

Reaching Out

ISSUE 108

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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Wear that Mask!

by Clay Zimmerman

Well, who of us does not know what a mask is? With the famous virus that has swept the world, the lowly mask itself has become famous/infamous. I don't know if there is a country in the world that did not become mask conscious. First, there were not enough to go around, then manufacturing was ramped up and now there is a plentiful supply. In fact there are now all kinds of designer masks out there to make it "fun" and personal.

Some authorities suggested using a mask, and some enforced it with fines if caught in the public without it. Some people complied, some rejected it, and others saw it as an infringement on their rights. And then, here in America, it even became political. Liberal if you wear it, conservative if you don't! Shall we wear it in the churches? Or should we take it off and praise God in song without it. All this fuss over a little piece of cloth. The lowly mask was simply designed to stop the transfer of germs and has been used in operating rooms for decades.

So does it help the wearer of the mask, to not pick up something from those around us, or is it

more about not passing something on that we might have? Likely both.

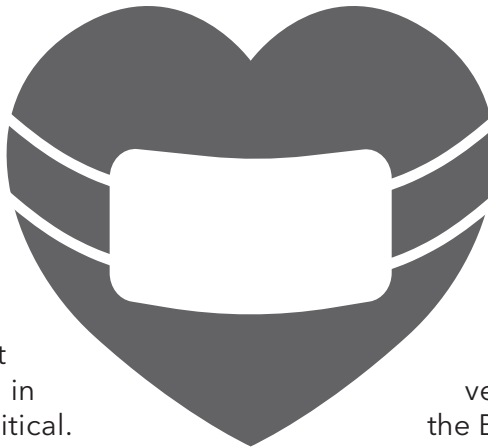
Are there spiritual lessons here?

Mask on our ears: The Bible says we are not to be deceived by wrong words. Is that like wearing a mask on our ears and filtering out wrong ideas? In Ephesians 5:3 through 6 the Bible tells us that fornication, and other sexually unclean things brings the wrath of God on those involved. It specifically says not to let others tell us otherwise.

Mask on our hearts: First John 2:15-16 tells us not to love the world. Filter your affections and don't let them develop in wrong directions. Here the Bible tells us the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life is not of the Father.

Mask on our speech: James 1:26 tells us we need to control our tongues. Our speech is what goes out and affects others. This is a serious subject because it says if we don't control our tongue we are simply deceiving ourselves and our religion is worthless.

Wear that mask!



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Reaching Out

Roger L. Berry, Editor
2256 West Dry River Rd.
Dayton, VA 22821

Reaching Out Published Quarterly Issue 107, 2 2021

Editor: Roger L. Berry

Board: Joe Weirich, Wayne Miller, James Yoder, Clay Zimmerman

Regular Columnists: James Yoder, Elvin Stauffer, Clay Zimmerman, Roger L. Berry

Reviewers: Glenn Kilmer, Lewi Graber

FEATURE ARTICLE FOR YOUTH

Do All Roads Lead to God?

by Harold Brenneman

"All roads that lead to God are good," said the learned Professor in one of our universities. The wise man who wrote Ecclesiastes in the Bible tried about every road "under the sun" of human experience and found them to be *"vanity and vexation of spirit."* People justify their own way and insist that they are worshipping God. But a "god" of man's making is not God.

"We're all going to the same place," is a similar vain saying. And yet, indeed, there is only one awesome way of stating that in truth: We are all going to the same place of judgment which will forever fix our condition, be it heaven--or hell!

Does man's way to heaven reach there? God plainly says in the Bible: *"It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"* (Jeremiah 10:23). God has declared the human race to be blind and walking in darkness. Shall we then agree with the brilliant professor that it hardly matters which road man takes? Shall we accept his inference that man needs no revelation from God, a new life from God, a new direction from God?

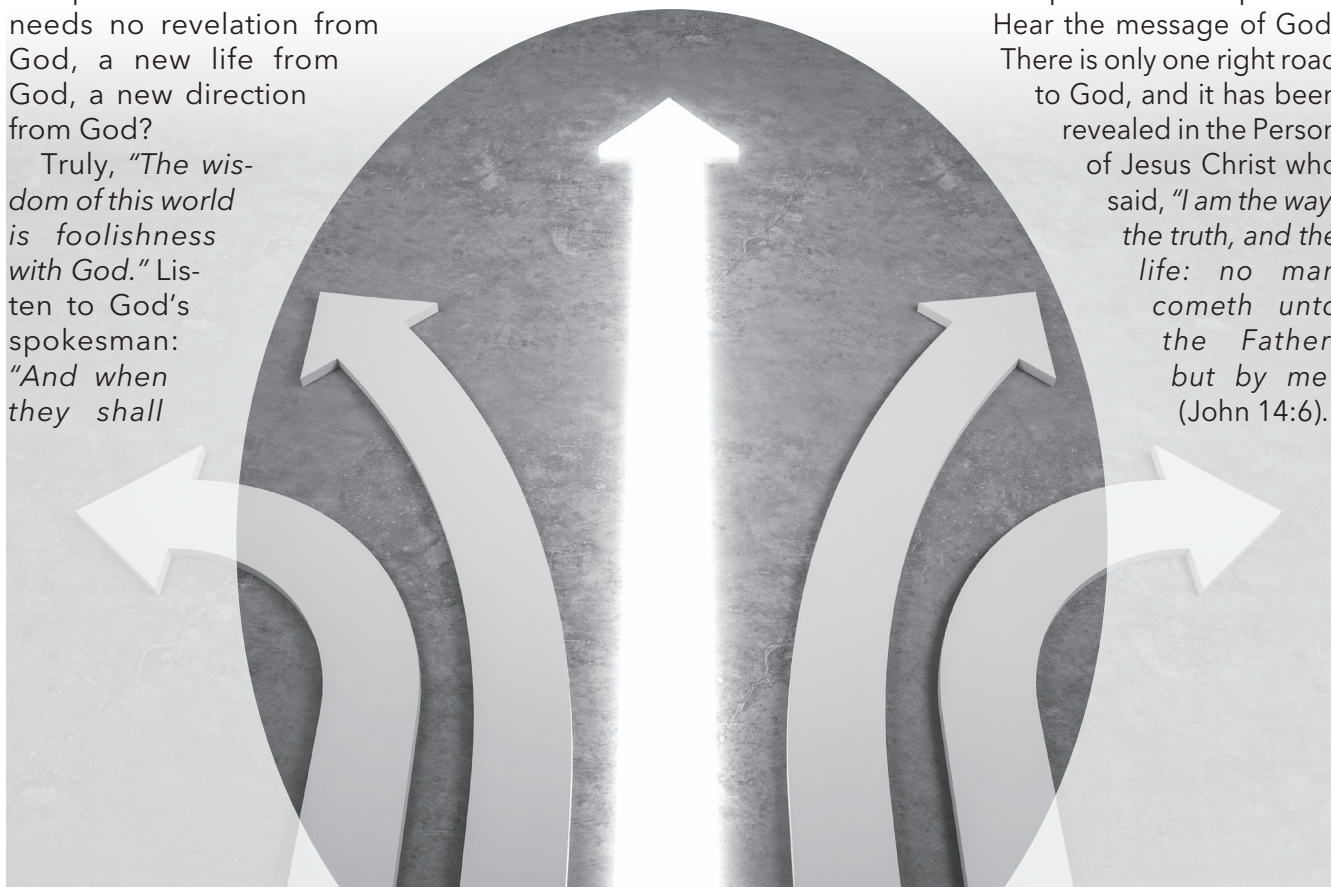
Truly, *"The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God."* Listen to God's spokesman: *"And when they shall*

say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto their God?... To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:19, 20).

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12). *"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it. Beware of false prophets . . ."* (Matthew 7:13-15).

Who has been getting **your** ear--the televangelist, the clever magazine writer, the college professor? Give God a hearing. *"Take heed what ye hear,"* is God's command. Give ear to the Bible. Give ear to the message in the Gospels and the Epistles.

Hear the message of God. There is only one right road to God, and it has been revealed in the Person of Jesus Christ who said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (John 14:6).





THE CHRISTIAN HOME SERIES

Ordered Families in a Chaotic World

by Caleb Martin

When the Lord created the world, He premiered a fascinating theme that would become prominent throughout the rest of history. On day one, Genesis tells us that He created everything “without form and void.” No form. Void. Or, in other words, the world was not finished.

Why? Was God incapable of creating more than a shapeless world on Day One? The rest of the story makes this question laughable. This is the God who would go on to create lights to rule the day and night on Day Four. And, just for majestic flourish, He threw in the stars also. No, God was fully capable of creating the entirety of all we see and know with a word but rather chose to lay out a basic theme for us to consider. The Creator created an orderly universe and world with purpose.

THE FAMILY IS A REFLECTION OF GOD.

We don’t need to read far into Genesis till God says, “Let us make man in our image.” Notice two interesting parts of this phrase. First, consider what it means that man is made in the image of God. This profound concept is at the very root of civilization. This gives human beings special dignity and worth. Secondly, as we read farther into Scripture, the reason that God uses the pronoun “us” becomes clearer. The angel Gabriel told Mary, “Therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). Thirty years later the Son of God, at His Baptism “saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:16, 17). For a moment, each distinct aspect of the Triune Godhead manifested itself simultaneously.

Obviously, drawing direct parallels between the

human family and God is faulty. Humans, though created in the image of God, fall far short of the Being they were created to imitate. However, the principle remains that the three part family—father, mother and child—are created in the beautiful mold of their Loving Creator and as such, should live nobly in their quest for representing Him.

There is, then, a beautiful harmony to be found in a well-functioning home, a harmony inspired by the perfect communion of the Trinity. As each part of the family fulfills its divinely appointed role, the home becomes a miniature heaven on earth. Gentle fathers that humbly and lovingly guard and guide, nurturing mothers that gracefully teach and serve, and joyful children that gratefully learn and grow each complement the other in almost superhuman ways.

HOW DO FAMILIES LEARN TO REFLECT GOD?

We reflect the things we aspire to. Aspiration comes from the thing we admire. We admire that which we love.

How do we learn to love God? This seems so simple. It is, after all, the greatest commandment.

We love those things we invest in. Jesus says, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” There are many ways to teach our hearts to treasure God. Daily time spent personally and as families reading the Bible and praying can seem insignificant and meaningless. “I’ll do it tomorrow,” is an easy excuse that leads many down a road away from God. The few minutes spent reading and praying may actually be insignificant in many ways. True, we may not receive mind-blowing revelations during this time. We may not even find inspiration always. However, this small investment is the first step each day

that helps to turn our heart away from its pursuit for physical pleasure and towards the eternal. Your heart must be trained by your will. The time spent in a church sanctuary has no holy merit. But it does teach your heart which things are important. Giving money to the poor doesn't always add much value to the poor. But it does begin to teach your heart the true value of money.

GOD'S PLAN CREATES AN ORDERED FAMILY

Genesis not only charts the beginning of God's work, it also shows us the cunning destruction of Satan. Satan is still eager to destroy God's beautiful Eden, the family. All parts of the God-ordained structure are under attack.

I'm a father. I'm well aware of the pressures that father's face. That same attraction that took us into the marriage bond, if not controlled, will easily destroy it. The temptations for adultery seemingly only grow but the devastating effects to the family also increase proportionally. Fathers that learn to control their desires often make the difference between a functional and dysfunctional home. And much of this discipline happens in very small ways. Every time fathers create order, the family benefits. Not that long ago, I struggled with many tooth cavities. The answer was really quite simple. If I could bring myself to floss my teeth regularly, I could eliminate much of the problem. Finally I had enough. I took the simple step and flossed my teeth each night. The tooth decay stopped almost instantly. But not only that, my family benefited. Now I had the inspiration to pass on this small routine to my children. And children flourish under routines. Routines create order. And order creates stability. And stability creates happy children.

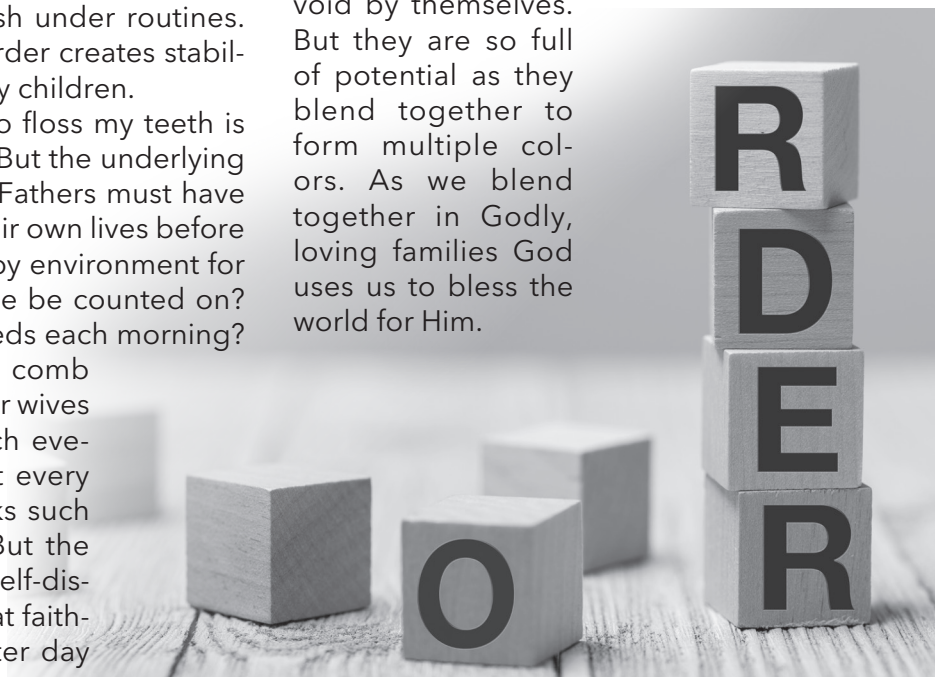
The story of me learning to floss my teeth is so basic that it is almost silly. But the underlying principle is vitally important. Fathers must have the self-discipline to order their own lives before they can create a stable, happy environment for their children. Fathers, can we be counted on? Are we willing to make our beds each morning? Do we dutifully help our son comb his hair each morning? Can our wives count on us to be home each evening by 5:30? Obviously not every father will perform small tasks such as these exactly the same. But the principles of faithfulness and self-discipline must exist. A father that faithfully serves his family day after day

on the micro (small things), will be in a much better position to respond correctly on the macro (most important) level. He will be much more apt to control his temper in a difficult situation or much more likely to turn away from immoral temptations in a weak moment. Faithful fathers reflect their Father God.

Thank God for mothers. Their gentle influence truly sways the fates of nations. Children, like all humans, are much more influenced by the relationships that they develop, than by the concepts they are taught. And mothers are uniquely situated to develop strong bonds with their children. The traits often represented by women; gentleness, nurture, beauty, and love, naturally mesh with the needs of vulnerable children. Fathers should encourage these traits in their wife and protect the home from the ravages of a harsh outside world.

Discipline that comes from the loving heart of a mother or father, is the only effective tool for correcting children. A child very capably discerns a selfish, angry parent. And anger and selfishness only cause resentment and destruction. How many innocent hearts have been broken by evil passions? Far too many. How many children have been gently guided by firm hands and a loving heart? Praise God, at least a few have been.

God, the Master Artist, with painstaking strokes, communicates deep emotion and beauty with only four basic colors: red, blue, yellow, and black. In many ways, those colors are void by themselves. But they are so full of potential as they blend together to form multiple colors. As we blend together in Godly, loving families God uses us to bless the world for Him.





THE BIBLE & SCIENCE

Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

by Elvin Stauffer

"Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Ecclesiastes 7:29).

In the beginning the human race was created perfect, along with the rest of creation.

"God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). Man was created in the image of God and made to live on forever. "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." There was no sickness sorrow or death. God then gave him stewardship over creation with a dominion mandate to rule and keep it.

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth" (Genesis 1:26).

Man's "Dominion Mandate"

Man exercises his "dominion mandate" when he improves varieties of vegetables and fruit trees. He is also filling this role over the animal kingdom when he improves milk production in cattle and egg production in chickens. Man has been experimenting with genetics like Jacob did with selective breeding to get the cattle he wanted (Genesis 30:40). In recent centuries man has greatly improved varieties of fruit, vegetables, and livestock from the original native strains. Gardening magazines advertise high producing varieties and are constantly bringing out more hybrids and improved strains.

All life has multitudes of DNA strings of genes in the nucleus of each cell of its body. From the big blue whale to the lowly earthworm. From the bird to the to the COVID-19 virus. Every living thing! DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) originated when God wrote the original genetic codes for every living organism on creation week—perfect! However, with the fall of man the curse of sin

brought genetic defects into the gene pool.

Because of new knowledge and techniques in science we face new life issues today that we did not in the past. Many have found life extended through procedures such as cell therapy that would have suffered and died without it. Through these procedures many now have life improved and lengthened. These are legitimate uses of the dominion mandate.

Medical scientists continue to advance in the knowledge and manipulation of the basic genetic building blocks of life. Most scientists do not have scruples of conscience about altering or destroying life. They are now working with genetics to eliminate the cause of biological defects in infants and many other issues with plants and animals. Many also see this as a new field of commercial value. Businesses are rushing to use the new information to produce new products. There is nothing to stop it but God. We will be challenged more and more with the ethics of some of these procedures and products.

Editing the Genome

But scientists are also going beyond correcting defects to altering genes that are normal to suit personal preferences. "Designer babies" may have their eye color changed, receive genes of strong athletic achievers, or of a high academic intellect and such like. This is getting into the area that Hitler wanted to tamper with to make a superhuman race.

A recent magazine *article*, explained how a new tool CRISPR/Cas9 is used to edit the genome. This is the long string of DNA information with millions of bits of information for every detail of a body. Scientists are also finding the genetic defects for more and more biologic disorders.

Scientists can point CRISPR at a certain place on the genome and use it as a molecular scissors to cut and disable or repair a defective gene. They acknowledge that it also does some damage to surrounding off target genes. But they say the damage is minor! Who really knows? The big issue is, weather we are correcting effects of the curse (diseases or handicaps), or if we are tampering with God's design which is out of bounds. Scientists who experiment with human embryos and then destroy them are committing murder.

God's Code Book

The Psalmist tells how genetic information is active in bringing substance out of nothing in forming an infant. *"In thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them"* (Psalms 139:16). Books carry information in black marks on white paper. The human genome also carries the code of life which God translates into substance in forming a new body for a new soul. From this "unperfect" (not imperfect v.16) beginning man is an eternal soul that God knows.

This is such an amazing phenomena that the Psalmist David exclaims *"I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works and that my soul knoweth right well"* (v.14). The DNA's intricate detail is described as being "knit together" (or embroidered). It is a twisted double helical coil that has rungs like a ladder. It splits and joins to a half that splits from the partner's DNA. In this way God makes a new creature with possible traits of both parents.

The primitive material of our being is described as "my substance" which was known (*"not hid"*) to God from its beginning. Man has no business dabbling in this area, least of all in a capricious effort to please his whims of curiosity. He does not have the ability or integrity to intrude into these areas and undo the design of God. This has gone far from God's original plan for husband and wife to join as one to raise up a Godly heritage.

A Reprehensible Action

In 2018 a doctor in China took the step to edit genes of human babies. Twin girls were born in which Dr. He Jiankui had used CRISPR to edit normal genes into a mutant form that prevents HIV from entering cells. We see another effort here of man to annul God's judgment on sin—to be immoral without consequences.

But this tampering with the genes in one area has shown in tests to cause multiple negative ef-

fects, causing a weakness to other viral infections and shortens life. This experiment with human life by the doctor and the girl's parents is inexcusable. These "germline edits" are different from previous gene therapy in that the change is encrypted in all their cells. It will be passed on to their children, along with off target effects, and spread out in the human gene pool to future generations with unknown results.

Ever since creation and man's fall Satan has been working to corrupt the human race, created in God's image. This makes one wonder how long God will tarry till He consummates the age. He ended it before when *"all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth"* beyond remedy (Genesis 6:12). Such perverse ways is the reason God implemented the plan of redemption and gave mankind his word in the Bible to live holy and acceptably before Him. But for those who reject God's Saviour Jesus Christ, there is a reckoning day when all men will give account of the deeds done in the body.

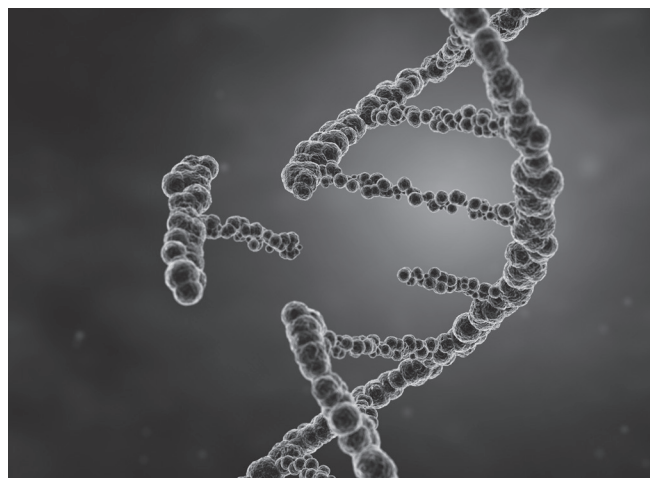
"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14).

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear" (Hebrews 12:28).

Resources:

The Bible, Psalms 139:13-16 Our "substance" is fashioned - *"curiously wrought" (embroidered or knit together)*

Answers Magazine, January, February 2021 - CRISPR : A Clear Cut Issue?"





WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

God's Wisdom

by Isaac D. Martin

Proverbs 1:20-33 gives us a picture of wisdom calling out to us to come and seek her. But many reject wisdom: "They hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD" (Proverbs 1:29). James describes the wisdom that comes from God. "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17). Before that, he speaks of the earthly, sensual, and devilish wisdom of the world. No man is truly wise until Jesus makes him wise. In one sense every true Christian is wise and every sinner is foolish. God's wisdom is available to every Christian that asks. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him" (James 1:5).

God's Wisdom Is First Pure

There is no wisdom in sin—none at all! The farther men move from God and truth, the more wicked they become. This process is described graphically in Romans 1:21-32. People who know about God but do not glorify Him become unthankful for all the gifts that He gives them. They then live by their imaginations, and their foolish heart is darkened. While they profess to be wise, they become fools; and all kinds of impurity follow.

Impurity involves much more than immorality. It is not wise to covet, to hate, to envy, to be proud, to be dishonest, or to love this world and its things. Any of these sins or any other sin pollutes the heart. Every sin calls for repentance. It is only through true repentance and godly sorrow that one is cleansed from his sins.

Satan tells us that it is all right to do what comes naturally, but that is a lie. Usually, it is right to eat when one gets hungry, but obesity usually indicates that one has gone beyond satisfying hunger. It is right to rest when one gets tired, but some rest too much and some do not rest enough if they follow their carnal nature. It is right to feel hurt when injured, but it is sinful to get angry when hurt. We will naturally hate the one who has slandered us, but hatred pollutes the heart.

The wise person understands the battle that rages for his heart and affections. He understands how to turn his mind to God and His Word in temptations. He is wise because he allows God to teach him about purity and rejects anything outside that perimeter. The Christian is wise concerning truth and righteousness, and simple concerning evil. If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives it liberally!

The Wisdom From Above Is Peaceable

What kind of person comes to your mind when you think of someone who is peaceable? Some synonyms are tranquil, placid, amiable, conciliatory, harmonious, calm, and friendly. Some antonyms are hostile, antagonistic, aggressive, warlike, unfriendly, and malicious.

As you consider those two lists, it is not hard to see that one speaks of wisdom and the other of folly. A wise person knows how to avoid a fight. It is not a matter of running away from a bully, but is a matter of knowing how to disarm him. A wise Christian need not outwit his opponent with words, but he shares the love of Christ along with the truth of God about a matter. But you cannot share the love of Christ if you do not have it in your heart!

A wise Christian fights the good fight of faith rather than fighting against flesh and blood. He follows his Captain, who is on the great white horse, as pictured in Revelation 6:2. There the Conqueror is conquering. There is much warlike aggression in religious circles against the evils of our times. These aggressors try to make the peacemaker appear cowardly for not campaigning for good laws and lawmakers. But laws will not keep people from sinning; only Jesus in the heart will. Wise Christians will lead others to Jesus, who can really make a difference. We need to encourage each other to be more diligent in our witnessing.

The wise Christian is peaceable in the brotherhood. Not everything will go the way we think it ought to go, and Satan uses such times to cause us to lose our peace. God's wisdom will have us take time to think matters over and take the way of the peacemaker!

The Wisdom of God Is Gentle

Peaceable and gentle have similar meanings. Both gentleness and peace are in the list of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. Some people like to dramatize the scene of Jesus cleansing the temple and use that to justify human anger, which is altogether unholy! It is not wise to try to justify anger on the basis of how Jesus cleansed the temple.

It is not unusual for situations to arise that would naturally stir us to feelings of anger, but wisdom directs us to stop and consider the real issue. Will getting angry help anything? Would not speaking softly get you further?

Second Corinthians 10:1-9 gives a picture of a man struggling to maintain the meekness and gentleness of Christ in a situation where he was tempted to use sharpness. Wisdom dictates that we use gentle, beseeching manners in confronting needs in others.

Wisdom Is Easily Entreated

You can make an appeal to a wise man, and he will understand what you are trying to say. He may ask questions to be sure that he understands your point of view. He will not argue; he will want to give himself some time to think and consider. If one makes a carnal appeal, a wise man will not become arrogant or combative when he uses truth to support his thinking. Truth usually connects with a man of wisdom.

God's Wisdom Is Full of Mercy

Humans make many judgments about others that are often unmerciful. In the political world, opposing parties throw harsh and unkind judgments at one another. Unmerciful judgments are also made among religious groups. They happen within a brotherhood and in families, and this is not wise.

A wise person considers the mercy of God to him, and it greatly tempers the judgments he makes of others. He extends mercy to others because He is full of mercy! He goes about doing good to others and accepts them as fellow men. He thinks kind thoughts of others, even those who are very different. He is compassionate to sinners. Mercy begins at home and extends to neighbors and strangers, as well as to brethren. Oh, how often we need God's wisdom! Remember, ask God for it. He will give it liberally.

Wisdom Is Full of Good Fruits

The fruit of the Spirit is goodness. Holy Spirit goodness fills the true Christian and makes him do many good things. Jesus went about doing good, and so do those who have Holy Spirit wisdom. It is never wise to be selfish, self-centered, or reclusive. Christians are surrounded by needy people who can benefit from the good deeds of others. The opportunities are not far away, but selfishness can blind us to these opportunities.

Jesus said we will know God's children by their fruit. Fruit is the sum total of our life. Does our fruit

identify us as God's child? Or do people say, "And to think, he calls himself a Christian"? The Holy Spirit makes us fruitful in an observable manner.

God's Wisdom Makes Us Impartial

By nature we are partial. It shows up in many ways. We may be partial to family, nationality, denomination, or background. We condemn partiality when we see it in others, but we are all affected by it to a degree, and that is not wise!

When we follow Jesus, we begin to focus on the souls of men; souls who are sinners like ourselves that need a Saviour. We see culture, family, and nationality for what they are: outward influences that shape the lives of people. Our background does not make us any more lovable than another. We are sinners in need of salvation! Christ and His Word must be the guiding light of our life. We have our own way of looking at life and may be partial to that, but Christ leads us together so that we lay down our own will and become impartial. That is what the wisdom from above does for us!

God's Wisdom Delivers Us From Hypocrisy

One bitter seed resulting from the Fall of Man was hypocrisy—pretending to be something we are not. How often people repeat the story of Joseph's brothers, living a lie! Repentance is an acknowledgment of what we are: sinners in great need of God's grace. True repentance makes us free. We lay everything out—we have nothing to hide. It is pride that makes us think that we are better than we really are. It is hypocrisy that makes us want to appear better than we are. A humble person readily ascribes his goodness to Jesus Christ and not to himself. Childlike openness in an adult is refreshing. Open-faced honesty blesses the life of the wise Christian, the brotherhood, and the community in which he lives.

Hypocrisy is not confined to a certain religious group. It is a human problem that plagues every segment of society. We all have that evil seed in us. If we are not fully surrendered to Christ and living by His wisdom, it may grow and produce its evil fruit.

Conclusion

- Some men may be quite knowledgeable about many things, but only true Christians are wise.
- God gives His wisdom to those who seek it.
- Wisdom is not something you just stumble onto; you must seek it.
- When you have God's wisdom, you will show it by being pure, peaceable, gentle, easily entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.
- We all need God's wisdom, and we can all have it.
- Without God's wisdom we will fail and will bring a reproach on the name of Christ.

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THE WORLD TODAY

The Best Day of Your Life?

by Roger L. Berry

Suppose someone would ask you what has been the best day of your life? What would you answer? Maybe you'd answer, "The day I was born. After all, if I hadn't been born, I wouldn't be here to have any good days." Babies cry when they are born and they cry a lot afterward. It's good we can't remember the day of our birth. We'd probably think that wasn't a very happy day.

People might choose other events as the happiest day of their lives. Maybe the day they started school, the day they got married, the day they got a driver's license. Now they'd be free to go where they wanted to go. Others choose great accomplishments, winning a contest or many other things as the best day of their lives.

Did you know that the Bible says something about the best day of your life? It is mentioned in one of the Bible's wisdom books, the book of Ecclesiastes. Much of this book focuses on the many things the writer, King Solomon, tried to bring satisfaction in his life. The first few chapters of this book tell of the things he tried. He built houses and orchards. He had plenty of silver and gold. He said, *"Whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them. I withheld not my heart from any joy"* (Ecclesiastes 2:10).

He tried many things but apparently did not focus on God. He concluded that these things were but vanity (emptiness, useless). The word "vanity" or "vanities" occurs at least 37 times in this short Old Testament book. The writer speaks often of the uselessness of life "under the sun." That phrase appears at least 29 times in the book and Solomon concluded, *"I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit"* (1:14).

In Chapter 7, verse one, he speaks of the day of one's death. "A good name is better than precious ointment; and the day of death than the day of one's birth." He goes on to speak of other things that can be better: *"Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better."* He also noted that *"it is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools."* Many things can be better than other things, but can we really say that the day of death could be better than the day of birth? By nature we avoid death if at all possible. We don't look forward to the pain and uncertainties associated with it.

Solomon does conclude that it is good to come face to face with sorrow, suffering, and even death sometimes. The only way we can find lasting purpose in life is to consider our relationship with God now and eternally. We can know now what will come after the end of our physical lives. Solomon concluded that it is possible for the end of a thing to be better than the beginning (7:8).

We need to go to the last chapter of the Book of Ecclesiastes to find out how things can turn out well now and after death. *"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them"* (12:1). This is especially addressed to young people perhaps because they so often forget about God and being accountable to Him. But older people who have lived their lives "under the sun" without focusing on God struggle with this too. In a sense we all live here "under the sun" but do we live in light of God's will and in light of the eternity we can experience with God.

Ecclesiastes then concludes with the call, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (12:13, 14).

Every day for the Christian can be better than what our world "under the sun" has to offer. You can actually enjoy life now lived in light of eternity with Jesus Christ.

Will the day of your death be better than the day of your birth? It can be if you live in light of God's will for your life and are ready to meet Him. Come to Him in repentance for sin and in obedience to His will.

Where Am I Going?

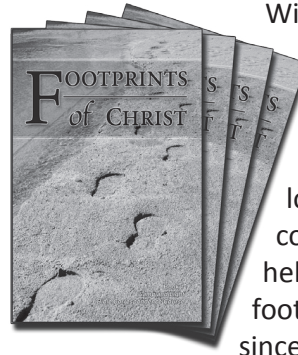
"Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going?" You may not have asked these questions in these words, but you understand the need to know the purpose of life—your life.

Where did I come from? This basic question is not speaking of your nationality, race, place of birth, or your ancestry. Another way of stating the question is, "Why was I born?" You were born because of a relationship between a man and a woman, as the Bible says, "By the will of the flesh." More significantly, you were born for a purpose. The Bible states it this way, "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" (Revelation 4:11). God has created you for His glory and with great potential that He can use.

Why am I here? This question is intertwined with the first one. It speaks of your purpose at this moment in time. Millions find little purpose for living from one day to the next. They face life with little zest or enthusiasm because life seems futile. Another question a hymn writer once asked was "What will you do with Jesus?" With Christ as your Lord and Saviour you have a cause to live and die for. You can live for Him now.

Where am I going? The answer to this question is determined by how you answer the other two questions. If you surrender your life to God and live with purpose for Him, then your destiny is heaven. People who do not have a goal or purpose for living usually end up in despair. Helping

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other people is a worthy purpose for living, but if that is where your goal stops, you will fall short of finding ultimate satisfaction in life. You will not be able to satisfactorily answer the question, "Where am I going?"

The Bible says, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." You need a goal beyond this life. You need to live in light of eternity with God—your own eternity and the eternity of those you influence.

How are you answering these questions about your purpose in life? Are you seeking answers in God's Word and through submission to His Son, Jesus Christ? Your answers will make all the difference in the world and in the next world.

"If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:9, 10).

