot her Sabbath, the nation suffered severe chastisement and a time of blood, sweat and tears.

Some years ago, alarming increase in juvenile crimes prompted the Federal Bureau of Investigation to call upon the churches of America to use the Sabbath Day for the saving of the country's youth. Said J. Edgar Hoover, "As a law enforce-

ment officer, I am certain that unless children are given the opportunity of participating in the activities which have God as their fundamental objective, we cannot hope to materially reduce crime in our country.”

Is the Lord's Day a delight to you? God's Word has promised: If we refrain from doing our own pleasure and call the Sabbath a delight, holy of the Lord and honourable, and honour the Lord by not doing our own things or speaking our own words, then the Lord will cause us to ride upon the high places of the earth (Is 58: 13, 14)

How then should Christians spend their Lord's Day? On this Holy Day, let all believers honour the Lord by worship (at morning and evening services), by witness, by acts of mercy, and works which bring glory to the Saviour's name. All selfish amusement, pleasure and worldly activities should be avoided. Secular work, business deals, etc, should never intrude into the sanctity of the Lord's Day.

This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. (Ps 118: 24)

*Remember the Sabbath Day
to keep it holy.*

Exodus 20:8

Thought: The Lord's Day is holy of the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, help me keep Thy Day for blessing.

EXODUS 20:8-11

JOHN 20: 19-31

Keep God's Day holy!

THE BLESSED LORD'S DAY

THE LORD'S DAY (sometimes called the Christian Sabbath) is the name given to the first day of the week by the Apostle John when the Lord Jesus appeared to him on the Isle of Patmos (Rev 1:10). It is the day of worship observed by the Christian church from the first century, marking a shift from the seventh day or Jewish Sabbath (a day still observed by Jews and Seventh Day Adventists).

Christians observe the first day of the week because on this day our Lord rose from the dead and appeared to the disciples. On this day also the Holy Spirit descended at Pentecost. Therefore the day is doubly precious to Christians. On this day early Christians gathered for worship (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2) and for the breaking of bread.

The Lord's Day should be observed by Christians as "holy unto the Lord." Observed in the right spirit, the day is a blessing and not a burden. Our attitude towards the Lord's Day is a measure of our love for Him. If our heart and mind are filled with thoughts of the Lord we shall approach each Lord's Day with joyous expectancy, like Mary Magdalene.

Mary loved the Lord her Saviour. Her devotion is recorded for our example by John the apostle. "The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark..." (Jn 20:1) looking for Jesus at the sepulchre. Every believer who truly loves the Lord will have the same spirit, the same longing and expectancy of meeting with Him and His people in the House of Prayer, *on His Day*.

Children often are more excited about the Lord's Day than grown-ups. Little Michael, aged seven, loved to assemble his "Sunday best," clothes and shoes, by Saturday night. "Tomorrow is Sunday School. Mummy, please give me my offering money." My own practice is to have an early night on Saturday, and not to accept social appointments, so that one's whole attention and energies may be focussed on the Lord's Day's worship and service.

May we love the Lord's Day as a day of thanks to the Lord for our redemption and as a foretaste of our eternal rest in Him.

*Thought: Day of all the week the best;
Emblem of eternal rest!*

GENESIS 2: 18-25

MATTHEW 19: 4-6

Stable family strong society.

THE WORLD'S FIRST INSTITUTION

THE MARRIAGE partnership is the oldest institution in the world, instituted of God. Together with it He also laid down instructions for its proper usage. However, men in rebellion have ignored His instructions and by their own devices have made marriage the most abused institution in the world.

“For maximum safety and satisfaction, follow manufacturer’s directions.” What applies to products and appliances applies equally to marriage. Our Divine maker intends for all users to know the rules governing marriage.

1. Marriage is a divine institution. Men did not invent it. God did. Therefore marriage is a sacred institution not to be entered into “unadvisedly, lightly or wantonly, but reverently, discreetly, soberly, and in the fear of God.”

2. In marriage, man is the head, because man was made first and woman was made from man. Nevertheless, the two are complementary to each other.

3. Marriage is a one-to-one partnership i.e.

monogamy. Polygamy is a violation of the institution.

4. Marriage is a union between man and woman. Any other partnership is abnormal.

5. Marriage is for life. Two individuals in marriage become "one flesh," a basic unit of society. "Those whom God hath joined together let not man put asunder."

6. Marriage alone allows the legitimate expression of sexuality. Outside of marriage all sex activity is contrary to God's law.

Modern man has distorted the whole concept of sex as something purely physical (e.g. hunger and thirst) to be satisfied as and when he chooses without regard to God's law. Thus he sees himself no different from an animal as far as the sex drive is concerned. Believing this to be true, he sees nothing wrong in any form of sexual activity. Out of this philosophy has arisen all sorts of abnormal practices and movements (which are basically violations of the marriage institution and anti-God).

Born again believers who acknowledge the Creator God and submit to His righteous law clearly recognize the foul and abominable nature of premarital and extramarital sex, homosexuality, bestiality (sex with animals), polygamy (having more than one wife, promiscuity (loose and multiple sex partners), pornography (visual sex, commercialised).

Question: Do you know the Seventh Commandment?

MATTHEW 19: 3-9

1 PETER 3: 1-12

For better for worse, for richer for poorer....

NO MAGIC IN MARRIAGE

IN that most intimate, loving and lasting bond of marriage is embodied a profound spiritual truth. Two persons have become one flesh. This bond may be severed by only two things: death and sin. In either case there is deep and agonizing pain. For the believing couple, it is their fulfilment and greatest joy to "live together according to God's holy ordinance, till death us do part." But beyond death is the glorious hope of the resurrection.

Sin in its varied forms may threaten to disrupt the marriage bond. When believing couples, because of sin, neglect their "love-submission" relationship the bond will be strained. Our Lord puts His finger on the pulse and gives us the diagnosis: men divorce their wives because of the "hardness of their hearts." Their evil eye has strayed and their heart is sold to another. Conveniently they forget their former ardour and solemn vows. Excuses and pretexts confuse the issue. They blame it on Siamese black magic, Malay bomoh's charms, occult forces.

But our Lord says: it is the hard stony unfeeling heart, now turned against their first love.

Why? They consider only their own lust and pleasure, without regard to their wives' feelings. The result is a rising tide of divorce threatening the marriage institution. Modern lifestyle with commercialisation of flesh and sex, hardens the heart, and fans the flames of adultery, burying every fourth marriage in America in the ash-heap of divorce.

A most alarming trend is the casualty rate among professing Christians and pastors. Truly the end time disease of Sodom and the days of Noah have returned. But the plague can be halted. Men and women must return to the Lord. Read 1 Peter 3 again. We need godly wives, adorned not like Hollywood stars but with a meek and quiet homely spirit of purity, subjecting themselves to their husbands. Not by dizzy merriment but by faithful devotion to the things of God can wives receive due honour.

Husbands, recall your first love and your marriage vows which you exchanged with the one who gave up her all to follow you. To her, render honour and grateful devotion as due to the weaker vessel (who depends so much on you). Above all else, think of this: Can I let my Lord down? He depends on me to uphold the honour of His name. I must!

Prayer: Lord, give me a tender loving heart of flesh.

PROVERBS 31: 10-31

EPHESIANS 5:22-24

....in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish....

SUBMISSION AND OBEEDIENCE

WHEN Princess Diana took her marriage vows the Archbishop of Canterbury removed the word "obey" from the Church of England form of marriage. A time-honoured Biblical term had been deleted. This reflects the spirit of the age: departure from the word of God and insistence on the equality of the sexes. The fact remains that the Lord Creator ordained it so: to alter the divine order is unwarranted. Surely the Lord knows the role of the wife. Hers is to submit, but submission is not subjugation.

Why submit? In every institution there can be and must be only one leader. In the marital boat the captain is the husband. The Lord God made it so: Adam was created first. He had the precedence over Eve. Eve was made from Adam. She came after him and from him.

If the husband is captain, the wife is first mate. In the air, they would be pilot and co-pilot. Wifely submission to a loving affectionate husband is a most lovely thing. Love reciprocated by submission promotes more love. The wife's role is to

support her husband, to encourage and to comfort him. But there are times when the husband has to acknowledge the wife's superior wisdom or knowledge. Then he should have the grace to submit to her. So there is mutual submission.

To wives and wives-to-be, hear God's word again: "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church." The roles are complementary, a teamwork arrangement. To suggest that this teaching of Scripture is out of date is to bow to the pernicious spirit of the age: Wifely submission is not a sign of inferiority and weakness but one of dignity and strength. The man leads and loves, the wife follows and supports. Together they make the team.

A word to "bossy" wives. It is to your credit and glory to play your wife's role of submitting to your husband. To constantly challenge his leadership and authority is to demean and downgrade your own status. "Henpecking" your husband, domineering over him (in private or in public) gives you a poor image, undermines the man you ought to support, and overturns the order in the home.

Be feminine, lady-like and wife-like! The credit will go to you as you yield your husband his rightful role.

Thought: A good wife is more precious than rubies.

1 KINGS 11: 1-6

1 TIMOTHY 3: 1-13

....till death us do part.

MONOGAMY, MONOTONY

THE TEMPTATION of some woman younger and more attractive than one's ageing wife will raise the question, "Can't a believer have more than one wife? Abraham (father of the faithful) had three and Jacob had four. Why can't I have just one more?" Perhaps you had occasion to doubt God's wisdom in making the marriage union for just two persons. Perhaps you have thought out some very good reasons for polygamy, eg. the monotony of the same old spouse! It's time for a change!

Not quite. Firstly, let us relearn our theology. God's ways are always perfect. He ordained it to be one-plus-one and no more. He made no mistake about it. If there is ever any mistake or miscalculation, it is never on God's part. Rather, it is always on man's part.

Monotony? Yes, indeed, says the carnal mind. The flesh with its lust clamours, "A change! Variety! New experience!" It all sounds very exciting. Unnumbered millions have gone the way of the flesh, only to find that the payment is not as the promise. My dear reader, the monotony of

monogamy is not to be compared with the bitterness and strife of polygamy!

Read again the passage from 1 Kings 11. Solomon loved women. With his kingly power and wealth he gathered 1,000. Some perverse wit remarked, "Variety is the spouse of life." Those women turned away Solomon's heart after other gods, and his heart was not perfect with the Lord. Read also the lives of Abraham and Jacob and the price they had to pay for their multiple wives.

No, my friend, polygamy was never God's plan. It was the work of man's carnal desire. A believer must not be ruled by his carnal mind, "for to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.... so they that are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom 8:6,8)

Monogamy in the Lord gives you and your spouse a monopoly of each other, within a fidelity one to the other. Consider the instruction from God's Word: "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth the favour of the Lord." (Prov 18:22) "Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth." (Prov 5:18) "Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her....." (Prov 31:10,11).

But godliness with contentment is great gain!

Question: What if our Heavenly Husband should get tired of us?

Prayer: Lord, thank Thee for my life partner.

AMOS 3: 1-3

2 CORINTHIANS 6: 14-18

Be ye not unequally yoked....

THE UNEQUAL YOKE – I

THE ESSENCE of the marriage bond is a fusion or union of two individuals. "The two shall be one flesh." The union is not only physical but psychological and spiritual as well. The mutual attachment and affection between husband and wife causes a convergence of likes and dislikes, of outlook and ambition, of ideological and spiritual persuasion. After a time the two think as one, speak as one and act as one.

One of the problems faced by some Christian young people is: May a believer date someone who is an unbeliever (or a Roman Catholic)? Simply going out in itself is harmless enough, but the questioner obviously has the ultimate objective of marriage in mind. God's word is positively against "mixed marriages" i.e. marriage between believers and unbelievers. God forbade the Israelites to marry outsiders "for they will turn away thy son from following me that they may serve other gods." (Deut. 7:4)

In a mixed marriage there is a conflict of loyalties, a contest of affection: it is either God or spouse. An unbelieving spouse has become a

“god”, an object of affection. God says “For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God.” He will not tolerate competition from any person or thing. Our love for Him must be exclusive and total. We must love Him with all our heart and soul and mind and strength. An unbelieving spouse makes this impossible.

Moses forbade the children to yoke an ox with an ass. The two are mutually incompatible in size, strength and temperament. To yoke them together was simply creating an unhappy and impossible situation, and sooner or later the partnership must end. The Apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth warning them against the unequal yoke in marriage. It is simply not right for a Christian to be yoked to a non-Christian in marriage. To do so is to ask for trouble.

Listen to this one: “John accompanied me to Church regularly and showed keen spiritual interest. He promised to become a Christian after our marriage. Eight years have passed and he has not believed, neither has he attended Church. He has nothing but ridicule and bitterness toward the Gospel. Our children are torn between two loyalties. I never knew there would be such troubles. If only I had obeyed the Scriptures. Why didn’t someone warn me earlier?”

Believer, flee the unequal yoke!

Thought: Can two walk together, except they be agreed?

JUDGES 16: 4, 5, 15-17

PSALM 37: 4, 5

....together with unbelievers.

THE UNEQUAL YOKE – II

TODAY'S READING is written specially with our young unmarried believers in mind, in particular some who are dating unbelievers and Roman Catholics, or members of liberal, charismatic and new evangelical churches (who hold different and unscriptural doctrinal beliefs and persuasions). For you, the future is fraught with risks.

It may be that you are being almost helplessly attracted to someone. It might even have been "love at first sight" and you are almost convinced that you have found your ideal life partner, but for that little nagging difference of faith. You know that there isn't the same persuasion, the same stand of separation from unbelief, the same commitment to God's infallible word. But the thrill and eagerness of "first love" minimizes the differences and obstacles. Perhaps the other person will come round to your beliefs. Perhaps!

A word of caution and advice. Make haste slowly! Count the cost before you take the plunge. Getting married is not like buying a car. Once "hitched" you cannot simply say "Take it back.

It's not what I want." Remember Samson. He was guided by his carnal instinct. Delilah was beautiful, captivating and desirable. He got her, and fell into a snare from which there was no escape. He paid dearly – with his life.

Marriage is serious business. Your first "heart-throb" is not necessarily the one that God has in mind for you. If you realize that our Heavenly Father is deeply interested and concerned about whom you marry, then you will want to commit your way to the Lord. Once you have grasped this truth, all sense of anxiety and haste will be allayed. Then you may relax and say, "Lord, please take charge. Guide me, and lead me to the right person, the one of your choice."

Read Psalm 37:4, 5 again. The promise of God's word is most assuring. The Lord will give you the desires of your heart; He will bring it to pass. But you must first delight in the Lord and commit your way to Him. Resolve to glorify the Lord in your marriage. The Biblical portrayal of marriage is that of the church united with Christ. It is a most beautiful picture of redeemed and Redeemer, the purified believers and the Saviour united in a perfect bond, sealed and sanctified by His own precious blood.

Marriage is much more than physical!

Question: Does your ideal of a life partner conform with Ephesians 5:22-30?

GENESIS 2: 23-24

EPHESIANS 5: 22-28

In marriage – make haste slowly!

BEFORE YOU PLUNGE IN!

WHETHER Christian or not, marriage is for keeps, for the Maker knows best. He made us that way, to function best on a one-to-one partnership on a life-long basis. So we repeat, for best results refer to the Maker! Marriage is not simply physical, not just for the satisfaction of the flesh and its biological urge. It is far more, and our Maker has clear guidelines for us to follow. Believers would do well to ponder carefully the spiritual meaning of marriage before they “take the plunge.” This will save many a future breakup – so often foreseeable and avoidable.

The modern outlook focuses mainly on the physical and biological elements of marriage. In the words of Samson, “Get her for me, for she pleases me well.” (Judges 14:3) He saw, he was attracted and he proposed. But, alas, the physical component of sex is shallow, fickle and fleeting. Beauty and excitement quickly wear thin and demand for a change. To cope with this sort of expectation in America, some marriages are legal contracts with built-in conditions for separation. The stage is set for divorce even before marriage has begun!

To the Christian believer, the marriage bond is permanent. The two become one flesh, a life-long fusion. Marriage is a picture of the relationship between Christ and his Church, which is loving, sacrificial and permanent. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself." (Eph 5:25,28). The church is the complement of Christ, like the bride is to the bridegroom. It is a beautiful, almost mystical, relationship of love, in which the Lord Himself has a part. It is aptly expressed thus: Each for the other, both for the Lord.

When two believers in love understand these basic elements of the marriage bond, and together commit their lives to the Lord, then there need be no place for polygamy, adultery, extramarital adventures or divorce. Courting couples should therefore carefully weigh all the factors before plunging into the matrimonial sea.

Question: Besides physical and spiritual considerations, can you think of others?

Prayer: Lord, strengthen me for a life-long partnership to glorify Thy name.

SINGLE BUT NOT SOLITARY

BY DEFINITION the unmarried are single. Our concern is with those who stay single past the average age of marriage – the confirmed bachelor and spinster. Why do some people stay single? Generally it is a matter of the person's urge and occupation. With the majority the course of nature (the "mating instinct") works toward a settlement in marriage. For a few, the instinct may be less urgent, or may be sublimated into the pursuit of career or hobby. Consequently the individual is busy and contented with life, somewhat oblivious to the advance of the years.

There is no question of which is better: to marry or not to marry. Neither can be said to be better for any particular person. He or she has to decide. The more important thing is to be contented, whatever state one is in, and to devote oneself to strive for the glory of God. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (1 Cor 10:31) Whether you marry or remain single, do it to the glory of God!

A single person has an advantage over the married person in serving the Lord. As Paul says,

He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord. Similarly, with the woman. The single, unattached person will be more mobile (eg. to become a foreign missionary), and can afford more time serving in the Church. This is true only if the person is fully devoted to God's service.

What about the state of celibacy, i.e. remaining single for life? Certain religious groups teach that celibacy is an expression of the pure life (the renunciation of dirty sex) and is a way of gaining merit with God. Such a doctrine has no Scriptural support and is a clear contradiction of God's will for man in creation (that a man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave unto his wife). This doctrine originated in the fourth century by the introduction of pagan philosophies and practices into the Church of Rome. We therefore reject monasticism, asceticism and celibacy as un-Christian practices.

The single believer may take comfort in belonging to the greater family of believers in the Church community, a blessing which renders him or her neither solitary nor sorry!

Keynote: Do all to the glory of God.

Prayer: In whatever state, may I be contented.

EXODUS 20: 13, 14

EPHESIANS 5: 1-7

Walk worthy of your vocation.

ABORTION AND CONTRACEPTION

IN THE WEST the doctrine of "free love" and permissive sex (now spreading rapidly to the East) has caused an epidemic of illegitimate pregnancies. In some communities the number of unwed mothers is catching up with married ones, and abortions outnumber live births. Abortion on demand being freely available has emboldened sex-crazy youths to lust like the inhabitants of ancient Sodom.

We shall briefly consider the place of abortion and contraception in the light of Biblical teaching. Abortion or the termination of foetal life before viability (maturity) has been legalized in most western countries, so-called "abortion on demand" to get rid of unwanted pregnancies. This practice is permitted mainly for socioeconomic reasons. The Bible clearly forbids it. "Thou shalt not kill." Abortion is killing.

There are however a few instances where termination of pregnancy on medical grounds is permitted in early pregnancy eg. maternal disease of a serious nature and foetal malformation. As medical care and knowledge improve, the need for

this class of termination correspondingly gets smaller and smaller.

Contraception or birth control to regulate the arrival of babies by married people needs no debate. To forbid it on religious grounds is without Scriptural support, although it may be enforced in the name of the Church or some human authority. In the medically-advanced West birth control clinics have mushroomed in many communities to stem the rising tide of teenage pregnancies. Any young person can obtain advice, knowledge, pills and appliances for birth control, without parental consent or knowledge.

While this may reduce the number of unwanted pregnancies, it has bred a new generation of youngsters who regard sex as a physiological need (like eating and sleeping) or some sort of recreational activity. This phenomenon is spreading throughout the world as an ominous sign that the "days of Noah" are with us, or a re-run of Sodom and Gomorrah. The writing is on the wall: our Lord's return is near, even at the doors, for the Judgement Day is at hand. Read Matthew 24:37-39.

Parents, warn your children! Young people be holy and undefiled, looking for our Blessed Hope! Behold, He comes!

Question: Are you living a pure and holy life for God?

Keynote: But fornication and all uncleanness, let it not be once named among God's people.

2 SAMUEL 11: 1-5

MATTHEW 5:27-32

If thy eye offend thee, pluck it out.

EYES OF ADULTERY

DAVID THE SHEPHERD KING was a valiant fighter and conqueror on the battlefield. Against his own lustful eye, however, he had no defence. While his generals were in the frontline waging war, he remained in the palace, "taking it easy." From his roof top he saw Bathsheba taking a bath. Immediately in his heart he committed adultery with her. "Sow a thought, reap an act." His lustful eyes set off a train of events which plagued the last 20 years of his life, beginning with his stealing a man's wife, murdering her husband and covering up his sins.

It was a great day when young John gained admission to University and a place in the hall of residence. After he had settled in, his godly Mother paid him a visit. She was taken aback when she entered his room to see the walls covered with pin-ups of film actresses, models and pop singers in various degrees of undress. No godly person could live in such a room, exposed to the unceasing temptation of the sensuous pictures. The mother kept her thoughts to herself.

On returning home, she sought God's wisdom in prayer. Then she took her own portrait, beautifully mounted and framed, and sent it to her son,

with this note, "My dearest John, I hope you like this portrait. Perhaps you will hang it in your room. Love. Mother." The next time she visited him, all the lustful pictures were gone: only Mother's portrait adorned the wall. "What happened to those pictures, John?" John replied, "You see, Mum, I could not have those pictures alongside yours. They would be out of place." Mother's prayer was answered.

God's word says, "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." So the children's hymn says, "O be careful little eyes what you see!" The lustful eye was the downfall of David and Samson, and many a "strong man." An old pastor made it his life rule not to look at women directly in the face. He actively avoided the "lust of the eyes." Prevention is better than cure!

*Yield not to temptation,
For yielding is sin;
Each vict'ry will help you
Some other to win;
Fight manfully onward,
Dark passions subdue;
Look ever to Jesus —
He'll carry you through!*

Horatio R. Palmer

Thought: "Be holy as I am holy," saith our God.

*Prayer: O Master let me walk with Thee;
Teach me all carnal lusts to flee!*

PROVERBS 7

HEBREWS 13: 4

....the end thereof are the ways of death.

EXTRAMARITAL ADVENTURISM

“EVERYBODY’S DOING IT, and nobody will know. Don’t be chicken!” This sort of persuasion clothed with a double lie has caused many a downfall. Not even the great King David could resist it, and one sin led to another and another; a whole trail of disaster followed one act. The modern setting is familiar to most: husbands away on business; lonely wives at home. Both situations invite temptation and even the strongest-willed and the least adventurous have fallen. Cover-ups notwithstanding, there is the inevitable aftermath: guilty conscience, fearsome diseases, marital conflict, God’s wrath.

The temptation will come, sooner or later. But see that you do not fall into the snare. Be not surprised if many are travelling the broad way. Did not our Lord warn us, that “wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat?” (Matt 7:13) It is the spirit of the age – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. (1 Jn 2:16) All these belong to the perishing world.

Child of God, what have they to do with you? Rely not on secrecy, for one day all secrets will be revealed, and "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ..." (Rom 2:16)

Now my dear reader, are you being sorely tempted? Are friends encouraging you? These you can well do without! Your best Friend is He who saved you from sin. He is able to save you to the uttermost. Remember our Lord's promise? "Lo, I am with you alway!" His promises are Yea and Amen! They are faithful and powerful. If He is with you, walk as in His presence! He says to you, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Hear Him! Follow Him! Be loyal! Do nothing that will let Him down.

Learn a lesson from Joseph. No one was tempted like Joseph. The situation was absolutely ideal. The enticement came daily and with increasing fervency. Excitement, pleasure, enjoyment — on a golden platter, served in style. But the Lord was with Joseph. Loyalty to Christ came first. He stood his ground and resisted with these words: "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen 39:9)

Finally, God has given you a will. Let your will be bound to His, and yield to Him in humble submission. Have a prior commitment. Say No to sin before temptation comes knocking. God has given you legs. Flee youthful lusts therefore! Shun the lusts of the flesh like deadly poison!

Keynote: "Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death."

Prayer: Lord, I want to be like Joseph, so help me.

GENESIS 19: 4-11

ROMANS 1: 26-32

The wages of sin is death.

THE AIDS PLAGUE

THE WORLD TODAY is in a dreadful mess, particularly in the area of sexual relationships. Those who are involved try desperately to justify it by giving new names to old sins. Extramarital sex or adultery is euphemistically called an "affair," fornication is "free love" and sodomy is "gay lifestyle." Cover-ups do not improve matters, but only make the problem worse.

An AIDS epidemic is sweeping across America. Thousands of homosexuals have died from this modern plague, a grim reminder of God's judgment on Israel for her fornication, when in one day 24,000 perished from a deadly plague. (Numbers 25:1-9) God stayed the plague when Phinehas, in righteous indignation, executed a couple who openly committed fornication in the sight of the congregation.

Is there now a voice of protest from the Church of Jesus Christ against this open and shameless sexual perversion? Far from it, but rather a group of prominent high churchmen, Catholic and Protestant, publicly declared that AIDS is not punishment sent from God. These men, in the name of the Church, have gone out of their way to condone and encourage a filthy immoral practice.

What is the cause of these sexual perversions? Basically it is a rejection of God. Romans Chapter one makes the diagnosis very clear. Verses 19-21 say that men wilfully refuse the knowledge of God in the face of adequate evidence. Man without the knowledge of God, and the restraint of His holy law, fall into gross darkness and vile practices according to their own filthy lusts and abnormal affections. As a result women lust after women, and men after men. (Verses 26, 27)

God judged the Israelites for their fornication (premarital and extramarital sex) with a plague. He judged Sodom and Gomorrah for their homosexual and other perverse acts with an overthrow: fire and brimstone from heaven buried the cities of the plain (in the Dead Sea area). The AIDS epidemic is clearly God's hand. The worst is yet to come.

Believing fathers and mothers, moral confusion will come if we refuse God's Word and God's authority. The only safeguard for you and your home is God's salvation. Love His Word, honour His holy law, obey His righteous commandments.

Thought: This is the way: walk ye in it!

Prayer: Guide me O Thou Great Jehovah.

ISAIAH 1: 5-18

2 PETER 2: 1-14

Delight thyself in the law of the Lord.

KEEP MORAL CONFUSION OUT!

THE APOSTLE PETER has strong words to say about false prophets bringing in 'damnable heresies' to pervert the pure teaching of God's Word and cause confusion in the people's minds. "And many shall follow their pernicious ways." (2 Pet 2:1, 2) Be on your guard, therefore!

Confusion prevails in the area of sexual morality. People are confused: God's Word says, It's sinful. Church leaders say, It's all right. The confused person is not sure. He struggles with right verses wrong. He tries to justify what he is doing, which somehow doesn't seem right. He says that it is good, but he really doesn't feel good or look good or act good. There is confusion.

Charles Krauthammer in a July 9, 1984, TIME essay makes this observation: "Perhaps the deepest cause of moral confusion is the state of language itself, language that has been bleached of its moral distinctions, turned neutral, value-free, "nonjudgmental." When that happens, discourse becomes difficult, moral distinctions impossible, and moral debate incomprehensible. If

abortion is simply “termination of pregnancy”, the moral equivalent of, say, removing a tumour, how do you account for a movement of people dedicated to its abolition? If homosexuality is merely “sexual preference” – if a lover’s sex is as much a matter of taste as, say, hair colour.... then why the to-do over two men dancing in Disneyland? But there is a fuss because there is a difference. One can understand neither, with language that refuses to make distinctions.”

What is the answer? There is just one solution: return to the Word of God. When God’s Word shines in, we see light and truth. Like a two-edged sword it cuts and divides error from truth. Nothing is able to clear confusion as the Word of God – quick, powerful, sharp.

The question is: how well do you know God’s Word? Some Christians keep their Bibles in book-cases for show, and carry them to church like rusty swords – unused, untouched, unopened. Dear reader, get to know God’s Word real well. It will be to you not a rusty sword, but a trusty sword.

That is the best way to keep moral confusion out of your home.

Thought: God’s Word cleanses and protects.

Prayer: Lord, defend my house, especially the young people, from moral confusion.

PSALM 27: 1-4

MATTHEW 28: 20

Home – a little heaven, the family haven.

HOME SWEET HOME

WHAT IS HOME to you? To a child home is where father and mother shower him with love and affection. To a man, home is where together with wife and children he makes a little heaven on earth – a place of happy noises, a haven for the family, a refuge from the hustle and bustle of the outside world. To me, home is where my heart is. Whenever I travel, the longer I am away, the keener is my longing for home. Thank God for sweet home-sickness!

John Howard Payne wrote that most loved song “Home Sweet Home.” Let us recall the words of the first verse.

*Mid pleasures and palaces
though we may roam,
Be it ever so humble,
there's no place like home;
A charm from the sky seems to hallow us there,
Which, seek through the world,
it's ne'er met elsewhere.*

*Home, Home, sweet, sweet Home!
There's no place like Home!
There's no place like Home!*

John Payne's immortal lines must strike a responsive chord in your heart. Go where you will through this whole wide earth, but invariably you will say "There's no place like home." Yet the joys of home are ever so fragile and fleeting, In our heart we would that our homes were always sweet and complete, but of course that is pure wishful thinking. Sooner or later, sickness, accident, parting and other untoward happenings shatter the serenity of home.

Then we sigh and long for old times. Home is never the same again. Children grow up and leave the family nest. Like birds, they fly away. Gone are the cheery youthful voices, the carefree laughter, the boisterous playtime. The piano, untouched for many moons, stands muted and forlorn. A strange silence hangs over empty beds, now occupied only by long-discarded dolls.

Home sad home, casualty of time and change! Yet in the midst of gloom comes quiet assurance: Lo I am with you always, even until the end of the world! With Jesus, home is still Sweet Home. Our Comforter and Friend abides with us. He understands our problems and shares our sorrows. He makes home sweet! His presence lifts the gloom, drives sadness away.

Make Jesus the Centre of your home. Meet with Him every night in Family Worship. Let Him make your Home Sweet Home!

Thought: "With Christ in the vessel you can smile at the storm."

Prayer: God bless our home!

PSALM 15

LUKE 10: 38-42

Crown Him Lord of all!

WHO IS HEAD OF YOUR HOUSE?

A WALL PLAQUE commonly seen in Christian homes reads thus:

CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THIS HOUSE
THE UNSEEN GUEST AT EVERY MEAL
THE SILENT LISTENER
TO EVERY CONVERSATION.

It is a good reminder to the members of the household that they belong to the Lord 'whose they are and whom they serve.' It also informs visitors that they are in a Christian home. The display of this and others with Scripture texts is a good practice, as Moses commanded the children of Israel to write God's Word "upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." (Deut 6:9)

If Christ indeed is Head of your house, then we ought to conduct ourselves as "in His presence." When we practise the presence of Jesus in our homes, it will cause us to guard our whole lifestyle and behaviour, especially the use of our ears, eyes and tongues. A children's hymn expresses this simply but powerfully.

*O be careful little eyes what you see!
O be careful little eyes what you see!
Your Father up above is looking down in love,
O be careful little eyes what you see!*

*O be careful little ears what you hear!
O be careful little ears what you hear!
Your Father up above is looking down in love,
O be careful little ears what you hear!*

The Lord Emmanuel, He dwells in our homes! What a blessed thought. He sits in our midst. Let no violence or uncleanness intrude into our homes by the air waves or video. We must not offend our Special Guest. Let no harsh, abrasive, unkind, provocative or vulgar speech jar His ears. Let us adorn our Sitting Lounge, Dining Room and Bed Rooms with Christ-honouring decorations. If any fleshy or lustful pin-ups have invaded your house, in the holy name of Jesus, destroy them! Let the Lord reign supreme in every area of your home. That includes the nooks and corners, the locked drawers and book-cases. May no immoral or occult or anti-Christian literature, pictures or articles be allowed to lurk anywhere within your four walls.

If Christ is Lord at all, He must be Lord of all!

Thought: Serve the Lord with clean hands and pure hearts within clean homes and pure rooms.

Prayer: Lord, make me clean and pure, every bit.

LUKE 24: 28-32

GALATIANS 2: 20

For to me to live is Christ

DOES CHRIST LIVE HERE?

ONE of the best loved Easter Hymns is *He Lives* by Alfred H Ackley. Most of us can sing the chorus from memory:

He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!

He walks with me and talks with me

Along life's narrow way.

He lives, He lives, Salvation to impart!

You ask me how I know He lives?

He lives within my heart!

If Christ truly lives in our hearts, He must also show in our lives. Our old selfish ugly ways should give way to the Christ-life, for "I am crucified with Christ" – the old nature, the old Adam is no longer in control. Then I can truly say "Christ liveth in me." The proof of our faith (our conversion) is the changed life – the Christ-life. Is this seen in you?

The new pastor of a village church in France called at one of the members' homes. When the husband came home from work his wife said,

"The new pastor called."

"What did he say?" asked the man.

“Oh, he asked me, Does Christ live here? I didn’t know what to say.”

The man’s face flushed. “Why didn’t you tell him that we are respectable members of the congregation?”

“Well, that isn’t what he asked.”

“Then why didn’t you tell him that we say our prayers regularly, and read our Bible too?”

“But he didn’t ask that either.”

The man grew more vexed. His wife could not honestly say Yes to the pastor’s question and neither could he. This set them both thinking. That night they turned the question over in their minds. “Does the Lord Jesus Christ live in our home? Does He live in us?”

As they searched their hearts, the Holy Spirit convicted them of their sins and their need. They confessed their sins and received Christ as Saviour and Lord. From that night on their lives were changed, and little by little, Christ became Lord of their lives; thanks to the pastor’s searching question.

Does Christ live in you also?

Keynote: Christ in your heart must show in your life.

Prayer: Out of my life may Jesus shine!

JOHN 13: 34-35

1 CORINTHIANS 12: 14-27

Glorify God in your home!

MANY MEMBERS, ONE BODY

THE BINDING PRINCIPLE for a happy family is love. A Christian home makes a good testing ground, for "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." (Rom 5:5) Loving one another in the home is not an option, but a command from our Lord. We are His children, and the home belongs to the Lord. We are under His jurisdiction and control.

Our Lord says, "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another." (Jn 13:34) Jesus loved us and gave Himself for us. The Good Shepherd laid down His life for the sheep. Our love within the family ought to be the same kind of sacrificial love. This applies to brothers and sisters in the physical family, as well as to brethren and sisters within the larger Church Family.

How shall we express our love for one another? Paul the Apostle gives us the spiritual guidelines in 1 Cor. 12 and 13. Let us enumerate the main points:

1. *Appreciate one another.* No one must think himself superior and another inferior. Hands are not superior to feet. Both are equally needful for the perfect function of the whole body. The Chinese expression "hands-feet" means "brothers-sisters," and aptly reflects what is being taught by the Apostle. If we are all "hands-feet" how affectionate and loving we must be!

2. *Honour one another.* This is one step further from mere appreciation. Within the family — whether physical or spiritual — there should be active expression in some way to show honour one to another, especially the "less honourable." Cliques and exclusive groupings must be discouraged. Let us reach out and be open to everyone, rich or poor, high or low, regardless of education or other status.

3. *Sympathise with one another.* Words are important. Comforting and caring concern works wonders at the right time. A visit, a card, a prayer together, or a little useful gift. Our love and concern must go beyond mere words to positive action, the motive always being this: The Lord loved us all. He wants me to act for Him. Why not? For His sake, for His great love — I will go, I will do!

For we are members one of another!

Keynote: God's love keeps the family together.

Prayer: Lord, may I love others as You loved me.

PROVERBS 4: 1-5

1 JOHN 2: 12-17

Be a model father for the Lord!

A JOB CALLED FATHER

THE FATHER of a believing household has a task not given to other fathers. He is God's appointed head over that particular community and on him rests the authority and responsibility to see that the family be nurtured, instructed, guided and led in the ways of God. We have not forgotten the role of the pastor, but the man on the spot to administer the rule of God from day to day is the father.

The family is a God-ordained unit of society and belongs to a theocracy of believers. Over this unit is our Lord God Creator who has vested His authority in the father. How can the believing father live up to the expectation assigned to him? Naturally, he must have the necessary knowledge to perform the many roles thrust on him:

a) *Father is pastor.* He must be equipped with sufficient elementary knowledge of Basic Bible Doctrines. As John the Apostle puts it: you have known Him that is from the beginning. He must be able to impart such knowledge simply to his family. He must assume responsibility for the spi-

ritual well-being of its members, and lead them in worship both in the home as well as in Church.

b) *Father is example.* He must be what he aspires to see in his children. He will fail miserably if he adopts the attitude of "Do as I say but don't do as I do." *Like father like child* is a law which he cannot ignore. His best assurance of success is to strive his uttermost to be like the Master: just, impartial, kind, compassionate, pure, honest, loving, wise, self-sacrificial, forgiving, merciful.

c) *Father is provider.* Count the cost and make wise provision for the family's needs. Naturally, this calls for diligence and honest hard work.

d) *Father is protector.* He is responsible for the safety of the family: safety from physical harm and threats from outside, as well as safety from spiritual attacks and subversion by false Christian sects, from apostate movements, etc.

Only a Spirit-filled, Spirit-controlled, Spirit-led man can successfully undertake the job called father.

Thought: The Church should conduct a course for fathers.

Prayer: Lord, give us good fathers so that we shall have good children.

PSALM 103: 13

1 TIMOTHY 3: 8-13

The Lord is my strength.

THE WORLD'S HARDEST JOB

MANY A YOUNG MAN plunges into the matrimonial sea on the crest of a romantic wave with hardly a care as to what fatherhood involves. With the arrival of babies he gradually awakes to the fact that he was never quite prepared for that sort of undertaking. If someone had given him a "job description" early he could have been better prepared.

Here then is a sample job description for prospective fathers:

WANTED: Christian man to be father of a family

QUALIFICATIONS: Must be a truly born-again believer with knowledge of basic Bible doctrines, to be able to instruct future children. Must be a man of vision, moral strength and character, able to direct training programme to produce effective future parents like himself. Must conduct his training at all age levels in cooperation with a co-director (female) of his choice, and together to give advice and counsel, and solve interpersonal disputes. Must cope with all problems within

the organization which may arise from time to time, including odd jobs around the house, and emergencies of a domestic nature. Must be available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

PROSPECTS: Good for right man. In time may well rise to be a grandfather.

PAST EXPERIENCE: Not necessary. Good family background an advantage.

SALARY: Payment will be in terms of children's love, affection, loyalty, gratitude, with liberal amounts of frustrations, domestic conflicts, childish rebellions and other periodic surprise upheavals.

Now that's some job description! Young men, ponder before you plunge! Surely no other calling is as demanding, as challenging and as heavy in responsibility. But the godly young man who seriously commits himself with his young lady need fear no ill. The prospects of glorious success in raising a wonderful godly family are assured, with God's help.

Thought: You can do all things through Christ Who strengtheneth you.

Prayer: Lord, thank Thee that with Thee the future is assured.

1 SAMUEL 2: 22-34

PROVERBS 3: 1-12

A stick in time saves nine!

A DELINQUENT FATHER

“**W**HEN a young person falls foul of the law look for a delinquent father.” This axiom is not always true but it must cause all fathers to think. Think of Eli the High Priest holding the top position as Judge among the people. Yet in his own house there was a breakdown of parental discipline. His two sons Hophni and Phinehas were profligates (immersed in vice and immorality) of the worst type. They committed gross immorality in the course of their religious duties. Such action betrayed their total depravity and defiance of parents, society, and God. They had lost all common decency. Their conscience was dead.

Now our chief interest is in Eli's response to his sons' sins. As any ordinary father he should have taken swift and drastic disciplinary action. As High Priest and Judge, such action should have been doubly quick and even more decisive. For the name of the Lord and His honour were at stake. When the son of an ordinary church member offends he injures the good name of Jesus Christ, but with the son of a pastor the damage

will be doubly magnified. What did Eli do when he came to learn of his sons' sins?

Sadly, he did almost nothing. Read his weak and almost apologetic protest in verses 23-25. Reading between the lines it is evident that here was a father who was afraid of offending his sons, probably an established relationship of many years. Eli was more concerned with pleasing his evil sons than pleasing God. The material gains of the priesthood (from the people's offerings) and the physical comforts over the years had lulled Eli into a spiritual stupor and dulled his perception. He had fallen into self-deception.

But God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. (Gal 6:7) Sooner or later, retribution from God will come. Eli honoured his sons above God. He had failed in his parental duty. In one day all three met their deaths: the sons slain by the Philistines and Eli, on hearing the news, fell back and broke his neck.

A stick in time saves nine. Discipline when young will save many heartaches in later years. Parents, know your responsibilities. Know God's word. Apply the truth and discipline in love, but start young. The sooner the better.

Thought: Above all, be good examples to your children.

Prayer: Lord, grant wisdom to know the right and courage to do it.

EZEKIEL 16: 44

2 TIMOTHY 1: 3-5

Like mother like daughter!

BOUQUETS FOR GODLY MOTHERS

THE ROLE of godly mothers in shaping their children's character and future careers cannot be over estimated. Timothy could look back and thank God for a faithful mother and grandmother. President Ronald Reagan says this of his mother: "Nelle Reagan, my mother, God rest her soul, had an unshakable faith in God's goodness, and while I may not have realized it in my youth, I know now that she planted that faith very deeply in me. She made the most difficult Christian message seem very easy."

Here are a few other testimonies to encourage our mothers:

Abraham Lincoln: All that I am or hope to be, I owe my angel mother.

D.L. Moody: All that I have ever accomplished in life, I owe to my mother.

Napoleon Bonaparte: Let France have good mothers and she will have good sons.

Susanna Wesley had seventeen children. One would think that she would have little time left for prayer. Yet she spent an hour each day shut up

with God alone in her room, praying for her children. Her two sons, John and Charles, under God, brought revival to England and laid the foundation of the Methodist Church.

The prophet Ezekiel said, "As is the mother, so is the daughter." Like father like son, like mother like daughter. We cannot escape this inviolable law. Inevitably our children will grow up to reflect us like a mirror; good, bad, warts and all. Having seen thirty years of married life, I realize as never before that children's upbringing is a challenge that takes all the manhood and womanhood there is in us, but God's grace enables!

To bring an immortal being into this perilous world, neglect it, allow it to drift without direction, to go where it will, do what it chooses, and one day to see it reap an awesome harvest of delinquency and crime is surely something no one in his right mind will want to do.

And yet thousands in our progressive, permissive society are doing just that.

Godly mothers, godly fathers, may you do your duties well!

Question: Who is the greater influence: mother or father?

Prayer: Lord, bless all mothers in our church. Make them good and godly.

MATTHEW 18: 1-6

Beware, the world's trash attracts!

CHILDREN FOR CHRIST

THEODORE ROOSEVELT said this: "If you are ever going to do anything permanent for the average man, you must begin before he is a man. The chance of success lies in working with the boy — not with the man. That applies peculiarly to those boys who tend to drift off into courses which mean that unless they are checked they will be formidable additions to the criminal population when they grow older."

How true. The child is father of the man! Fathers, how are you handling your young man? Parents, how are your children doing? Those who bring children into this world should realize that it is a very hard and hostile world, both materially and spiritually. What are we doing to equip our children for the day when they must stand on their own — or fall?

Parents should plan for their children. Most do. Plan and provide for their physical and material needs, for their education and recreation. Some plan far ahead even into the distant future of higher education and career prospects. All this is well and good. Most parents need little coaxing

or encouragement in these areas. They have a good eye on the future.

But our concern is our children's eternal security which, sad to say, many Christian parents treat with little real concern or interest. This is to a large extent a reflection of their own spiritual lukewarmness and complacency. To assume that making the routine trip to Church each Sunday will suffice for the family's spiritual nourishment is certainly the *height of folly*. *We are facing issues and challenges so massive and overpowering that a casual encounter with "religion" on a weekly basis is the surest way to failure.*

Heed our Lord's words: "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Your little ones are most precious in God's sight, not just in your sight alone! We who have children must take heed: the effect of sending them 10-12 hours daily 5-6 days a week into the unbelieving world to be soaked in society's filth and anti-Christian philosophy **CANNOT BE NEUTRALISED AND CLEANSED BY AN HOUR IN CHURCH.** We need to do more!

What are you doing about your child's salvation?

Thought: Every believing child needs to grow, not by feeding on trash but on God's word.

Prayer: Lord, help me to be mindful of my children's spiritual welfare.

PROVERBS 22: 4-6
DEUTERONOMY 6: 1-7
You cannot start too early!

TRAIN UP A CHILD

Parents are ever so mindful of their children's advancement in every field that they happily study with them, study for them, train them up in various skills and do a host of other things for them. In this respect Christian parents are not behind other parents. Strangely, however, believing parents not uncommonly neglect their responsibility in their children's spiritual upbringing. Some leave it to the Church; others leave it to the child. Whichever it is they are failing in their God-given opportunity.

The Word of God clearly lays on believing parents the holy duty of instructing their children in spiritual things. We must not shirk or shrink from this responsibility nor should we delegate it to anyone else. God's Word says, "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Such is the zeal required of God's people in the instruction of children in God's Word. The same zeal naturally applies to the instruction of children in prayer.

Sadly, many Christian parents have not been instructed by their pastors of their responsibility. Consequently their children grow up not knowing how to pray or read their Bibles. At meal times they do not thank God for the food. Morning prayers are said hastily. Bedtime prayers become a drowsy formalism and dead routine. Does this describe your children? I pray not. God's Word commands all believing parents: "Train up your child when he is young!" We are to pray with them, to teach and guide and supervise. This is God's way.

When should we start? As soon as a child begins to speak. We cannot start too early. Let us read God's Word to them and teach them to speak to God as they learn to speak to man. This is our joyous and holy assignment from God. So, be faithful!

Sometimes

*Across the fields of yesterday
He sometimes comes to me,
A little lad just back from play—
The lad I used to be.*

*And yet he smiles so wistfully
Once he has crept within,
I wonder if he hopes to see
The man I might have been?*

Thomas Jones

Thought: Like parent like child!

Prayer: Make me a faithful servant for Thee, O Lord.

PSALM 8: 1-4

MATTHEW 19: 13-15

The secret: start young!

ARE YOUR CHILDREN SAVED?

WHOSE BUSINESS is it to see that your children are saved: the pastor's or the parents'? The answer is both are responsible but the role of parents comes first! At home, parents, you are in the place of pastors to your children. How soon should parents begin to impart the knowledge of God and salvation to their children? What do you think?

My answer to that is: begin as soon as you begin to communicate with them about other things. Which mother or father has come to consult a doctor, asking, "How old should my child be for us to talk to him?" Is it not a fact that we speak to our newborn babies, as though they understood? Of course they did not at first, but gradually they began to take it in, bit by bit. Did any parent say, "Oh, don't speak too much too soon. The child will be confused!"

Now do you see the point? Just as you coax the child to take her food, to go to sleep, to smile — so you speak to her about praying to Jesus, loving Jesus, etc. Which mother ever ran to the pastor to say, "Please come and sing a lullaby to my child?"

Every mother does it naturally, happily and readily. Then, the next time you do, sing hymns and gospel choruses.

Pray for your child. Sing songs of salvation. The earliest songs that I can remember are the hymns my mother used to sing me to sleep. Even to this day I can recall this one:

*God is always near me,
Hearing what I say;
Knowing all my thoughts and deeds,
All my work and play.*

*God is always near me
In the darkest night;
He can see me just the same
As by midday light.*

*God is always near me
Though so young and small;
Not a look or word or thought,
But God knows it all!*

Mothers and fathers can play a crucial role in their children's salvation. Start today. Tell them of Jesus' love. Tell them Bible stories. Tell them simply everyday, and with fervent prayer. What a blessed ministry you can have, just where you are, in your home.

One day your children will call you blessed!

*Keynote: Suffer the little children, and forbid them not,
to come unto me;
For of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

Prayer: Make me a blessing to my home, Lord.

PROVERBS 13: 1-10

EPHESIANS 6: 1-4

Guide them by example and precept.

CHEATING YOUR CHILD

WHAT FATHER or mother will ever dream of cheating their own child? And yet many well-meaning parents are doing just that. Some parent reading these words must wonder what I am driving at. That parents ought to give their children the best in life none will dispute. What is in question is, What is the best?

Many well-intentioned parents believe (and sincerely too) that the best way to love children is to give them whatever they demand and to give in to their every whim and fancy. Nothing is further from the truth. This sort of parental indulgence is the surest way of producing self-willed, self-centred and self-conceited offspring, who will grow up into social misfits and a disgrace to the parents.

This story comes from China. Loo Ting was being sent to the gallows for armed robbery and murder. For years he had been terrorising the countryside by his crimes and assaults on helpless people, old women and children. Finally the law caught up with him. As the judge passed sentence he asked Loo Ting if he had a request. "Let me

“speak to my mother.” Mother came with tears in her eyes. As she approached, he said, “Mother, what I have to say is only between you and me. Let me whisper it in your ears.” Loo Ting then held her close and before she realized what he was doing, he had bitten off part of her ear.

Then to the startled judge and audience in the courthouse, Loo Ting made his last speech. “I am what I am because of my mother. She brought me up to be a thief and robber, to steal and to hurt others. When I was a child she allowed me to do as I pleased. She never corrected or beat me. Whatever I wanted she gave. When I grew up it was too late. Mother did not give me the necessary discipline when I most needed it. I have been cheated.”

Parents, indulgence is not love. It is cheating your child. “He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.” (Prov 13:24) Let every chastening be just, fair and timely, and tempered with love.

Thought: A stick in time saves nine!

Question: Who should administer punishment: father or mother?

Memory Verse: Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. (Eph 6:1)

PROVERBS 10: 1
COLOSSIANS 3: 20, 21
Act now, or – never!

NATURE AND NURTURE

THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE is fallen in sin, under condemnation. Before we came to Christ for salvation, we were children of disobedience and by nature the children of wrath. (Eph 2:2, 3) Our children too from the time of birth already manifest the same fallen nature. Every child heralds its arrival into the world with a cry and soon (without having to learn) erupts into tantrums of self-will. To young and new parents their newborn child is the loveliest thing in all the world, and to this we all heartily agree. Nevertheless, as enlightened believers we also agree with the old preacher who setting eyes on the baby exclaimed: "What a beautiful bundle of iniquity!"

We have said enough about the need to discipline a child. A further word about the method of discipline by Christian parents. Discipline must be administered with love and parental concern. It must be firm and never frivolous or in a fit of temper. While the intention is to correct errant behaviour or cure some bad habit, there must always be the encouragement towards the positive. At all costs, avoid empty threats, punish-

ments which cannot be enforced, an appearance or spirit of vindictiveness, resentment or vengeance.

Never make the sentence something which the child ought to do anyhow, and should love to do, e.g. "Now for being disobedient to Mother, you will read your Bible for half an hour," or "You must attend Youth Fellowship meetings for one month." These activities must never be made punitive sentences. Rather our children and youths should be encouraged by spiritual instruction and parental example to love God's Word, to love the Church and its activities.

In this day and age, the nurture and upbringing of children is full of pitfalls and difficulties. Parents have to pray for and pray with their children and spend time with them consistently from infancy through their childhood days. Those times spent doing useful and constructive things with them are precious beyond price. Once lost they can never be recalled, for children advancing into their teenage years are already leaving the parental nest.

Thought: Childhood years are years to nurture. It is now or never!

Question: Did you ever regret not spending time with your child doing useful constructive things?

COLOSSIANS 3: 21

JAMES 5: 16

A little humility goes a long way!

WHEN PARENTS APOLOGIZE

ONE OF THE HARDEST LESSONS for parents to learn is that they are not infallible. There are times when they are unfair or unkind to their children, perhaps unintentionally or even unconsciously. Nevertheless, in the weakness of the flesh, they have wronged their son or daughter. The child has been obviously hurt. Has this ever happened in your home? If we think back honestly, many parents will discover, to their surprise, that they are not free from this fault.

God's Word admonishes Christian fathers: Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. Fathers are usually the disciplinarians in the home. In the exercise of their authority, it is possible for them to exceed their bounds and become unduly rigorous or severe. It may be a hasty conclusion or a one-sided judgment based on incomplete evidence. As a result, the child has been unjustly reprimanded or unfairly punished. A wrong has been done which even a little child senses.

Children may say nothing, but deep in their hearts a reaction begins to set in. There is a feeling of hurt, possibly anger, resentment, and even rebellion. Of course, the individual psychological and emotional make-up varies, and some children react more than others. Nevertheless, parents should recognize that children do have personalities and feelings and hurt feelings may leave mental wounds and scars. It is well also for parents to remember that, before they realize it, children will grow into adolescents and soon into young adulthood. What kind of parent-child relationships should we be building *now* that will make for a stable, loving and lasting bond in the years to come?

Prevention is better than cure. Let all Christian parents take stock, how they treat their children. Let authority be exercised with love and fairness. One good tip is to put yourself in the place of the child, and the issue becomes a lot clearer. Is this how I would like to be treated by my father? "In every thing by prayer" is another good rule to go by. Constant prayerful communion with God gives wisdom for every situation. But when a child has been wronged, father or mother should have the courage to admit it and say, "Son I'm sorry, my judgement was wrong. Please forgive me." Then, lovingly, parent and child will be reconciled, and God's peace in the home restored.

Keynote: Parents are human – and fallible.

Prayer: Teach us, O God, when we are wrong to ask for forgiveness.

EXODUS 12: 25-28

I CORINTHIANS 5: 7-8

Look to the Lamb of God.

WHAT MEAN YE BY THIS SERVICE?

CHILDREN are by nature curious and parents do well to always have a ready and reasonable answer to their questions. Many parents help their children in their school-work. Some even study for them. Their zeal and ambition for their children's success in worldly learning is to be commended.

Can this same zeal and ambition be applied to the things of God's Kingdom? Indeed it can, and it should. Remember, God's plan is for every believing parent to be spiritual guide and teacher to the children. It is therefore very essential for all parents to equip themselves adequately, at least in Basic Bible Knowledge concerning the main doctrines of our faith. How else can parents instruct their children?

Of course we are not asking all parents to become theologians! That is to be left to the pastor, in his territory. But parents must know the basics, the essential minimum. The historic event of the Exodus is one of the essentials every believer ought to know, and know well. God commanded that His great act of deliverance be

observed for ever by the congregation of Israel. Naturally the children of future generations will ask, "What do you mean by this service?" They are curious to know. Then the parents ought to be able to tell them, "It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he killed the Egyptians, but spared our houses."

Today we no longer observe the Passover. Its place has been taken by the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In our church we observe this once a month. In other churches more often, in some it may be less. Nevertheless, the elements are the same: bread and wine. Only communicant members of the church participate while the others are excluded or simply sit as observers. Now the children want to know. "What is it you are eating, Mom? Why am I not allowed to eat?" And so they come with their questions.

Christian parents, Are you able and ready to answer their questions? Do you know the answers? Are you quite clear in your own minds what Holy Communion is? What is the meaning of the bread and the wine? Do you know the difference from the Roman Mass?

"What mean ye by this service?" Be sure of your answer before your child confronts you with the question.

Question: What is the significance of the passover lamb?

JOHN 15: 3-14
ROMANS 5: 6-11

If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

NO GREATER LOVE

FOR SIDNEY CARTON life had been empty and frustrating. Others had achieved so much, he so little. The lady he loved had married Charles Darney, but his love for her remained undiminished. It burned in his heart, an undying flame.

One day Charles Darney was condemned to die at the guillotine. A wild idea came to Sidney Carton. Here was his chance to prove to his lady love his eternal devotion. "Let me die for Charles Darney!"

By ingenious scheming, Carton smuggled himself into prison, exchanged clothes and places with Darney. Thus Carton went to the guillotine for his friend. On that chilly morning when he took his last steps to his death he might have thought to himself, "At last my life has found fulfilment. I shall leave behind a fragrant memory in somebody's heart."

Consider now the death of another Man. He laid down His life for us all. God's word says:

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.....God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:6, 8.

Carton died for a friend. Christ died for enemies. He gave himself a ransom for all. (1 Tim 2:6) He, the sinless Son of God, died for us the sinful sons of men. He died to bring us back to God, to give us an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven. (1 Pet1:4)

Dear friend, there is no greater love than God's love. Believe on the Lord Jesus and be a recipient of that love.

The Love of God

*Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made;
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above
Would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Tho' stretched from sky to sky!
O love of God how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure –
The saints' and angels' song!*

Thought: "The Son of God became the Son of man that the sons of men might become the sons of God"

Prayer: Lord, accept me as thy child, through Jesus Christ my Saviour.

LUKE 16: 19-31

REVELATION 21: 1-8, 27

God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.

“I’LL BE LOOKING FOR YOU!”

LYNN was just seven when she became an earnest believer. Her tender heart received Jesus as her Saviour. She also loved her father very dearly, but he was not a believer, and was not concerned about the things of God.

Each evening as father returned from work, Lynn would be at the gate eagerly waiting. The wooden gate was high and the palings or stakes were close together, so father removed one of the palings so that Lynn might see him approaching. Each evening Lynn would wait for father without fail, eagerly looking through the opening in the gate.

One day, Lynn fell sick and no doctors could heal her. Father called in the best specialists but her condition only grew worse. He was heart-broken, for he loved her more than his own life. When Lynn knew that she was not getting well, she said to father, “When I get to Heaven, I will ask Jesus to remove a paling from Heaven’s gate so I can look through to see you come.... Daddy, I will be looking out for you everyday. Promise, you won’t be long.” Then she fell asleep, safe in the arms of Jesus.

Father's heart was melted by his child's words. He yielded to the Saviour and became an earnest believer, like his daughter. God in mercy had used the death of an only child to save him.

Dear reader, God's Heaven has a place for those who believe. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me." (Jn 14:6) Like a loving Father longing for his child, God is waiting for you to turn to Him. Don't be long – come to the Saviour without delay. Believe on Him and be saved – today.

The Home Over There

*O think of the Home over there,
By the side of the river of light,
Where the saints all immortal and fair,
Are robed in their garments of white.*

*Over there, over there,
O think of the Home over there,
Over there, over there, over there,
O think of the Home over there.*

Question: If God is a God of love, will He not save everyone in the end?

Prayer: Lord, I believe. Please write my name in Thy Book of Life.

PSALM 121

MATTHEW 6: 24-34

"I am come that ye might have life....."

ETERNAL LIFE INSURANCE

WHEN I asked the young man what he was selling, he said, "Life insurance."
"That's not life insurance, surely. That's death insurance!"

"What do you mean?"

"You have to die to win."

"Not really. You get your money back with good interest in 10, 15 or 20 years if you live. In these days of rampant inflation and high income tax, this is wise investment. But if you die, your family is provided for. You can be assured that your wife and children will be protected for a number of years. You can't beat that for security! Say, by the way, what are you selling?"

"Life insurance too, but of a different sort – eternal life insurance. Nothing to pay, and you receive unlimited dividends immediately."

"No kidding!"

"No I'm serious. Eternal life insurance is serious business. It concerns everybody. The Author of life, Jesus Christ, makes you an offer: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my*

word, and believeth on him that sent me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation: but is passed from death unto life.” (John 5:24)

Dear reader, our Lord Jesus is concerned not only with our spiritual welfare, but He is very much concerned with our day-to-day necessities as well. Not only is He interested, but He is able to supply all our temporal needs as well. But He wants us to have our priorities right. Jesus said, “Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things that you need for your daily life shall be added unto you.” This is the best insurance – everlasting life insurance in Jesus Christ, the Prince of Life.

The New Jerusalem

*We're a pilgrim band now headed
For the Glory Land of light,
We are trav'ling through the
Wilderness of night;
We've a home that's far away
Beyond the heaven and the stars
In the New Jerusalem!*

*Hallelujah fills the heavens
For the saints have all come home
To Jerusalem! To Jerusalem!
Joyfully they shout Hosanna!
Come and crown Him King of Kings!
In the New Jerusalem!*

Timothy Tow

Prayer: Lord, thank Thee for Thy abundant life.

1 CORINTHIANS 6: 15-20

1 PETER 1: 18-21

Come unto me....and I will give you rest.

BOUGHT WITH A PRICE

THIS is a true story from the days of American slave trade. A young black girl was being sold by auction. She was tall, slim and attractive. The bidding was keen, and quickly mounted higher and higher. At last only two men were left. One was a lowly uncouth ruffian who swore each time he raised his bid against his competitor, a quiet refined gentleman.

Finally, the bidding stopped and to the gentleman who had bid so earnestly was given the legal document which made him the owner of the girl. With a push the auctioneer roughly presented her to her new master. Proudly and defiantly, she stood before him with contempt on her face and hatred in her eyes.

Then an amazing thing happened. Her new owner took the papers of ownership and tore them into pieces in front of her eyes. Then throwing them on the ground he said kindly, "My dear, I bought you that I might set you free!"

Too stunned for speech, the black girl stood staring in disbelief. Then with a cry of happiness

too deep for words, she fell at the white man's feet. Through her tears she exclaimed, "O sir, I am yours! I will serve you all my life!"

My dear reader, there is One who is the kindest, who loves you with an everlasting love. He paid the price to free you from the bondage of Satan – the cruel slave master. He bought you with His own life blood. Will you not also come to Him, and serve Him for life?

God's word says, "For as much as ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver or gold....but with the precious blood of Christ." The Saviour has died, the price has been paid in full. Come, trust in Him and He will set you free – free from every bondage of sin.

For ye are bought with a price!

*O the love that sought me!
O the blood that bought me!
O the grace that brought me to the fold,
Wondrous grace that brought me to the
fold!*

Spencer Walton.

Question: Why did Christ have to die? Was there no other way to save us?

Prayer: Lord, make me a faithful follower of the Lamb.

LUKE 12: 16-31

JAMES 4: 13-17

...but he was not rich toward God.

“YOU NAME IT, I HAVE IT”

DR. GEORGE TRUETT, a minister of the Gospel, was entertained on one occasion in the home of a Texas oil tycoon. After dinner the man took him up to the roof-garden and proudly showed off his possessions.

Pointing toward the north he said, “Doctor, see all those oil derricks dotting that vast expanse of land? That’s all mine. They call it black gold. I came to this country 25 years ago penniless. Now I own everything as far as eye can see in that direction.”

Then he turned to the east and pointed to the luxuriant fields of grain. “See that, doctor? They call it yellow gold. Yes, all the golden grain, that’s mine.” Next, he turned to the south, and pointed to huge herds of cattle and contented cows. “Everything as far as you can see in that direction is mine.”

Finally, turning to the west, he pointed to a great virgin forest covering the hillside. “See that, doctor? It’s all mine, everything that you see, in this direction, that direction, that direction, and this direction, it’s all mine.”

Dr. Truett gently laid a hand on the tycoon's shoulder, pointed to heaven and said, "My friend, look up there as far as your eyes can see. How much do you own in that direction?" The man dropped his head, paused a while, and said, "I never thought of that."

Dear reader, how much of this world's goods do you own? No matter how much or how little, it is certain you can carry nothing out. He who lays up treasure for himself on earth is not rich toward God. What are you doing to prepare for the inevitable day of departure? Do not say, "I'm still young. Let me think of it another day."

God's word says, "Whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Plan today for your tomorrow with God. Lay up treasures in heaven, not on earth. Be rich toward God!

There Is A City

*There is a city bright,
Closed are its gates to sin;
Naught that defileth,
Naught that defileth,
Can ever enter in!*

Question: How can one lay up treasure in heaven?

Prayer: Lord, teach me to set my affection on things above and not on things below.

JOHN 14: 1-6

2 CORINTHIANS 4: 16-5: 6

"I go to prepare a place for you."

“TILL WE MEET, GOOD-NIGHT!”

FOR 40 YEARS Jim had followed the Saviour. He lived each day with a steadfast hope in God's promise of a home in Heaven. He firmly believed, "To be absent in the body is to be present with the Lord." One day sickness struck and soon the time came for him to depart. To his family he said, "I'm going to be with the Lord. Sorrow not, my beloved."

To his dear wife he said, "Dearest, Good-night. We shall meet again.... in the morning!" To his daughters he said, "Dearest, Good-night. Our separation is only for a while. In the morning we'll meet again. Good-night!" Then the dying man turned to his son and with tears in his eyes said, "Good-bye, my son! Good-bye!"

At this the son was astonished, and asked, "Dad, why did you say Good-bye to me and Good-night to Mum and my sisters?"

"Well, son, through the years you have rejected Christ. Believers and unbelievers go their separate ways after death. Unbelievers are eternally separated from God and from their loved ones who die in the Lord."

The dying father's words pierced the son's heart. God's Spirit brought deep conviction of sin and the young man repented. In tears he said, "Dad, here and now I receive Christ as my personal Saviour. I believe He died for me and forgives my sins. So, till we meet in heaven, Dad, Good-night!"

Dear reader, Heaven is not just a hope. It is a place, a city, a country. How do we know? We have the promise of the One who reigns there. Its beauty, peace and splendour are beyond description. But not all may go there. God's Word says, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." (Rev 21:8)

Heaven is for those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. Is your name written there?

Beyond The Sunset

*Beyond the sunset, O blissful morning,
When with our Saviour heav'n is begun;
Earth's toiling ended,
O glorious dawning;
Beyond the sunset, when day is done!*

Virgil P Brock

Question: How can your name be written in the Lamb's book of life?

Thought: There shall be no night there.

PROVERBS 16: 27-32

EPHESIANS 4: 26, 27

Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God.

OF TEMPERS AND TANTRUMS

CHILDHOOD TEMPERS and tantrums usually respond to father's firm hand. Repeated fits and outbursts require careful investigation into the cause and its removal, but generally speaking the rod (with reasonableness) will cure. What if the cause is parental tempers and tantrums? As they say in China, "Monkey see monkey do." Can one blame a child for copying from parents? Obviously some adult soul-searching is needful.

Adult tempers and tantrums are a serious malady and not easily cured, but no matter how resistant to treatment, relief must be earnestly sought. A Christian home ought not to emit angry sounds from internal commotions. Outbursts between husband and wife or parent and child are hurtful to the spirit, degrading to neighbours and a shame to God's name.

Dear reader, if your home is afflicted by this disease, pray earnestly to God for deliverance. Then yield yourself to the Spirit. Violent temper and unreasonable clamour are simply giving in to the carnal mind and falling into the devil's

snare. The devil's chief ambition is to cause us to go back to our old ways, to quench the Spirit of God and to let our old Adam take control. The devil makes us feel self-righteous, self-important and puffed up. Then we forget our submission to God, and down we fall. Nothing delights the devil more than this. You can frustrate him by saying *No!*

“He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.” Let the father and mother of the home set the example. Determine that your home will be a haven of peace, a house of quiet retreat, a refuge for every troubled soul. Men are not impressed by our service in church, by our witnessing everywhere, by our eloquent prayers. But when peace and harmony reign supreme and love evidently fills every heart, men will stop and take notice.

Even unbelievers will give glory to our Saviour's name.

Thought: Let all believers' homes be havens of peace and joy.

Question: When was the last time you threw a tantrum? Have you found the solution?

2 KINGS 2: 23-25

2 TIMOTHY 3: 1-5

Juvenile crime reflects parental neglect!

LIKE PARENTS LIKE CHILDREN

IT is no little thing to mock a prophet. For their insulting behaviour toward Elisha, forty-two children were killed by wild bears from the forest. If God were to dispense comparable justice to the juvenile offenders of today, one shudders to think what the outcome might be! An appalling assortment of juvenile crimes appears in the daily newspapers. In every major city of the world the age of criminal offenders creeps lower each year. As God's Word warns: In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their ownelves disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good

Juvenile crime reflects the state of our homes. It is in the home that young thugs, hooligans, thieves, gangsters, kidnappers, rapists, sex perverts, swindlers, robbers and murderers are bred. Parents must bear the major accountability for their children's anti-social performance.

Chief Justice William H. Waste of the California Supreme Court commenting on the rising tide

of lawlessness among the youth of today observes that the criminal indifference of parents is largely responsible. He agrees with the President that "What the youths of the country need is not more public control through governmental action, but more home control through parental action." He continues:

"Through indifference or because of an ill-considered belief in the dangerous doctrine of the "new freedom," parents have given over the reins of authority, and they now watch with horror the resulting runaway. You cannot give youth the reins and say, Drive! without inviting a smash. Youth lacks judgment. It is dominated to a large extent by the physical urge. Without a guiding hand it will run amok and smash itself."

"True religion and good citizenship are inseparable. Supplementing the work of the Church is the Sunday School. I am sorry that the Sunday School and the Church must often do, unaided, what the home should co-operate in doing." (The Wesleyan Methodist).

The sad fact is that Christian homes are failing in their duty. Believing parents, be warned. The problem's more important than your golf and club activities.

Thought: Christian parents with time to spare should spend it serving in Church, not in clubs.

Prayer: Lord, help our parents to save their children from the world of crime.

2 SAMUEL 18: 33

LUKE 15: 11-24

They first loved you!

HEREIN IS LOVE

THE SUPERLATIVE LOVE of God is matchless and incomparable. Its depth can never be fully fathomed. John the Apostle of love said: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his son to be the propitiation of our sins. We love him because he first loved us." (1 Jn 4:10,19)

We see something of God's love in the way fathers love their sons and daughters. Children will not really understand parents' love until they have become parents themselves. King David was under attack by his rebellious son Absalom. He had to flee for his life. In the ensuing battle, Absalom was killed by David's men. The King was overwhelmed with grief at the news and wept, "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

The prodigal son returning from his disastrous venture in that far country received a royal welcome from his heartbroken father, who said, "For this my son was dead, and is alive again: he was lost, and is found." All of the son's past ingratitude and misdeeds were forgotten and forgiven. Both this father and King David reveal to us, only

faintly, the loving heart of God, our Heavenly Father.

Now, my young readers, do you appreciate your parents better? Listen further to this account of another father's love for his child. "When I return home tired after my day's work, I am refreshed when I see my baby daughter. I hold her in my arms, look into her blue eyes and every little sound she makes is music to my ears. I whisper to her my tender affection although she understands not a word, and neither can she love me now.

"I lay her down to sleep, and if I were troubled by some sudden illness she will not stir a finger to help. If I should die she would likely forget me in a few days. And while I live she is a constant expense to me. I earn only a little but I will not part with her for all the money in the world. How is it? Does she love me? Not really. Do I then withhold my love until I know she loves me? Do I wait for her to prove her love before I love her?"

Herein is love, not that you loved your father or mother, but that they first loved you, and gave their best for you, when you were little and helpless.

Thought: Thank God for the love of parents.

Question: What have you done to repay your parents' love?

EXODUS 20: 12

MATTHEW 15: 4

Filial piety begins at home!

HONOUR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER

COMING from a traditional Oriental culture, I have observed with amusement (and amazement) some Western young people address their parents by their first names. Words like “Daddy” and “Mummy” seem to have been removed from their vocabulary. This sort of practice, I am told, is encouraged by progressive and liberal minded parents. Whatever the truth of the matter, such behaviour to conservative Easterners is disrespectful if not outrageous. Culture aside, it is contrary to Biblical teaching.

At the heart of the Ten Commandments is the Fifth: Honour thy Father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee. (Ex 20:12) Honour implies respect to one who rightfully deserves it. Parents deserve respect from children for all that they mean to them. From parents children receive life, loving care and nurture, education and a whole host of good things. Next to God, parents stand in the place of authority – in the place of God – and

therefore deserve the highest honour and esteem from their children.

How can children honour their parents? Obey them in the Lord: for this is right. (Eph 6:1) Respect and esteem them highly (even if they are not as well educated as you!) Love them, for they first loved you! Do all these, while parents are alive. Show kindness and love before they are gone, or too old to be able to enjoy your kindness. Give them some of the comforts of life which they lavished on you before.

This story comes from China. In the cold northern winter, houses had no heating . Ming was only seven years old. He lived with his widowed Mother. How he longed to repay Mother for her hard work and tender care in looking after him. An idea came to his little head. "There is not much that I can do for Mother, but I can warm her bed for her. Then when she comes to bed it will be nice and warm." So little Ming crept into Mother's bed between the bed clothes and with his little body he made the bed comfortable and warm. Imagine the lovely reception which Mother got at bedtime! Such a meaningful act warmed not only Mother's bed but more. It warmed her heart to know that her boy was grateful and appreciative of her love.

Young reader, there are ways of expressing your love for your parents. Doing them honour carries a promise of blessing. Will you act on it?

Thought: A filial son will have filial sons.

Recite: Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise. (Eph 6:2)

GENESIS 46: 29-30; 47: 11-13

MATTHEW 15: 4-9

Repay love with gratitude!

CARING FOR PARENTS

HOW should we treat aged parents? In Jesus' day there were those religious hypocrites who evaded their filial duty by pretending that their money was committed to God's work and thus they coolly neglected their aged parents. The truly converted Christian would do otherwise, considering the debt he owes to his parents which can never be adequately repaid.

A Chinese proverb says, When you drink water think of the source. We owe our success to our parents. We who are well established in life, with good jobs and careers, can look back almost without exception to an earlier day when our parents made us what we are today. Some will recall how fathers sweated and mothers sacrificed in order to send us to school. Think of their unstinting devotion, lavish affection and unceasing concern when we were totally helpless, useless, dependent creatures, more a nuisance than anything else. Yet they showered us with love and kisses, attention and kindness, day after day, year after year, until we left the family nest.

But now they are of no more use to us, more an inconvenience than a source of goodness. Now they are burdensome, troublesome, old and decrepit castoffs, fit to be dumped at some old folks' home. Is this how we regard aged parents? God forbid! We see Joseph the model filial son. He had been separated from his family for almost 20 years. He had risen to become the Prime Minister of a great country. He had his own family and was comfortably settled. He could well have said, Out of sight out of mind!

Not Joseph! He remained the same loving son. His father had arrived after a long trip. He greeted him with tears and kisses. The same treatment was accorded to his wicked brothers. "And Joseph nourished his father, and his brothers and all his father's household with bread, according to their families." (Gen 47:12) Let our sons resolve and aspire to be like Joseph. Surely in this day of return to Biblical Christianity, filial love and piety will also see a revival.

A young graduate in his first year gave half his monthly pay packet to his retired parents. In his second year he presented them with a car. These were merely token repayments of their love. God sees and God repays!

Thought: Be a filial son (or daughter) if you hope for filial sons.

Prayer: Lord, implant the seed of filial love in my heart.

PSALM 104: 24-35

COLOSSIANS 3: 16-17

God's people, love godly music!

MIND YOUR MUSIC!

ONE of the most effective ways of polluting the mind is through music. Our adversary (that wily and crafty customer) uses it to maximum advantage. Last generation it was through swing and jazz. Now, it is pop and rock. With the media explosion of TV, Hi-fi, tapes and video, the air waves are bombarded round the clock with a torrent of filth and mental garbage, available to anybody anywhere at the touch of a switch.

Believing parents and children, we go to great lengths to safeguard our physical well-being with every sort of health protective, inoculations, immunizations. Pause a moment and think: What protective measures have we taken to safeguard our mental and spiritual well-being? The famous Latin proverb says "Mens sana in corpore sano," meaning to say, "A sound mind in a sound body." This is so important for us to understand, for an Olympic strong man or athlete can be reduced to a physical wreck by drug abuse in a matter of weeks. Similarly, sex abuse can rapidly destroy a morally healthy young person.

Music today has taken on sinister and subversive overtones. A multi-billion dollar industry is

churning out red hot top tunes, charged with immoral, suggestive and seductive messages, souped-up with booming soul-stimulating decibels and big drum beats. The target: millions of unwary, pleasure-seeking young people looking for excitement and kicks, drugs and sex. Exposed to the overwhelming barrage of sensuous sounds many a young person is hooked, and taken as lambs to the slaughter.

Even more noxious, certain rock tapes have hidden occult messages and Satanic signals which come through when played in reverse – an eerie and spine-chilling experience. The devil is running to and fro seeking victims for his kingdom of bondage and death.

It is high time for Christian young people and parents to take stern action against the wiles of the devil. Let us employ the strictest censorship of all musical programmes and tapes, to exclude doubtful or harmful materials. Those in our homes, personal libraries, and private collections should be destroyed by fire, to put an end to Satanic mind-washing. Out with immoral pop and rock!

Let our homes be filled with God-honouring music and songs of the Heavenly Kingdom. A Christian's music should bring glory to God's name.

Keynote: Sing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Prayer: Lord, teach me the songs of Heaven which honour Thee.

EPHESIANS 5: 18-20

REVELATION 15: 3

Hymns of praise bring heaven to earth!

SINGING IN YOUR HEART TO THE LORD

CHRISTIANITY is a singing religion, but atheism is songless. It has nothing to sing about. The funeral notices of Robert Ingersoll, the noted agnostic stated, "There will be no singing." Quite rightly too, for what joy is there for a departed soul bound for hell fire? Without God, without Christ and without hope, infidels, skeptics and atheists truly have no cause for song.

For the Christian there is every reason to sing. The knowledge of sins forgiven and the assurance of a home in heaven must evoke in the believer joyous songs of everlasting praise. Songs of praise to God uplift the believer's spirit and brighten his life. Men of the world foolishly seek solace in drink. The Apostle admonishes Christians: And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.

Our salvation joy should move us daily to praise God with our voices: in times of loneliness, depression and anxiety, it brings a soothing calm

over the soul; in times of sorrow and bereavement, nothing comforts as hymns of heaven and our eternal hope in God. Every circumstance in the Christian's life is an occasion for praise and thanks to God. The believer ought to fill his day with spiritual songs.

Martin Luther said, "Music is a fair and lovely gift of God which has often wakened and moved me to the joy of preaching Next after theology, I give to music the highest place and the greatest honour. My heart bubbles up and overflows in response to music, which has so often refreshed me and delivered me from dire plagues." A hymn a day will refresh us too, and deliver us from a despondent or sharp and sour spirit.

In days of yore, Christian martyrs went to their deaths in the Roman arenas, singing psalms for courage and strength. Thus they faced savage beasts with the full assurance that to be with Christ was far better (Phil 1:23). Such a spectacle alerted the Roman rulers to a new and supernatural force at work, so that even the blood-thirsty spectators were filled with awe.

Heaven is vibrant with the songs of saints and angels praising God for endless days. In heaven, "they sing the song of Moses ... and the song of the Lamb." We shall never stop singing His praises. If so, should we not begin now on earth to fill our hearts with joyous songs of praise?

*Song: Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace.
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.*

MATTHEW 5: 28-30

1 JOHN 2 : 15-17

Beware, the lust of the eyes!

GUARD YOUR EYES

*“O be careful little eyes what you see!
O be careful little eyes what you see!
The Father up above looks down in tender love,
O be careful little eyes what you see!”*

THIS CHILDREN'S HYMN beams an equally pertinent message to adults whose roving eyes (like King David's) are still a potent pitfall. "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness." (Matt 6: 22, 23) An evil eye lets the body into a host of troubles — all avoidable if the eye had been single i.e. of sound judgment and able to shut out that which is unwholesome.

In most modern cities, lewd and seductive advertisements, periodicals and commercials battering the eye gates are carried on moving vehicles, large billboards and shop windows. These are largely unavoidable sources of visual pollution. But there are others over which we can and must exercise control. Not to do so is to yield to the lust of the eyes, and one false sensuous look may lead the unwary one down the slippery slope of sin.

The Apostle John's words apply. "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

What preventive measures do we have to keep our eyes "single" and pure? "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Pray, therefore! After prayer, make a commitment to God. "Lord I want to be pure for Thy service. Keep my eyes from sinning. Help me to hate sin, and to treat it like a venomous snake." Then search out all evil, pornographic, obscene books and other seductive materials, and burn them. Finally, beware the TV (or cinema). Let not any child of God invite evil and pollution right into the bedroom or living room. Choose your viewing carefully, and be strong to switch off when you sense the world creeping in.

Parents, children, check on your TV-time!

Thought: Keep your TV viewing to NEWS, DOCUMENTARIES, EDUCATIONAL AND HISTORICAL FILMS.

Prayer: Take my eyes and let them be consecrated, Lord, to Thee.

MATTHEW 18: 7-9

1 JOHN 2: 15-17

With God's help, pure eyes – pure minds.

A TIME-BOMB IN YOUR HOME?

A PROFESSOR of psychology at New York State University speaking on “Violence in the Communications Industry” stated that “the cumulative effect of violent television programming might be likened to the planting of a bomb which might explode after a period of ten to twenty years. Every murder or violent act a child witnesses on TV is like a small weight placed on the balance eventually the balance might trigger off violent acts on the part of individuals who previously appeared normal.”

The hard fact is that television has invaded the home, and according to a US News and World Report survey, TV is the most influential force in daily life and culture today. No other force affects the way of life more than television. Now with the addition of video-cassettes, the versatility and power of the TV set has been multiplied many times. Research shows that in America schoolchildren spend on the average 15-20 hours per week viewing TV programmes.

What ill effects may be caused by TV? The ill effects are threefold: physical, intellectual, and

moral. TV damages the brain cells of millions of children, so declares one of Spain's leading paediatricians, Dr. Manuel Perdeguero, President of the Spanish Paediatrics Association. A child's brain cells and vision can be permanently damaged if exposed to TV at an early age. This naturally impairs the child's intellectual development. Constant viewing leaves the mind imprinted with TV pictures, which linger on in the mind so that the child is incapable of clear thought or constructive imagination.

A large proportion of TV programmes glamorize sex, immorality, fast living, violence and crime. Constant exposure to such programmes, consciously or subconsciously, leaves its impression on the mind particularly of children and young people. Is it any surprise that crime and immorality are on the rise everywhere?

What must the Christian do about it? Our Lord says, If thine eye offend thee, pluck it out. What does He mean? Simply this: Stop viewing offensive TV programmes! John the Apostle calls it "lust of the eyes." Some Christians ban TV altogether from their homes. In Michigan, USA, 400 members of the Nazarene Church burnt their sets in a big bonfire! There is no need to go to such extremes. Carefully controlled and regulated, TV can serve us well. Parents can, and should, exercise judicious control on the hours of viewing and the type of programme. Have courage to ban sex, immorality, crime and violence. Remember, the "Time-bomb effect."

Prayer: Lord, keep my eyes from filth and lust.

ROMANS 7:19-25

1 CORINTHIANS 6: 19, 20

Smoking is lust of the flesh.

SHOULD BELIEVERS SMOKE?

“WHY NOT? Where in the Bible does it say that a Christian may not smoke?” Smoking Christians naturally try desperately to justify themselves. But in their sober and saner moments every smoker realizes that tobacco smoking is not a good thing. Many smokers frankly confess, “I wish I had never started. To give up now is impossible!”

Impossible? Not so. With God nothing is impossible. Returning to the first question, does the Bible forbid smoking? Apparently not, since it says nothing about smoking. Then, does the Bible forbid lotteries and gambling? It says nothing about these things either. Smokers, take no comfort in these shallow and thoughtless arguments. But let us reason from first principles.

The Apostle Paul lays down an important principle for Christians. Our body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. When we believe we yield God our lives. That means our *bodies* are now *indwelt* and *controlled* by the Holy Ghost. The question is “Do you think the Spirit of God will say, Smoke if you wish, and remember to glorify God in your body?” Yes or No? Read on.

From scientific studies in reputable centres around the world, the evidence against tobacco smoke is conclusive. Smoking is the major cause of lung cancer, and a big contributing factor in heart attacks, blood vessel narrowing, high blood pressure and upper respiratory tract infection. Smokers suffer much more than non-smokers from chronic cough and throat irritation, palpitation, chest pain, shortness of breath, heartburn, and nervousness.

From the social aspect, smokers pollute the air and cause annoyance to non-smokers. Bad breath, smoky hair and clothes, stained fingers and teeth are other undesirable side effects. Smoking parents breed smoking children. It is impossible for a smoker to stop his own children from picking up the habit.

Now, what do you think? We must not defile the temple of God – our body. (1 Cor 3:17) The limiting factor in stopping the habit is *willpower*. When a person yields to God, His power enables.

Thought: Let our homes be filled with God's glory, not with tobacco smoke.

Prayer: Lord, keep me burning only for Thee.

1 CORINTHIANS 10: 31 - 11: 2

PHILIPPIANS 4: 8, 9

Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, not a smoke-house!

“BUT SOME DO!”

A SMOKING CHRISTIAN, and worse, a smoking pastor, becomes a stumbling block to young believers. “If he does, why can’t I?” Many mindless youths hero worship film stars, celebrities and pop singers, and imitate their dress style, hair style, and life style – including their immoral living and smoking.

Alas, for man’s fallen nature! Men would rather imitate the base and corrupt than the chaste and pure. For a Christian to find an excuse by saying “Because so-and-so does the same” is a sign of an immature mind. We *do* because *it is right*, not because of what others do.

Charles Spurgeon the “Prince of Preachers” in England in the 19th century, regularly preached to Sunday congregations of 5,000 for over 30 years. His smoking habit, however, caused others to stumble. One day Spurgeon saw in a shophouse a display of cigarettes with the label “Spurgeon’s Tobacco.” This struck at his heart. His name and fame were being used to promote smoking. “Let others remember me for my preaching and not for my smoking! I cannot smoke any more to the glory of God, for that does not happen.”

As the Spirit of God convicted him, Spurgeon immediately picked up his smoking paraphernalia and destroyed them in the fire. Thereafter he never smoked again. Never again would he be seen and copied, and be a cause of stumbling! But Paul was altogether worthy of imitation, for he was a close imitator of the Lord. He says, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am a follower of Christ." And do all to the glory of God, giving none offence!

Finally, believing parents and children, read again Phil 4:8,9: Whatsoever things are true honest just pure lovely of good report if there be any virtue if there be any praise, think on these things. With full confidence, the Apostle says, Those things which you have learned, and received, and heard, and seen *in me*, do! And the God of peace shall be with you.

Take My Life

*Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of Thy love!*

*Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages from Thee;
Take my voice and let me sing
Always only for my King!*

Frances R Havergal.

Thought: Follow the best, leave the rest!

Prayer: Lord, keep my body holy, not smoky!

PROVERBS 20: 1

EPHESIANS 5: 15-21

Don't drown in drink!

DANGER IN DRINK

AFTER 3,000 YEARS, Solomon's proverb has not lost any of its wisdom yet. The mocker continues to mock and strong drink rages on unabated defying man's scientific, social and medical advancement. Wise men, foolish men, rich and poor, they are still being deceived and led to the sacrifice on the altar of Bacchus.

Alcoholism is medically classified as a disease. If so, it is the only disease on which people spend billions on advertisements to catch more victims. It is the only disease which respectable industrialists and manufacturers propagate vigorously by flooding the world with liquor enough to float a navy. It is the only disease which governments legalize by the licencing of dealers and bars.

Strange disease! What does alcohol do? A question innocently asked by your enquiring child demands a factual answer. Medical science has shown that alcohol is a potent poison to body cells, essentially to cells of vital organs such as liver, brain, kidney. As a nerve depressant it impairs neurological responses and reactions: hence behavioural change and impairment of neuromuscular coordination and control. Any wonder, then, that drunken driving is the major cause of motor accidents?

Further evidence of the pathological effects of alcohol is best seen in the ruin and havoc it causes to human lives as described by the pen of Catherine Booth, wife of the founder of the Salvation Army: I am against alcohol because I have known unborn babies to be cursed through booze, little children starve, young people stunted for life, gifted women turned into imbeciles, leaders in industry become beggars in the streets, decent girls become prostitutes, bright young boys become criminals, men and women losing their respect and honour – and lives.

Dear believing people of God, our bodies are for the Lord's use. How can He use us if we defile them with drink? After all, we have only one life, 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for God will last! There are great and precious tasks for us ahead. Therefore, be not drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit. The spirit of Bacchus spells doom. The Spirit of Christ is life and health.

More Alcohol, less shame!

Question: Is it true that alcohol makes a person braver?

Answer: No. It simply makes him do bad things with less shame.

Thought: God's people should keep their bodies holy and healthy.

Prayer: Lord, raise up mighty Spirit-filled men to serve Thee.

GENESIS 19: 30-38

GALATIANS 5:22-23

Keep the demon bottled in!

THE MODERATION TRAP

LOT'S DAUGHTERS conceived an evil scheme and a son each, with the aid of alcohol. Their father probably would not have consented, at least not to getting drunk and losing his self-control. But the crafty girls, by offering their father an initial after dinner "nightcap", softened up the old man and finally disarmed him. That is the moderation trap, an innocent, harmless "wee taste" – the bait for the unwary.

Weak-willed young people in a hurry to climb the social ladder give undeserved importance to social drinking as a way of "getting on." For Christian people, promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one and setteth up another. (Ps 75: 6, 7) My dear young (and anxious) reader, look not to the boss but to the Lord. He who promoted Joseph against all odds, can He not do the same for you?

A girl of 20 starting in a new and promising job writes: "I'm a Christian and have made up my mind not to drink, but people make it very hard for me to refuse. At parties they keep insisting and

some get annoyed when I say, I'm sorry I don't drink. I'd rather have an orange. What's the best way to refuse?"

Some reader may be facing the same problem. "What is your suggestion?" Firstly, let me advise our enquirer, Do not start off by saying, I'm sorry. That makes you sound apologetic and defensive, which you need not be. What you need is a firm and polite, "Thank you, I only take soft drinks." Stand your ground with dignity and your host will learn to respect you. A young lassie with her head "screwed the right way up" commands much respect.

General Frederick D. Grant said, "I found out it was an impossibility to drink moderately so I became an absolute teetotaller. I will not allow drink in my house The hard drinker was once a moderate drinker. The chances are all against a moderate drinker remaining as such so I don't propose to take such chances If I could, by offering my body a sacrifice, free this country from the demon drink, I'd thank the Almighty for the privilege of doing it."

Thought: The best way to deal with poison is "touch not."

Prayer: Lord, may all Thy people say, No, to this demon drink.

PROVERBS 23: 29-32

1 PETER 4: 1-3

Be filled with the Spirit!

HARD FACTS ABOUT HARD DRINKS

IN case the last two readings have not fully convinced some reader of the dire dangers of drinking, we add one more, backed by facts and figures that should discourage even the diehard. Tests show that after taking three bottles of beer, there is a loss of memory of 13%. Trained typists were tested and their errors shot up 40% after only "light drinking." One ounce of alcohol retards reaction time by 17%, slows down decision time by 10%, increases errors due to impaired attention by 35%, and impairs muscular coordination by 60%.

When the blood stream contains 0.002 parts of alcohol the drinker thinks that he can fight anybody in the crowd: his sense of judgement is that badly impaired. When it is up to 0.004 parts alcohol he is in a drunken stupor, and when it is 0.006 he is not far from death's door. Is it any wonder, then, that in America alcoholism is blamed for 80,000 deaths a year, including half of all traffic fatalities and a fourth of all suicides, besides being a major cause of cirrhosis of the liver, an incurable and often fatal disease?

Some console themselves with the false notion that "social drinking" is quite harmless. They think that as long as they do not get drunk they are all right. This is far from the truth. A recent report at the 28th International Congress on Alcoholism disclosed that even "social drinking" destroys brain cells. Dr. Kinsely, Professor of Anatomy at the Medical College of South Carolina, presented evidence to show that when a drinker begins to feel a little giddy, a few brain cells are being destroyed. If this process is repeated day in day out, over a period of years, the cumulative effects of brain damage will be evident, for brain cells once damaged or destroyed are not replaced. One heavy drinking bout can damage 10,000 precious brain cells.

Despite all these known ill effects, wine has not lost its seductive snare. Men still indulge freely with the "spirit of the vine" to keep up the "spirit of the party" in their revellings and banquetings (1 Pet 4:3). Solomon sounds a stern warning: At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Now, a final word of advice to would-be drinkers: think ahead. Alcohol is habit-forming and addicting. Prevention is better than cure: don't touch the bottle and there'll be no regrets. Think ahead: broken homes, ruined health and careers, life-long regret all too often are without remedy. The safest place for hard drinks is inside the bottle, not out!

For Drinkers: Stop before it's too late!

For Non-drinkers: Don't start!

DEUTERONOMY 4: 14-24

1 THESSALONIANS 1: 9, 10

Little children, abstain from idols.

ADMIRABLE OR ABOMINABLE?

THERE IS NOTHING that God hates more than idolatry. When man the creature will not worship the Creator exclusively and turns to worship the works of his own hands, he falls under the wrath of God. The first two commandments allow no room for idolatry in any form or shape. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God." (Ex. 20:3-5)

Today there is a revival of images and idols in Christian worship. At the last Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Vancouver, 1983, heathen idols were a prominent feature of their worship. The Church of England has an annual pilgrimage in honour of "Our Lady," the image of Virgin Mary at Walsingham, England. Increasingly, Anglicans are being conditioned to the veneration of images as an acceptable thing. The Greek Orthodox Church is rich in its display of icons

(painted images) within its churches. The leading advocate of idolatry is the Roman Catholic Church which venerates the Holy Family, in particular the Virgin Mary and a number of dead saints.

My dear believing parents and children, you must think it strange for Christian people to openly defy the Commandment of God. But even more strange and astonishing is the approval of this dark heathen practice by EVANGELICALS (i.e. Bible-believing Christians), who have hitherto loyally opposed idolatry. By association, consent, commendation, and fellowship, prominent evangelicals have given their support to the idolatrous system of Rome.

Dr. Billy Graham attending a Roman Catholic service for his friend Archbishop Fulton Sheen said, "The mass is a very beautiful thing" thereby commending an idolatrous act. Others who openly favour the Roman Catholic Church are Dr. John Stott (leading the Anglican Evangelicals back to Rome), James I. Packer and the evangelical Archbishop of Sydney, Dr. D. Robinson. The swing to Rome gathers momentum like an avalanche.

Suddenly idolatry has become admirable. It is an integral part of the Ecumenical Movement.

Thought: The Ecumenical Movement will shortly engulf the world.

Question: Now do you understand why believers should have no part in the Ecumenical Movement?

JOHN 16: 13

1 CORINTHIANS 14: 1-40

Pentecost happened only once.

IS THE "TONGUES" PHENOMENON SCRIPTURAL?

THE "TONGUES SPEAKING" FAD catches on like wild fire under the guise of "Holy Spirit baptism." Believers in our churches are confronted by charismatics: "Why aren't you speaking in tongues? You have not been baptized with the Holy Spirit." Some are shaken, others amused. A friend of mine was invited, in fact persuaded, to attend a tongues meeting. He was taken to the stage, made to kneel for the laying of hands, and was told, "Just relax and let your tongue roll. Tongues will come."

We do not dispute that the charismatics have benefited many people, but we do seriously question their unscriptural practices in just a few areas:

1. The drawing together of "Christians" of all shades of doctrinal beliefs into its fellowship as "One in Jesus Christ." Can liberals, Bible-denying modernists, Roman Catholics, evangelicals and Bible-believing Christians be "One in Christ?"

2. God's word says: God is not the author of confusion. Let all things be done decently and in order (1 Cor 14:33,40). But charismatic meetings are confused, disorderly and at times indecent.

3. Paul says: In the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding.... than 10,000 words in an unknown tongue (verse 19). But at charismatic meetings the opposite happens.

4. Paul commands the women to keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak (verse 34). This rule is being regularly and openly violated.

5. Paul also commands that speakers in tongues should take turns ("by course") and not more than three should speak at one meeting (verse 27). Charismatic meetings are a "free for all," the uttering of confused, meaningless sounds ("gibberish") by all and sundry.

6. Tongues are for a sign to unbelievers, not to believers (verse 22). Charismatic tongues speaking happens chiefly at meetings of believers, clearly in violation of Scripture.

Conclusion: *The present TONGUES PHENOMENON does not fit the Scriptural pattern.*

Prayer: *Lord, Keep me abiding in Thy truth always.*

ISAIAH 28: 9-17

1 CORINTHIANS 15: 1-4

We should earnestly contend for the faith.

EVANGELICAL DOCTRINES ("THE FAITH ONCE DELIVERED")

DOCTRINAL TEACHING in the Church of Jesus Christ is either absent or perverted. Either way the people will be ignorant or confused. Increasingly popular is the notion that "service for the Church" and "experience in the Spirit" are more important. How sad and how wrong is such teaching.

Isaiah says that the teaching of doctrine must be "precept upon precept, line upon line; here a little, there a little." Unless Christian people are soundly instructed in the basic fundamental doctrines of the faith, they will be readily taken in by false teaching; and at no time has there been such a proliferation of erroneous doctrines, all claiming to be "Christian" or "evangelical" as today. Everywhere, groups, movements and churches make themselves out to be true witnesses of the Gospel. How can you tell? Only by a sound knowledge of the Christian faith!

Here we summarize the basic, essential doctrines of the Christian faith, also called the "EVANGELICAL DOCTRINES."

1. The total depravity of man and his complete inability to save himself.
2. The perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ by His substitutionary death on the cross to atone for man's sins.
3. The justification of the sinner by faith alone, and the free offer of salvation to all who believe.
4. The deity of Jesus Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity, born of the Virgin Mary to become Immanuel, God Incarnate.
5. The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ according to the Scriptures, and His subsequent Ascension to Heaven.
6. The imminent return of Jesus Christ in person to redeem His Church and to judge the world.
7. The plenary inspiration of the Bible, the infallible and inerrant word of God, our sole and final authority in faith and life.

Study these seven fundamental doctrines carefully, for on these the Church of Jesus Christ is founded. Take away any one or more, and the foundations are undermined! If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do? (Psalm 11:3)

Question: Does your Church teach doctrines regularly and thoroughly?

Prayer: Lord, I believe. Help Thou my unbelief.

ISAIAH 60: 1-3

2 THESSALONIANS 2: 1-12

In the end time, "falling away", not revival.

THE END TIME DECEPTION

THE END TIME immediately precedes our Lord's return. It is also called the last days (2 Tim 3:1, 1 Pet 1:5; 2 Pet 3:3; 1 Jn 2:18; Jude 18). The end time is marked by the proliferation of antichristian movements and false "Christian" leaders. These are "false Christs" (Matt 24: 5, 24), men who pretend to have the Gospel, but in fact preach "another Gospel," a false and counterfeit gospel (Gal 1:6, 7). This is a major sign of our Lord's imminent return.

Who are these false Christs? 2 Thess 2: 10-12 explains and identifies them. They hate the truth ("received not the love of the truth"), so God lets them pursue their wicked way, sends them "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie." So 53 bishops of the Church of England declare that it is no longer necessary to believe that (a) Jesus was virgin born and (b) Jesus had a bodily resurrection. (Sydney Morning Herald, June 7, 1986) These Anglican bishops are now preaching a gospel founded on a mere mortal whose body lies rotting in the grave. As Paul said, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." (1 Cor 15:14)

We see then that the end time deceivers are within the Church – leaders who have “fallen away” (2 Thess 2:3) and departed from the faith. These deny one or more of the “Evangelical Doctrines” discussed in a previous reading. For the sake of revision, we summarize them again: 1. Total depravity of man. 2. Perfect atonement of Christ’s death on the cross. 3. Salvation is by grace through faith alone. 4. Jesus Christ, virgin-born, is God the Son, incarnate. 5. Christ rose bodily from the dead. 6. He is coming again from heaven in power and great glory. 7. The Bible is God’s word, fully inspired, infallible, inerrant, our sole authority in faith and life.

These seven pillars form the foundation of the “faith of the Gospel,” God’s one eternal plan of salvation. **IT MUST NOT BE ADDED TO OR SUBTRACTED FROM.** Any man who does so is undermining the Gospel. He is a false Christ and a false prophet. False Christs and false prophets abound in Churches everywhere. The Bible said it 1900 years ago.

Finally, remember: History has shown that once a Church departs from the Word of God and its fundamental doctrines, it can never return to its original position. In no instance has an apostate body returned to fundamentalism. Apostasy is the way of **NO RETURN.**

Question: Can you now identify a “false Christ”?

Prayer: Lord, keep me loyal and faithful to the end.

1 TIMOTHY 4: 1-7

JUDE 3-4

God's word warns: Perilous times shall come.

EARNESTLY CONTEND FOR THE FAITH

THE FAITHFUL APOSTLE PAUL foresaw the peril to the Church and “ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.” (Acts 20:31) So must every faithful servant of God be constantly sounding the alarm, for the Church at large has fallen into the hands of “grievous wolves” (Acts 20:29), “false prophets” (2 Pet 2:1), “antichrists” (1 Jn 2:18), “ungodly men..... mockers” (Jude 4, 18), “enemies of the cross of Christ” (Phil 3:18).

As we have seen already, the Gospel alone saves. Any denial, perversion, addition or deletion of any part of it, renders it “another gospel” ineffectual and deceptive. Recall the seven vital components. Jude the Apostle extorts believers to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3) What does it mean to “earnestly contend?”

Firstly, we must know thoroughly what God's word teaches about this vital “faith once delivered,” this eternal unchanging Gospel. These

have been summarised twice, for readers' benefit! How well do you know each of the seven fundamentals of the faith? "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." (2 Tim 2:15) You must know the faith before you can contend for it.

Secondly, we must be discerning and well informed of what any particular "Christian" group or leader is saying or promoting. The question uppermost in our mind is, "Does this man teach the truth? Does he shun to declare "all the counsel of God?" (Acts 20:27) Is there any deletion, addition, perversion or dilution of God's word? Does he believe without reserve all the seven fundamental evangelical doctrines? Does he associate, fellowship with or support those who are not of the evangelical faith?

Finally, when particular individuals or groups have departed from the faith, we must counsel them lovingly. If they will not listen, we must cease to fellowship with them, and warn others of the false teachers and their false teachings. Our first loyalty is always to our Lord. He is the Master, we are servants only.

Question: Are you giving your support to any false teacher?

Prayer: Lord, help me to speak the truth in love.

EXODUS 34: 10-17

2 CORINTHIANS 6: 14-18

Why be a "partaker of his evil deeds?"

BE YE SEPARATE

GOD'S WORD teaches a clear separation of God's children from ungodly people, of believers from unbelievers, of Christians from the world. For mortal warfare rages between God and Satan, the "prince of this world." (Jn 12:31) Shortly, this enemy of our souls will be cast out. What business have we to do with him?

The Lord had brought His people out of the land of bondage. On the way to the Promised Land, He gave express instruction to Moses for the people: "Observe thou that which I command thee this day....take heed....lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee: but ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves.... for the Lord is a jealous God." (Ex 34: 11-14)

Close affiliation of believers with unbelievers is a snare which God's word constantly warns against, in particular alliances in **worship** and **marriage**. (Ex 34:15-17; 2 Cor 6:14-17) In the Gospel bond, the believer is united to Christ, "espoused... to one husband" (2 Cor 11:2; Eph 5:23). This bondage is radically weakened, if not broken, when a believer is united with an unbe-

liever in marriage. All too often, love and loyalty to our heavenly Husband is superseded by the earthly bond. For a believer to be linked to an unbeliever in mixed marriage or worship is disloyalty, even treachery, to our Lord and Saviour.

The Israelites were commanded, when they had taken possession of the Promised Land, to "destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves" (places of idolatrous devotion). "For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God. (Ex 34:13, 14)

Our God is one God, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. (Heb 13:8) He is unchanging. His law also is unchanging. He who loves us with an everlasting love commands us: "Be ye separate." His commandment is not grievous.

Soldiers of Christ

*Soldiers of Christ arise!
And put your armour on;
Strong in the strength which God
supplies
Through His eternal Son;
Strong in the Lord of hosts
And in His mighty power;
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
Is more than conqueror!*

Charles Wesley

*Question: Are you obeying God's clear command?
Or are you fellowshiping with idolaters and
unbelievers?*

Prayer: Lord, I will be loyal and true to Thee.

“If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?”

Psalm 11:3

BUILDING FIRM FOUNDATIONS

CHRISTIANS are fighting a losing battle. In fact, many are not even fighting at all, so the battle is lost without firing a shot. The prince of this world is smarter than we think. He makes the world so attractive and comfortable that we forget the war. He lulls us to sleep with deadly complacency. He disarms us without our knowing!

Christians, awake! "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." (*Rom 13:11*) Cast off your spiritual malaise. The Lord's return is near, even at the doors. Are you ready? Do not wait till the trumpet sounds. Then it will be too late.

BUILDING FIRM FOUNDATIONS offers practical help to the sincere believer for Quiet Time personal devotions and Family Worship in the home. May you find in its pages precious spiritual lessons and encouragement in your walk with God.

The Author

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