

Loaves & Fishes



Issue 25

How to Be a
Genuine Christian

Testimonies
From Prison

Keeping Joy

Joy inside these prison walls?
I never thought I could
Be grateful for this time in here,
And say it's for my good.

But it's my Father's plan,
To use this just that way;
So much has He done
As I seek His holy face.

The world is not my home
And neither is this place;
But I know I can bear it
By God's sufficient grace.

The time that I'm in prison,
However long that be,
Will find me faithful to Him;
His loving Spirit leads,
Even walking right beside me,
Keeps me from whelming grief.

Sorrow cannot weigh me down,
Nor condemnation wear me out;
Loneliness can't bring despair,
As God's Holy Spirit dispels all doubt.

Richard Sanders

We publish *Loaves & Fishes* as the Lord provides. Our goal is to point those in prison to Jesus Christ and help them experience the life, hope, and freedom of a daily walk with Him.

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Loaves & Fishes

Issue 25

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Keeping Joy
Take a Moment

ALERT: THIS COULD BE YOUR LAST ISSUE

If you see "SUBSCRIPTION EXPIRED" on the back cover, use the form in the middle of this book to renew.

This applies only if you get *Loaves & Fishes* with your name on the back.

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How Deep Are Your Roots?

Lavern Gingerich

When we lived in Tennessee, nearby areas would often get hit with tornado damage. Once, when I was helping clean up after a storm, I saw a large oak tree that had fallen over. Instead of the trunk snapping off, the entire root ball had pulled out of the dirt; the trunk was stronger than its roots. Seeing how small the tree's root spread was, it was no surprise that it fell over under the pressure of strong winds.

Like a tree, we also have two parts—the visible trunk and the hidden roots. The trunk, branches, and fruit represent our public reputation. The roots represent our private life. A tree with shallow roots might fall over any time, but a tree with strong roots going deep into the earth is a useful, enduring tree. Just as a broken tree trunk after a tornado reveals a strong root system, so a strong faith

in God, even after deep trials, shows that our spiritual lives are firmly rooted.

How strong are the roots of your Christian life? Is your private life deep enough to support your reputation?

How strong are the roots of your Christian life?

In Matthew 23, Jesus gave the religious leaders (the scribes and Pharisees) heavy warnings and judgments for their hypocrisy, referring to them as whitewashed tombs and poisonous snakes.

Let's take a look at some of the ways Jesus described hypocrisy. These warnings are especially given to leaders, but they are good for all of us to think about.



“Woes to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites...”

1. Hypocrisy in evangelism.

“You shut the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces... you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.” (ESV)

These are very strong words! Jesus condemned the Pharisees for not only missing the Kingdom of God themselves, but also leading others away from God. They worked hard and spent a lot of time, money, and energy to make converts, only to end up with people who were twice as much children of hell as themselves.

2. Hypocrisy in doctrine.

“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘If anyone swears by the

temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’ You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred?” (ESV)

Apparently, the Pharisees had come up with their own system of determining when an oath was binding. Jesus made it clear that their rules did not line up with God’s principles. This was only one way they had extended and redefined the law of Moses by adding rules of their own for people to follow (23:4). In Matthew 15, Jesus criticized them for giving their own traditions so much weight while ignoring God’s commands.

3. Hypocrisy in priorities.

“You tithe the mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness.” (ESV)

Apparently, in their zeal to please God, the Pharisees were busy with small, technical details that were not even requirements of God's law. At the same time, they ignored higher priorities like justice and mercy. Jesus even criticized them for "swallowing a camel" while "straining out a gnat." More than once, this was a point of conflict between the Pharisees and Jesus.

4. Hypocrisy in personal life.

"You clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence." (ESV)

Of course, Jesus was not warning the Pharisees about how they washed their dishes, but about how they maintained their spiritual life. Their public life looked orderly and disciplined, but inside they were full of greed and carnal desires.

"You are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness." (ESV)

What a contrast—beauty on the outside and a rotting corpse inside! The Pharisees appeared zealous for God's laws and were held up as models for others to imitate; but really they were no better than the common people.

5. Hypocrisy in aspirations.

"You build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous." (ESV)

The Pharisees claimed to honor the martyrs of long ago, but Jesus showed them that they were just like those who persecuted God's prophets. Regardless of their godly aspirations, they would treat the prophets just as their forefathers did if they had the chance. Jesus even said, "Go ahead and complete what your ancestors started!"



In conclusion, Jesus asked a very appropriate question, "Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?" (v. 33). We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. It is only by the grace of God that we can escape hell.

When the Pharisees brought the woman caught in adultery, Jesus said, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first" (John 8:7). One by one, the Pharisees left, each convicted of his own sin. When Jesus looked up from writing on the ground with His finger, they were all gone but the woman.

Allow the healing and light of Jesus to transform you,
and you will never have to walk in darkness again.

He kindly asked her, “Where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?”

She said, “No one, Lord.” Jesus replied, “Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more... I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”

This woman could have slipped out with the Pharisees, but she stayed. She chose to be honest about her sin, and she received forgiveness and healing. The Pharisees were confronted with Light, but they left the presence of Jesus. They couldn’t come to grips with their double life.

As a follower of Christ, you must choose to be honest—to stop living a double life, if that’s what you find yourself doing. Jesus is standing by, eager to

extend mercy and healing if you will acknowledge your sin and receive the light that only Jesus can shine into your life.

Be genuine in your aspirations, your personal life, your priorities, your doctrine, and even the influence you have on others around you. Allow the healing and light of Jesus to transform you, and you will never have to walk in darkness again.

Perhaps you are looking forward to getting out of prison soon, and you dream of changes you will make in your life, and things you will accomplish for God and your family. Such a vision is important; but I encourage you to use your time in prison to grow your spiritual roots deeply. That’s the only way you will stand when the winds of life try to uproot your tree. ~





Traits of the Self Life

Following are some of the features and manifestations of the self-life. The Holy Spirit alone can interpret and apply these to your individual case. As you read, examine yourself in the very presence of God. Are you demonstrating the self life? It shows itself as:

A spirit of pride. Do you have an exalted feeling because of your success or position, because of your good training or appearance, or because of your natural gifts and abilities? Do you show an important, independent spirit?

Love of praise. Do you have a secret fondness to be noticed, a love of supremacy? Do you draw attention to yourself in conversation? Does your self swell out when you have had a time to speak or pray in the presence of others?

Stirrings of anger. Are you irritable, and do you cover it over by calling it nervousness or holy indignation? Do you have a touchy spirit, a disposition to resent and

retaliate when disapproved of or contradicted? Do you throw sharp words at others?

Self-will. Do you show a stubborn, unteachable spirit? Do you quarrel with people who disagree with you? Are you harsh, sarcastic, driving, or demanding? Do you come through as unyielding or headstrong? Do you have a disposition to criticize and pick flaws when you are ignored or decisions don't go your way? Do you have a peevish spirit that loves to be coaxed and humored?

Carnal fear. Are you controlled by a man-fearing spirit, that causes you to shrink from duty? Do you reason around your cross? Are you afraid your commitment to righteousness will cause some prominent person to think less of you? Do you compromise principle to please others?

Jealousy. Do you hide a spirit of envy in your heart? Do you harbor an unpleasant sensation in view of the prosperity and suc-

cess of another? When someone is more talented or appreciated than you, are you disposed to speak of his faults rather than his virtues?

Dishonesty. Do you evade or cover the truth? Do you hide or minimize your real faults and attempt to leave a better impression of yourself than is strictly true? Do you show false humility? Do you exaggerate, straining the truth? Do you show one face to one person and quite the opposite to another?

Unbelief. Do you demonstrate a spirit of discouragement in times of pressure and opposition? In your heart, is there a lack of quietness and confidence in God, a lack of settled trust? Do you have a disposition to worry and complain in the midst of pain, poverty, or trials that God allows? Are you overanxious about whether situations will turn out all right?

Religious formality. Are you complacent about the lost? Is your relationship with God characterized by dryness and indifference? Does your life lack spiritual power? Do you regularly meet God?

Selfishness. Do you have a love of ease; a habit of catering to your appetites; a hankering for short-lived pleasure? Do your joys and sorrows revolve around your personal interests? Do you yearn for money and earthly possessions?

■ ■ ■ ■

These are some of the traits that indicate a carnal heart. By prayer, hold your heart open to the searchlight of God until nothing is hidden.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23–24).

The Holy Spirit will enable you, by confession and faith, to bring this self-life to the death. Do not patch over it, but be thorough. Nothing else will avail.

*Oh, to be saved from my self,
dear Lord,
Oh, to be lost in Thee;
Oh, that it might be no more I,
But Christ that lives in me.*

“Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10).

— E. E. Shelhamer, *adapted*
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OPTICAL ILLUSION

*Find the
second
animal in
this picture.*



While optical illusions make for fun conversations when they trick our brains, hypocrisy is a spiritual illusion we all need to take seriously. Is the appearance of godly character in my life real, or is it just an illusion?

Somewhere in Isaiah 48

Unscramble the hidden verse (NKJV).

Blhdeo, l ehva rednife uyo, ubt tno sa lersiv; l heav teedts ouy ni
eth enfaucr of tfcoafniil.

Reference: _____

Can We Do This Every 3 Months?



Our readers would be glad to get a new issue every 3 months, but it's been a stretch financially to maintain that schedule.

If you have the means to help, return this form to learn more about the needs in prison and how you can help us publish *Loaves & Fishes* every quarter.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/St/Zip: _____

Email: _____

(By sharing your email address, you give us permission to follow up via email.)

Word Search Puzzle

Matthew 23:23–24

Find all the words from this Scripture passage in the puzzle below.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

T H E O T H E R S F J A D C F N R E P
C O E H T I A F D N A P M E N O D O X
J U O Y R O F R C X K V Q Y M U Q G J
G T P P E T Y H E V A H T E D E J Q M
N A P O A K G G E D U Z Y N P C X F I
A T T C D P N T P U D C L V A E V V E
T H I R O X V H Y Y R M I A N A I O S
E E O I F D A G G E H C W O N M K Z A
I S A T M R Y E M R P D D D E J R S N
G E X E I S C D T G E N S X R E N R D
A L H S N I N F C A U W J D I M Z B C
A M E Y T A Y B X Z A F G T E F N X U
C E C S I G L P A L C H H B M N W D M
S N U V C I Y J L P J G E H J E U Z M
Y J B P N S W O E A I Q Q G Z G O E I
Y L D D M N W Y S E D I U G H L Y S N
D E C R R L H M W V V A O Y L E O I J
Z M F W N H N L W B Z I B V E C T N M
L A X T I U T E L O Y C W R A T A A J
L C E W H O S T R A I N I Q V E W D M
A A S H D G X A Y C L G T T I D B N A
K N W C N N U C Y M U I H E N K K A T
Y D D F R E A O C R M V O B G E B E T
C H Z H H I D B U J V F U F A V X C E
H O G T A K B D O O H C T I Z L Q P R
P L F X A V G E C P Y F I Z N N C M S
G O F J M V E C S L D E H T I T Y A P



Science in Creation

Solar Eclipse

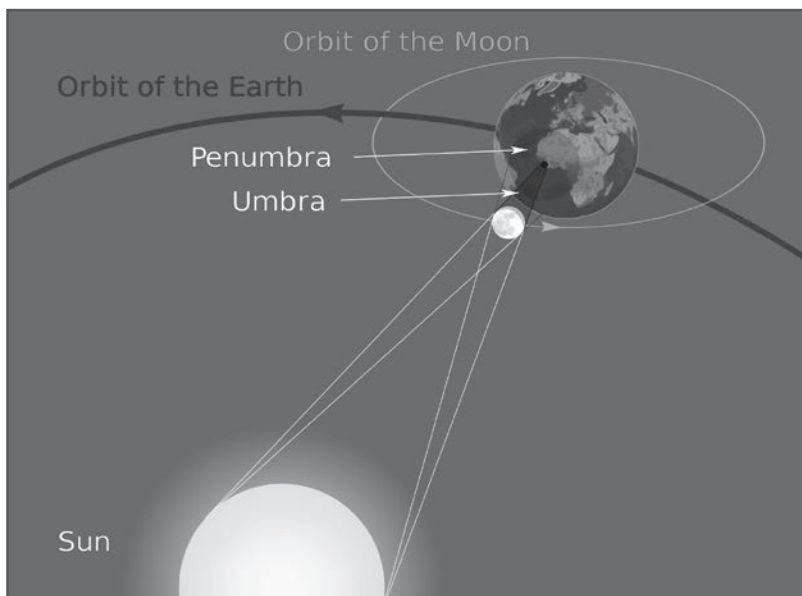
Andrew Zimmerman

The checkpoint at the Mexico border was much busier than usual, that warm day in July of 1991. Thousands of eclipse chasers were streaming south, deep into Mexico, to be in the path of totality, where they could experience a total solar eclipse.

For most of us, the privilege of observing a total solar eclipse is rare. That's because, although they happen on average about every 18 months, the path of totality passes over a relatively narrow strip of the earth's surface. For any particular location on earth, the average time between total solar eclipses is nearly 400 years. The time of totality is usually only 3 or 4 minutes, but it can be as long as 7 minutes. The 1991 solar eclipse

was visible in a narrow band stretching across Hawaii, the Pacific Ocean, Mexico, Central America, and South America. The time of totality was a near record 6 minutes and 53 seconds. There will not be a longer total solar eclipse until June 13, 2132.

Andrew has had an avid interest in science since he started studying it in his early years of school. More recently, he has been blessed by studying the work of creation scientists such as Henry Morris and Ken Ham. Because of his interest in science and his belief in a literal six-day creation, he enjoys telling others about creation science. He lives in Central Pennsylvania with his wife and children.



A total solar eclipse occurs when the moon comes between the earth and the sun, obscuring the sun for observers on earth. It includes a view of the crescent-shaped sun, just like a partial solar eclipse. But the really astounding part is totality, when the sun's disc is completely covered by the moon. The sky appears dark, and stars appear, in the middle of the day! (See illustration.) In the area of the penumbra, a partial eclipse can be observed, with the sun only partially hidden. (See the crescent shapes in the photographs. That is the sun, with the moon partially obscuring it.) The sky doesn't darken enough for stars

to appear. But in the much smaller umbra, the experience is completely different.

Given the rarity of accessible total solar eclipses, and the relatively "close" distance to our home in Pennsylvania (a drive of only 3,000 miles) we had decided to make this trip with our family. It would be the best chance we'd have for a number of years to observe this special display of God's marvelous heavens.

After spending a night in Phoenix, Arizona, we left early on the Monday morning before the eclipse, crossed the Mexican border at Nogales, and traveled south to our friends' house in Los Mochis. The day before the

The edge of totality, raced toward us at 1,000 miles per hour.

eclipse, we drove to Mazatlan, then on to the coast on the morning of the big day. After several delays, we found a spot on a sandy beach with a good view to the west over the Pacific.

With little time remaining before the great event, I quickly set up my tripods and camera gear to record the scene. This was before the days of digital cameras. I was shooting Kodachrome 64 slide film. I wouldn't see the results until the processed slides were returned weeks later. Clouds were threatening, but we had an excellent view of the sun as the moon "bit" into its side and started sliding over it.

Using eye protection, we watched the episode in awe. As our eyes adjusted to the decreased light, there wasn't a noticeable darkening of the landscape at first. But we could see the crescent shape of the sun projected through tiny holes in a thatched roof nearby, creating hundreds of bright crescents on the sand. The sun was glistening on the white caps of the waves as we looked west over the Pacific. It was high in the sky—nearly straight overhead, as we were south of the Tropic of Cancer, just after the summer solstice.

Adjusting the tripods was different, and harder, than during the



test shots of the sun I had made back home in Pennsylvania.

As the crescent of the sun grew thinner, to a sickle shape, and then still thinner, the sky darkened; and the sun's corona began to come into view. Looking toward the west, we could see the glistening whitecaps disappear as the moon's great shadow, the edge of totality, raced across the waves toward us at 1,000 miles per hour. I tore the filter from my camera and began shooting with the unfiltered telephoto lens. I



captured the "diamond ring," the last peek of the sun's bright rays past the edge of the moon.

Then the eclipse was total, for a spectacular 6 minutes and 53 seconds. We gazed in awe at the starry heavens. We could easily pick out the three planets that were visible in close alignment at that time.

The horizon looked like a beautiful sunset or sunrise in all directions. We saw an orange sky, 360 degrees around us, and the starry “night” sky above us. We were in the dark shadow of the moon, looking out toward the sun-lit earth in the distance. The bright disk of the sun was completely obscured by the moon, and the sun’s corona was visible all around it. Made



of hot, colorful gases streaming into space, the corona is always there, but is usually not visible because of the bright furnace of the sun’s glare. Now we could see the colors of pink, blue, and white. Shooting pictures of varying exposure, I captured different parts of the corona, with the black disk of the moon in the middle.

Then, as quickly as it had started, totality was past. The sun again blazed past the edge of the moon, as that great shadow raced eastward across Mexico, Central America, South America, and on to Costa Rica, bringing awe to thousands of more watchers, waiting for their moment of totality. On the coast, clouds obscured the sun, and we didn’t get to see the reversal of the crescent affect as the sun grew larger and larger.

We were thankful for the privilege of witnessing this episode in God’s universe. To God, it’s just a minor detail, but to us, it’s awe-inspiring.

If we had not known this eclipse was coming and made the effort to see it, we wouldn’t have been prepared to enjoy it as we did. In August of 2017 there will be a total solar eclipse visible in the United States. Lord willing, we also want to prepare for that one.

There is another great event coming—an event much greater than a solar eclipse. Unlike a solar eclipse, this event will not be seen by only a few in the path of totality; the Bible says, “every eye will see Him” (Revelation 1:7). Jesus is returning! Are you prepared for that great event? ≈

Mirror, Mirror

Mike Fisher

If you're familiar with Grimm's old fairy tale, "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs," you no doubt remember the wicked queen and her magic mirror.

Every day, the queen would ask the mirror, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?"

This was an honest mirror, telling nothing but the truth. And each day, the magic mirror would reply, "Thou, O Queen, art the fairest of all." Naturally, the queen was pleased.

Everything was fine until the day the queen was shocked to hear the mirror reply, "You, my queen, are fair; it is true. But Snow White is even fairer than you."

The queen flew into a jealous rage and vowed to get rid of Snow White and once again become the fairest person of all.

But how about that little magic mirror? What if there were a "magic" mirror you could look into for an honest assessment of yourself? No doubt you would be pleased if the mirror flattered

you: "You're the smartest person of all—you're always right." Or, "Deep down, you're really a good person. You deserve the best."

But what if the mirror said instead, "You are not a good person. In fact, you are evil to the core. You really don't deserve to live. Not only is your mind messed up, your actions are selfish and wrong as well."

You might react to this description much like the wicked queen in the old tale. Would you fly into a rage? Would you be tempted to smash the mirror? You would probably avoid looking into that mirror again, especially if you had something deep and dark you wanted to keep secret.

Many people don't really want to be honest about themselves. Most of us seem to think well of ourselves, and we try to forget about our own bad traits.

But what if you want to be honest? What if you truly want to know who you are? What if you don't like who you are and want to change?

Any good repairman knows that if you want to correct a problem, you must start by learning how bad it really is. If you want to change your life, you need to find a good mirror.

We can be thankful that there is such a mirror. The Bible says, “Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:21–25).

The word of God is the mirror that will tell you who you really are. If we have the courage to take a deep look into God’s word, we will find out who we really are. And if we keep looking, receiving that word as the truth and putting it into practice, we will experience a great blessing.

The Bible, the writings of the prophets and apostles sent by God, contains this word of God that can save our souls. In the Bible, we see who God is and who we are. We learn how the world came into being and how it will end. The Bible contains the “perfect law of liberty”; its wisdom brings us freedom.

It is the truth.

The truth about ourselves, as we saw before, may not be pretty. This is why many people take a look into the word of God and quickly move on. Nothing changes in their lives. They do



You will find
freedom and peace
when you hear
and obey the
Word of God.

not experience the salvation that is possible for them, and they miss the blessing that could be theirs.

Do you want to know how God sees you? Do you really want to change who you are? If you are coming to the Bible for answers, you are coming to the right place. It is here that you will find reality. You will not like everything you learn here. Get ready for some pain; this is going to hurt.

But it is here, and only here, that you will find healing! You will find freedom and peace when you hear and obey the word of God. You will be blessed. You will experience real change when you embrace the truth of God's word.

Imagine that you had cancer, but you did not know it. Imagine that you went to the doctor for a routine physical, and the doctor's tests revealed an aggressive form of cancer that would kill you if not treated quickly. The treatments would be expensive and be very painful, and the required medications would have negative side effects.

Would you want the doctor to be honest with you?

Of course you would. In fact, once you realized that your life was in the balance, you would want to know every detail. You

would want to know exactly how bad the cancer is, how fast it is spreading, and exactly what you need to do to treat it effectively. You would be willing to undergo painful therapy. You would gladly take the recommended medications and visit the doctor often. You would be open to any advice that might help save your life.

The mirror of the word of God is even more important than a cancer cure, because it is your only chance of finding salvation for your soul. In the Bible, you will learn both the seriousness of your situation, and what to do about it.

Many people begin their day by taking a look in the mirror. Men and women everywhere make sure their hair and clothing are in order before going out in public. We don't want to be embarrassed by something being out of order!

What about checking the word of God frequently to make sure your heart and life are in line with God's will? We might save ourselves much embarrassment and frustration if we always made sure our heart was in the right attitude before God before we started our day.

Something amazing happens when you receive and continue

in the word of God: you begin to assume the character of God himself.

The Bible says, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

When you gaze at the glory of the Lord in his word, transformation occurs! Others will notice the change. You won’t be the

person you used to be. Your life will glow with a new light—the reflection of God’s character.

Make the effort to stay focused on the word of God, and go through the pain of being honest with yourself. Look into the mirror long and hard. Study the words of Jesus Christ; read the story of the works of God, and learn His character. Be filled with the Spirit of the Lord. Live out what you learn, and be blessed! ~



Send Your Work to Loaves & Fishes!

Do you have a testimony, poem, or other inspirational writing to share with the rest of our readers? To improve your chances of being published in *Loaves & Fishes*, please keep the following in mind:

- **If your poetry uses rhyme and rhythm, the rhyme and rhythm should be consistent throughout the poem.**
- **The message of the writing should be clear and focused, not rambling from subject to subject.**
- **The writing should be consistent with the truth of the Bible.**
- **If you write your Christian testimony, it should not focus on your sinful past or your attempts at self-improvement, but on God’s redemptive work in your life.**

We receive far more submissions than we can use. Thoughtful attention to these guidelines will increase your chances of having your work published.

Let's Study...

Matthew



- **Matthew** is the 40th book of the Bible and the 1st book of the New Testament.
- **Author.** The author of the book was Matthew, a first-century Jewish tax collector who became a follower of Jesus, the Son of God. He was one of the twelve disciples, following Jesus wherever he went. That makes the book of Matthew a firsthand account of Jesus' life and teachings.
- **Date.** Scholars believe Matthew wrote his account in the late 50s to early 60s A.D., twenty to thirty years after the death of Jesus.
- **Historical context.** The events of Matthew occurred between the years 4 B.C. and A.D. 33 in the land of Palestine (Israel today). The Roman Empire was in control of Palestine. The Jewish people were ruled locally by a Roman governor, and their land was occupied by Roman soldiers. The Roman Caesar Augustus was emperor at the beginning of this period; he was replaced by Tiberius in A.D. 14. The Jews hated Roman rule and longed for the coming of their Messiah, who was promised by their prophets hundreds and even thousands of years before.
- **Theme.** Matthew was trying to convince his skeptical fellow Jews that Jesus was in fact their long-promised Messiah. He quotes nearly every Old Testament book, and twelve times he shows how Jesus fulfilled specific prophecies. The theme of the book is that Jesus is the King of the Jews.
- **Synopsis.** Matthew records the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, the Christ. The book begins with a genealogical record proving that Jesus was a descendant of the Jewish king David. In detail, Matthew tells the story of Jesus' birth, and of the beginning of his ministry. He records large sections of the teachings of Jesus and describes his ministry and travels throughout

Palestine. He tells of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and concludes with some of Jesus' last words to his disciples before he left Earth.

- **Special characteristics.**

- » Matthew is a distinctly Jewish book, written by a Jew for the Jews.
- » Matthew contains five great speeches of Jesus, including the well-known Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5–7) and the Olivet Discourse (chapters 24–25).
- » Matthew's account is neatly organized. For example, he describes 10 miracles of Jesus, all in chapters 8–9, and 7 parables, all in chapter 13. His background as a tax collector shows itself in his organizational skills and attention to detail.

- **Book outline.**

- I. Jesus' birth and childhood – Matthew 1:1–2:23
- II. Jesus' ministry begins – Matthew 3:1–4:11
- III. Jesus' ministry in Galilee – Matthew 4:12–18:35
- IV. Jesus' ministry in Perea – Matthew 19:1–20:16
- V. Jesus' ministry in Judea – Matthew 20:17–34
- VI. Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem – Matthew 21:1–25:46
- VII. Jesus' suffering and death – Matthew 26:1–27:66
- VIII. Jesus' resurrection – Matthew 28:1–20

- **Key verses.** Matthew 1:22–23: So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us."

- **Key questions.** Keep these questions in mind as you read and think about this book.

- » What strong proofs does Matthew give to convince Jews (and others) that Jesus was in fact the long-promised Messiah (king) they were waiting for?
- » Those who listened to Jesus' teachings were astonished (Matthew 7:28). What teachings of Jesus in the book of Matthew do you find surprising, convicting, or incredible?
- » What does a disciple of Jesus look like today?



Free on the Inside

Prisoners encourage Prisoners

Thanks

Thank you, Lord, for your blessings
That you give me every day;
Thank you, Lord, for your favor
And for showing me the way.

I had to travel some hard roads,
And I questioned—was your love true?
Surrounded by nothing but darkness,
Thank you, Lord, for seeing me through.

Thank you, Lord, for your protection;
You could have taken me years ago.
Thank you, Lord, for walking with me
As with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

I know my ways have not been righteous;
Thank you, Lord, for allowing me to change.
If I keep your commands, I can have
Anything I ask in Jesus' name.

Truly, I thank you for my life;
I learned perseverance comes through tears.
Since I can't turn back the hands of time,
I stand on your promise, "to restore the years."

Kelvin L. Davis, CCI, Vienna, IL

—TESTIMONY— A MISSION IN PRISON

Oliver Guyton, Butte County Jail, Oroville, CA

I have been down for twelve months now. In September of 2013, I rededicated my life to serving Christ. I get out in April 2016, so I set out to serve Jesus Christ starting right here. God put it on my heart to begin a Bible study group, and I struggled with Him for a month over it, but every time I prayed, read the Bible, and talked to people, God was there knocking. I'm like—really, God? I'm an eight-time loser, and I don't know the first thing about Bible study.

But you can only deny God for so long, and so I prayed and talked to the pastor here. I got a Halley's Bible handbook, the

NKJV study bible, an NIV compact concordance, and an NIV compact Nave's Topical Bible. I prayed some more, stepped out onto the tier, and asked anyone and everyone in the pod to come to the Bible study. Wow—God does not play around when we begin to live a Christ-centered lifestyle. We have eight guys in the Bible study, and five young men have come to Christ. Now I'm doing a prayer group for the Lord, too. Our prayers are being answered, and it's so awesome to feel and see the Holy Spirit move in these young men's lives, as well as mine. The fruit of the Spirit is strong.

2 Corinthians 5:12–21 is our mission statement, and God is making us ambassadors for His ministry. I've never known what life really was until now. I have never been so happy and fulfilled. When I go home, I am to be given a position in a ministry as a mentor to very young men. God is so awesome, and I can't wait to see what He has in store for me next.



God is making us ambassadors
for His ministry.



God's Strength in Me

Have mercy upon me, Lord,
For my life is spent with grief—
A soul in constant sighing;
A heart that seeks relief.

My strength repeatedly fails me,
Weakened by iniquity;
Being tempted by the things of this world,
I need God's strength in me.

For I was a reproach to those who knew me,
Be they family or friend—
Consumed in my own journey,
Never looking to the end.

Pleasures in my life numbed my heart,
And didn't let me see
The fact that I was not alone—
It affected friends and family.

Thank God, I was not forgotten,
Like a dead man out of mind;
I've reached for His love and understanding,
Not knowing what I would find.

But I trusted in God's great mercy,
His strength renewing me.
My faith is ever growing,
That, through Him, I finally see.

My times are in his hands;
He will surely deliver me,
That I might regain trust and love,
From friends and family.

Holbert E. Bridgman, East Arkansas Regional Unit, Brickeys, AR



Steady Faith

When our hopes have been crushed
And our faith is running low
And it seems God's on vacation
From all the miracles He's bestowed,
Just keep on trusting Him in faith,
And never waver, never doubt!
For the promises He's given
Will surely come about!

You see, Christians love when life is good,
When they're standing on the mountaintop!
But when they find themselves in the valley,
Then it seems their faith wants to stop.
Now faith is the substance of things hoped for
And the evidence of things not seen.
Just hold on strong when life gets dirty,
And your faith will keep you clean!

Charles Moody Jr.
Kirkland Correctional Institution
Columbia, SC

—TESTIMONY— JESUS SAVES

Yolanda Munoz, Central California Women's Facility, Chowchilla, CA

At one time I was on the road to eternal destruction. I found myself mentally lost, living in Satan's world. I had no regard for myself, let alone others, for many years. I was battling drugs and alcohol abuse, and living with terror in my heart. My abnormal thinking led me to lots of violence, prison, and more crimes. I was released in 2003 after being in and out of the system. I was discharged on parole; now, at 33, I'm back in Chowchilla State Prison—the result of giving way to pride again. If I had continued in the life I was living, I would have died in my sin.

Even while deep in sin, I always desired a better way of life, but I was mentally and physically possessed and spiritually dead.

Now Jesus has saved me and given me a miraculous conversion which I didn't deserve, but which I wanted deep within my heart. I'm free for the first time in my life, even though I'm in prison. I've surrendered myself to God. I praise God that he has given me another life and a new start. He gives me peace, strength, and the ability to accept life as it comes. I know Jesus is real and He has plans for us all!



LOST YEARS

I may never know what it's like
To tuck my son into bed—
To look at him with eyes of blue;
To hear him say, "Dad, I want
to be like you."

I will never get a chance
To see my son grow.
I've made many mistakes;
I'm sure he'll know.

During his childhood,
I won't be there for him to call,
To take him to the playground,
To teach him baseball.

I would have taken him to the lake—
Taught him to comb the lake through
In search of the biggest fish;
To find the right spot and know what to do.

All the great times we would have had!
Aiden, I'm sorry I'm not there for you.
I pray you will live for Jesus;
Any problem you have, He will see you through.



Richard Smith
Hutchinson Correctional Facility, Hutchinson, KS

—TESTIMONY— GOD'S PLAN IN MY ILLNESS

Aerial N. May, Ohio Reformatory for Women, Marysville, OH

I was born with a genetic disease, neurofibromatosis. This disease causes tumors to grow anywhere in the body.

When I was born, the tumors were only in my tongue, chin and throat area. Tumors began to grow in other areas of my body throughout the years. I now have tumors on my lower spine, optic nerve, abdomen, and a malignant tumor on the basal ganglia of my brain.

I have had numerous surgeries to remove the tumors in my tongue, chin and throat area, which required having a tracheotomy and feeding tubes.

When they performed the surgery on my abdominal tumor, they said it was approximately the size of a two-liter bottle. They also removed my spleen, as well as part of my pancreas.

When they diagnosed the malignant brain tumor, I was about fourteen. They told me and my Mom they weren't sure if I'd make it past sixteen due to the size and position of the tumor.

They implanted a Portacath in the right side of my chest, and I began chemotherapy.

When I was about eight or nine, I was invited by Cliff and Betsy Wallace to attend Sunday school and church services at Amity Enterprise Baptist Church in Plain City, Ohio. I began to learn about Christ dying for me and how He was able to heal my illness. I was very faithful in attending services, sharing testimonies, and singing. I was constantly in my Bible and went to White Oak Baptist youth Camp in Gallopolis, Ohio for about six years.

At this time the tumors only affected my tongue and chin. Even as I was faithful in my walk with Christ, the tumors began to spread. When I was diagnosed with the malignant brain tumor, that was the last straw for me. I stopped praying, reading my Bible, and attending church. I began feeling as if God could never love or care about me.

With more and more tumors appearing, I was angry and blamed God for a long time. I couldn't believe He was allowing me to go through all this pain and suffering at such a young age.

Due to all of the pain I was in, the doctors began prescribing numerous narcotic medications. I began to abuse those medications in an attempt to numb myself, not only from the physical pain, but also from the emotional and mental pain.

I began to sleep and abuse my prescription narcotics with random men. One night "Jack" and I were drinking and snorting my pain medications. That night "Jack" overdosed and passed away. I was held responsible for his death and pled guilty of one count of involuntary manslaughter, one count of aggravated trafficking in drugs, and one count of deception to obtain a dangerous drug. I was sentenced to eight years at the Ohio Reformatory for women.

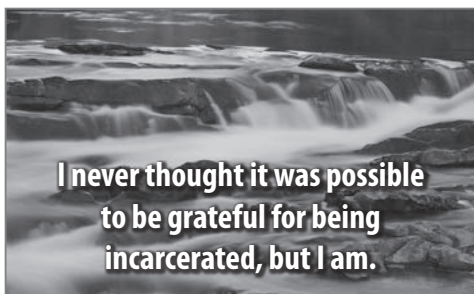
I have been incarcerated since August 14, 2007. At first, I was angry and bitter about the entire situation. I was incredulous that a woman was being held

responsible for the death of "Jack," a 24-year-old young man.

In August of 2008, I was chosen to participate in Epiphany 19. This was the most moving experience I have ever had. The volunteers, who didn't even know us, spent their time, love, and energy to help bring us to a closer relationship with Christ. All of us young ladies who were chosen were assigned an "angel" to guide us through this experience. My "angel" was Dawn. She reminded me so much of my great-grandma June. She was so wonderful. The experience truly helped me to reestablish my relationship with Christ.

Through the experience, I realized that all the things I had been through and will continue to go through were my trials and tribulations. I realized that everything I had been through had a reason, and is an opportunity for me to spread the message of





**I never thought it was possible
to be grateful for being
incarcerated, but I am.**

Christ. I began to understand that God has a purpose for it all.

For a long time I wanted to just give up, but now I have full trust and faith in Christ to guide me in everything I do. I have shared my experience regarding my health, and also my drug

addiction, with many ladies here. My goal is to help others have faith, hope, and strength to keep going.

I trust Christ to guide me in all I do, both here and when I'm released. I never thought it was possible to be grateful

for being incarcerated, but I am.

Jeremiah 29:11–13 is one of my favorite scriptures; it has helped me realize that though I may not understand what God has planned for my illness, I know it's for the good.



Journey of Life

As you start life's road together
And you cross the narrow sands,
There's a King who sits in heaven
Just to guide you through the land.

There will be laughter and sunshine;
There will be sorrow and tears.
There will be promises broken
As you travel through the years.

But put your trust in Jesus;
He will be there by your side,
And as the dark clouds gather,
You will have a place to hide—

Safe in the arms of Jesus.

Donald E. Styck
Johnson State Prison
Wrightsville, GA

Choosing Earthly

All that I have,
All that I've saved,
Means nothing at all,
When I'm laid in the grave.

Collections of coins,
Rare though they be,
Made of silver and gold—
I can't take them with me.

So much value I have,
So much I am worth;
But what good will it be,
When I'm put in the earth?

The day will come
When I'm raised from the grave;
In heaven I will find
No treasures I've saved.

William Billington
Chester Correctional Center
Cheshire, CT



The Acorn

Taken from 1 Corinthians 15:26–58

Art Mayse, DeBerry Special Needs Facility, Nashville, TN



Autumn comes, and a tiny acorn falls to the ground unnoticed. The chilly wind rushes to cover the naked acorn with the fallen autumn leaves. The winter rains descend and turn to snow, covering the acorn with a soft white blanket. Snuggled up like a hibernating bear, the acorn sleeps quietly through the winter.

One morning, the acorn is gently awakened with the cooing of a snow-white dove. Silently it is raised from its cold, dark wintery covering to a fresh life of warm sunshine. Nearby are seen the glorious beauty of a hummingbird, the squirrels, and the colorful butterflies, all rejoicing to the song of an orange-breasted robin.

The warm spring rains come to help lift the acorn's tender limbs, and it begins to praise and worship its one and only Creator and Caregiver—Almighty God.



While seasons come and seasons go
Through wind and rain and falling snow,
Through summer days and summer nights,
The moon and stars still shine so bright.

One day the acorn is looking down
From high above familiar ground;
Unnoticed through the years we see
The acorn is now a great oak tree.

The acorn knows between the trees
Are blooming flowers and honey bees;
From daffodils unto the rose
With some the colors of rainbows.

Each year the world goes round and round
An acorn falls onto the ground... unnoticed.
Lord, help me prepare to be
More like the acorn and the tree.

Amen.



—TESTIMONY— I PRAISE HIM

Joseph Arthur Miles, FCI, Texarkana, TX

In the middle of despair, I lost all hope.

Prayer was a foreign language I could not speak nor comprehend.

Redemption hid itself from my understanding.

Addictions dominated my past and determined my future.

Inside me a black hole sucked up all light, love, and faith.

Suicidal thoughts, means, and devices disabled my days and stole my nights.

Endless cycles of guilt, shame, regret, inadequacy, and depression imprisoned me.

Then heaven intervened through God's grace—love and mercy I finally realized!

I must forgive myself to accept forgiveness from Him!

My remaining days will be a testimony to the life and hope and salvation found in Christ!

The Place

In a dark dreary prison
I learned to be free
When I looked within
I began to see

When I was alone
I met my best friend
I reached my beginning
When I was at my end

Part of me would die
Then I learned to live
Nothing left to get
I learned how to give

I had to stop talking
To learn how to hear
When I was most afraid
I overcame my fears

Sometimes I'm so happy
Other times I weep
I've received all things
But nothing's mine to keep

I sit in perfect silence
Solace from above
All around me, hatred
Deep inside me, Love

Thomas Helm, IMSI, Boise, ID

A Quiet Ordered Life

Denny Kenaston

“The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever. My people will dwell in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.” Isaiah 32:17–18

There is a beautiful flow of thought in this portion of Scripture that probably expresses the goal of every sincere parent: a quiet, orderly home. If you read the verses that precede these, you will find that the state described here will not happen “until the spirit be poured upon us from on high” (Isaiah 32:15). This inviting picture is the fruit of the Spirit. O, that God would pour out His Spirit on our families and transform our homes into “quiet resting places.”

I see a motivating progression of truth in this text. The Spirit is poured out on us, and that produces the right ways of God in our lives. As we walk in

these blessed ways, they produce peace in our lives. This peace is first an inner peace, then a peace that works its way out into our everyday life. This inner peace produces a quiet assurance, which in turn affects our homes. Our homes become stable and secure, havens of order and rest—yes, a little bit of heaven on earth. “Your kingdom come...as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

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Denny Kenaston and his wife, Jackie, were delivered by God from the drugs, drunkenness, and immorality of the hippie culture of the 1970's. Denny's book, *The Pursuit of Godly Seed*, shares the wisdom God has given him during many years of raising a godly family and serving as a pastor. On July 4, 2012, after struggling for several months with brain cancer, Denny finished his race and went to his eternal reward. We pray that this selection from his book will challenge you and change your heart and home.

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I know it is a little hard to imagine this state of quiet and order in our American homes. We tend to live at a very fast pace; some have even cynically called it “the rat race,” alluding to a rat endlessly running on a wheel. Have you ever felt that way? I have. Although the society goes on at an ever-increasing speed, you can turn your home into a haven of rest and refreshment for all who enter there or live there, even if you live in a city. However, you must be willing to take over control of your environment.

This chapter is not a teaching on destructive influences in the home, but I wonder what would happen if we got rid of all the noise makers in a home—the television, the radio, the boom box, the computer games, and even the telephone ringing all the time. Silence has to be more peaceful than noise, even in a secular home. That is not the point of this chapter, but I encourage you to think about how these things affect the spirit of your home.

Consider with me the benefits of an ordered life—benefits for your home and for your children.

Who Is in Charge?

The typical American home is far from orderly. We hardly eat together any more. The members of the family get up at different times, eat at different times, and so on. Home, for



You can turn your home into a haven of rest and refreshment.

many, is simply a place you pass through on the way to the next appointment, and a place to lay your head at night to grab six hours of sleep before the next day’s schedule. Truly, the “rat race” is in charge of such homes.

We have chosen to order our home in a different way. If you want to eliminate the problem of a scattered family, it is best to start when the children are young. I have learned that children do not prosper or feel secure if they do not know what

will happen next. They also do not prosper if they are allowed to be in charge of their own lives. I have found this to be true from very small children all the way through to youth. An ordered life is the most fruitful life.

This ordered life has been an issue of debate lately, and there are extremes on both sides of the spectrum. The debate centers around the little ones; how much order can you expect from them and how soon? I can see why the debate centers on young children, but the principle of order applies all through the child's life. We have always given good healthy structure to the children's lives, with good results.

The bottom line of the whole debate is this: who is in charge? Is the baby or toddler in charge of the mother, with life revolving around the child's needs? Or is the mother in charge, and can she order this baby's life enough that she can carry on other parts of life: the rest of the house, the rest of the children, and her husband? I recognize a small baby has some special needs to deal with, but at the same time, order is needed. I believe the more you can direct the routine of a baby, the less training you will have later. A small baby can

be trained to do much more than you think. It seems to me from my studies that Susanna Wesley knew this, and she had a quiet home that caused others to marvel.

Calm, Quiet Authority

It is very clear that God has placed the children completely under the authority of the parents. This is a place of great prosperity for the child. It also is a place of abundant freedom; all the children have to do is obey their parents, and it will be well with them all their days. I have learned by my own parenting experiences that God works mysteriously behind the scenes to establish this authority. I don't believe parents have to push their weight around to gain this authority. They already have it and need to confidently exercise it. There are several ways this authority is established. Consider a few of them:

- First, because this authority is already given by God, you just need to carry it out. Lead your family in the way they should go. Let me use the example of the policeman. If you were given this responsibility, you would just start being a policeman.

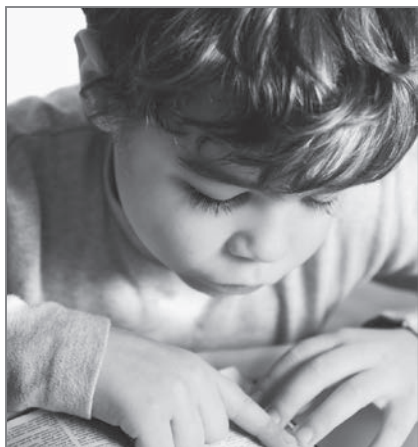
You wouldn't need to shout or wave a gun in the air. You would have a uniform on, and that would be it. You would just need to go carry out your duties. In the same way, God has called each of you to be parents. Now just go do it, confidently and calmly. This will establish your authority more than anything else you can do.

- Second, you need to walk with God. As you walk with the One who has ordained you to be parents, He will establish your authority. He will do this in the same way He did with Joshua when Moses passed off the scene. Authority is a work of God. Trust Him to work in your home as you give direction.
- Third, build a relationship with your children. In this sense, being a parent is different from being a policeman. As you draw close to your children, you will further establish your authority. In a way, you earn the right to be obeyed. This does not apply from the children's perspective; they must obey because of your position. But we as God's representatives in the

home must lead in a way that builds their confidence.

- Fourth, you must be consistent in your directing and in your discipline. Children are very discerning; they discover your true expectations very quickly. Be consistent with anything you want to accomplish, and you will have success. This is where the will of the child will assert itself. If you win here, you win in most other areas of child training.

All this should be done in a cool, calm way. There is no need



Authority is a work of God. Trust Him to work in your home.

to push your weight around, because everything you are doing is well-established by God in His word. Many parents are slow to act on their authority. Then, through neglect, things get out of hand, and they rise up and try to set things in order through strong emotion. For some homes, this scenario is repeated over and over. The children figure out that this is what authority is, and this is how it operates. They soon learn to “live it up” until Mom gets pushed to the point where she “exercises authority.”

This is all wrong—a total distortion of God’s original intent. Moreover, the children are receiving a perverted view of God’s authority through it. If you are caught in this emotional trap, and your children are “playing you” to their advantage, I strongly encourage you to establish godly authority in your home. This is done by taking charge of your home, staying ahead of the children with consistent discipline, and calmly directing them in the ways you want them to go. God has given you a charge, and He has promised you His help. Just start being the one in charge. The children will quickly evaluate the change of order and make the necessary adjustments.

Positive Order or Negative Correction

The clearest expression of this authority is seen when parents take the active, leading role in the home. They are the ones directing the children. Obviously, if God tells the children to obey their parents, then He had in mind that we shall tell them what to do. I know that sounds silly to say; we all know this. But the truth is, many parents are not active in leading the children in the home. Somehow, they think being an authority is making corrections. They just let things go as they will, and then give corrections when the children get out of line.

Let me ask you a question to which you already know the answer. Which of these approaches calls for more corrections? If you guide the children in your home, filling their days with good wholesome activity, you will give very little correction, and you will have a peaceful home. This is God’s way: a calm quiet authority expressed in positive direction most of the time, with occasional correction for disobedience. This is an authority that is in control, guiding the child’s activities in good and right paths. A child who grows up with this kind of

authority learns to give up his will to many positive influences. Dear parents, and especially mothers, this is freedom, blessed freedom, for both the child and the parent. This is a child walking through life guided by loving parents into activities that will profit him all his days.

Imagine trying to run a business the other way, with little guidance and order. Imagine just sending all the workers out to the shop to do “something,” then spending the rest of your day solving problems, correcting mistakes, and answering questions. No, thank you! That business will not last long. It will never make a profit, and the workers will soon quit in frustration. We wouldn’t do that; we know better. A business manager plans the day, assigning different workers to different tasks. The workers are trained so they know what is expected of them, and business gets done.

Some mothers allow their homes to operate much like the dysfunctional business above. Their lives are full of frustrations, and at times they are tempted just to give up. It may not be as extreme as what I described, but many of the same traits are there. Children who are given too much “freedom”



**This is God’s way:
positive direction
most of the time, with
occasional correction
of disobedience.**

get into more trouble, tend to be more discontent, and require many more spankings.

Stop and think about your home for a moment. How is your home ordered? Maybe it would be helpful for you and your spouse to sit together at the end of a day and evaluate. Ask yourselves, “What was the order and atmosphere of the home like today?” I have developed four categories here to help you evaluate. Which one fits the order of your home?

Proactive: acting in advance to deal with expected difficulty. This describes a home in which the parents are actively leading the children into good and right

activities. Planning and forethought are involved.

Reactive: responding based on difficulties that arise. The parents in a home that operates reactively are sincere, wanting the children to go the right way. However, they do a lot of correcting and nagging. The children are allowed lots of “freedom” to make decisions, and then, out of concern, they are corrected when they do wrong.

Inactive: taking a passive attitude toward difficulties. Inactive parents, through ignorance or carelessness, leave the children to themselves. They say, “Children will be children,” and other words that show their uninvolved mode. These parents need a wake-up call from the Lord before they reap the harvest of their apathy.

Explosive: reacting to difficulty in a frustrated, highly emotional way. Such parents have mixed motivations. They tend to be self-centered. They could be foolish, undisciplined Christians, or they could be totally lost. Either way, these parents neglect the children and allow them too much liberty. Then, as the children express their nature, the parents explode in frustration. They use

emotional outbursts, harsh, hateful words, and other such methods to try to bring order in their home.

I am pleading for proactive parenting because it is the most Biblical way to raise a godly generation. Of the options listed, proactive parenting will produce the most peaceful parenting experience. Obviously, you will have the best results if you can begin using this kind of directed order at the beginning of your child’s life; but moving into this proactive mode will improve your home at any stage.

In the following sections, I will apply this proactive approach to infants first, and then make some applications to children at any stage of development.

Start Young

For many parents, it is a totally new thought that one can order the life and schedule of a small child. This is because we are so used to meeting the “urgent needs of a helpless child.” I have emphasized these words on purpose because, while that is how many think of it, what we consider urgent needs may actually be urgent *demands* of a self-centered child. If the “urgent needs” we are trying

to meet are, in fact, urgent demands, then we are training a selfish, demanding child each time we cater to his cries.

A small child can be guided into an ordered life. He does not have to eat every time he cries. He does not have to be held or rocked whenever he cries out for attention. If this is a foreign thought to you, take some time to reflect on it. If we are meeting selfish demands instead of needs, this is not a little thing.

The question is this: Is the child's life to be ordered by careful parent's love or by its own desires? This may surprise you, but a small child can be taught to wait thirty minutes before it is fed. There is nothing wrong with an empty stomach. Nothing bad will happen to the child if he doesn't eat right away. If you treat all hunger as urgent, you train the child to express frustration and even anger if he is not fed right away, at the first whimper of hunger. I feel this is wrong.

Mothers, think what it would be like if your baby could learn to sleep six or seven hours every night. What a difference this would make in your day! There is nothing wrong with an empty stomach. We adults break our fast in the morning after going

about twelve hours without eating. It actually is good for our body functions to get a rest. A few hours without eating will not hurt the child. You will have to work the child up to this, but it can be done more easily than you think. You actually can come up with a predictable routine for the child, which will bring much peace and blessing to your home. Let's look at a list of possible activities mothers have ordered for their child.



Developing a predictable routine for your child will bring much peace and blessing to your home.

The child can learn to eat at given times throughout the day. They can learn to be patient and



Lead your child in the ways of righteousness instead of correcting him into them.

wait until Mom is ready to feed him. The child can learn to take a nap in a peaceful way at certain times in the day. How pleasant to lay your baby down for a nap and have him curl up and go to sleep. And if sleep doesn't come right away, he will lie quietly in the crib.

The child can learn to enjoy quiet time for thirty minutes during the day. We often have let our children listen to the Bible on cassette during this time. The child can learn to have playtime all by himself each day, and even

learn to be content with three or four toys.

The child can learn to sleep through the night. If he wakes up in the night, one word can send him back to sleep. The child can learn to relish special play times with mama, a time when relationships are built. A child thrives on this kind of focused time.

These are just a few examples of good helpful activities that will benefit everyone involved. A child guided in this manner will be content, secure, and very pleasant to have around. The home in which this child lives will be a peaceful habitation. I'm sure every mother reading this would agree that this would be nice. But how do you do it? It can be done; it must be done. This is guiding your child into the right, training him to give up his will to good things, things that he will learn to love and anticipate. Also, add a couple more children to this ordered home, and again, it is easy to see how helpful this would be. It's true that many children make a busy mother, but if some of this order is in place, life goes much better.

Blessed Order at Any Age

Perhaps it is too much for you to grasp to imagine a small

baby fitting into this type of schedule. Okay, then wait until he is four months or six months old. The sooner you implement a life directed by the parents, the better it will be for the child. The longer you wait, the more selfish demands you will have to work through.

Even if you are in the midst of raising a family, it is not too late to implement this principle. Take charge, and begin to guide them into the right way. Order their day for them. Plan out what you want them to do.

I remember sitting down and making a list of good activities for our little ones. I think I had about fifteen different things for a toddler to do while Jackie directed the schooling. With a list, Jackie was never at a loss for direction.

I encourage you to try an ordered life for a week or two, and see if you are not pleased with the results. I do believe there will be less nagging, with fewer corrections and spankings, if you will move in this direction.

Consider also the results of the demand approach to early child care. By putting several examples together, it is easy to see how selfishness can be strengthened in the heart of a child.

- If you feed your child when he cries for it, then the child is learning to get what he wants by crying. If a child is trained this way, and the mother can't get to the child quickly enough, then the child cries louder and more forcefully. This strengthens self-centeredness even more. Many times the child may not need to be fed, but we have patterned ourselves to feed him whenever he cries. I'm sure some colic comes from this overfeeding.
- If the child is picked up and held each time he cries for attention, this also teaches the child to demand attention. Every child would rather be held than made to play or just lie by himself for a time. So the child cries more and gets held more.
- If you develop the pattern of rocking your child to sleep each time he needs to take a nap, then the child will demand that you keep this up, and will let you know by throwing a fit about it.
- Once this pattern is established in the child's mind, the demands will increase as the child grows older. And guess what he will do to ex-

press his new demands? He will cry and sometimes even scream to get his way.

Many parents have innocently allowed this demanding nature to form in their children. As the months go by, the child's will becomes stronger and more demanding. At about eight to ten months, the sincere parents realize there is a need in the child. Because they are not aware of what has happened, they usually think that as the child is getting older, this is normal behavior. So they begin to bring correction and training. I have seen parents start to spank their child over and over because they now see this willful self-centeredness and want to deal with it before it gets out

of hand. Dear parents, there is a better way to do all this. A child this small cannot comprehend all these spankings. You need to put more effort into directing your child, quickly. Lead your child in the ways of righteousness instead of correcting him into them.

Prayer

Father in heaven, we cry out to you for the wisdom to understand something new. Open our understanding that we may see into the real issues with our little ones. I pray for these parents. Give them wisdom. Let your still small voice witness to them as they ponder the chaos of their homes.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.



Somewhere in Proverbs 12

Unscramble the hidden verse (NKJV).

nLgyi ipls ear na aiainnmobot ot the DRLO, btu hseto woh ldae
turhufyltl are siH giedhtl.

Reference: _____

HOW SAM HOLMES LOST HIS PARDON

Samuel Holmes thrust his face between the bars of his cell in Frankfort, Kentucky, and morosely watched his friend Lucien Young walk down the long gray corridor toward him. Samuel was serving time for murder after being convicted by a jury of his peers; but this friend of his, Lucien Young, was a different sort of fellow. From Richmond to Lexington, they called him a hero. Once he had rescued a fellow seaman who had fallen overboard, and more recently, his heroic actions during a shipwreck had won him the honor of the Secretary of the Navy, the Kentucky legislature, and even the US Congress.

Striding down the dismal prison corridor that day to meet his old school friend, Lucien Young had in his pocket one of the most powerful papers any man can sign, that magical document that opens the doors of the prison and lets the offender walk free. In his pocket, neatly folded, was a governor's pardon, and on it was Samuel Holmes' name.

"If anyone else had appealed, Young..." the governor had said. "For your sake, for the sake of your heroism for this state, I'll sign. I'll pardon Samuel Holmes because he's your friend."

But Lucien Young wanted to be sure before he shared the good news with Samuel.

"Sam, old fellow, suppose'n the warden was to come by, stop here like he was afixin' to unlock this barred door, and then, quick as a jackrabbit, swing it back on its hinges. What'd you do?"

Holmes' face was a mask. "I reckon I'd leave. Mighty quick."

"And suppose'n after you'd gone a piece up the corridor, somebody was to shout after you, 'Samuel Holmes, you are a free man?'"

Holmes grunted. "I'd keep on agoin'."

"And then suppose you got out the gate, and the governor came and shook you by the hand and said, 'Samuel Holmes, I do hereby pardon you.'" Lucien Young's eyes glowed. "What do you reckon you'd do first?"



Lucien Young took the governor's pardon and ripped it to shreds.

"I reckon I'd head first for Lancaster."

"Lancaster?"

"And get me a shotgun. And the first thing I'd do, is I'd find me that Judge Owsley and blast him wide open. And then I'd look around fast for that devil that witnessed against me and kill him too."

It was only a short walk from Samuel Holmes' cell to the dirt road that went by the prison. Once he reached it, Lucien Young took the governor's pardon from his pocket and ripped it to shreds that fluttered down into the dirt.

This is the story the Richmond Register published; the story of how a pardoned murderer let freedom slip through his fingers. But there is more to the story than that.

Why did Samuel Holmes lose his pardon?

When he was forgiven, he would not forgive. He admitted no regret. He had a chance at

mercy, and he seized it as his big break to get even. Genuine sorrow? Honest repentance? Samuel Holmes didn't show a trace of it.

The governor granted Samuel the pardon for only one reason: his regard for Samuel's friend. It wasn't Samuel's character, or the way he kept the prison rules, that convinced the governor to sign the pardon papers.

"For your sake," the governor had said as he signed the paper.

And that's exactly why God can forgive us. He forgives us for only one reason: for Christ's sake.

While we're condemned, under the sentence of eternal death, God offers us a pardon, unrequested and undeserved, through His Son's atoning death on the cross.

The Bible puts it compactly and simply into one verse, "even as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32).

Samuel Holmes' friend brought to his cell a complete, unconditional pardon. When the governor took his pen away from the paper, the bargain was made. Lucien Young was ready to declare, "The governor has pardoned you. He told me to tell you." Lucien Young never had it in his mind to say, "The governor

will pardon you, maybe.” The business was settled.

God’s end of the forgiveness bargain is already done. You don’t have to beg for mercy. God already extended it to you, a long time ago.

No matter what you’ve done, what kind of a life you’re leading now, or how well you’ve kept the rules, God has forgiven you unconditionally and completely. That’s the kind of pardoning God we have.

But there is more to Sam Holmes’ story. He was pardoned by the governor, but that pardon did him no good. Why? Because of a stubborn heart that refused to repent.

The divine compassion of God can be thrown away on us. Two people can be reconciled only if they both consent to it. Forgiveness may go out from one heart, but it only brings reconciliation when the other heart receives it.

That is the way it is with us and God. Unless we admit, right down in our deepest heart, that we’ve sinned and need forgiveness, and unless we repent of our rebellion and yield our lives to Him, we throw His forgiveness right back in His face.

In spite of the governor’s pardon, Sam Holmes stayed in



*Reach out your hand to
accept God’s sacrifice.*

prison because he refused to repent.

The Scripture says: “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:17–19).

Sam Holmes was pardoned, but he was trapped in prison by his own stubbornness. What about you? Will you die in your sin, condemned by your own stubbornness? You desperately need God’s forgiveness, and you can have it if you repent of your sin and reach out your hand to accept God’s sacrifice—Jesus Christ, who died on the cross so you could live! ~

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Word Search Puzzle

Titus 2:11–14

Find all the words from this Scripture passage in the puzzle below.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.

A Z A E N E M Y F O E C A R G L B K H K
D N G J V H I M S E L F A C K Y T C X M
N N D F Q I D B Q L A G O D L Y G H I P
G O X O X K L U F L I H B X I N A C A B
O I X R U B U U O D C W O F I N R U L T
D T U T A C O N R A E U O Y Y V Q V V A
Z A T H P H H A G R P R N N Q W E G H P
S V H E P R S S O O S E W O E C V R M P
A L A N E X E U O H D M G B S Y E E C E
V A T T A W R S D R N L E L C C R A F A
I S H Q R Z D E E P H D I E O H Y T U R
O A E T I A P J Z N P T N N D R R V C E
R A W I N T H E Q G T B U A E E I I H D
S E O V G Y L E U V N F R S E S R O S H
F O R U S B R T I A P I G G T P S W U T
T S K L E R R U O F O E H A H H O Z L S
E W S T S U L U Q I J W O C V I A H F U
S X B E T Z Z R D C F Y U P A E L T U G
N I L W Q S S E L W A L S S L E P S S W
C M E O I K D N A D O G J J U E T U F S
D W S R O O T H Y L S U O E T H G I R X
E H S L Y K A A E J O M F T H G I M O O
E O E D L C I S Z G C U Y D B I P S M K
D T D L L Q N N Z H A P S O B E R L Y B
Y W H Y A X E F G B R I N G S I U L L W
J V U D O A S M Y F I R U P I Y I T Y Q
V W P W T P C L O Q B O B N W O S I H G

The background of the entire page is a photograph of a sunset or sunrise over a body of water. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue. Several birds are silhouetted against the sky, flying in various directions. In the foreground, there are tall, thin reeds or grasses, some of which are in focus and others are blurred. The water reflects the colors of the sky.

Take a Moment

Take a moment to be still,
Take a moment to discover God's will;
Take a moment to enjoy the simple things,
Such as the joy a child brings.

Take a moment to sit in the sun,
And realize that life isn't about who has lost or won;
Take a moment to listen to the birds,
And feel God's presence, just meditate on His words.

Take a moment to stand in the rain,
And wash away all your pain;
Take a moment to smell a flower,
And be overwhelmed with the Holy Spirit's power.

Take a moment to hear your Father's voice;
Eternal life or death—it's your choice.
So just take a moment to seek,
And you shall find what you need.

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**“Search me, O God, and know my heart;
try me, and know my anxieties; and see
if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me
in the way everlasting.” Psalms 139:23–24**

