

Reaching Out

Issue #80

Welcome to *Reaching Out*, a Christian magazine
to serve the community. Our goal is to offer Biblical
solutions to the problems facing our society today.

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It's Not Fair!

—Clay Zimmerman

Haven't we all heard that statement a lot? Someone fiercely declaring, "It's not fair!" Maybe we have often said it ourselves. Is it always the others who get the breaks? It's always the others who are born rich or win the lottery. Now if that were me!

Is it the others getting the good grades in school? Always our friends getting the good jobs? "I could do that!" It seems our colleagues are the ones who get the raises at work. "Can't the boss see my contributions?" It is the others getting away with things while I am getting tagged for every little thing. I think I am as good as the rest. Guess I just have bad luck. *It's not fair!*

Recently I heard a message at our church that challenged us to look at the statement "It's not fair" in a different light. Instead of always looking up at the "have more than me" people, try looking down to others. Do you consider yourself poor? Almost half the world's population (about 3 billion people) lives on less than \$2.50 per day. Is the amount you live on not fair? Do you have access to good food and

clean water daily? About 27% of all children in developing countries are estimated to be underweight or stunted, while 1.4 million die each year from lack of safe drinking water and adequate sanitation. "It's not fair!" Have you had the opportunity to attend school? Did you know that nearly a billion people entered the twenty-first century unable to read a book or sign their names? Oh, and are you reading this with the help of electric lights? About one-fourth of humanity (1.6 billion) live without electricity. Maybe it's not fair you have so much!

No, life is not fair in some ways. Some have more; some have less. But that makes you and me responsible to thank God for what we do have and to help those who are in need.

The Bible says: "*He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth his eyes shall have many a curse*" (Proverbs 28:27). "*The righteous considereth the cause of the poor: but the wicked regardeth not to know it*" (Proverbs 29:7).

Life may not be "fair," so let's get to work helping others.

*Would you like to receive each issue of
Reaching Out,
or do you know of a friend who might?
Send your requests to the church
represented on your back page.*

Do you care to respond to any of the articles?

Send your thoughts and comments to:

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Reaching Out Published Quarterly

Issue #80, 3-2014

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THE BIBLE AND SCIENCE

—Elvin Stauffer

God Consciousness

“God that made the world . . . hath made of one blood all nations . . . that they should seek the Lord . . . though he be not far from every one of us” (Acts 17:24-27).

Atheists under Russia’s communism and evolutionists in America’s public education system believed that if you could raise a few generations of children free of religious teaching, they would forget God. This belief in a better existence without God was stated by atheists on a billboard outside New York City last Christmas. It proclaimed, “There is no God, just be good for goodness’ sake.” This reference to a Christmas story, however, is claiming something that man has proved he is unable to accomplish. Without the moral compass of the Bible and the restraining force of the Holy Spirit, men and women cannot help themselves. When sin (the violation of God’s law) becomes people’s practice, it never satisfies, but they must do it more and more and in different ways for more excitement. Then like Solomon who tried it all—it is boring (Ecclesiastes 2:1-11). *“Vanity of vanities, all [earthly pleasure] is vanity.”* Human cultures invariably descend into all kinds of wickedness, sin, and bondage and will self-destruct.

The Effort to Eradicate God

In Russia the effort to “rid the world of God and tear Him out of the heavens,” as it is said Lenin blasphemously declared, only produced a remnant of Christians with amazing persistence even to death. Karl Marx, the ideologist behind communism, said, “Religion is the opiate of the people.” It dopes them into subservience! It is true that religion makes people peace-loving and easy to keep in subjection, whether good kings or tyrants are in control. However, Lenin’s bloody revolution by inhumane despots in Russia (estimated 17+ million dead) was a

horrible alternative. Neither did it remove from people the desire for God, but rather enhanced it. With the breakup of the communistic system in the 1990s, the spiritual void caused openness for Bibles, Christian literature, Christian teachers, and churches. False religions also exploited this spiritual vacuum. The evidence is that in the absence of religion, man reaches out for security, direction, destiny, and purpose in life. The state is a vain resource for spiritual help.

In America the persistent effort to eradicate Christian influence has removed prayer from public schools, which is now replaced with shootings, security checks, fear, and locked doors. The Ten Commandments and crosses are removed from public places. “Watchdogs” try to make sure no one prays at ball games or refers to God at commencement exercises.

It is also significant that in recent years many crosses have been put along roads where individuals wanted to memorialize friends who were killed in accidents. People, by nature, turn to God in times of despair.

God Still Speaks to Men’s Hearts

A recent event exposed how futile these efforts have been in removing God consciousness from society. Debates between creationists and evolutionists have been held at times over the years. Secularists have come to oppose such debates because they often expose the unscientific nature of amoeba-to-man evolution (old-time spontaneous generation). As always, falsehoods propagate best in darkness.

In February of this year, however, another public debate was held, which has frustrated

atheists. With their success in sterilizing public schools of religion, one would think that people would not be interested anymore. Instead, there was a world-wide response of historic proportions to the debate.

It is estimated that well over 10 million people watched the debate in homes, and 13,000 groups (churches and schools) live-streamed the 2½ hour event. It was carried to at least 212 countries and territories. People are still talking to each other—believers with unbelievers. Many are considering the Gospel message for the first time and many unbelievers are less sure of themselves.

With the advances in communication, such events are no longer restricted to those who can crowd into auditoriums of cement and brick walls. The debate was the top item on the three main social networks for many hours and was at the top of Yahoo news. People were already talking before the debate as they “chatted” and passed the information from one to the other.

Who Has Answers?

One of the questions brought by the audience to the debaters was: When did consciousness develop from matter? The evolutionist said, “That is a great mystery.” In this he revealed that they don’t really have answers to the spiritual issues of life. But the Christian has God’s revelation in the Bible. We know that life came into human flesh when “*the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul*” (Genesis 2:7). Animal consciousness, a different kind of life (1 Corinthians 15:39), came as the animals were created.

Another question was: “How did the atoms that caused the big bang get there?” Here the Christian has the simple statement: “*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth*” (Genesis 1:1). This statement has never been disproved. This question also exposes the fact that both systems of thought start with nothing (Hebrews 11:3). The Christian has an original cause in God; the evolutionist does not. All ideas of historical science, such as evolution and creation, of necessity must be faith concepts. No one was there except God, and it cannot be experimentally tested today.

The phenomenal interest in this debate on origins underscores the fact that “*God created man in his own image*” (Genesis 1:27). As such,

man has a God-sized void in the center of his being that cannot be filled and come to rest until he makes his peace with his God.

This public discussion of the biblical view of origins is very significant. Secularists in England and America have dominated and largely shut down public discussion of the origin issue. In recent years they have, by and large, refused to debate creationists. Meanwhile they work to pass legislation protecting the teaching of evolution in the public schools. With subtlety, they claim the naturalistic belief system is not a religion. However, it can be shown to be an unscientific faith system with definite moral and social consequences.

Be God-Conscious, Not World-Conscious

The advanced communication and social networks today have made the spread of information—true and false, good and evil— instant, personal, and intimate. Feelings and opinions are freely expressed and often lead to further relationships.

These are aspects of “fellowship” that the Bible says we should not have with the world (Ephesians 5:11). They tend to form people all into one mold despite apparent individuality. For this reason, the wise Christian will not participate in these social activities. Separation from the world is required of the Christian (2 Corinthians 6:17). The consequence of our choices will follow. “*And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partaker of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues* (Revelation 18:4).

Although it is gratifying to see many people talking about God, we must remember that even “*the devils believe and tremble*” (James 2:19). There are many that would press into Heaven’s gate (Matthew 7:22, 23). But there are few that deny their sinful nature, are born again, and live in holiness (Hebrews 12:14). You must be born again to enter the kingdom of heaven (John 3:3).

God is not only real but He is also very accessible and knocking at our hearts’ doors (Revelation 3:20). “*The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart . . . that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved*” (Romans 10:8, 9).



The Christian Home Series

—Marlin Kreider

How to Teach and Train Children

Part 2

Teaching and Training Academically

We begin again with the testimony concerning Jesus as a child found in Luke 2:52: “*And Jesus increased in wisdom.*” The word *increased* as used here simply means “to advance, to grow, to be well along.” This is our desire for every child. We all love to observe a child growing in mental development and understanding.

For this brief article, we will be looking at “wisdom” in the area of academic growth.

Academic makes us think about schools, education, and the acquiring of knowledge. Someone has well said that wisdom is the ability to put knowledge to right and good uses. We also know that the subject of wisdom is much broader than formal schooling and the gaining of knowledge.

The Bible says there are those who “*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools*” (Romans 1:22). So it is possible to know a lot, be well-educated, and yet be a fool. This happens when a person fails to make right, godly conclusions and decisions.

The question is this: How should children be properly taught, trained, and schooled so that they may also grow up to be wise and useful, both to God and humanity? This process begins very early in the child’s development. The foundation must be laid by the parents in the home, prior to formal schooling. Consider a few things parents can do for their children.

1. **Require willing, joyful obedience!**

The Bible says, “*Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right*” (Ephesians 6:1). God has set up the authority structure for the home, church, civil government, and the work place. Only fools despise and disobey to their own hurt. Even when obedience to God’s higher authority brings us into disagreement with delegated authority, there are right ways to respond respectfully. One such Bible example is found in Acts 5:29 when the apostles said to the authorities, “*We ought to obey God rather than men.*”

For teaching and learning to be most effective in the life of a child, the will must first be brought into submission. This is the parent’s job—to establish proper authority in the home. The child who has learned this foundational principle of obedience to authority is well prepared for a life of learning and growing in wisdom. This is one reason we believe children should be in the home until the time comes for formal schooling.

Modern society, with its socialistic bent, champions the removal of the young and tender from the home very early, with day care, nursery, pre-kindergarten, and kindergarten schools. The bottom line is that the world and godless humanism have more influence and control in the life of the child than the parents and a secure home environment. This is one contributing factor to the social and education crisis that threatens to destroy our

society. This is an appeal for responsible parents to rise up and teach their children respect for and obedience to authority.

2. Teach respect and reverence for God.

The Bible says: “*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; and the knowledge of the holy is understanding*” (Proverbs 9:10). To properly understand, teach, and live the principles of authority, one must know and reverence God. He is the supreme authority under whom all delegated authority must function. Human authority that operates apart from the fear of God will in time become corrupt, tyrannical, and abusive. The attempts today to remove all influence of God and His absolute decrees from our world only hasten the day of reckoning and ruin.

Parents can teach and train their children to respect God and his Word by having a regular, daily family altar of Bible reading, discussion, singing, and prayer. Parents also need to be examples of this respect in daily living.

Then there is the Christian church. Every home needs to be in and working with a sound Biblical church. A Biblical church in our day will have a vision for Christian education. They will provide a church-sponsored Christian school. The three-fold cord of church-home-school is not easily broken. (See Ecclesiastes 4:12.) In the absence of a church school, an honest, sacrificial effort to home school can be an option for the godly parent.

Our churches must be spiritually alive, pure, and powerful. Our homes must be Christ-centered with parental love and discipline. Our Christian schools must have a Bible-centered curriculum with God-fearing teachers along with standards that serve as a bulwark against today’s moral decay.

Among God’s people there is a united, collective effort to teach and equip each person through family worship and good home training. The church as a body provides Sunday schools, Bible classes, Christian day schools, and Bible schools. Every family needs a good, Bible-practicing church to blend with in corporate worship and accountability. This will provide wholesome, edifying fellowship and influence. Nowhere is this collective effort more important than in the teaching and training of the rising generation!

3. Teach respect for others.

The Golden Rule in Luke 6:31 teaches us to treat and respect others’ feelings, persons, and

property as we would like them to do to us. We do well to learn early in life that the world does not revolve around me, my, and mine. What does this have to do with academics? Respect for authority, reverence for God, and respect for our fellowman are core values that make the world a better place to live. Our society is already burdened with multitudes who, though they are educated, live self-serving, rebellious, God-ignoring, and irresponsible lives. We need more genuine Christians who, like Jesus, are here not to be served, but to serve and give to God and others. These values are either taught or lost at an early age in the home.

4. Teach personal responsibility.

Blame-shifting, “passing the buck,” is native to fallen human behavior. (See Gen. 3:12, 13.) Modern psychology has only fueled the problem. Children and adults alike can become very skilled at doing this. “It’s not my fault; not my problem; I couldn’t help it; I am this way because of my parents, my environment. . . .” And the list goes on. These are all lame human reasoning and excuses. The truth is, we all make choices and our choices have consequences. Many times the root of our problem lies right in our own heart. Children must be taught and trained to take responsibility for their actions! We all must learn to face our needs and, with God’s help, solve our problems—not shift the blame or take escape routes, such as alcohol and drugs!

This reminds me of a stanza of a poem:

“We are not here to dream, to drift,
We have hard work to do and loads to lift,
Face it, ’tis God’s gift!”

Yes, we must teach our children personal responsibility!

In conclusion, the wise man in Proverbs 4:7 declares: “*Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.*”

With wisdom, academics, and education, we must also emphasize humility. We will address this in more detail in the topic of “character development.” Everything we have and are is a gift from God, so He must receive all the praise and honor. Parents’ pride is often revealed by how they talk about, promote, defend, and dress their children. As we teach and train children academically, let us also exemplify and teach humility. May God help us to teach and instill true godly wisdom in the rising generation!

Feature Article for Youth . . .

What Do You Know?

by Harold Brenneman

You've heard and may have asked this careless question many times, "Well, whadda ya know?" And the likewise careless reply is often, "Not much!" Or, some silly, foolish reply is added to furnish the idle sport of the moment.

Do you know the things you really ought to know? "Whadda ya know" about this old world and what it's coming to? About God's plans for the future? About God's plan for *you*? What do you know about that? "Not much?" The outcome of life is either Heaven or Hell, joy or pain, saint or sinner, God or the devil. Let's think soberly and ask the question the way it ought to be asked: "What do you know about God and His plans for you?"

First, you need to know that God will punish evil, inasmuch as He is holy and righteous, and all evil is a transgression of His will. "*Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. . . . And I will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity; and I will cause the arrogancy of the proud to cease, and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible. I will make a man more precious than fine gold; even a man [more precious] than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the LORD of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger*" (Isaiah 13:9-13).

Second, you need to know that the goodness of God planned a way of escape for all who cease to be His enemies: "*God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early. . . . The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge*" (Psalm 46:1-7).

Now, what do you know about the way to become God's friend? You may say you don't dislike

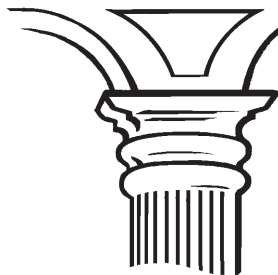
God, you thank Him often, you even go to church and may be a member of a church. But the question is this: Do you love Him? Jesus said, "*If ye love me, keep my commandments.*" Do you know enough of Jesus and His Word to know His commandments? Do you know what kind of Person He is, and that He wants you to be like Him? And do you know that such likeness is impossible without first being humbled, penitent, emptied of sin and self, "loving all, forgiving all, confessing all" in response to the Holy Spirit's work in your heart? Of all this, "What do you know?" And of all that you may know with your head, how much of it do you know by heart experience?

Nothin' much? If that is your answer, you are in a tragic state far worse than if you had terminal cancer. To be "dead in trespasses and sins" is to bear the sentence of death and consignment to Hell and not to know it; and, worse yet, to stand eligible for a free pardon from Almighty God and not to know it. Ah, friend, it's high time to "wise up" and turn from a lighthearted view of life that knows "nothing much" and cares little more. Turn to the things that do matter.

When the "*great and terrible day of the Lord*" comes "*as a thief in the night,*" then you will wish you had awakened out of sleep.

"*Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit*" (Ephesians 5:14-18).

"*Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*" Seek Him. Search His Word, the Bible. Read God's Word. Begin with the Gospel of John or the Book of Romans, which tell us how to be saved. "*Those that seek me early shall find me*" is God's sure promise. Then live in obedience to what He tells you to do.



—Lester Troyer

The Babel Effect

In case you don't know the story, it happened after earth's population had been wiped out by the flood of Noah's day.

The narrative is taken up in the Bible in the Book of Genesis. Chapter ten recounts the tremendous population growth from the three sons of Noah—Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Chapter eleven recounts the eastward spread of the population, with all people maintaining a single language. It was there, on the plain of Shinar, at the site that became Babel, that people hatched a plan. They would build for themselves a city and a tower—its top reaching into the heavens. This likely was an occult center for worshipping the “hosts of heaven.”

This may well have been the commencement of the most ambitious construction project ever undertaken. The ability to make good on this plan must not be underestimated. We need only consider the incredible engineering skills and construction feats of other ancient civilizations such as the Egyptian pyramids and the marvels of Inca/Mayan culture of South and Central America. There is one basic difference. The Egyptians and Incas built with massive, perfectly fitted rock, while the Babel project used bricks of their own making, joined with a bonding agent.

Thus commenced the labor on a city and a tower with a particular goal in its construction. It would forever establish the genius and the might of men to control their own destiny. Noah's ark was built to God's design to save humanity for God. Babel, in contrast, was to be built to save man apart from God. Babel stands for matter as the only source of meaning. In today's terms, they would ensure their well-being and their future in the ability to understand the workings of science and nature. But as Andrew Nelson Lytle pointed out, this is “accepting the shell for the total meaning. His [man's] vanity would lead him into thinking that he could control matter, and hence life—the ultimate folly.”

But the “shell” of nature could not then, and cannot now, be understood through the minds of men, even as a turtle cannot be understood by its shell. When we once had a snapping turtle in our yard, we knew the shell got there via the turtle. Had we imagined a thousand other ways the shell of the turtle made it into our front yard, all would have been wrong. That's the fatal mistake of a generation trying to understand and interact with nature apart from God. The really telling part of this error lies in the fact that the most brilliant scientists, looking into the shell of nature, have only their hundreds of unlikely theories of how it came together, with equally unlikely theories on how to save the planet.

And the outcome of Babel? The project to challenge the heavens didn't get finished. Unknown to them, God was still in control. The God that judged the evil of Noah's day with a flood now spread confusion of tongues and plans throughout the construction site of Babel. Thus, the unity of those aspiring humanists was interrupted. Their plans came to naught, and the Lord scattered them on the face of the earth.

Apparently, short memories of divine judgment combined with the false exaltation of man's devices are always the bane of human existence.

Americans seem to be especially cursed with a tragic loss of memory. We know that at least for the most part, our ancestors and our government once knew that nature and science have their meaning in God. To know this is to know that no king, ruler, or political system is in ultimate control. It is to know that the Most High rules in the kingdoms of men and that nations ought to reflect the truth of God.

Yet even now, in a mad notion of intrinsic power, and a pinnacle position among nations, western civilization is in a frenzy of self-destruction. Freedom and liberty is rapidly being transformed into a

gutter culture. This happens on two fronts. The first comes in the form of personal permissiveness. Without respect for God, people will do as they please. We now live in a nation and culture where necessary parameters are not established and preserved by truth and integrity, but by cumbersome precautions and unreliable security systems. No businesses, retailers, or nations are immune from hackers, thieves, and frauds. The last of moral restraints are rapidly trampled under. To make moral judgments is to be judged as intolerant. Rising generations are not taught that it is always wrong, always harmful, and often fatal, to defy the biblical limits on sexual impulses. The scourge of AIDS, though filling millions of early graves, has been carefully disassociated from its sordid cause.

But the lack of godly cohesion also allows people in key positions to rule and coerce in destructive ways. The departure of righteous precepts will be followed with oppression, intended or not. The net result is human powers playing God over the people. Acceptance of abortion left the value of human life to the individual decisions of expectant mothers and abortion providers, leaving the land defiled with innocent blood. The unforeseen consequence is an aging population and a barely sustainable level of repopulation. Even now, Western Europe is sustained by immigration.

Talk about short memory. A few years ago, marriage was defined and limited to the union of one man to one woman. Known homosexuals could not even serve in the military. Now, “coming out” is considered heroic. We can expect difficult times ahead for those who disagree. But homosexual rhetoric aside, their sterile existence witnesses against them. They are alive only by the gift of opposite sex coupling. Further, the well-being of future generations and the very survival of civilization depends not on them, but on those who marry the opposite sex, bring children into the world, and nurture those children in father/mother context. In all the change of law and court orders, nothing at all about men and woman has actually changed. Homosexuality bears no fruit and contributes nothing to human existence. This, then, is no mere disagreement on the morality of the issue, or even a mere fight against Christian faith. This is a self-devouring fight against biology itself. This empty shell of nature ends up destroying nature.

Let’s wrap this up with a very different Biblical account. The Bible speaks of *the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel [the people of God] ought to do* (1 Chronicles 12:32). They knew the perils of the day. They knew what to do about them.

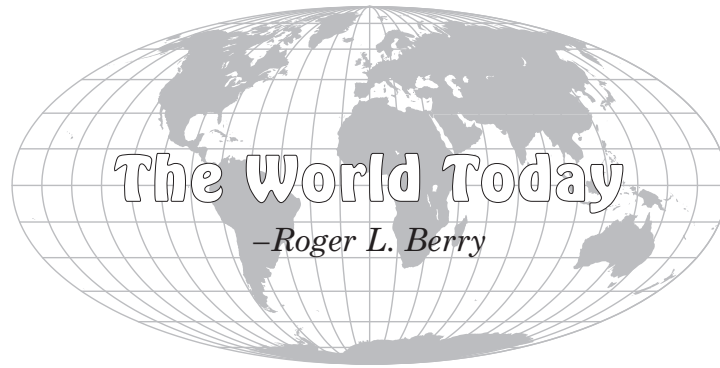
My challenge is to the church. Recent polls show that western Christians are not like the children of Issachar. There is only a scant lifestyle difference between Christians and their unbelieving counterparts. Apparently, the family once noted for praying together no longer finds compelling cause for staying together. Any serious survey of evangelical churches reveals that few take any serious stand against raising up new blended families out of broken marriages. The Bible calls it adultery. And their offspring? It’s hardly surprising that many of the children of these unions have no particular qualms against immorality before marriage.

While there is evangelical concern for selected moral wrongs (such as abortion and homosexuality), the energy that should be directed toward the purity of the church is mostly directed away from the church into politics and government, even while the worldly church is itself unprepared for the judgment of God.

Yet God will not accept us based on our own “Christian” profession. Thus we need to unpack the single factor through which we may be prepared to face the judgment of God. It was preached by John the Baptist in preparing the way for Jesus Christ. Then it was immediately preached again by Jesus Himself. It then became the driving theme for the powerful inroads of the Gospel. It also came as the final word in Scripture to churches struggling to find their way (Revelation, Chapters two and three). It came in a single word statement—“*Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*” (Matthew 4:17).

Repentance is the accurate, sorrowful knowledge of God’s case against our sins. In repentance, we bring those sins to God for forgiveness. Thus does God deliver us *from our sins*. Otherwise the sinner falls under the condemnation of God—eternally.

Sadly this two thousand-year-old message has been greatly tampered with in modern times. The popular goal today is to make Christianity, the love of God, and the character of Jesus Christ attractive to the multitudes. The message of the cross is no longer taught as the costly way of hardship, trial, and persecution of faithful believers. Yet those who will not deny themselves and take up the cross to follow Jesus are not worthy of Him and have no claim of being prepared for the kingdom of God. True repentance recognizes the gulf between the holy and flawless character of God and the just condemnation of sin and sinners. Without repentance and faith in Christ, there is no reasonable expectation of an actual conversion. True conversion unfailingly turns people from the power of darkness and translates them into the kingdom of God’s Son.



The Decline and Fall of Society?

Between 1776 and 1788 Edward Gibbon wrote his famous *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. This six-volume history has been noted for its thorough research and its sometimes controversial conclusions. All ancient empires eventually collapsed. The same has continued to be true of the nations of the world since. Will the powerful countries of the world today be any different?

Among the many reasons Gibbons cited for the fall of the Roman Empire were the following five observations that sound like they could have been written just yesterday.

1. Affluence (a love of show and luxury).
2. A widening gap between the very poor and the very rich.
3. Obsession with the arts such as literature and exotic music.
4. Obsession with sex.
5. An ever-increasing desire to live off the state.

If these were evidences of decline and fall in the Roman Empire, what of our society today? Can a civilization long exist where these obsessions are rampant? What will happen to your life and mine if we are obsessed with these things? The Bible has answers to each of these sins of the twenty-first century.

Affluence

"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Ephesians 4:28). *"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy"* (1 Timothy 6:17).

Affluence contributes to the many other sins. People who are affluent often become possessive of what they have and demanding of other people. They fail to see the needs of others and live only for themselves and their possessions. Violence and even wars have resulted from a spirit of affluence.

Oppression of the Poor

"Jesus said . . . If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor; and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (Matthew 19:21). *"Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard"* (Proverbs 21:13).

People in an affluent society often do not care for the needs of those who are poor. They will ignore the poor and even put down the poor because they cannot reach the same degree of affluence. They imagine that giving generously to the needy will give them less possession to enjoy and so they hoard their wealth to themselves.

Obsession With the Arts

"Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:4). *"I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity"* (Ecclesiastes 2:1).

People with plenty of time on their hands waste time on entertainment and the things that money can buy. Their lives are, in many ways, empty and so their entertainment seems to give them temporary thrills that deaden their consciences.

Obsession With Sex

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart" (Matthew 5:27, 28). *"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints"* (Ephesians 5:3).

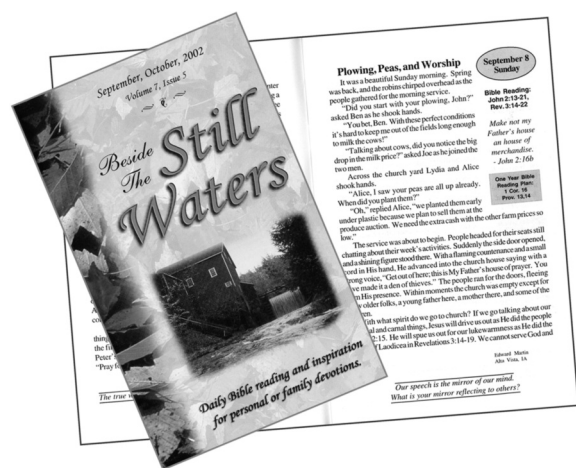
God created man and woman to find fulfillment with each other in marriage. This leads to stability in the community and in the nation. Obsession with sex often leads to disease, broken homes, devastated children, and lack of respect for the personhood of each other.

Desire to Live Off Others

"And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you" (1 Thessalonians 4:11). "This we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord" (Romans 12:11).

If we as Christians would live according to these precepts, the hand of God's judgment could well be delayed on a land ripe for judgment. Even if faithful Christians would not delay God's judgment, they would most certainly make the countries in which they live far better. The faithful Christian has the sure promise of 1 Timothy 4:16: *"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."*

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The Way to God

Come to Jesus for salvation.

"Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:18, 19).

Walk daily with Jesus.

"And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

Walk in obedience to Jesus' commands.

"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (John 15:14).

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8).

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

Be baptized and find a church that lives by the Bible.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:16).

"That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

Live in readiness for Jesus' return.

"Be ye therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not" (Luke 12:40).

"But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer" (1 Peter 4:7).

