



Did Genesis Borrow From Pagan Creation Myths?

Kyle Pope

Since the seventeenth century critics of the Bible have tried to suggest that the books of Moses were not verbally inspired but compiled from source documents which are no longer extant. With the archaeological discovery of Mesopotamian and Egyptian creation myths in recent centuries, critics have tried to further argue that the account of creation in Genesis was merely borrowed, adapted and custom tailored from these myths. While it cannot be denied that there are interesting similarities between the biblical account and these myths, the distinct features of the biblical account makes it impossible to credibly entertain such a suggestion.

THE MESOPOTAMIAN MYTH — *ENUMA ELISH*

The Mesopotamian myth, called *Enuma Elish* (from the opening words of the epic — meaning “When on high”) begins with a universe composed of a massive watery chaos of salt and fresh waters mingled together. Two deities make up this mass, Tiamet, the goddess of salt-

water and, Abzu, the god of freshwater. The two gods give birth to two other gods — Ea (earth) and Anu (sky). Ea and Anu separate Tiamet and Abzu and Ea kills Abzu and covers his body. Thus Earth covers Abzu forming the “abyss” of underground fresh waters.¹ Tiamet is convinced by a new lover to try to restore the original chaos of the universe by killing the younger gods. When they learn of her plot they convince Marduk, the storm god of light, to order to fight against her. He kills her and from her severed body creates the heavens and the geological formations of the earth.

THE EGYPTIAN MYTH — *THE BOOK OF THE EVOLUTIONS OF RA*

Egyptian myths were varied and diverse depending upon the region of Egypt in which they were circulated. One myth popular east of the delta was related in the book known as the *Book of the Evolutions of Ra*. Like the Mesopotamian myth, originally there was a
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Manuscripts should be sent to Mike Willis, 6567 Kings Ct., Avon, IN 46123, (317) 272-6520. E-mail: mikewillis1@attglobal.net

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Confused About Your Sexual Identity?

David Dann

In response to those who questioned his teaching with regard to divorce and remarriage, Jesus said, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’” (Matt. 19:4-5). By referring to the Genesis account of creation the Lord clearly set forth the fundamental truth that males and females are created in such a manner as to make them suitable mates for one another. The words of Christ are so clear on the matter that no room is left for an alternative to the one-man-for-one-woman relationship. Herein lies the most fundamental truth concerning human sexuality; that is, males are only compatible with females, and vice-versa.

THE SEXUAL IDENTITY CRAZE

While the Lord’s teaching on the subject is clear, the waters have become quite muddy in our modern society. One can hardly turn on the television or radio without hearing something about “sexual identity.” Those in the entertainment industry have taken it upon themselves to saturate our eyes and ears with stories of young men and ladies who are confused over their respective sexual identities. One would be hard-pressed to find a prime time drama on television whose plot lines are not constantly embroiled in some such variation of this theme.

THE POPULAR CONCEPT

The idea that it is common and acceptable for young people to become confused over their sexual identity has engulfed our society. The main tenets of the theory are recognizable everywhere.

1. You don’t know how you will turn out as an adult. The message our culture sends to young people is that you just never know what your sexual identity will be when you grow up. The idea is that just as a child does not yet know if he will be better suited to be a lawyer rather than a truck driver, he also does not yet know if he will be better suited to be sexually attracted to other boys, rather than to girls. He will just have to wait a few years to see how he turns out. This is often depicted on television as a young boy who has always felt more comfortable in dresses than in jeans, or a young girl who develops a crush on a female classmate. Who would dare to disturb the evolution of their sexual identities?

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Mother Is Not Home

Connie W. Adams

Over and over this statement is made by young children and teenagers across America to their peers, or to family friends who call. “Mother isn’t home.” Well then, where is she? She is at the office, or the plant, out of town at a sales meeting, or to a business conference. Or, she is out with the girls to bowl or play softball. And why not? Has not political correctness taught us that women can have it all? They can manage very well, thank you, with a job, a husband, children, manage the house, and take care of the responsibilities common to all Christians, women included. She is super woman. Such is the image of today’s successful, modern woman.

Now, let’s get it straight right up front. Some women never marry and some who do should not have done so. They have to support themselves. There are financial crises which arise in families which demand that the wife and mother do something to keep the family afloat. Widows must survive. Wives and mothers with sick or disabled husbands have to do something to earn money. What they need is understanding and support, not censure. It will not be easy for them or their families.

But Paul taught that the older women should teach certain things to the younger women, and instructed Titus, a gospel preacher, to include these things in his preaching. Hear him out: “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: that aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed” (Tit. 2:1-5).

“Keepers at home,” Paul said. Exactly what does that mean? Let’s look at some other translations for help.

“workers at home” (NASB and ASV)
 “homemakers” (NKJV)
 “domestic” (RSV)
 “busy at home” (NIV)

Do you get the picture? Here is the most challenging career which any married woman ever considered. It is at once challenging, frustrating, rewarding, fulfilling, exhausting, yet satisfying. It provides support for a husband and guidance for children. It demands time, patience, and effort. It is the cement

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which holds family life in place. Not only have the foundations of family life cracked and crumbled, we have very little cement left to hold the bricks together.

“Mother isn’t home.” Somebody has convinced her that unless she competes in the job market she will never really find out who she is. She must find self-expression and self-fulfillment. She must contribute something of her talents to the world or it will surely deteriorate. And so we educate our daughters to plan for business careers. We must prepare them to escape the mundane, humdrum, boring, unfulfilling, dreary existence of being a “mere” wife and mother and homemaker. Ask a class of junior high or high school girls about their future plans and listen to what they say. How many of them *really* dream of being good wives and mothers? Some have told us, “Oh yes, well that, too!”

We have all heard the reasons why mother is not at home. She can add greatly to the financial security of the family. They can all have better housing, better clothes, better cars, better trips, better toys. What has not been considered is that we shall also have disappointed husbands, neglected children, and frustrated women. “It will teach the children to be more independent.” Come on! It will leave them alone when they need you. They will learn that you are really too tired or too busy to listen when they need to tell you of their disappointments or hurts, or their dreams and ambitions.

They will find somebody to listen but, after it is too late, you may not like their choice. You will not have time to talk with them about Jesus and the apostles and the early Christians and how they applied truth to the real situations of daily existence. There will be buttonless shirts, skirts, and jeans. There will be unstitched seams and hems. There will be unkept houses and you will become more and more reluctant to have company.

Showing hospitality to friends and strangers will become a virtual impossibility. You will be too tired, or not have time to “guide the house” (1 Tim. 5:1:4), or to “bring up

children,” “lodge strangers,” “wash the saints feet,” “relieve the afflicted,” and “diligently follow every good work” (1 Tim. 5:10). You cannot find time to be “full of good works and almsdeeds” and make “coats and garments” for the poor as did Dorcas (Acts 9:36-41). When will you and your husband ever find time to “expound the way of the Lord more accurately” to an Apollos, or anyone else, as did Aquila and his wife Priscilla (Acts 18:24-26)? How will you be able to “labor in the Lord” as did Tryphena and Tryphosa (Rom. 16:12)? The homemaker is the foundation of hospitality. How can you ever find time to help your husband demonstrate this qualification of an elder? He cannot do it without you.

Many of the things just mentioned impact directly or indirectly on soul winning efforts, or the lack of them. Home studies go begging because life is too hectic to bother with them. Home chores which used to be done in the daytime, now have to be done at night. Who has the time or inclination to invite folks in for Bible study? Several years ago, while living in Atlanta, I had home studies several mornings a week with ladies who gathered in the homes of Christians after the children left for school. That resulted in a number obeying the gospel. But now, husband leaves for work, children go to school and wife? Well, she leaves, too. She must not be bored and she *must* find herself and be fulfilled! It is her duty! She must make a statement and be part of a movement to forever halt injustice and stop chauvinism dead in its tracks!

Something is wrong here, folks. We must get back to what the Bible teaches. Families are falling apart for want of it and churches are suffering in the aftershocks. Young people would be well advised to discuss this area fully before marrying and come to a meeting of the minds as to what the Bible teaches and the roles to be filled by each partner. Children must be taught at home, in Bible classes and from the pulpit what Paul told Titus to preach as a part of “sound doctrine.” Preachers, are you telling older and younger women what Paul said to tell them about being “homemakers”? Would you “catch it” from the women where you preach if you did, or worse yet, from your wife when she gets you home?

Sisters, if you want a career which will help stabilize the basic unit of all ordered society, make your husband a better man, give your children guidance for life, set a worthy example for your children, grandchildren and neighbors, develop leadership qualities in your husband which will help the church and provide a better climate in which to enhance the work of soul winning, then I strongly recommend to you the challenge of being a good wife and mother who is “discreet, chaste” and a “keeper at home.”

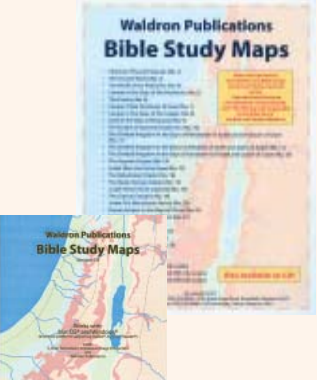
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Frank Himmel

A Thousand-Year Reign

The heart of premillennialism is the notion that Jesus will return and reign on earth for a thousand years. Is this the Bible picture? As mainstream as this doctrine has become, Bible readers might expect frequent references to the thousand-year reign. Is it not telling that only *one* passage mentions such a period? Let us consider that text, Revelation 20.

CONTEXT

The book of Revelation foretells the persecution of Christians which was to occur shortly after it was written (1:1, 3). Indeed, it was already beginning (1:9; 2:13). The message is, be faithful to Christ. No matter how much opponents seem to have the upper hand, he and those with him will be victorious.

In the imagery of the book, the great red dragon is the leading opponent. He has three allies: a beast from the sea, a beast from the earth (sometimes called the false prophet), and the great harlot Babylon. Satan, of course, is the dragon. His assistants are civil government, false religion, and worldliness, respectively. Chapters 12-16 portray their rise to power, chapters 17-20 depict their fall. Satan is the first to rise, the last to fall.

Saints suffer severely. Early on, we get a glimpse of those who have been slain because of their faith crying out for justice (5:9-10). The fall of Satan in Revelation 20 is the answer to their plea.

TEXT

First, Satan is bound for a thousand years (vv. 1-3). Next, John saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their faith. They come to life and sit on thrones with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead are unaffected at this point (vv. 4-6). Then Satan makes one last gasp effort, fails, and is cast into the lake of fire, his eternal destiny (vv. 7-10). After that the final judgment of all mankind occurs (vv. 11-15). Now some questions.

Where are the thrones? On earth? In Jerusalem? Nothing in the text even remotely suggests that. To the contrary, Christ's throne is in heaven (3:21; 12:5; 22:3). The only thrones on earth in the book of Revelation are those of Satan (2:13) and the sea beast (16:10). The truth is, *no passage anywhere in the New Testament ever has Jesus setting foot on the earth again!*

What kind of resurrection is this? Is it bodily? Nothing in the text indicates that. Jesus said there would be but one of those, a universal resurrection of both the righteous and wicked (John 5:28-29). This is a resurrection of selected souls, martyrs.

Revelation 20 is the answer to the plea we hear in chapter 5. Those then under the altar are now on thrones; those then crying for judgment are now given judgment. A scene of defeat has become a scene of victory. The expression "judgment was given to them" does not mean that they were made judges, but that judgment was passed in their favor. Human verdicts against them have given way to the divine verdict in their favor. They, and the cause for which they died, are vindicated.

Earlier, Christians were admonished, "Be faithful until death (that is, even to the point of death or martyrdom) . . . He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death" (2:10-11). Now our text says of the martyred souls who have come to life, "over these the second death has no power" (v. 6). Christians were promised, "He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My Father's throne" (3:22). Sure enough, in chapter 20 they are sitting on thrones with Christ.

Why a thousand years? Would you endure losing a dime to gain a thousand dollars? If these Christians could endure tribulation lasting ten days (2:10), they would be victorious a thousand years! Obviously both numbers are symbolic, as is so common in the book. Their sizes illustrate

The Lord Will Deliver Us

On August 15 while I was working at my computer on a longtime project, I was aware that the sound of a diesel truck had entered the back yard. My son inquired of his mother about who it could be as I made my way out the back door, through the garage and to my truck. That was to be the last day on earth for me had it not been for the hand of our Father. In the midst of flying bullets I called to mind, speaking aloud, "Is this the way it will end for us?"

My feeble attempts to load our unloaded guns, first the pistol, then the rifle, realizing the small pistol bullet would be no match for a fully automatic weapon in the end was in vain, as I encounter at the last our vacated yard before I was able to make it to the kitchen window. The perpetrator fled. We came to ourselves, having been delivered from the brink of death in a moment of time. My Father had for a moment, wrapped his loving arms about us all, and we withal escaped with one scratch on mama's left foot. She had been tethered to the wall with a corded phone, trying to get the 911 to work, which for the moment had failed. One

the relative values of suffering for Christ and being victorious with him. The point of this paragraph is the saints' victory, not the duration of Jesus' reign. Martyrs are not dead, they are alive and reigning with Christ!

CONCLUSION

Ray Summers said it well (*Worthy Is the Lamb* 203).

If verses 4, 5, and 6 of Revelation 20 had been omitted, no one would have ever dreamed of a literal thousand years of Christ's reign upon the earth. . . Yet whole systems of eschatology, theology, and philosophy of history have been constructed on this precarious basis of highly symbolical verses.

Jesus reigns now in heaven. Are you a citizen in his kingdom?

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of over forty rounds of ammunition that had pierced our walls came out twelve inches on her left shattering a glass dish which cut her foot, and one twenty-four inches on her right. Five rounds glanced away from her flesh due to the yaupon tree between her and the man. I had hollered to our pleading children to get under the bed! They could not, for none of our beds were high enough. My daughter helplessly went to her bed and prayed while my son remembered grandpa's bed was high enough to get under. As he ran through the hall to grandpa's room, a bullet passed through three walls hip high and missed him. While under the bed, the window above his feet was shattered by a bullet that had pierced four walls and embedded in the garden dirt out back. Grandpa (90 years old) in his confusion, had made it into the living room while twenty-five rounds shattered windows, pictures, and wood all around him. Whether or not I was there in the library at the time, six inches above my head where I had found my rifle and frantically tried to load in three shells, a bound volume of *Guardian of Truth* from 1984 caught yet another round that had pierced four walls, holding it embedded in its pages without marring a letter. I suppose that only a couple minutes had ticked away in the moment of our crisis. The truck lay shattered, the house littered with glass and wood chips among the toys, the old guitar, and the Bibles from our evening reading the night before. It was over. As we held each other and cried from fright and the large measure of relief, we thanked and gave endless glory to the one who is able to deliver us out of temptations. The devil agent had gone, and we emerged from our bullet riddled home in one piece, my family of five.

Our home was mistaken for the known drug house down the road where the intended murder was to take place on that early Sunday morning. It could have happened to anyone. We are never guaranteed tomorrow, for David himself had once said, "but truly as the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, there is but a step between me and death" (1 Sam. 20:3), as he had conveyed to his friend Jonathan that his life was in jeopardy from the wrath of one man. I have an article at home from a young seventeen-year old boy who was dying of an incurable disease. That article

was actually his last sermon as he bid everyone farewell. He was going home. He had obeyed the gospel in baptism and began to preach the truth of Jesus Christ. Though his life was cut short, he was safe. His last sermon was not titled death; it was titled life. The apostle Paul, knowing his death was eminent, wrote to Timothy, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (2 Tim. 4:16-17). Shortly after, he was beheaded for his faith in Jesus Christ at the hand of the wicked emperor Nero.

I received a letter from a sister in Christ several days after, and by her writing I could tell she had imagined in her mind that we were all shattered in our hearts, not knowing where to go next, groping about without the comfort from God and his word. While her understanding of our mental condition was quite misguided, her thoughts were much worth our consideration. For she spoke of Job, who had lost everything, not knowing why. He lost everything but his life. Then his three wise friends took the occasion to vent their envy or express their over-confidence in their own wisdom by steadily affirming their knowledge that he indeed suffered this calamity because of his well-kept hidden sin. Nothing could have been further from the truth. The devil had accused him behind his back. "You have heard of the patience of Job, and seen the end of the Lord, that He is very compassionate and merciful," said James, the Lord's brother (Jas. 5:11). Yes, the Lord God said to those three men to offer sacrifice in Job's presence, and Job would pray for them lest he deal with them according to their folly (Job 42:8). He was tried, and so were we.

The big question is, am I ready to go home to be with the Lord? Are you ready to go home to be with the Lord? If we have missed his expectations of us, we are not going to God's home when we die. There is the place where death and Hades will be cast and their torment will last day and night forever and forever (Rev. 20:10). People who refuse to obey the gospel of Jesus Christ without being immersed in water for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21) have no hope in that day when we will all bow before the Creator of the universe. There we will give an account of our deeds that we have done in our bodies, as the Scripture says, or we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10). There is a day when we will be reunited with our bodies to rise again. Jesus said, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come

forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29). That is called the resurrection of the dead. And, it will occur to everyone who ever lived, except Jesus, as stated by the apostle, saying, "And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust" (Acts 24:15). Jesus has already been resurrected. People make fun of that idea and always have. "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked: and others said, we will hear thee again of this matter" (Acts 17:32). But it is true that all who have put on Christ (Gal. 3:26-27) in baptism will be raised in the likeness of Jesus' resurrection, or if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection (Rom. 6:5). Romans 6 shows that we who have been immersed into Christ are baptized into his death, saying, "Now ye know, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3).

No doubt, God can deliver us out of the hand of man (read 2 Pet. 2:9), but more importantly, he has the power to save, which he does through the gospel message (2 Thess. 2:14) and has the power to cast into eternal exile, where the worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched (Mark 9:44-48). "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt. 10:28). With that being said, it is true then, that each one of us has little or no control over the first death where his spirit is separated from his body. "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death: and there is no discharge in that war; neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it" (Eccl. 8:8). However, we do have the ability to do something concerning whether or not we will die the second death (Rev. 2:11) simply by deciding whether or not to obey the gospel. The apostle Peter said, "And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). We may or may not be delivered from the physical death of the body. But, as long as we are alive, it is not too late to save ourselves from spiritual death by obeying the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let him add you to his church (Acts 2:47) and walk according to the gospel so long as you live (Rev. 12:11). Then, you also will be at peace and be ready to go home to be with the Lord in the face of death.

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Barriers to Unity

Obstructions which stand in the way of unity:

- **Desire For Prestige**
- **Selfishness**
- **False Teaching**
- **Factionalism**
- **Lack of Brotherly Love**
- **Sowing of Discord**

... To maintain the unity of the Spirit we must destroy the barriers that block harmony and agreement. Those who erect such obstructions bear responsibility for the resulting disunity.

Scriptural unity is much to be desired among God's people. It is sweet and refreshing (Ps. 133). It affects our influence in persuading the world that Jesus is the Son of God (John 17:20-21). It is "of the Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:1-6).

There are obstructions which stand in the way of unity. Please stop and think about some of them.

DESIRE FOR PRESTIGE

One's faithfulness may make him outstanding in the eyes of others. Judas and Silas were "chief men among the brethren," that is, they were leading men (Acts 15:22). James, Cephas, and John "seemed to be pillars" (Gal. 2:9). It is not wrong for a person to develop and possess the qualities that make for greatness. Frank Puckett once remarked concerning W. Curtis Porter, "He was a great man but didn't know it." Truly great men do not look upon themselves as being great, and their humility is a part of the reason for their being widely known and esteemed.

It is the love of prestige, prominence, and distinction that makes one discordant. This was the case with Diotrophes who is mentioned in John's letter to Gaius (3 John 9-10).

Diotrophes loved to be in control. He craved dominance. He gloried in preeminence. That translates into his being a church boss. His actions were a hindrance to unity. Today, there are people who want to be in a position

of widely recognized importance. They covet exalted rank. They imagine themselves as being a couple of notches higher than their peers. From their elevated position they sit in judgment on others, often accusing, vilifying, and defaming. It is hard for an inflated person to be charitable toward others.

SELFISHNESS

Some in the family of God show more interest in pleasing self than in pleasing the heavenly Father. The attitude of Jesus was, "I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29).

Holy Scripture teaches us to be considerate of others. "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves" (Rom. 15:1). To avoid schism in the body, "the members should have the same care one for another" (1 Cor. 12:25). Selfishness makes people inconsiderate. Those who are self-centered often insist on having their own way rather than yielding to others. They are unwilling to esteem others better than themselves (Phil. 2:3-5). To qualify as a bishop one must not be self-willed (Tit. 1:7).

FALSE TEACHING

Judaizers troubled the churches of Galatia in the first century. They denied the adequacy of the gospel of Christ by insisting that the Gentiles be circumcised after the manner of Moses. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth

before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth?" (Gal. 3:1). Again he remarked concerning the false teachers, "I would that they were even cut off which trouble you" (Gal. 5:12). Peter warned about false teachers "who privily shall bring in damnable heresies" (2 Pet. 2:1).

False doctrine may be taught relative to creation, the plan of redemption, worship, grace, marriage, the second coming of Christ, hell, and other basic Bible subjects. False teaching is always an obstacle to unity. Paul instructed the saints at Rome to "mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Rom. 16:17).

FACTIONALISM

This was a chief cause of division in the church at Corinth. "Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (1 Cor. 1:12). This divisive spirit reflected carnality (1 Cor. 3:3-4). The Corinthians needed to learn "not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another" (1 Cor. 4:6).

The party spirit is loyalty to a man (or group) rather than devotion to Christ. Partisan effort often is confused with zeal for the Lord. One may deceive himself into thinking that he is working to build up the body of Christ when in reality he is striving to build up a faction. A heretic is one who leads a faction, and the Bible says, "A man that is an heretic after the first and second admonition reject" (Tit. 3:10). Some who are the most militant supporters of a faction never miss an opportunity to label others as partisan in their views. A factional spirit is one of divisiveness. One does not rid himself of such a spirit by accusing others of being schismatics.

LACK OF BROTHERLY LOVE

Backbiting, bickering, spreading malicious rumors and lies, displaying

envy, and similar actions show that love is absent. Some brethren act toward others in the most "unbrotherly" manner imaginable. The "golden rule" (Matt. 7:12) has never made much of an impression on their hearts. Their words and deeds exhibit an attitude of bitterness and contempt.

As brethren in the Lord, we are exhorted, "Let brotherly love continue" (Heb. 13:1). "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another" (Rom. 12:10). Jesus taught his followers, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). Brethren who have genuine love for each other will work diligently to resolve differences rather than dividing asunder. Love prevents impugning motives. Love deters the use of ugly insinuations.

SOWING OF DISCORD

The book of Proverbs lists seven things which are abomination to God. The final item in the list is "he that soweth discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:16-19). "Abomination" points to that which is distasteful, loathsome, repulsive, detestable, reprehensible, or abhorrent. God detests the sowing of discord among brethren. "Discord" is strife, dissension, or friction.

Discord is sown when a brother or sister goes from house to house spreading rumors about others in the church, putting in a bad light those who are not present to defend themselves. Discord is sown when the

elders of a congregation are vilified by complainers and faultfinders. Discord is sown when a preacher is maligned by worldly people who dislike preaching which condemns their manner of life. Discord is sown when someone insists on having his way in matters of judgment or else he will raise a disturbance. Discord is sown when wishy-washy brethren advance loud objections to strong and distinctive preaching which shows the right way and exposes error. Discord is sown when teachers of error are defended, truth is compromised, and people loyal to the Lord are derided.

"The sowers of discord among brethren, are worse than those who set fire to the houses of their neighbors. They kindle flames which burn with unrelenting fury" (Lawson). Those flames can destroy relationships which took years to build. Those flames can burn long after those who kindled them are deceased. Notwithstanding, "Some Christians are absolute experts at discord. They thrive on tension and sarcasm. . . . They seem to be oblivious to the fact that God says, 'I hate discord'" (Draper).

To maintain the unity of the Spirit we must destroy the barriers that block harmony and agreement. Those who erect such obstructions bear responsibility for the resulting disunity.

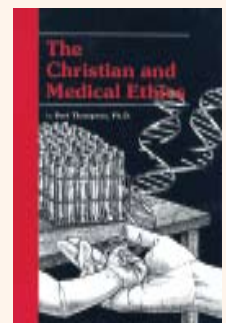
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Marshmallow Gospel

Most people with whom I am acquainted love marshmallows. What are some of the qualities that marshmallows have that people love? They are *soft*, *sweet*, and *flexible*. Would you believe there are people who expect the gospel to be the same way?

Many people refuse to accept the Lord's invitation through the gospel because as they say, "What you are preaching is too hard. I just can't accept the consequences of what you are teaching me. Those are hard sayings." When gospel preachers teach folks that they *must* be immersed in water so that their sins may be pardoned (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21), they often huff, puff, snort, and blow, declaring, "Man, that's too hard. I have been taught all my life that a person is saved by faith alone before and without immersion in water. That's all I have ever known and nothing is going to change my mind. I will stick with what I have been taught even if it is wrong." How sad. The fact is, when a person discovers he is wrong, he should change even if it is hard. Friends, this attitude is not new. Jesus personally met people who said the same thing while he was on earth. "When many of his disciples heard it (what he metaphorically taught about his flesh and blood, RD), they said, 'This is a hard saying: who can listen to it?'" (John 6:60, ESV).

Indeed, our Lord taught some things that people found "hard" or offensive. We should strive to be right with God first and foremost! (Prov. 14:12; Rom. 3:4; Mark 12:30). Most of the world's people believe that God's conditions of salvation are too hard; they want a gospel that is *soft* like a marshmallow! Such people have about as much backbone as half-jelled Jello.

There are other people who not only want soft doctrine, they also want a *sweet* gospel. They are the "honey like" ecumenical kind who are determined to get along with everybody regardless of what is believed, taught, and practiced in "christendom." They, like Rodney King of Los Angeles police beating fame ask, "Can't we all just get along?" They can't fathom the idea that not everyone is acceptable to God and not heaven bound. They are so sweet and mild-mannered that they even make honey bees

nauseous. They do all they can to avoid telling people who espouse doctrinal error that they are wrong. They want to live in the make believe world of "everybody is alright with God, believe what you want to believe, God could care less about doctrinal differences." They don't want to rock the boat. They try to delete all negativism from their artificial vocabulary. They sometimes say, "You can draw more flies with honey than you can with vinegar." The fact is, gospel preachers, elders, and other members of the Lord's body are not in the fly drawing business. We are in the soul saving business, and, to that end, we must teach what is necessary even when it is a bitter pill to swallow (Acts 20:26; 2 Tim. 4:1-5).

There are also people who not only want a *soft and sweet* gospel, but they also want a *flexible* gospel. Though they usually do not explicitly say so, nonetheless they imply that God's law is too strict. They believe certain parts of it need to be "bent" just a bit. They would have us to know that the unyielding characteristics of the gospel creates unnecessary barriers between believers and unbelievers. They believe there should be more than one exception that allows divorce and remarriage (Matt. 19:9). They believe the "one body" taught in Scripture is at least one less than there ought to be (Eph. 4:4). They believe singing in Ephesians 5:19 is too specific and a little playing of a mechanical instrument should be allowed. They believe that the biblical parameter of the Lord's supper on the first day of the week is too restrictive (Acts 20:7). They want a Thursday observance of the Lord's supper. They believe it is too inflexible to state that men are the only ones who are scripturally allowed to publicly proclaim the gospel (1 Tim. 2:8-15; 1 Cor. 14:34-35). They want women preachers, women elders, etc. They believe it is too unbending to say that a person has to go to the Father through Jesus Christ (John 14:6). They want to make room for a journey to the Father through the Pope of Rome!

The point is this, we have no right to be softer, sweeter, or more flexible than holy Scripture allows us to be. The gospel is not like a marshmallow though some wish it were!

Exceedingly Great and Precious Promises

Peter states in 2 Peter 1:4: “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises.” Men lie. In an effort to try to get man to keep his word, we make him sign contracts. But with God, we know that he keeps his promises. He cannot lie (Tit. 1:2, Heb. 6:18-19). Let us look at some of these great promises that Peter talks about.

PEACE

Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you . . . let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). Again he said, “I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace” (John 16:33). As we see our neighbors running to and fro, bound up with stress and anxiety, you and I have the comfort of having been given peace. I know that no matter what I face that “if God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31). Someone asks, “How do I get this peace?” Let me point out two ways. First, through prayer. Paul exhorts, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything through prayer . . . and the peace of God that passes all understanding shall guard your hearts and minds” (Phil. 4:6-7). Knowing that we carry everything to the creator and sustainer of the universe brings about peace. Our prayers are listened to and acted upon, according to his will (1 Pet. 3:12, Jas. 5:16).

Secondly, through obeying God’s commands — God’s commandments are for our good always (Deut. 6:24). When we do them, it brings about joy and peace. Jesus said, “If you know these things, happy are ye if you do them” (John 13:17).

COMFORT

We all face trial and temptations. We all face times of sorrow (Job 14:1). God has promised comfort to his righteous. Paul said, “. . . and the God of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulations” (2 Cor. 1:3-4). David wrote long ago, “This is my comfort in my affliction; for thy word hath made me alive” (Ps. 119:50). Once again the Psalmist wrote, “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart . . . many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all” (Ps. 34:18-19).

Through his word, and through his saints, God provides comfort.

AID IN TEMPTATION

One of the great promises that God has promised is aid during times of temptation. As a matter of fact, God has promised not to allow any more than we can bear. Notice what Paul said, “. . . but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13).

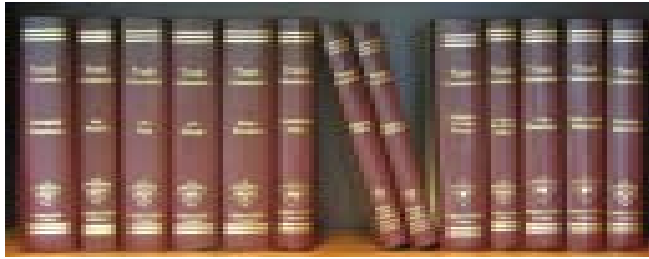
SALVATION

The God who cannot lie, has promised us salvation. Many of my brethren appear to doubt whether or not they are saved. Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). He came for that very purpose. “For I came not to condemn the world, but that the world through me might be saved” (John 3:17). It is God’s eternal wish that all be saved (1 Tim. 2:3-4; 2 Pet. 3:9). We must rest on the promises of God, and know assuredly that if we are obedient to his commands, and attempt to conform our lives to his blessed Son, that we are in a saved state before God (1 John 1:7-9).

ETERNAL LIFE

For as long as man has been on the earth, men have attempted to find immortality. Juan Ponce DeLeon looked for the fountain of youth. Many scientists claim to have found a way to stop the aging process. All such things are rooted in a desire to extend life. God has promised us such! “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Tit. 1:2). John said, “For this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life, and that life is in His Son” (1 John 5:11).

When we consider these things, we certainly can understand more fully Peter’s words, “exceeding great and precious promises.” Let us praise God for these promises, and find our joy and hope in such. When you consider these promises, you can understand why the Apostle Paul, from prison, could write, “Rejoice in the Lord always, and again



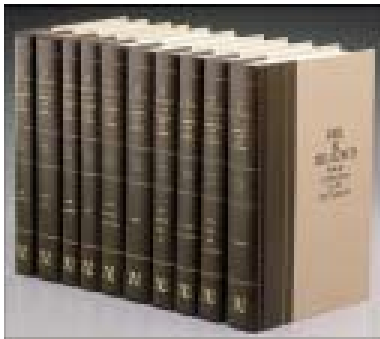
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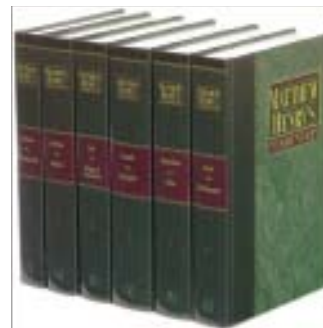
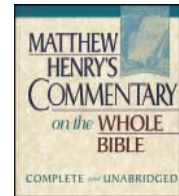
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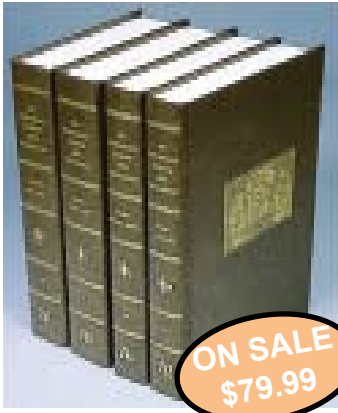
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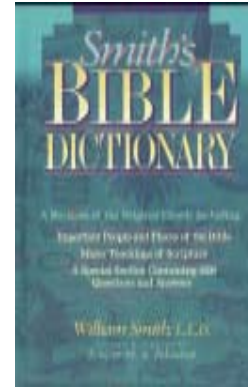
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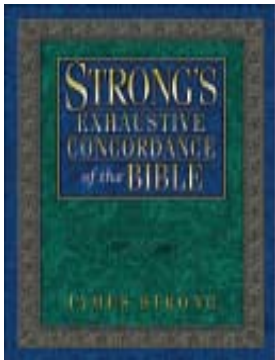


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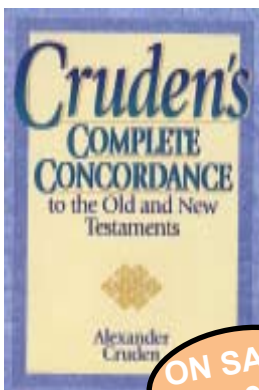
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Worldliness and the Home

When the Lord said that “man shall not live by bread alone,” he acknowledged that man does live by bread and that he is a creature of the world, “of the earth, earthy” (Matt. 4:4). Christians are not to be ascetic. They are not to divorce themselves from this world as though they do not live in it (1 Cor. 5:10). How else could they be light and leaven and the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:16)? They are citizens of the world. They have obligations to it (Matt. 22:21; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). They may appeal to it for redress and retribution (Rom. 13:1-4; Acts 22:25; 23:17-35; 25:10, 11).

Both the apostles, Paul and Peter, when writing of the various roles and relationships of children of God, spoke of domestic duties and family fellowship (Eph. 4:17-6:20; Col. 3:1-4:6; 1 Pet. 1:13-4:16). Mark and observe those items which refer to the home. Note that all are in the sphere of one who is seeking to work and walk in love and not in lust (Eph. 4:17; 5:2; Col. 3:2; 1 Pet. 1:13-15; 2:1, 13). Our homes and families are not to be separated islands, cut off from the community and society of this world (1 Pet. 2:12; 3:15-17; 4:4). We do not exist in a social vacuum. If we did, how could “they think it strange that (we) run not with them to the same excess of riot”?

“In,” But Not “Of,” the World

We are to abide in the world but not imbibe of it (1 John 2:15-17). Saints are to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Tit. 2:11, 12). They live “*in* this present world,” but are not to be friends of it nor conformed to it (Rom. 12:2; Jas. 4:4). Jesus warned that “the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful” (Mark 4:19). It is possible to live a morally pure life and yet be of the world, worldly. Many families are seen as good and godly. They attend worship services. They are community leaders and good examples to their

neighbors. Yet, they are carnally minded. Their affections are set upon things of this world. They do not wish to serve the devil and go to hell, but their main goal in life is not to go to heaven and take others with them. Though they are religious and very active in their “church life,” they flirt with the world and bring forth no fruit to maturity (Matt. 7:21-23; Luke 8:14).

CHARACTERISTICS OF WORLDLY HOMES

1. Sporadic Attendance. They are there most of the time, but if there is any social or recreational activity, the Lord must take a back seat. Ball games, vacations, parties and personal agendas come before the worship of the Lord. This is typical of families that seek to “have it both ways.” Their attendance is determined by convenience, not conviction.

Children raised in such a home often are not faithful when they leave home.

2. “Questionable,” “Borderline” Behavior. Actually, what they call “questionable,” and “borderline” often is pure ungodliness. Worldly families play “footsie” with the world on a variety of fronts. Their dress and social activities, especially that of their children, reflect the form and fashion of this world. (Do I have to spell it out? No, for you can form the image of such apparel in your mind and you can think of specific examples. Perhaps you have seen immodest dress worn by these families at a “potluck” or picnic with the brethren!) While they do not patronize “X” rated clubs or read *Playboy* magazine, they rent movies and read magazines and books that are not wholesome. Parents who read and watch trash and allow their children to do the same should not expect that their children will have clean hands and pure hearts.

Worldly parents belittle godliness and mock and undermine the efforts of faithful teachers. Children grow up

in homes where the preacher, the elders, and other godly folks are ridiculed and spoken against with harsh and bitter words. Thus, they grow up and have no respect for those who seek to nurture them in the way of God.

3. Liberal Trends Are Defended. Name the issue — social drinking, immodest dress, dancing, marriage and divorce, theistic evolution, the days of Genesis 1, denial that a serpent appeared in the garden of Eden, or that the flood in the days of Noah was a world-wide event — and the worldly family generally will take the more liberal view.

In Bible classes, mom and dad will “question” whether or not “the Bible really forbids social drinking.” They will raise doubts and ask if “drinking just one beer or one glass of wine,” will send anyone to hell. They will be careful to add that they do not drink and do not advise others to do so, but they leave the impression that they do not believe the issue is settled in their minds. They question each argument made for abstinence, modest apparel, and the literal acceptance of the book of Genesis.

They are like the agnostic who declares he is not an atheist, but that he just does not know whether or not God exists. However, the agnostic accepts every argument against God and creation and questions and attempts to poke holes in anything and everything taught in the Bible. He never challenges arguments made by atheists. He never critically examines attacks against the Bible. Thus, he shows his true face. He shows where his affections lie. So it is with the worldly parent. He says he is “with us” and that he believes in spiritual and godly homes, but his defense is always for liberal views and his criticisms are always leveled against those who contend for strict adherence to the word of the truth of the gospel.

4. Absence of Home Bible Studies. “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart; you shall *teach them diligently to your children*, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deut. 6:6, 7). “We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done. For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that *they should make them known to their children*: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children” (Ps. 78:4-6).

Timothy knew the truth from his youth (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:14, 15). Do our children? No, not in the worldly home, because the Bible is not read to the children. As they grow and take part in Bible classes, the children are not guided at home by concerned parents. Those same parents help their

children with math and history homework, but they do not assist them in studying for a Sunday morning Bible class. What knowledge their children possess is superficial. It is scraps and crumbs, bits of isolated events and incidents. The Bible is not denied. It is ignored. It is fashionably posed on an ornamental pedestal in the foyer. It serves as part of a room’s decor, but it is not the heart of the home.

5. Prayer Is Rare. Yes, a perfunctory, traditional prayer at meal time may be heard, but worldly parents in worldly homes do not teach their children to pray, nor do they set an example for them. Children raised in such a home rarely give thanks for their food when at school or out in public. Prayer, like a crutch, is placed in the closet and never brought out unless there is an emergency. As a result, children grow up knowing neither how to use a crutch nor how to pray acceptably unto God with reverence and godly fear.

Oh, how greatly improved would be the lives of many young people if they had been taught the word of God and prayed with at home! “Lord, teach us to pray.”

6. Materialism. Worldly parents subtly school their children in the culture and avocation of the world rather than in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The fashion of the world is the standard of dress and demeanor.

See the example of the rich fool in Luke 12:15-21. He was not charged with criminal or immoral behavior. From all that is said, he was a good man. No doubt he was widely respected in the community where he resided. He was a fool for thinking that his life was defined by what he owned (v. 15). He knew, as a wise man once said, “the price of everything, but the value of nothing.” He was blind and deaf with respect to death, the judgment, and eternity.

7. Little Family Time. Modern families often do few things together as a family unit. Mother and father, son, and daughter — all go their own way. Whether at work or play, each has his own separate sphere, his own private world. As a result, there is little family unity and harmony. In the long run, this leads to a break down in communication. Interests draw us away and apart from one another. Communication becomes a problem. “Closeness” is non-existent. This is a sorry state. Sadly, it describes many families in the church of God. Godly parents should not allow their family to be dissolved into independent entities.

Let no one charge that I am saying that family members cannot have their own private time and private interests. One boy may want to play in the band while the other wants to play football. Dad may like to deer hunt and mom may learn how to “china paint.” (Men, pray for a wife who loves to do yard work!) There is nothing wrong with such difference in hobbies or past times. However, we see some

Stones and Serpents

(Giving Good Gifts to Our Children)¹

It has been observed, “the family is the nucleus of civilization.”¹ Tragically, families in America and elsewhere are disintegrating. The single parent household is more commonplace than ever. In America, “only forty-five percent of all teenage children (ages 13-18) live with their married biological father and mother” while “some twenty-four percent of teenagers live in various types of single-parent households.”² Parents need to stabilize and strengthen their marriages for the good of their children, society, and their souls (Heb. 13:4; Matt. 19:4-6). Fathers and mothers must understand, accept, and fulfill their parental roles.

Parents want to provide their children with those things that give joy and fulfillment to their lives. Jesus recognized this parental desire:

Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him! (Matt. 7:9-11).

families running in different directions all the time. The family rarely has a meal together. What a shame! Family meals should be used as a time to talk and to find out what’s going on in one another’s world. Parents should plan times just for the family to participate in activities and to enjoy them together. Trips to amusement parks, museums, and ball games can be done together. Today, school programs take so much of our children’s time that we seem to have no time to do things together as a family. It is a mistake. Perceptive parents will not allow it to happen. Mom and dad, do not get so busy that you have no time for your children, no time to be involved in their interests.

The spiritual ties in which a family should be bound will not be promoted when each member develops his own

Although parents *want* to give their children “good gifts,” they may in fact be giving them “stones and serpents” when they ask for “bread and fish.”

Parents need to know what “good gifts” to give their children. It is not enough to *want* to give our children good things; we must recognize *what good things* to give them so they will truly be blessed.

1. Parents give their children stones and serpents when they ask for (need) their parents’ time and attention and instead give them material things. Time is a commodity that always seems to be in short supply, although we all have an equal amount of it each day. How we use our time reflects our values, interests and commitments (Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5).

Things do not substitute for parental time and presence with their children. Children need and deserve their parents’ time and attention. Being a good parent takes time. The time you now have with your children will not be

world, separate and apart from the family unit. I cannot imagine that Timothy’s family was a disjointed one. His growth shows close family ties (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15).

CONCLUSION

Worldly homes create worldly schools and churches. As goes the home, so goes society, both sacred and secular. The lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life dominate the words and deeds of the world. Let our homes and hearts be sealed from the goods, gold, glitter, and glamor of this vain world and open to the purity and holiness of heavenly law, love, light, and liberty (Matt. 6:19-34; Col. 3:1-3).

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recoverable in years to come. Your children will never be as young as they are today. Your opportunities as a parent exist today, not in the elusive environs of tomorrow's plans (Jas. 4:13-14). Parents should be compelled by life's brevity and uncertainty to put the interests of their children before themselves and material things.

Yet, the materially minded society in which we live has infiltrated the home, robbing children of their parents' presence and preference. The world promotes the idea of spending "quality time" with our children in the absence of a "quantity" of time. But, have you ever heard a little boy or girl say to mommy or daddy, "all I want is some *quality* time with you!" No. Time spent with loving parents is "quality time" when viewed from a child's perspective. Dear Abby gave some good advice when she said, "If you want your children to turn out well, spend twice as much time with them and half as much money."³

Children suffer from this world's mad dash to acquire the comforts and conveniences that technology affords. We live in a day-care society. A politician has said, "It takes a village" to rear our children. But, the Bible teaches it takes the time, care, and attention of a mommy and daddy to accomplish this vital task!

"One doesn't have to be a religious fundamentalist to consider the nurturing of children of vital interest to a society. Yet, women have gladly opened their arms to embrace the hideous lie that hired-help is in any way equivalent to a loving mother in the raising of children."⁴ It has been correctly stated, "a mother is she who can take the place of all others, but whose place no one else can take." Hannah is an example of a mother whose primary interest is the care of her young child (1 Sam. 2:20-23). Choosing to stay with her son Samuel until he was weaned (rather than attend the annual sacrifice), she would then present him before the Lord forever (1 Sam. 2:24-28). Other godly mothers come to mind: Jochebed, Naomi, Mary, Lois, Eunice. These women are tremendous examples of motherhood. Yes, parents need to be with their children in order to rear them in godliness.

Parents must be careful not to make material things the point of emphasis in the home. The love of money keeps parents from giving their children the good gifts of their time and attention (1 Tim. 6:9-10). The deceitfulness of riches convinces many parents they have the best interests of their children in mind when they lavish them with material things (Mark 4:18-19). But, material things cannot sit down and teach a little girl how to tie her shoes, or talk to a son about his day at school. Things do not instill faith, values, and integrity in the heart of a child.

Although written over one hundred years ago, Mark Twain's observation continues to be painfully relevant:

We are always too busy for our children; we never give them the time or interest they deserve. We lavish gifts upon them; but the most precious gift, our personal association, which means so much to them, we give grudgingly.⁵

Parents need to nurture their children (Eph. 6:4). It takes time and attention to be a parent. Parents, your children need *you* much more than the *things* you can give them. Remember, "the best thing to spend on your children is your time."⁶

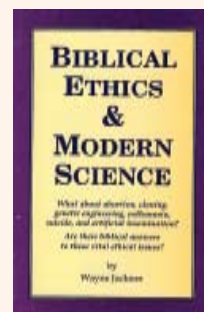
2. Parents give their children stones and serpents when they ask for (need) discipline and instead leave them alone and look the other way. Proper discipline includes instruction and correction. Consistent and beneficial discipline is hindered when parents are absent from their children. The problem of absent parents is compounded when their absence becomes the very reason they are unwilling to punish an unruly child. When Eli did not restrain his sons from their vile conduct before the tabernacle it led to divine judgment against Eli's entire house (1 Sam. 3:12-14; 2:12-17, 22-25, 29). When parents will not punish a disobedient child, trouble surely results.

Before children are punished they must be taught what is right and wrong. God expected Israelite parents to continually teach his law to their children (Deut. 6:6-9; 11:18-21). In turn, he expected children to obey their parents (Deut. 5:16; 21:18-21; cf. Eph. 6:1-3).

Parents still need to teach their children about God, about Christ, and about salvation. God's respect for Abraham included this striking statement: "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him" (Gen. 18:19). John

Biblical Ethics & Modern Science

by Wayne Jackson



What about abortion, cloning, genetic engineering, euthanasia, suicide, and artificial insemination? Are there biblical answers to these vital ethical issues? Jackson examines these issues in the light of biblical revelation, the only source of true ethical instruction. 50 pages.

wrote, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 4). But, children do not follow the Lord by accident. Discipline your children in the ways of the Lord.

Parents who refuse to apply corrective discipline to a disobedient child are not showing true love for the child: "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly" (Prov. 13:24). They are not acting in the child's best interests or their own: "The rod and rebuke give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother" (Prov. 29:15). On the other hand, "Correct your son, and he will give you rest; yes, he will give delight to your soul" (Prov. 29:17).

Failure to discipline children adversely affects an entire society. The Duke of Windsor once observed, "The thing that impresses me most about America is the way parents obey their children."⁷ In a day when corporal punishment is increasingly viewed as child abuse, godly parents must have the courage and wisdom to guide and correct their children in the ways of truth and righteousness (Prov. 19:18; 22:15; 23:13-14; Heb. 12:5-11). Children need parents who have the strength of faith to apply consistent and reasonable discipline, regardless of the cost.

3. Parents give their children stones and serpents when they ask for (need) moral and ethical guidance and instead give them unrestricted access to immorality. Whether it is entertainment, fashion or recreation, the children of the twenty-first century are inundated with immoral attractions. Television, movies, music, magazines, books, and the Internet are consistent purveyors of filth. It is not a new phenomenon that entertainment reflects the immorality of its society (1 Pet. 4:1-4; Eph. 5:3-4, 11-14). In every age, worldly entertainment attracts those who are worldly (1 John 2:15-17). Christians must rise above the profane and be holy as God is holy (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Tit. 2:10-14).

Parents must respect the divine boundaries of decency by setting examples their children can follow. Parents who say "do as I say, not as I do" will lose the respect of their children. Parents who cheat on their taxes cannot expect their children to value honesty. Parents who give their children worldly entertainment can expect their children to have the same values, attitudes, language, and conduct that enters their ears, eyes, and minds.

Children need spiritually mature parents to serve as role models and to surround them with nurturing love. We cannot take our children out of the world, but we can protect them from its evil (John 17:15-17).

4. Parents give their children stones and serpents when they ask for (need) spiritual focus in their lives and instead focus their attention on the pleasures of the

world. Parents have a duty to focus their child's attention on God and his will (Eph. 6:4; Matt. 6:33). To help do so, parents should ask (and answer) some fundamental questions about the goals and interests they are teaching their children to pursue: "Is it moral?" "Does it help or hinder faithfulness to God?" "Will it interfere with or enhance my worship of God?" "Does it help or hinder my influence as a Christian?" "Does it please God?"

Children need to learn to live for heaven as surely as they need to learn to live on earth. They need to see their parents laying up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:19-21; Heb. 11:13-16). Children need to remember God in their youth, and it ought to be their parents that help them do so (Eccl. 12:1). Parents can focus their child's attention on heavenly things by taking them to Bible classes and worship services, and by living holy lives at home and in public (Heb. 10:24-25; Phil. 4:8-9). Will Rogers said, "So live that you wouldn't be ashamed to sell the family parrot to the town gossip." Children need parents who are faithful, active Christians.

5. Parents give their children stones and serpents when they ask for (need) compliments and praise and instead are quickly criticized and belittled. Unrealistic expectations break a child's spirit and can embitter him against his parents. "Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged" is a needed warning of a very real danger (Col. 3:21). When a child is constantly criticized he will grow up learning to condemn. His demeanor will be resentment rather than appreciation. A child loses respect for parents who spend more time criticizing what has been done wrong rather than praising legitimate effort and its accomplishments. Children need to be reinforced with praise, trust, attention, and affection. By so doing, parental teaching is more likely to be heard (Prov. 3:1; 4:1-4).

6. Parents give their children stones and serpents when they ask for (need) order and stability in their lives and instead give them chaos. Divorce has caused broken families and damage to untold numbers of children. Children from divorced and otherwise one-parent families are more likely to have educational, developmental and behavioral problems, an increased use of illegal drugs, and are more sexually active outside of marriage.⁸

Furthermore, children are harmed when mother and father fail to treat each other with respect, kindness, and consideration. Children who grow up in the middle of a running battle between their parents learn hostility rather than peace and retaliation rather than mercy and compassion. It has been said, "The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother."⁹ We may properly add, it is equally vital that a mother loves her children's father. When love is in the home, children will grow up with its security and the confidence they need to perpetuate God's order in the home (Eph. 5:22-33; Tit.

The Wayward Child

Few emotions can match those of a married couple who find out that they are soon to be parents. Joy, love, wonder, nervousness, and pride mix in equal parts with anticipation as the stages of pregnancy slowly mature into the birth of a healthy baby — boy or girl. Who can describe the tremendous emotions that tug at the heart of parents as they gaze into the wrinkled face of their newborn? How can words describe the loving plans that are put into motion to bring that child to maturity and to see it grow and develop into a normal, productive human being? No matter that millions of other parents in millions of other families have shared these emotions. This is your family and your child and your love is beyond measure. As parents, you fully expect that the love you give so freely to this newborn will be returned in kind as the baby grows into a teenager and, finally, an adult.

Regretfully, few emotions can match the disappointment when, to your dismay, your child doesn't follow the plan. They reach a point in life where they do not return your love in the normal way, they do not "follow the plan" laid out in your mind for their maturity, they do not react as you

expected. You have given birth to a wayward child.

"Where did I go wrong?" "What have I left undone?" "What could I have done differently?" These and a multitude of other questions press on your heart and conscience as you deal with the heartbreak of disobedience, lying, rebellion, and lack of respect in this child you brought into the world with such love and hope. The daily pressure of dealing with waywardness and unruliness takes its toll until anxiety and despair gives way to hopelessness. "I have failed." "My child is out of control." Failure is such an ugly word.

It is usually impossible to put one's finger on a single day, a single act or a single decision that was the turning point. When did this little baby become this stubborn rebel? When did sullenness set in? Where did this deep resentment come from, this intractable anger? Did something happen early in life to cause rebellion to begin? Did he see too much television, listen to too much rebellious music? Was it when he had difficulty fitting into the regimen of school? When did he start resenting Bible classes and worship services?

2:4; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).

CONCLUSION

Parents have the tremendous challenge of training their children in way they should go (Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:4). To succeed, parents are encouraged to give their children the "good gifts" that will endure into eternity, instead of the "stones and serpents" that do not satisfy the soul.

Footnotes

¹ Ariel and Will Durant, cited on Wisdom Quotes, www.wisdomquotes.com.

² *The Positive Effects of Marriage: A Book of Charts*, Fagan, Rector, Johnson & Peterson, The Heritage Foundation, 3.

³ Abigail Van Buren, cited in *The Star*, Lois Wagner Memorial Library Newsletter, Spring 2004.

⁴ Dr. Laura Schlessinger, "How Low Can Women Go?", World NetDaily.com.

⁵ *Poor Man's College*, cited on The Quotations Page, www.quotationspage.com.

⁶ Louise Hart, *The Quote Lady*, www.quotelady.com.

⁷ *Look Magazine*, March 5, 1957.

⁸ *The Positive Effects of Marriage: A Book of Charts*, Fagan, Rector, Johnson & Peterson, The Heritage Foundation, 28-41.

⁹ Theodore M. Hesburgh, President Emeritus of the University of Notre Dame.

joe@bibleanswer.com

Was it when he started staying out so late? At what instant did he turn against God? When did he decide to disobey his parents? When did he decide to associate with the very worst kind of friends? And *why* does he feel the necessity to break all the rules?

PARENTS AND GUILT

Most parents of wayward children carry an immense load of guilt. The immediate feeling is, "I have done something horribly wrong, this is all my fault." This is not necessarily so.

In Luke 15:11-32, Jesus gave us the parable of the prodigal (wasteful) son to illustrate God's love for the lost. The Jews were critical of Jesus' contact with sinners and Luke 15 is heaven's answer to that spiteful charge. The story of the lost sheep (vv. 4-7) and the lost coin (vv. 8-10), as well as the prodigal son graphically speak of God's love for sinners and explains Jesus' association with them — to save their souls. But let us not forget that the father in verses 11-32 portrays God. The prodigal son's father illustrates God's love for his children and this demands an absence of wrong-doing on the part of the father even when the son chose to leave home and go to that "far country" and waste his inheritance in "riotous living." This is simply free will in action. In spite of being taught the right way, the prodigal (as well as some well-taught children today) chose to do wrong. This is the risk of free will and many choose the wrong way. While there are no perfect parents, some parents who are faithful in their lives will sire children who make wrong choices. In such cases, guilt is misplaced and unnecessary. As difficult as it is, the child must be allowed to bear the burden of responsibility of his own actions. Parents who have been faithful Christians in their lives and who have taught their children by word and by influence should not berate themselves with guilt when

their child decides to reject godly values.

WHEN PARENTS ARE TO BLAME

Sometimes, parents become Christians late in life and do not have the luxury of raising their children from birth to maturity as they now would like to do. Sometimes, parents did not accept the responsibility of parenting as they should have. Sometimes, lots of mistakes are made along the way: lack of discipline, lack of influence, lack of consistency, favoritism, too much materialism, too much worldliness, fighting in the home, absentee parents, parents who did not love each other, etc. The list of possible errors is nearly endless. Surely, you can add a few things peculiar to your household to the list. Waywardness in a child may have been fostered by an environment where parents are, indeed, to blame. Wayward parents produce wayward children. What is to be done in such circumstances?

Sadly, the clock cannot be turned backward; a bell that is rung cannot be unring. We can never reclaim the years that are past. We must now deal with the realities that exist and work to bring about change. If you have a wayward child and you are partly to blame, you must institute changes, and do so immediately. Time is of the essence.

NECESSARY CHANGES MUST RESTORE GOD'S ORDER

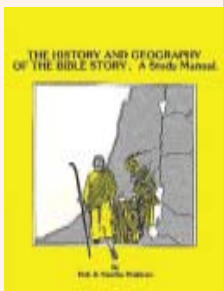
The best solution for wayward children is for the parents to be Christians. We cannot ask our children to be more than we are. Are you setting the proper example by obeying the gospel? Are both parents Christians? A home that is divided religiously cannot be all that it should be. Apart from being a parent, each person needs Christ in his life for his own salvation. If parents expect submission from their children, they should exhibit submission to God in themselves. Submit to Jesus Christ as the Lord of your life, repent of your sins, confess Jesus as the son of God, and submit to baptism for remission of your sins (Rom. 10:17; John 8:24; Luke 13:3, Rom. 10:10; Acts 2:38). The power of such an example is beyond measure as your children see the power of faith in your lives.

In a godly home, husbands must be the head of the home and wives must be willing help mates (Gen. 2:18; Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-19). Wayward children need to see this harmony and love in their parents. If there are unresolved conflicts between the parents, the solution begins when harmony is restored. If husbands and wives are in a state of conflict, if war exists between them, or if children can see disarray at this level, don't expect them to rise above it. Children reflect the environment in which they are reared. If they see anger all the time, they will be angry. If they hear quarrelling, they will quarrel. If they live in confusion, they will be confused. Parents cannot expect more from their children than they are willing to exemplify.

If both parents work outside the home, difficulties increase and sacrifices must be made if order is to be restored.

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Consider the possibility of the wife returning to the home as a full-time mother. Let the husband be the bread-winner. Do you need the income for selfish reasons or do you really want to “bring your children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”? Do you really need that latest DVD, that big screen television, that newest golf club, that newest fashion? How does one measure material possessions against the soul of your children? Don’t blame God if you are not willing to do what he tells you to do to have a happy and faithful home. Many of our problems began in society when mothers became career-oriented and put jobs and careers ahead of family. “Women’s Lib” made subtle, but profound, changes in the thinking of many of our daughters. “Equality” took the place of “submission” (Eph. 5:22) and a woman’s value is now often measured in the amount of her paycheck rather than her influence in the home. If it is absolutely necessary for both husband and wife to work, make whatever changes are possible to bring parental influence back into the home. Proverbs 31:10-31 is worthwhile reading for guidance in the value of a “worthy woman” and her powerful influence in the home. A worthy woman and a godly father are powerful influences in the lives of children. If you want to rescue your children, work mightily to lay these good examples before them.

In a godly home, parents are in control (Eph. 6:1-4; Col. 3:21; Prov. 1-7) and children obey their parents. If this is not the case, change it! Children must not control the home and dictate their own terms. Parents are older, wiser, bigger, stronger, and more capable than their children. Children depend on parents for food, shelter, and accommodations. It may take “tough love” to take control, but parents are appointed by God to this role and must not abdicate this responsibility. Modern ideas that suggest that parents are to be “friends” and not parents are misguided. Your children will have lots of friends in their lives, but they have only one set of parents and you must act the part. Children are not born knowing all the rules. They must be taught and that is where parents must act: teach, instruct, compel, reward, discipline, love, guide. It is an added benefit if you can be friends with your child, but be parents first. Do not depend so much on sociologists (Dr. Spock admitted that he was wrong in some of his advice!) as on the word of God. Sit down with your child, admit that you have made mistakes in the past, read the Scriptures that outline your roles and let them know clearly what the rules are. Set guidelines of behavior, establish curfews, outline household chores, limit the types of friends that they are allowed to have, be frank about your mistakes and the need for a change, verbalize your love for them, and allow open discussions about these rules and the need for them. In the end, take charge. Be fair, but enforce. Be the parent. Endure the protests, accept the resentment (even hatred), be patient, be consistent, be loving. Waywardness did not begin overnight and it will not be changed overnight. Parenting takes time.

Discipline in the home is essential and harmony will

never exist without it. But there needs to be a clear distinction made between child abuse and discipline. Not only the laws of man, but the laws of God are opposed to child abuse. However, spanking is not child abuse. Notice these passages: Proverbs 10:13: “Wisdom is found on the lips of him who has understanding, But a rod is for the back of him who is devoid of understanding.” Chapter 13:24: “He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly.” Chapter 22:15: “Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; The rod of correction will drive it far from him.” This ancient, inspired advice is more valuable than modern sociology which scorns corporal punishment. However, we must add that spanking is only one form of discipline. Discipline is “direction, instruction.” Thus, the intent of parenting is to guide children into maturity through the many avenues of discipline. “Time out” or withholding of privileges is one form of discipline. Instruction is another. Spanking may be the last resort, rather than the first, but it may be necessary. Good parents do not withhold discipline or, you can be sure, rebellion will be the result.

Be sure that your children attend worship services with you. Do not permit your children to lay up in bed or go elsewhere while you assemble. The worst kind of child abuse is to neglect spiritual guidance. They must be in Bible classes, read their Bibles, and get their Bible class homework. There is no shortcut to this. There is no substitute for hearing the word of God being taught. They need to be in worship and they need to be there with their parents. They need to hear their parents sing in worship. They need to see your heads bowed in prayer. They need to know that part of your income goes to support the Lord’s work. They need to see you help the needy, uphold the truth, encourage the weak, support the fainthearted. They need the association with fellow Christians. Illness needs medication, and waywardness can be healed, if at all, by a good dose of spirituality.

WHEN YOUR BEST EFFORTS FAIL

Understand that all this may not work. It is our only hope, but not all will accept it. God does not coerce us to love him and, if rebellion is bound up in our hearts, God will allow free will to work during time. Each of us, including our children, can reject God if he chooses. Of course, we will have to give an account in eternity, at the day of judgment (2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 4:13). It was an observation of Solomon (a proverb, not an absolute rule), that we should “train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). But if your child is going to be different, to be the one who rejects God and continues in rebellion, hold fast to your course of faithfulness. Who knows what the future holds? Truly, while there is life, there is hope. Let your child leave home, if need be, seeing you serve God faithfully. You see, you don’t serve the Lord just for the sake of your offspring. You are faithful to God because this is your personal choice, your

Letting Go

On July 23, 2004, Raven Phoebe Willis was born to my son, Corey, and his wife, Meagan. The last act of the birthing process is cutting the umbilical cord. It is also the first step in a parent letting go of his children. Heretofore the child has been totally dependent upon its mother for its life; from this step forward, the child has independent existence. Gradually the parent must shift responsibility from the parent to the child. Parenting is the job of preparing these children for independent existence — equipping them with the skills they will need to go out into the world and meet its challenges and to bear responsibility for their own actions. Parenting is helping your children develop the godly character traits they'll need to make good decisions, even when you are not with them.

At the various steps along the way, the shifting of responsibility takes different forms. It begins when infants are totally dependent upon their parents for every thing

righteous decision for your own eternal salvation. Just remember that children can never really forget what they see and hear in the home. Wherever they go, however long they live, whatever pathways they take, let them take with them the memory of godly parents who loved the Lord “with all their hearts, with all their soul, and with all their might” (Matt. 22:27). Even when you are dead and gone, this memory will be with them and cannot be erased. It may well be that, years after you are gone, that rebellious spirit will ease, that waywardness will come under God’s control and the prodigal will come home. May God help it to be so.

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they have. As toddlers, the children need strict boundaries in which to exercise their autonomy. For school-aged children, the boundaries will begin to expand and the parent will test the child’s ability in decision making, giving them greater amounts of freedom. As they leave for college, the children expand their independence even more, even though some children may live at home longer than others. When marriage comes for one’s children, they have left their nest at home and formed their own home. All along this transition period, the parent has been letting go a little more at every step until finally the child is totally independent. “Letting go” is a process in which we change our relationship to our children and transfer responsibility for decisions concerning their lives from us to them.

Adult children need a different kind of parenting than do children at home. One of the hard things to learn is that advice should not be given unless it is wanted. I haven’t always followed this rule very well, but I comprehend it. Sometimes adult children do not want advice, they want approval of the decisions they have already made. They want their parents’ blessings.

Parents realize that this process that must occur. Writing about the creation of the family, Moses said, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). It is God’s will for the family that a man should “leave” his father and mother in order to become one with his wife. This involves the mother and father “letting go” and that child assuming responsibility for his own conduct.

The transition of letting go is not always easy. Sometimes parents and children struggle through this process. Perhaps a few words about the matter will help us work through difficult years with less grief.

LETTING GO MEANS LETTING CHILDREN DO THINGS FOR THEMSELVES

There are many things that children can do for them-

selves. They need to be taught how to do various things and then given the space to do them. Karen L. Maudlin wrote, “Maria Montessori, a leader in early childhood education, advised parents to hold off on doing anything for a child that he can do for himself. This includes redoing something the child has done, such as making his bed, even if his work doesn’t meet your standards. Once a child has learned a skill, do not do that service for your child unless there’s a solid reason he can’t do it on a particular day” (see Christianitytoday.com home/expert advice/on the family front).

Children learn from the mistakes they make. They may have to re-do the job, but re-doing the job is a way of learning. I remember hauling hay one summer. On my second job, my crew hauled 400 bales of hay and stacked it in a barn; the next morning the stacked hay had fallen. The owner called it to my attention and showed me how to stack hay so that it was interlocked. We never forgot the lesson about how to stack hay. What would have happened had the person just redone the job for me? Sometimes children will not listen. Learning from the consequences of not listening is sometimes painful, but the lessons learned are deeply embedded in one’s memory.

LETTING GO IS TIED TO TRUST

In parenting, one lets go of the reins gradually. When a child takes responsibility and does his job well, the parent is able to entrust that child with greater responsibility. On the other hand, when the child fails in the performance of one task, he will need to be overseen until he handles that responsibility correctly before entrusting larger responsibilities to his oversight. Letting go is a series of negotiation and re-negotiation. Trade offs allow the child gradually to make more and more decisions as they experience their independence. This is basically the principle outlined in Jesus’ statement: His lord said unto him, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a

few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matt. 25:21). Making children understand this principle is important; they will live under that principle in every relationship in life. Joseph’s faithfulness in his job performance led him to be overseer, first of his master’s house, then prisoners, and finally over all of Egypt.

LETTING GO MEANS RELEASING CONTROL

The control that one has over his children is not released all at one time, although a final separation has to occur. It is somewhat like what happens when one is teaching his children to ride a bicycle. The parent holds the bicycle up, runs along beside the bicycle for a while, but finally has to let go of the bicycle, knowing that the child will fall and bruise himself. These falls and bruises, like the ones that the toddler has as he is learning to walk, are the necessary steps in learning to ride a bicycle. Even after he has learned to ride, the parent will instruct the child about where to ride, how to cross a street, and other lessons. Even when he is allowed to go further and further on his rides, he is instructed about when to come home and to call to tell the parent that he made it to where he was going without any problem.

Some parents err in letting go because they are so protective of their children that they never allow their children the independence to make any mistakes. Children must learn to make decisions, and in the process of learning, they will make some bad decisions. Learning to cope with the consequences of their bad decisions is part of maturation. It is better for one’s child to suffer a “D” on a homework assignment because he waited until the last minute to do his work than to be fired from a job for making the same mistake. When parents protect their children from the consequences of their foolish actions, they raise fools. Each of us has witnessed those parents who were so overly protective of their children that, when they reached the age



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Connie W. Adams says of this book, “This book is a summary of the scheme of redemption from the loss of man’s access to the Tree of Life in Genesis to his admittance to it in Revelation. It is perhaps the most devotional of all of Otey’s books. His chapter dealing with the faith of Abraham and Sarah in leaving Ur and going into a land God would show them directly affected the decision my first wife, Bobbie, and I made to go to Norway in 1957 to preach the gospel there. We had read the book together as a family devotional. It is good reading for a new generation.

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of majority, they went wild — exercising the freedom they had so long wished for, but had not been trained to use.

Some parents refuse to let go of the reins. They only shift in how they use those reins. In the early years, the means of control was a spanking, time out, sending the child to the room, grounding the child, and other forms. In the adult years, the manipulation may take these forms:

- **Bribery:** “I might be able to manage that ski outfit you’ve been hankering for if you —”
- **Appeal to guilt:** “And the doctor said that it’s all this stress I’ve been under ever since you —”
- **Threat:** “As long as you’re living under my roof, you’ll —”
- **Shaming:** “I should think you’d be more considerate —”
- **Power play:** “You’ll not see another cent from me as long as you —”
- **Appeal from authority:** “I’ve lived longer than you. I know better, take it from me —”
- **Unfavorable comparison:** “I don’t understand why you can’t hold on to a job and the Elmar son, who doesn’t even have a college degree, is a sales manager, and last year, his mother tells me, he made, with salary and bonus —”
- **Dire prediction:** “If you go on this way, you know how you’re going to end up? Well, let me tell you —”
- **Invoking the dead:** “It’s a good thing your father/mother is no longer alive, because if he/she knew that you —” (Arlene Harder, *Letting Go: Easier Said Than Done* 41).

The bottom line is that the parent has not let go and is seeking to control the life of his adult child through manipulation. Such conduct will produce resentment and result in the retardation of the adult-to-adult relationship with one’s child.

LETTING GO VERSUS CO-DEPENDENCY AND ENABLING

Children do not always made decisions which please their parents. The statement in Proverbs 22:6: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it” — is a proverb, a maxim, a general statement of truth which has many exceptions. Ezekiel 18 describes the situation of a righteous man raising an ungodly child demonstrating that it can happen.

Eli is condemned for not restraining his adult children. The Scripture says, “For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not” (1 Sam. 3:13). However, this passage was not written about a man with teenaged children. Eli’s sons were serving as priests (1 Sam. 2:12). They were guilty of fornication and greed (1 Sam. 2:13-17), causing the people to resent the

sacrifices. The Levitical law stated that men could not serve as priests until they were thirty years old (Num. 4:3, 23). From this we see that Eli’s sons were not children still under the care of mother and father; they were married sons who had established their own homes.

Eli served as high priest overseeing the Lord’s work and had the responsibility for overseeing what went on in the Tabernacle. When he saw his sons’ sinful behavior, he should have acted as the High Priest to have them removed from office. Instead, he did not restrain his sons. Some elders have done the same thing for their wayward children.

Unfortunately, many parents whose children have made wrong decisions about their lives have trouble coming to grips with those bad choices. One problem of “letting go” is coming to grips with the fact that you cannot control their choices. You will not approve of their choices, but you must accept that they are their choices. You have no alternative but to accept the reality. Another problem of “letting go” is allowing your children to suffer the consequences of their own mistakes. Some parents try to cover up their children’s sinful conduct. I have known of parents who flushed marijuana plants down the toilet to protect their children, repaid stolen money, covered bad checks, paid off a loan which the children refused to pay, and other things to prevent their children from suffering the consequences of their sinful behavior. In nearly every case, the parent justifies or excuses the sinful conduct of the children because of how someone else acted. “He was wrong but . . .” Such parents become “enablers” — parents who provided the support one needs to continue in his sinful conduct. These parents have not learned to “let go.”

Some parents, such as Eli, have to come to grips with the fact that their children are sinful and wicked. Accepting the reality of the character of one’s children, however painful that may be, is one of the first steps one must take in learning to “let go.”

The problem of accepting that one’s children are sinful and wicked is complicated by the fact that we view our own spirituality in terms of how our children have turned out. Jane Adams wrote,

As parents, coming to terms with our adult children’s limitations also means facing our own. . . . In mid-life, a central aspect of parents’ identity is how our children have turned out; that is, what kind of adults they have become. The lives of grown children constitute an important lens through which we judge ourselves and our accomplishments; it is through reconsidering their adult successes and failures that we seek, retroactively, to validate the kinds of parents we were and the responsible caring we provided (“When Our Grown Kids Disappoint Us,” 4therapy.com).

This problem may be particularly hard for a Christian because his self worth as a Christian may be tied to his children's choices, over which he has no control.

LETTING GO AND THE EMPTY NEST

Parents should remember that their children are not the whole of their lives. They are home about 18-20 years out of a normal life span of seventy years. Even when this is spread out over several siblings to 25-35 years, there are still a number of years when husband and wife are alone after the children are grown. Some parents are not prepared for the empty nest because they cannot let go of their children. Letting go is not easy, especially for the mother who has been a stay-at-home mom devoting all of her energies to child rearing.

There are constant reminders of the fact that the children are gone. When my daughter Jennifer left for college, Sandy closed the door to her room for several weeks. The pain of not having her in the home was too much. Being oblivious to any of this, I sent Mom to take Jenny to college and didn't even go with her. I had no clue about the pain of the emotional separation on Mom. That's one of those things I wish I could do over again. I should have been there as a support for Sandy.

Since one is going to spend a lot of time with one's mate after the children are away from home, one needs to be careful not to neglect each other during those years of child rearing. If one neglects his mate during those child rearing years, he may find himself living with a total stranger after the children are grown. One needs to learn that the best thing he can do for his children is to love their mother. Parents need to make time for each other during those busy years of taking children to school, sports events, VBS, church, and other activities. Whatever way you choose to do that, keep the love between mom and dad healthy so that you love that person with whom you are going to spend your senior years.

Esther Manuel Bergen ("Letting Go Is Part of Parenting," retirementwithpurpose.com) related that a friend gave her a poem which helped her understand the letting go process. The author is unknown:

- To "let go" does not mean to stop caring, it means I can't do it for someone else.
- To "let go" is not to enable, but to allow learning from natural consequences.
- To "let go" is to admit powerlessness, which means the outcome is not in my hands.
- To "let go" is not to fix, but to be supportive.
- To "let go" is not to judge, but allow another to be a human being.
- To "let go" is not to be in the middle arranging all the outcomes, but to allow others to affect their own destinies.
- To "let go" is not to be protective, it's to permit another to face reality.

- To "let go" is not to deny, but to accept.
- To "let go" is not to nag, scold, or argue, but instead to search out my own shortcomings and correct them.
- To "let go" is not to regret the past, but to grow and live for the future.
- To "let go" is to fear less and to love more.

CONCLUSION

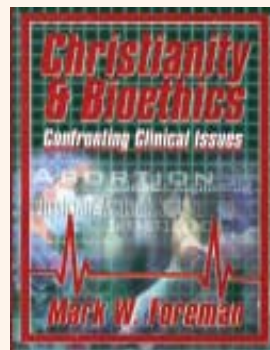
In conclusion, let me remind parents and children alike that there are no perfect parents and there are no perfect children. We all are raised by imperfect parents; we all were imperfect children. Having said that, the first message should be, "Relax, a little and give you and your children a break! You never will be perfect." The second message is that each of us needs to freely dispense forgiveness for the other's mistakes. I am thankful that my children have been forgiving of our mistakes. We made enough of them and they will make a bunch rearing their own children. The third message is the same message I had to accept about feeding my children. We tried to make our daughter eat everything on her plate. We had many unpleasant meals because of our own foolishness. By the time we had our son, we realized that our job was to put food on the table and theirs was to eat it. If they didn't eat and became hungry, that was their fault. They got the message. The same message is true about teaching them the way of the Lord. The parent's job is to teach their children the way of the Lord (Deut. 6:4-9; Eph. 6:1-2) and to live it before them in such a way that they can see the "beauty of holiness"

6567 Kings Ct., Avon, Indiana 46123 mikewillis1@attglobal.net

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“Creation Myths” continued from front page

chaotic watery mass known as the deity Nu. The sun-god Ra brings forth from the midst of Nu two gods, Shu (the god of air, light and heat), and his mate, Tefnut. According to some myths about Shu, he was said to separate two lovers that mingled in the waters of NuNut (sky) and Geb (earth). In this separation Shu lifts the watery heavens of Nut above Geb forming the heavens and the earth. The Egyptians believed that the heavens were actually a sea of waters in which the sun and moon floated. It was believed that the rising and setting of the sun was Ra sailing his boat across the watery heavens.

THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE BIBLICAL ACCOUNT

The Biblical account shares three things with these pagan myths (1) **Water**. All describe an initial watery mass. In the biblical account this mass is not pre-existent, but the creation of God (Gen. 1:1-7). (2) **Chaos**. All describe a universe of chaos being brought into order. In the biblical account God creates the initial chaos and then brings it into order (Gen. 1:2). (3) **Separation of the Waters**. All describe a separation of waters above and below an expanse of heaven. In the Bible, this expanse doesn't separate lovers or fight battles, it is simply the elements that compose the atmosphere (Gen. 16:7).

Here is where the similarities end. First, in the biblical account God is over and separate from his creation (Gen. 1:1). Second, in the Bible the elements which God creates and with which he forms the earth are just that. The earth is not a deity. The sky is not a god. Things are simply things! (Gen. 1:1-19). Third, in the biblical account the waters above the firmament are not portrayed as heavenly seas in which the sun and moon literally sail (Gen. 1:9). These “waters” either refer to the water vapors of cloud which canopied pre-flood earth, or to the fluid elements from which God would compose the heavens.² The Jews understood this. The book of Job says that God hung the earth “on nothing” (Job 26:7). There are no “sun-boats” in the Bible.

WHY ARE THERE SIMILARITIES?

The book of Genesis was revealed to Moses sometime around 1500 B.C. This was centuries after the initial events which it describes took place. We know that during the time of the patriarchs God spoke to some people. He revealed to Abel how he wanted to be worshiped (Heb. 11:4). He revealed to Enoch what would happen in the future (Jude 14,15). It is not unreasonable to consider that God revealed to someone, something about the past (i.e. the Creation). If so, Romans 1 shows us that man has often twisted the very acts of God into their own idolatrous imaginations (Rom. 1:20-25). These pagan myth could well reflect the same type of thing. While Genesis was not borrowed from pagan myths, I believe that it may be that the pagan myths represent the perversions of early man's historical memory

“Sexual Identity” continued from page 2. Those who promote these theories concerning one's sexual identity are the same ones who preach that a person is either born a homosexual or a heterosexual. In other words, it's okay for little Johnny to be confused about his sexual identity right now, after all, he may grow up to be gay. Not even his parents are permitted to correct his behavior, since he really has no choice in the matter. The idea is that if he was born a homosexual, then he will eventually practice homosexuality once he sorts out all of this confusion over his sexual identity.

3. It does not matter which sexual identity the child ends up with as an adult. If he decides his sexual identity is that of a homosexual, then that is fine. If a girl decides her true sexual identity is that of a lesbian, then no one ought to persuade her to the contrary.

THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT

Nothing could be more opposed to the truth of God than the popular theories of our day concerning sexual identity. What does the Scripture say?

1. God's word only recognizes two categories of sexual identity. God recognizes the lawful marriage of a man to a woman as sexually pure, for, “Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled” (Heb. 13:4). According to the Bible, the sexual identity of those who confine their sexual activity to their marriage, or abstain from sexual activity altogether, is that of sexual purity (1 Cor. 7:7-9). “But fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4). Among these fornicators are any and all who practice homosexuality (Rom. 1:26-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-11). One need not waste time searching for his sexual identity. A man is identified as either sexually pure or sexually immoral based upon his actions. Scripture knows nothing of the modern concepts surrounding sexual identity.

2. Sexual identity is a choice. While the world presents sexual identity as something into which a person will grow, the Bible presents sexual identity as a conscious, deliberate choice. The oft repeated warning of Scripture is to, “Flee sexual immorality” (1 Cor. 6:18). Society may

of what had been revealed about creation.

Footnotes

¹ It is believed that the Greek word *abyssos*, may have been derived from the name of Abzu. This has come into English as our word abyss.

² The word *mayim*, translated “waters” can be used to refer to water in its strict sense or to other fluid substances.

8927 Widmer Rd., Lenexa, Kansas 66215 kmpope@worldnet.

be confused about sexual identity, but Christians need not be. “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

3. Those who have chosen the wrong sexual identity need to repent. Sexual immorality is wrong (1 Cor. 6:18). The gospel of Christ calls upon all sinners to repent (Acts 17:30). Let us not forget that no one, not even a homosexual, has been born with an uncontrollable desire to sin (1 Cor. 10:13). And, let us not forget that sinners, even

homosexuals, can repent and come to God. Some of the saints in Corinth did just exactly that (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

CONCLUSION

What shall we say to society’s view of sexual identity? “But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8). Anything confusing about that?

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Preacher Needed

Huachuca City, Arizona: The church of Christ in Huachuca City is in need of a full-time gospel preacher. Huachuca City is located in southeast Arizona only six miles from Sierra Vista which has a population of 40,000. They can only supply partial support so additional support will be needed. The attendance is 25-30 and the congregation is debt free. If interested, please call Sheldon Blair anytime at 520-439-0217 or e-mail sejrblair@juno.com. Also Tom Lorenz at 520-803-1042 evenings or weekend.

Grinnell, Iowa: The congregation at the Grinnell, Iowa church of Christ is currently looking for an experienced evangelist to work with them. Their current evangelist, brother Al Sandlin will be leaving at the end of this year and they need someone that is sound in his knowledge of the Scriptures to fill his shoes. He also must be willing to devote much time to growing this small group of 25-35 souls of varying ages.

We would need you to submit a tape or tapes of your sermons and a phone number where we may contact you. If you will do this, then we may begin the process of interviewing individuals to see if we agree on all the important things that it takes to lead us to the next level and to get us all to the place we desire most, Heaven. After the process is begun, then we will be able to discuss the financial end of things. Please know though that we can only offer partial support so the interested man will have to provide some on his own. Grinnell is a college town and could possibly be a very satisfying town to work and live in. Please contact Patrick Blythe through their website, www.grinnellcoc.com or call his home (641) 793-2989 anytime during the day. If there is no answer, leave me a message and I will get back to you ASAP. Thank you.

Quips & Quotes



Court Rules in Favor of Breakaway Methodists

“Fresno, Calif. — A Fresno congregation that quit the United Methodist Church has been granted ownership of its property under a unanimous state appeals court ruling that overturned a lower court.

“Secular courts usually side with control by denominations when, like the Methodists, they have ‘connectional’ rather than ‘congregational’ governments.

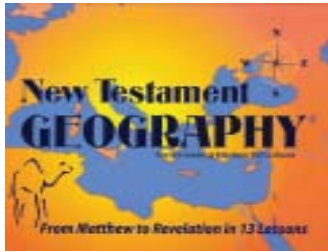
“If the Methodist ruling stands, that could affect an ongoing dispute over three California congregations that left the Episcopal Church last month, largely over the gay issue, and joined the Anglican Church of Uganda.

“The Episcopal congregations in Long Beach, Newport Beach and North Hollywood rejected a demand from the Los Angeles Diocese to surrender their buildings, financial records and membership lists.

“The former United Methodist congregation walked out in 2000 after the California-Nevada Annual Conference took no action against 68 pastors who defied church law and conducted a union service to bless a same-sex couple” (The Indianapolis Star [September 4, 2004], F3).

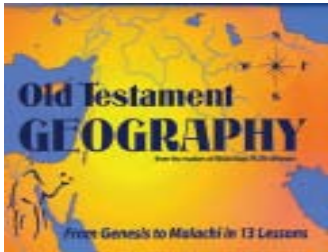
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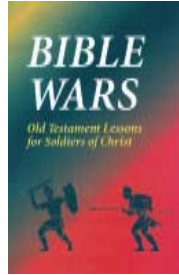
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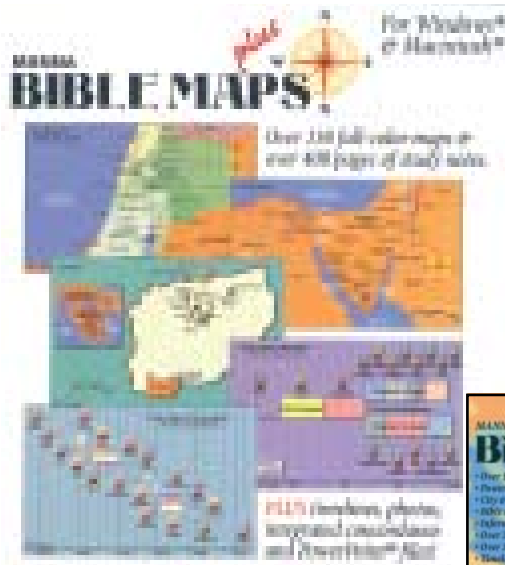
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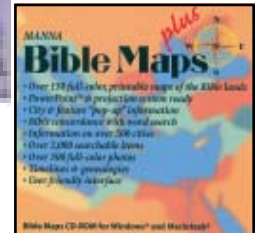


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