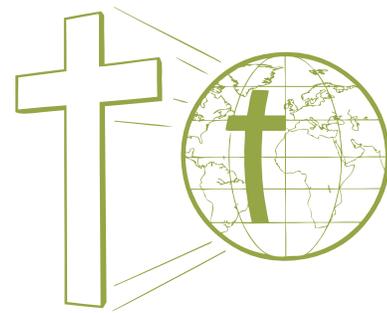


Foundation of Faith



Mother's Day

May 2014

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Editorial

Winter is finally over! How happy we are to see spring waking up nature all around us!

Let's compare the ice-cold winter months to the frigid and hate-filled hearts of the people who despised Jesus, condemned Him to death, and then crucified Him. Yet, Jesus patiently endured their brutality and even prayed for the Roman soldiers who nailed Him to the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34).

With what love did Jesus bear shame and suffering to atone for our sins! And by His resurrection, He stripped death of its power. He brought eternal life and immortality through His glorious gospel. Indeed, it is through this "Dayspring from on high" (Luke 1:78) that mankind is finally awakened from the dormancy of sin.

The Lord is the victorious Prince of Peace. He is the Son of Righteousness, and under His wings are love and mercy for everyone who reaches for Him in faith. He, the King of kings and Lord of lords has gone up to heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. Here, He makes intercession for us and for all mankind. And He does this because He loves us!

His love reaches for and warms our hearts, making life worth living. It is His love that generates love within us. The love of a mother is an example of this. Isaiah writes: "As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; and you shall be comforted in Jerusalem" (Isaiah 66:13).

Dear reader, if you have felt the genuine love of a mother, then thank God for it. Thank your mother for it as well. If you were deprived of a mother's love, then please know that there is One who always loves you, and that is Jesus Christ!

The month of May is when we think especially of our mothers, and we wish them God's grace and richest blessings!

H. D. Nimz

The Family Altar

I often have to think back on a visit I paid to a family. Though it was already late in the evening when I arrived, I was immediately shown to a beautiful room in which I was to sleep. The furnishings were simple, but meticulously cleaned and orderly.

The next morning I got up early and joined the entire family at the breakfast table. Everyone, father, mother, and children—all of whom were still young—bowed their heads while I prayed. After breakfast the father explained: “We established our ‘family altar’ when we gave our hearts to the Lord. We always have our special devotions in the morning. If you have no objections, we will proceed as usual.” I was honored that they were so willing to give me this glimpse into their intimate family life.

The young father then reached for his Bible and told the children: “Please get ready for prayer.” The mother took the smallest child in her arms, sat down, and the other children gathered reverentially around her. The father, with the Bible in his hands, stood up and read a passage of Scripture. Every now and then he would pause to explain a few words to the

intently listening children so they could better understand the text being read. When he finished reading, the entire family knelt down and the father prayed a short, fervent prayer. The mother followed, and then every child that was able to speak. The entire devotional time was only about fifteen minutes but left me with an unforgettable impression.

As I knelt down with them, tears came to my eyes. My heart was filled with gratitude. I could not help but pour out my heart to the Lord. I had to thank Him for the privilege of experiencing such a blessed moment.

I fear that our young mothers and fathers today are too busy to have time for spiritual things. What an encouragement it was for me to find a father who faithfully served as the true spiritual head of his home at the family altar. A country where the fires of the family altar are kept burning brightly is safe. A church that has fathers and mothers like these will grow and prosper.

How important it is for every father and every mother to choose the Lord as the focal point for their family, and to faithfully serve Him each day!



The Oak and the Vine

In the forest there stood a mighty oak tree. Right beside it grew a grapevine whose tendrils encircled the trunk of the oak, and whose green leaves entwined the branches of the tree. Year after year the oak supported the grapevine, and those passing by commented: “What a load the oak must bear with this vine!” One night, there was a powerful storm. A bolt of lightning struck the top branches of the tree, charged through to the bottom, and split the oak. But the tree did not fall. Although it was split and damaged, the tree remained standing and eventually recovered from its wounds and continued living. The vine had held it together in its hour of need! In this crisis the vine was the strong one that carried the weight of the oak tree.

This is a picture of many marriages. The wife clings to her husband and relies on his strength. Her husband believes he is the one supporting her, but there comes a time when he discovers the strength of the vine.

A young man who was tall and remarkably strong married a young woman who was rather petite, had a gentle spirit, and a tendency to rely and depend on others. He considered himself as the oak tree and saw her as the vine. He was proud of his strength and his ability to provide for and protect her. He felt very aware that she needed him for support. But he also believed he was strong enough

to look after himself.

Then came the lightning strike. While the young man was out of town, he suddenly became very ill. His condition was serious, and the attending physician made it very clear that recovery would be a slow, painful process. After regaining a little strength, the young man returned home. It seemed as though his feet could barely carry him to the door of his house. In this frail condition he limped inside like an old man. He was overcome with pain, sickness, and discouragement.

When his wife saw him approaching, she ran towards him. He threw his arms around her as a son would seek comfort in the arms of his mother. He burst into tears and sobbed, “I am home, but I can’t do anything for you!”

“You are here now and that is the main thing,” she said gently, as she led him into the house. She brought him to their most comfortable chair and quickly prepared a hearty meal that would warm him up. After the meal, she hurried to get him comfortable for the night. During this time his eyes were opened to the value of his wife’s faithful support as he relied on her strength like the injured oak depended on the strength of the grapevine. That is how God intended it to be when He said of Adam, “I will make him a helper comparable to him” (Genesis 2:18).



Disappearing in the Clouds

We quickly become used to having a good friend. If we need advice or if help is needed, we don't have to worry because we know we have someone who will help us. The disciples didn't find just a good friend in Jesus Christ but also a teacher, a brother, and Someone who cared for their souls. But nothing assured and comforted them like the knowledge that Jesus was God's Son. They found everything they needed in His companionship. He always had counsel to give. He could always help. They were in good hands with Him.

They certainly would not have thought that the Lord would one day leave them. They were willing to go everywhere with Him and to give up their own lives for Him. The crucifixion and death of the Lord was a bitter disappointment for all of the disciples. The resurrection, however, brought them new hope again. Now the Lord would be with them forever and would never leave them. As the Lord led them up the mountain, spoke with them, and was taken up toward heaven, they could do nothing but watch Him. Perhaps they waited to be taken up to heaven too so that they could be with Him. However, most likely they must have sensed that where their Lord had gone they would not be able to follow Him there in their own strength.

Two men in white clothing appeared to comfort the disciples. How the Lord cares for His children! He doesn't leave them standing hopeless and helpless. God loves His children greatly. He sends angels to help. With the words, "Men of Galilee," the disciples are personally addressed and are brought back to awareness again. A child of God cannot live in a state of reverie. "Watch and pray," and "fight the good fight of faith" are not appeals for daydreaming. Christians can only be sober and vigilant if they serve God with all their hearts and count on Him in all areas of their lives.

Let us be admonished by the greeting, "Men of Galilee." The Lord does not want us to stand idle. He has a task for us. Dear child of God, do not dream of the past. The Lord wants to use you today! He wants to give you an assignment. He will equip you with strength. Are you ready?

In the question of the angels we hear a reproach: "Why do you stand gazing up into heaven?" However, a wonderful promise is spoken next. This is how it is with the Lord. He reproaches when needed, but He does not want to harm us: He wants to help! "This same Jesus will come again!" was a heart-warming promise for the disciples. And what was the result? They returned to Jerusalem with great joy!

This is exactly the outcome the Lord desires for you and me: great joy! However, we have to pay close attention to His promises, found in His Word. His Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (Psalm 119:105). This fact brings us joy and comfort, even in the greatest trouble and darkest time.

The lasting reason for their joy, however, was the assurance that this same Jesus would come again. Now they waited daily for Him. They lived, worked, sacrificed, and suffered with the assurance that the Lord would come soon. In the meantime, they tried to be good stewards of what God had entrusted to them, to win people for the Lord, and to be found as faithful servants. So alive was their anticipation in waiting for Him that the Lord was not far from them: He was in the midst of them even though He was now in glory, even though He now sat on the throne of power. He had been given all authority in heaven and on earth. They were His servants, yes, but He had also called them His brothers.

Even today, the ascension of our Lord remains a powerful force of our faith. In this world, we have fear. In this world, we have to struggle and suffer. What does it mean for us to know that the Lord has all authority?

Let us notice that the text does not say He will be given all authority. Rather, it has been given to Him, which means He has it now. Right now, in that place where you and I stand threatened by fear, Jesus has all authority! This assurance lets us shout for joy! It fills us with an indescribable strength. It means we can overcome any struggle through our Lord and Savior. Who can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus? (Romans 8:35) Jesus has

all power and allows only that to happen which will bring us closer to Him.

Ungodliness is increasing. Evil is on the rampage. Many are turning from the faith and have fallen in love with the world. You and I, however, are waiting for our Lord. We want to serve Him faithfully and work eagerly, for we know that He has ascended and will come again. He is and remains the Victor! The prince of this world, Satan, is already judged and overcome. This assurance continues to help us fight the good fight of faith with renewed courage

and strength.

Dear child of God: are you hard-pressed? Are you plagued by doubt and discouragement? Look up to the Lord! Receive new strength! Remember: He will come and bring with Him our reward! Imagine how our hearts will rejoice when we see the great King in His glory! Let us therefore be faithful. Let us strive to be found worthy on this great and glorious day. Take courage, dear soul: that day is not far away anymore!

Fritz Friedrich (1928-2002)

Christ's Ascension

“He was parted from them and carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:51).

With these few words Luke describes the facts surrounding our Lord's ascension. It is worth noting that Jesus did not ascend to heaven immediately after His resurrection. The risen Savior remained on earth for another forty days. The disciples needed this time to gain assurance of His resurrection through His repeated appearances. They also needed the Lord to further instruct them during this interim time and tell them about the kingdom of God. They began to understand some things they had previously not understood. For the disciples, this was a blessed time of growth in faith and in knowledge.

Even the location from which the ascension occurred is noteworthy. We read: “He led them out as far as Bethany” (Luke 24:51). Bethany was a peaceful place where no urban noise nor the presence of enemies distracted the disciples' thoughts. Here they were to be witnesses of His glorious ascension to heaven.

The Lord was taken up to heaven in the presence of all of His disciples. Rising above them, with hands raised in priestly blessing, He departed from them. With reverence and awe, they watched as He was lifted up into the sky, higher and higher until a cloud took Him from their sight. “He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3). That is where He lives, reigns, and governs in majesty. It is from here that He will return in glory one day.

The Lord's ascension had a great impact on His disciples and left a lasting impression. It was here on the mountain that the apostles “worshiped Him” for the first time (Matthew 28:16-17). As long as He was still with them, even after His resurrection, we do not hear of them bowing down together in prayer before Him. His resurrection in conjunction with His ascension irrevocably confirmed Him as the promised Lord. After they saw Him ascend to heaven, they received this strong conviction to fall down to the ground and worship their glorified Master.

Later on it is stated that the disciples “returned to Jerusalem with great joy” (Luke 24:52). Their joy was the fruit of their faith and the assurance that He indeed was the Lord, and that all of His promises would be fulfilled. They were no longer worried or fearful of whatever the future held: they were safe in the power and grace of Christ, their Lord.

Finally, it is stated that the disciples “were continually in the temple praising and blessing God” (Luke 24:53). They nourished and strengthened the faith that was alive in them through prayer and edification from God's Word. They no longer sought after earthly things, but after that which is above, where Christ is.

For this same reason you and I are called to set our hearts on things above! By following the example of the apostles and the first Christians, we too will not have to fear death, man's final foe, and we will have great joy on the Day of the Son of Man!

A Glorious Hope

Shortly before Christ's suffering and death, He spoke comforting words to His disciples. He knew that the coming events would shake them to the core. They had testified of their faith in the Lord with the words, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68-69). Now His loyal followers were standing before their most difficult test of faith. That is why He told them, "Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me" (John 14:1). He made it clear to them that His difficult journey was necessary in order to prepare a place for them with His Father. During His explanation He gave them the wonderful promise, "I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:3). This statement pointed to the eternal union with Him. However, He first had to die on the cross.

After His resurrection, the Lord once again had times of fellowship with His disciples. One day, He climbed the Mount of Olives with them. As He was giving them special instructions and blessing them, He ascended to heaven in a cloud. Luke reported this event in his Gospel, "And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke 24:52). What had filled them with so much joy? They had received a glorious promise, and for them, heaven had been opened. In the midst of a godless world, they were secure with Christ in God. He was their God and had all authority in heaven and on earth.

Even though Christ was no longer among them, their hearts were filled with the hope of an eternal union with Him. He had clearly told them, "I will come again and receive you to Myself" (John 14:3). They had seen Him ascend to heaven, therefore they knew that heaven was the place where He would someday bring them. In His intercessory prayer they also heard Him pray, "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me

where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me" (John 17:24). This hope gave, and continues to give, children of God the courage and power to endure trials, even the courage to suffer death with joy. They know that these earthly trials are nothing compared to the glory awaiting them in heaven.

Hope has always played an important role in people's lives. The young person enters life full of hope, and is willing to endure obstacles and difficulties in order to achieve a goal. The sick hope for healing and prisoners for freedom, and this hope sustains them. One man of God wrote the following: "Millions of us who were prisoners of war have experienced that life can be sustained purely by hope. Under the harshest conditions we lived for one day: the day of our homecoming. Our life had one purpose: to see home once again. We had one topic of conversation: life in our homeland. Our entire life was motivated by the hope and will to return home. As long as this hope was alive, a prisoner was capable of unprecedented performance and could endure much hardship. If this hope faded, he would have collapsed like a pocket knife. Good news from home would lift him up again and give him new hope, new courage to live, and new strength. Through this, he was given new life with living hope. Anyone who has experienced this immense, preserving, propelling, and transforming power of hope as a prisoner of war, has a sense of the living hope within the first Christians. Imagine the power of Christianity today if this hope was as alive now as it was then! If Christians flew toward their heavenly goal on the wings of hope! If they were driven by the desire for an imperishable prize and moved by the longing to attain it! The truth remains: true Christianity is a life of hope."

Dear reader, do you possess this hope of heaven, which cannot be put to shame? Come to Jesus. He offers it to you!

Gustav Sonnenberg

Jesus Is Coming Again

Jesus Christ will be coming again. He told His disciples, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:3). After the ascension of the Lord Jesus, an angel told the stunned disciples, who were looking up toward heaven: “Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

Christ’s return will be remarkably different than His first coming to earth. Then, He came as a little baby in a Bethlehem manger. He came in poverty and lowliness. He came to give His life as the Lamb of God and to carry the sins of the world. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. He was despised, rejected, and eventually crucified between two criminals.

When He comes again, Jesus will come with great power and glory as the Son of God. He will come as a Judge sitting on a throne, and before Him every knee will bow. Some believe in a future millennial reign of Christ; we, however, believe that the reign of Christ, about which we read in the Bible, is already occurring. Christ reigns in the hearts and lives of the redeemed, and His second coming will usher in the end of world.

Jesus told the Pharisees that His kingdom exists within the hearts of people (Luke 17:21 and John 18:36). Jesus also clearly taught that He was already reigning in His kingdom while He was on earth: “The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it” (Luke 16:16).

From the time when Jesus ministered on earth until this very day, people have been pressing into the kingdom of God. They enter in through genuine repentance and a living faith in Christ. People will continue to press into it until the end of time, until the time of Jesus’ return. Then

the time of grace will be over.

We want to look at a few of the biblical teachings regarding Christ’s return for judgment. He will come suddenly, without a special announcement of His return. Jesus makes it very clear that no man knows the time or the hour of His coming (Mark 13:32). Many people have announced a specific time for Christ’s return. This is unbiblical, for Scripture tells us that it is impossible for us to know the exact time of His return. Christ’s second coming will be completely unexpected (Matthew 24:44). It will happen so suddenly that it is compared to a flash of lightning. Since we know neither the time nor the hour of His return, the Word of God exhorts us to be ready (Mark 13:33).

Some speak of Christ’s return as a delayed event. I do not believe that this great event will come late. It will occur at the exact moment that has been determined by God, the Father. When the time was fulfilled, God led the children of Israel out of Egypt. At another time, He led the nation of Israel into Canaan. In the fullness of time, Christ was born of the virgin Mary. God always knew exactly what He was doing. He does everything in His time. Christ will also return at His Father’s appointed time.

When Jesus returns, everyone will see Him. Then, even those who crucified Him will see Him (Revelation 1:7). All who were present at the Lord Jesus’ crucifixion have long since died and been buried. In order to see the Lord Jesus Christ at His return, they will have to be resurrected, as we read in Acts 24:15.

In John 5:28 and 29 we read of this resurrection. All who have died will be resurrected. When Christ returns, every eye will see Him. I cannot explain how all the millions of people who lived then and those who are still alive will see Him the moment He returns. However, He said that when He comes again, everyone will see Him and I trust in His power.

Do Not Fret

Sometimes it doesn't take much for us to lose our emotional balance, or for our feelings to be negatively influenced. We've noticed in those times how quickly we can create all kinds of problems for ourselves. The Word of God teaches us how to live a happy, contented life.

To fret means to chafe, be irritated, be uneasy, be troubled and bothered. It is just the opposite of peaceful, trustful rest. Jesus has promised us rest for our souls, and we may have this rest. We cannot have it, however, if we give place to worrying and fretting. God's purpose for us is that we should have calmness and soul-quietness, even in the midst of tribulation. He has said, "My peace I give unto you." He followed this by saying, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be fearful" (John 14:27 ASV). It is not God's will for us to be continually worrying. This world is full of things that are not as they ought to be. If we are to be happy and peaceful we must adjust ourselves to circumstances and learn to be happy in spite of the things that are displeasing to us. We will never encounter perfectly ideal conditions in this world.

Fretting is like sand in a bearing; it is likely to make all sorts of trouble. It will use up the energy that we ought to be using for something else; it will keep our physical and spiritual nerves on edge; it will spoil the tranquility of our lives; it will mar our peace and take the sweetness out of our devotions.

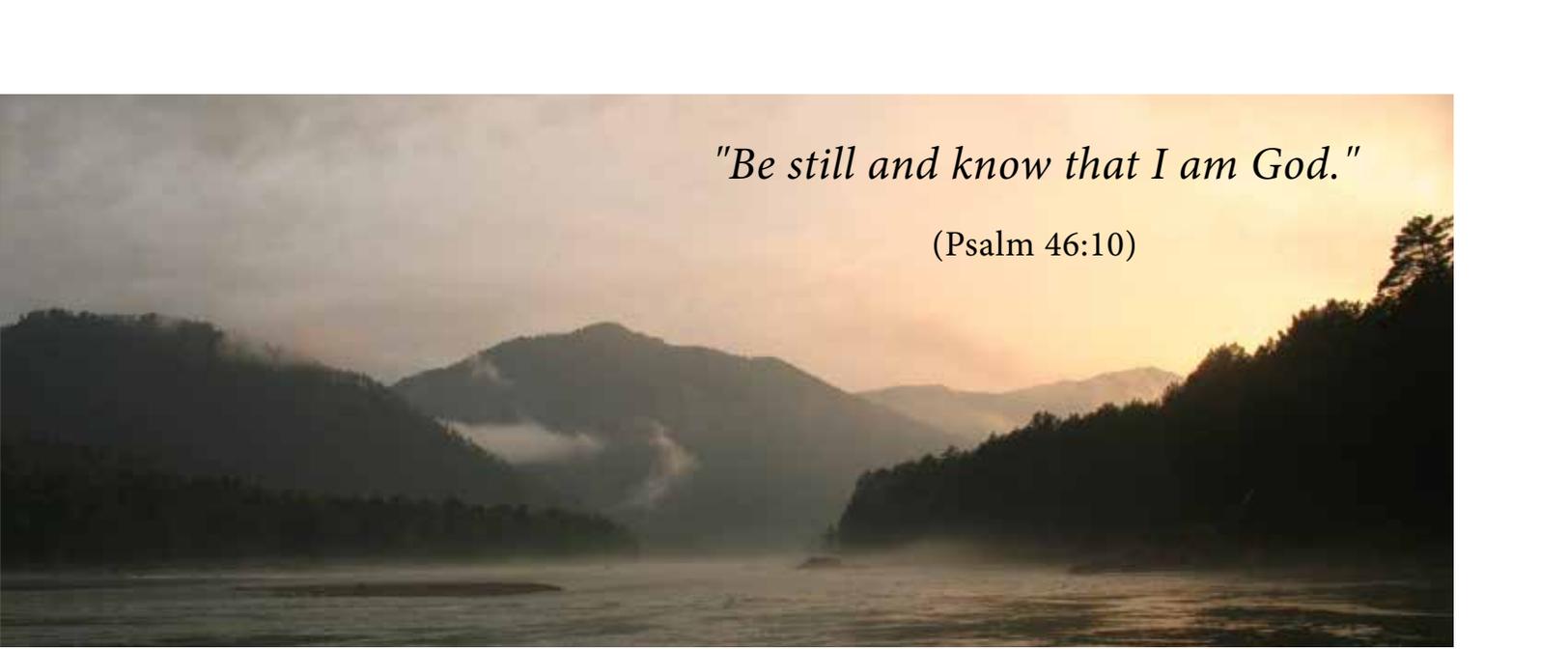
Some people are always worrying about the wrongdoings of others. They fret and grieve, and cannot remove that subject from their minds or the burden from their hearts. The Bible says, "Do not fret because of evildoers" (Psalm 37:1.) Many people choose to do wrong; they do wrong to themselves and to others, including God's people. Of course, we cannot rejoice over this, but we should not let it spoil our own lives. We should not fret about it. We should have a proper concern for the welfare of their souls, so that we earnestly pray for them and do all in our power to help them to do better, but this

is very different from being fretful, from worrying and bothering ourselves continually. If we keep our eyes on the wickedness of others and continually grieve over it, we will have no time to be joyful ourselves, and we will have no time to live our life with God. The Psalmist further states, "Do not fret because of him who prospers in the way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass" (Psalm 37:7). What all of us need to learn is to let God bear His own responsibilities. He tells us what to do in the first part of the verse: "Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him." If evildoers prosper, if they seem even more prosperous than the righteous, if they seem to get along without trouble, we should not be bothered over that. That is God's business.

We see a great many evil things going on, and we would like to stop them. They grieve us in spirit, and this is natural. But we should not fret over them. There is a vast difference between godly concern and human worry, and we need to learn this difference clearly. To be concerned about such things, and to pray earnestly for God to overcome them and put a stop to them is all very well; but when it comes to fretting over them and worrying and being bothered, this is quite another thing. We should never let these things mar the peace of our souls. God means for us to have peace and be thankful right here in the midst of all this wickedness.

God tells us why we should not fret: "Do not fret—it only causes harm" (verse 8). Fretfulness has a tendency to make us doubt God and His wisdom: how natural for us to think that if we had the power that He has we would put a stop to such things. Fretfulness has a tendency to make us complain and to be dissatisfied. It is likely to





"Be still and know that I am God."

(Psalm 46:10)

discourage us, and when we are discouraged, we are likely to complain about the way things appear to be going. Fretfulness is almost certain to take the sweetness out of our hearts and out of our communion with God. It will lead to a loss of spirituality. It will rob us of spiritual tone.

When we are fretting we may think that we are doing the best we can, but we are not. We may think that we cannot help fretting, but we can. There is a way in which we may possess control of ourselves and cast the burden of the responsibility upon God, and if we do, He will bear it. We have to decide that we will be happy no matter what happens, no matter what the conduct of others may be, no matter what obstacles they place in our way, no matter what burdens they may throw upon us. We will be happy anyway, because God has willed that we should be happy. If we see things going wrong we should take the burden to the Lord, saying: "Lord, You must bear the responsibility of these things. My shoulders were not made to bear these burdens. They are Yours. I give them over to You. If anything is to be accomplished, You must do it." Then we must take our hands off. We must let the thing go, treat it as something that is none of our business, and let God handle the situation.

The Psalmist says further: "Nor be envious against the workers of iniquity." It is so easy to look upon those who are rich and are not using their money for God, and think, "I wish I had their money; how much good I might do with it!" Or perhaps when we see talented people of the world, we might say, "Oh, if I had the ability they have, I would use it for the Lord!" God does not want us to do this, to envy them, their riches or talents. It is all right for us to wish that we had more money or

greater talents to use for the Lord, but it is not right to be envious of others. Even wishing that we had more is a waste of time. The thing that is important is that we use what we do have.

If we are given to letting ourselves worry and fret over things that others do toward us, it is often an incentive for them to try to make us trouble. We see a good illustration of this in the life of Hannah. Elkanah had two wives. Peninnah had a number of children but Hannah was childless. Peninnah took advantage of this to reproach Hannah and it is said she "provoked her sore, to make her fret" (1 Samuel 1:6 ASV). There are some people who delight in mocking others about some fault or physical defect, or because of a lack of ability or something of this sort. If they see that this causes us to fret, it only increases their desire to provoke us. Then again, some people like to make sport of others and tease them, and if they see that someone cannot bear it well, if it frets him and worries him, this only increases their delight. Christians, of course, should never do something like that; they should have more regard for the feelings of others. But sinners will do such things. We may expect it. Therefore, the thing to do is to learn not to fret over it, but to submit our ways to God and bear it patiently.

Never allow yourself to fret over anything. Fretting never helps; it only hinders. Learn to commit these things to God. Cast your burdens upon God—and do not try to bear His burdens. Learn to be happy in spite of your difficulties. Keep your own soul-life separated from these troublesome things. God will help you and give you success. He commands you not to fret, and He will give you grace to keep from doing it.

Sanctifying Your Life

What does it mean to "sanctify yourself"?

In the previous lesson we had shown that sanctification is the work of God in a person: the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. In this lesson, we now consider to what extent sanctification is our responsibility.

Paul writes to the Thessalonians: "Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God" (1 Thessalonians 4:1). And to the Romans: "But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life" (Romans 6:22).

The expression "abound more and more," or "becoming holy" (Luther) shows us that Paul is referring to a spiritual progression. It is this process that is the responsibility of man. This "becoming holy," or "sanctification" (Schlachter 2000) is to be man's "fruit."

Thus, when the New Testament asks us to sanctify ourselves it is speaking of a progress, of an attitude in us that leads to a progression. Which attitude and which progression are meant here?

1. The Desire for More of the Divine

Paul writes further in the passage: "But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life ..." (1 Thessalonians 4:9-11).

He thus urged the brothers and sisters to increase more and more in brotherly love and to aspire to lead a quiet life. They should have the desire to grow in these things. They should utilize the opportunities that God gives to grow in these areas. They are to mutually inspire one another to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24).

The point is to have a desire for the things that come from God or that please God. We need to reach for these things and strive in prayer to receive more of them.

2. Separation and Purification from all Ungodliness

To the Corinthians, Paul writes: "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 7:1). What promises does he mean here? In the previous chapter he wrote: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.' Therefore 'Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you.' 'I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty'" (2 Corinthians 6:16-18).

With this promise in mind (and with the associated condition) we are to cleanse ourselves from the defilement of body and spirit.

In the ancient world, society saw nothing wrong with fornication, just as there is nothing wrong with pornography in the eyes of the people of our time. But this cannot be so with us. We are to separate ourselves. We are to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Idolatry was normal in the society in which Paul lived, just as idolatry is normal today. In our Western society, we have no little statues in our front yards where we make offerings as is common, for example, in India. We have other idols. It is upon the altar of one's career that the family is sacrificed; it is a hobby to which all money is sacrificed; it is selfishness to which the relationships with our loved ones are sacrificed. The danger with these idols is that they are invisible. But this idolatry stains the soul, and we should cleanse ourselves of this defilement.

The idea here is to abhor the ungodly, to separate our-

selves from it, and to resist when such things are looking to gain entry into our lives. We need to repent if they have found entrance into our lives.

We need to understand that it is the Holy Spirit who reveals the ungodly things, or the lack of the divine, in our lives. But the idea of “sanctifying ourselves” implies that we must rid ourselves of what the Holy Spirit has revealed.

To sanctify oneself therefore means to consistently live

in such a way that we may be found pure and holy before God, as people who have separated themselves to the service of God, as those have consecrated their lives to serve God and to bring forth fruit to His glory.

Dear reader, is this the goal of your life? Do you live in the will of God in this sanctification? May God grant it!

Robert Witt
Gifhorn, Germany

Mother Love

My grandmother told a story of her time living in Joroco. She knew a woman who lived all alone. Her husband had died and his brother came and took her two sons away. It almost broke her heart, but there was nothing she could do about it. This was common in Africa. The children belonged to their father, and when the father passed away, his brother had the right to determine the fate of the children. They then belonged to him.

This particular uncle thought that the two boys would be useful as his workers, so he decided to take them along. The mother was deeply saddened. She constantly watched for visitors who came from the area where the uncle lived. Although he lived far away, she was able to occasionally hear news of her sons from others who were visiting. The news she heard lay heavy on her heart. Her children were suffering. They were working beyond their capabilities and were often beaten.

The woman did not know what to do. She could only pray and plead, “Almighty God, I want to have my children with me again!”

One day she discovered that the uncle had brought her children to a family who lived near Banga. When she heard that a missionary in her area was planning to go there, she asked if she could go with him. “Yes, if you are ready tomorrow morning at five o’clock,” he replied. She was ready on time, sat down on the bed of the truck, and patiently rode along. They arrived in Banga at noon.

“I can walk the rest of the way,” she said and then asked the man, “When are you returning?”

“Tomorrow morning,” he answered.

“Good, I’ll be there,” she promised, and started on her journey. She walked all day and into the night. In the little village the cooking fires were still lit. The tired mother entered a strange hut. During the second half of the night she left this hut with a small boy in one hand and an older one by her side. No one knew how she accomplished this. “God helped me,” was her only answer when she was asked.

The three had to walk twenty kilometers back to Banga. When the missionary got up to leave the next morning, they were sitting on the truck bed. Wordlessly, the mother exposed one of her son’s back to show the extensive scars caused by the sharp blows the little one had endured. Tears filled the missionary’s eyes. As they drove home he thought to himself, how great is this mother’s love! What she had to endure to bring her children home! He watched them in his rearview mirror. He saw a mother sitting between her two children, both of whom she had firmly clasped in her arms.

In the Bible we read that God’s love surpasses even the love of a mother. Think of what the Savior endured to bring us back to the Father! Nothing was too much. This love is there for us, and will not rest until we are safely home in His arms.

H. Schilling

SERIES: THE CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD

I RIGHTEOUSNESS

II TRUTH

III OMNISCIENCE

GOD'S OMNISCIENCE

When considering the attributes of God, we cannot help but be filled with awe. We have a God who is eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient. The focus of this article will be the omniscience of God: His knowledge of all things. God has always been. He created all things and “known to God from eternity are all His works” (Acts 15:18). God knows humanity, the crown of His creation. Scripture tells us in 1 Chronicles 28:9 that “the Lord searches all hearts and understands all the intent of the thoughts.” The prophet Jeremiah records God saying of Himself, “I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind” (Jeremiah 17:9-10). It is because God knows the intents of the heart that He will be able to judge us fairly and righteously on the Day of Judgment. In Hebrews 4:13 we read, “there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.”

God's Word reveals that all persons of the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit) are equally omniscient. Before Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, He told them, “Your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him” (Matthew 6:8). Our heavenly Father must be omniscient to know our unspoken needs. Jesus the Son of God is omniscient, like His Father. On several occasions, certain people, including scribes and Pharisees, sought to trap Jesus in His words or actions so that they might find an accusation against Him. We read in Luke 6:8 that Jesus “knew their thoughts.” Who can know the thoughts of man? Only He who is omniscient knows our thoughts. The omniscience of the Holy Spirit is clearly illustrated by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:11: “For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.”

Some might feel unsettled at the thought that God knows everything. This is especially true for those who are trying

to hide their sin from God. People can be easily fooled because they are not able to discern the hearts and intents of others. Let us remember that God will not be fooled. Luke 12:2 contains a sobering message for us all: “For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known.” Children of God, on the other hand, can find peace and comfort in God's omniscience. God knows the physical and spiritual dangers that exist around us. Nothing happens here on earth or in heaven above without first receiving the approval of God. All things are in His hands and He knows our limits.

If God knows everything, even the choices we make, do we still have a free will? Yes, we have a free will to do what we please. However, God knows us intimately and how we will react in every situation. God allows us to make our own decisions, but He has a perfect will that He will see accomplished through divine intervention if necessary, but never by removing a person's free will. One example of this is Pharaoh's stubborn refusal to let the Israelites leave Egypt. God tells Moses in Exodus 7:3-4: “I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and multiply My signs and My wonders in the land of Egypt. But Pharaoh will not heed you.” God revealed His presence and might to Pharaoh, but instead of melting in awe, he hardened his heart. God's presence and nearness can be likened to heat. Some things melt like butter when heated. Others harden like clay. After hearing Moses' request from the Lord to let the Israelites leave, Pharaoh responds, “Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the Lord, nor will I let Israel go” (Exodus 5:2). Pharaoh hardened his own heart in the presence of the Lord. The Lord knew Pharaoh's stubbornness and how he would react, but ultimately Pharaoh made his own decision.

Dear reader, how does God's omniscience make you feel? Ashamed or comforted?

John Reimer *Barrhead, AB*

My Dear Son,

It is very early in the morning, not yet 3 a.m. While I lie in my bed, my thoughts are with you because I just prayed for you. It is perhaps odd for a mother to wake in the middle of the night when she is concerned about someone in the family. Your entire childhood, or all that I remember of it, often passes before me in such hours.

Your life is still very short. It was only 17 years ago that the nurse brought you to me in my room with only a diaper and shirt. I thought you were the prettiest baby ever born. As your father was often on the road preaching, we had a lot of time for one another.

I still remember when you were 4 years old, how you would love to sit in the rocking chair with me to “read”. It was shortly before Easter. I read to you out of the illustrated Bible how the disciples fell asleep while Jesus prayed, and later how they ran away when He needed them. You looked at me constantly to see my expression. The familiar story and pictures gripped me so hard that I could not hold back the tears, especially as I looked at the image of Jesus’ crucifixion and thought of His pain and suffering. Do you remember what you said to me then? – “Mommy, I would not have run away. I would have helped Jesus!”

Yes, my son, I know that you would have truly helped Jesus then, if it had been in your power to do so. You so willingly attended church services and Sunday school. At home you played “church” with teddy bears, toy dogs, and your younger brother. You would “preach” to them what you had heard on Sunday morning. You gave your life to Jesus very early in life. He was your best Friend and your Example.

Something happened one day that I often think about. You came to me in the kitchen and sat down on the yellow stool to speak to me.

“Mom,” you began, “I had an interesting dream.”

“Yes?”

“Mom, it was very strange. I was in the church and I was so thirsty. I went to the water fountain, but I was

too small and no one was there to lift me up. And I had such thirst. Then someone grabbed me from behind. I couldn’t see who it was, but his arms were as strong as Dad’s. The strong arms from behind me said, ‘Drink!’ so I simply listened and drank. And you know, Mom, I was suddenly big myself and I stood on my own feet and became the preacher.”

Something like this is not easily forgotten, but I hid it in my mind with all the other many things you said or did that surprised me. Again and again, when you achieved something new, I was proud of you. Naturally all three of my boys had a special place in my heart, each in their own way.

But over time, my son, I’ve grown concerned for you, when I see how you slowly turn away from God. Since you have grown so much in the last while, I suddenly noticed that you sit in the last row in church and that you often even walk out. It also makes my heart heavy when I have to watch how you neglect the youth meetings and go your own way. You at one time gave your life over to Jesus. Please do not go so far away from Him that you can no longer hear His voice!

It is clear to me that you are at an age where you must learn to make your own decisions. Neither can I complain about your report cards, or about the way you fulfill your duties at home.

Why then do I stay up at nights and cry for you? Maybe because I hear your voice as it once said to me, “Mommy, I would not have run away. I would have helped Jesus.” – Our Lord Jesus will return soon. Will He find you sleeping when He comes? Or will you even be on the run from Him?

My hope and prayer is that you will consecrate yourself entirely to Jesus. Then the happy thoughts of a mother will mix with the joyful praise of the angels, for she will have personally experienced the truth of the biblical promise: “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

Your Mother

Thank You, Lord, for Our Mothers!

- For the love that we sensed from them that surrounded and cared for us, that placed Your Word in our hearts while we were still young;
- For the nimble hands and feet that worked day in, day out for our well-being, that spared no effort because it was a labor of love;
- For the eyes that watched over us in all quarters, that rejoiced or cried with us;
- For the prayers that accompanied us into the world, that entrusted us to You and that built a protective hedge around us;
- For the time they spent with us and taught us to build strong characters.

O Lord, You have so wonderfully enabled them! We thank You for that! Lord, protect our mothers and give them grace in difficult situations, when they are sad, when they are at a loss for what to do next. Let them overflow with Your love and genuine peace in You! Amen!

Prayed into Heaven

Dear Mother,

I want to thank you for all the love you gave me. I am especially thankful for your prayers. I truly believe if I do not return home, your prayers will have prayed me into heaven. God bless you for that, my dear mother. My hope is that you will join me there soon.

Your John

No Occupation

*"No occupation" is what it said.
In disbelief, I just shook my head.
There it was in mom's passport, and there to stay!
Yet she just keeps working, night and day.*

*Working for others, day in, day out,
That's what the occupation of my mother's about.
Wife and mother, and homemaker too;
That's more than a full-time employee would do.*

*She's a cook of my favorite meals;
She's a shopper, who's looking for deals;
She's a packer, preparing family trips;
She's a waitress, not receiving tips.*

*She's a doctor, when I'm ill and in bed;
She's a judge, the children do as she said;
She's a tailor, who keeps our clothing new;
She's a banker, and manages money too.*

*She's a teacher, she's always around;
Encyclopedia, her knowledge abounds;
Entertainer, when she reads aloud;
Peace-keeper, when there's strife in the house.*

*Decorator, gardener, barber, and Mom.
She has all of these titles, and still I'm not done.
Women by whom God has blessed the nation,
And that's what the world calls "no occupation!"*

A cabin boy lost his life during a fierce storm. When his poor, godly mother received the package with her son's earthly belongings, she found a letter from her son. On the letter was written: For my mother if I don't return home.

Receiving the notice of her son's death was extremely painful for the mother. Her mother's heart found it hard to grasp. In spite of the pain, she folded her hands in prayer and praised God for the assurance that her prayers had helped her son attain that heavenly goal.

My dear Mother,

Once again it is Mother's Day and I would like to share my heart with you in this letter. How sad this Mother's Day would be if I didn't have you anymore! For many people this is the case. Many years ago you lost your own mother, but I am so thankful to the Lord that I still have you. When I think of your love for me, my thoughts immediately go to our great God. The pure, sacrificial love of a mother can only have its source in the Almighty. The whole mindset of a mother, who nurtures her child so faithfully and committedly, can only come from the heart of God. And I am blessed with such a mother!

Dear Mother, for more than 50 years you have blessed me with your constant love. From the first moment you became aware that a child was growing under your heart, your love for me grew. As a baby I was shielded by your arms around me. I was lovingly and faithfully cared for. I'm so thankful that you brought me into the house of the Lord in the first days of my journey here on earth and that, since then, I was able to return there almost every Sunday and Wednesday of my life.

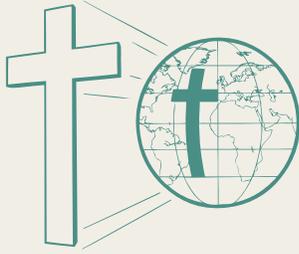
What a beautiful childhood we children had together in our family circle, with a mother who was always there for us, caring for us in so many ways. I could come to you with all my problems and hurts, and you in turn brought them to the Lord. As I grew and progressed to the point where I could begin to understand, you taught me to pray on my own. Never will I forget those sacred moments when I was looking for you and, standing at the door to your room, heard that you were on your knees in prayer. How it moved me to hear my own name brought before the Savior. Despite my resolve never to disappoint you, I know that all too often I failed. Your love for me never faltered.

Thank you, Mother, that you and Dad gave us an example of faithfulness in serving God. From the time we were small, we learned that God's kingdom needed to have priority in our lives. Doubtless there were times when you were discouraged and going through trials, but we children never sensed a slackening in your commitment to serving God. Blessing continues to flow from that faithfulness, as all your children have followed in your footsteps. Thank you, Mother, that as parents you did not allow everything we children wanted. Even though it was sometimes hard during our youth, today I appreciate it so much. Thank you for not trying to make the narrow way of life broader. How you rejoiced when I received Jesus as my Lord and Savior! Thank you that I had parents who were always there for me and who always sought my best during the growing pains and trials of my young life.

Next to my Savior I thank you, my dear mother and my dear father, that I serve God with all my heart as His minister today. So often I am comforted and strengthened by the thought that my parents are praying for me. Thank you, Mother, that you repeatedly assure me of that blessed fact. Thank you for not only praying earnestly for me, but also for my dear wife and every one of my children. It obviously gives you great joy to hear each one's voice on the telephone or Skype! Your character is revealed in the great pleasure you have in finding ways to bring us joy.

Dear Mom, I will never forget the image I carry in my heart of how you so lovingly cared for your mother until her last days. Today, you've grown older yourself and are embroiled in a constant battle for your health. The Lord chose a field of labor for me that resulted in us living far apart and I cannot be with you very often, but it is my desire to be a son who will bring you joy and honor. I am so thankful to the dear Lord for giving me you!

*In thankful love,
Your Son*



Radio Broadcast

The Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, Ontario

A Genuine Faith

“I remember you in my prayers night and day [...] greatly desiring to see you [...] that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.”

(2 Timothy 1:3-5)

Timothy worked closely together with the apostle Paul. He called Timothy “my dear son” and constantly thanked God for him. The joy and benefits Timothy provided for Paul could not be credited to him alone. They obviously were nurtured by his mother and grandmother as well. Together, these two women had influenced the young man in matters of faith. It is worth noting that the quality of their faith is emphasized. One translation calls it an “unstained faith”. Others translate it to be “sincere” or “genuine” faith. Theirs was an authentic, pure, and undistorted kind of faith. This is truly the “treasure in earthen vessels” we read of in 2 Corinthians 4:7. Can you imagine if every child had parents and grandparents like these?

Our culture is characterized by a deep and growing alienation from God. The faith that gives our life a strong foundation, support, and guidance is largely considered useless and worthless. Contrary to these sentiments are Jesus’ words regarding true faith: “Believe in God, believe also in me” (John 14:1). These are the words He delivered to the hearts of His disciples. They are justified by the message of John 3:16: By faith you will have life. To the people who sought help from Him in faith and found it, He repeatedly said, “Your faith has made you well!” (Luke 8:48)

He told Peter, “I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail” (Luke 22:32). Thus, Jesus emphasized for His followers the vital importance of faith. It is no surprise to us then that the disciples responded, “Lord, increase our faith!” (Luke 17:5)

Without faith we cannot find God, and without faith no one can enter into the realm of divine light. This is why those who do not believe place themselves at such a great disadvantage. This becomes the root cause behind so many problems in families! Fathers, mothers, and grandparents need to have a “genuine” faith in order to pass this faith onto their children. After all, we can only share what is in our possession.

In a daily devotional, I read about a child care worker who tried to motivate the children in her care to get dressed up for a carnival. Almost without exception, the parents went along with this, not thinking about the superstitious and corrupt place their children were being taken to. The concluding thought in the devotional included an important question that I would like to share with you: “When you are old and sick, would you rather be cared for by a person whose thinking is dominated by magic and evil spirits, or by one who fears God and has faith?”—Whoever is convicted by this statement should return to true faith and pass it on!

Allow me to provide another example: in the Ruhr district in Germany a well-educated man stood in front of a large assembly. He tried to prove that there was no God. Encouraged by repeated applause, he continued to speak for nearly two hours. Then the audience was given the opportunity to share their opinion. It seemed no one had the courage to say something. Then a grandmother stepped out of her row in the back and walked boldly up to the podium.



“Mr. Speaker,” she began, “You have now spoken for two hours about your unbelief. Let me speak for five minutes about my faith.” She then recounted the difficult experiences in her life and how the Lord had helped her. She spoke of how her faith had carried her through great hardships and dark valleys. “Now I am old and close to my end. But I know that I belong to Jesus and will soon go to my heavenly home. My Lord has given me all of this through faith. Now I want to ask you: What has your unbelief done for you?”

The embarrassed speaker walked up to her, placed a hand on her shoulder and said, “We would not want to shatter the faith of such an old woman!”

“No, no, you can't get away with that,” she replied. “I have asked you a question, and you haven't answered it!” With that, the meeting was closed.

Let us return again to our text. Here, everyone could reflect back with gratitude and joy on the precious fruit of faith that was evident in the life of young Timothy. According to Acts 16, Paul had found him in Derbe, a place where he had to suffer severe persecution. Even as a young man, Timothy had a good reputation in this neighborhood. He was a great support and help in Paul's ministry. The apostle later wrote about him, “For I have no one [as] like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state” (Philippians 2:20). The effects of the genuine, sincere faith of his mother and grandmother are simply amazing.

May the Lord strengthen our mothers of faith through this example, and give them wisdom and grace to have this kind of influence on their sons and daughters.

One final thought: We all know that children are born speechless, yet they have the ability to learn the language of their parents. This is a true miracle! Every language is valuable. However, the most important language is the language of God! Therefore, we want to take care to make our children familiar with this language, as Timothy was. With this in mind, we wish all mothers and grandmothers an enjoyable Mother's Day and the Lord's rich blessings!



A Kind Word

Our daily routines tend to shift the focus of our attention on ourselves, our struggles, anxieties, disappointments, etc. We can become so preoccupied with ourselves that we fail to see the needs of others around us. And the greatest need is often the easiest to meet: a simple word of encouragement.

Having worked hard all day, Andrew Stelzer came home tired from work one evening. His wife had also worked hard all day and had just as much right to be tired.

"A cheerful wife and a cheerful home—what a paradise that would be!" thought Andrew, as he turned away from the not so cheerful face of his wife and sat down a bit grumpy.

Not a word was spoken. Walking with slow and heavy steps, Mrs. Stelzer brought dinner to the table.

"Husband!" Mrs. Stelzer finally spoke as she cheerlessly called Andrew to the table. Andrew immediately stood up and came to the table. He was tempted to make some cutting remark, but he overcame the temptation. Although it did not please him that his wife was so tight-lipped, he wondered if it might be his fault that his wife was not more cheerful. There was nothing wrong with the food—the food alone would have pleased him—but he would have been delighted to see some sunshine in his wife's face.

Noticing that his wife did not eat, he almost asked her if she did not feel well. However, the cross look on her face stopped the words on his lips, and he remained quiet, deep in thought. Looking at each other from across the table, Andrew and his wife finished the meal in a heavy silence. After Andrew put his fork down, his wife cleared the table, spread a green tablecloth over it, and left her husband to his thoughts.

"This gloomy silence is intolerable," Andrew thought to himself as he got up and began pacing the room with his head down and his hands in his pockets. After a while, he pulled a piece of paper out of his pocket and sat down at the table to read it. With great astonishment he read the words, "Praise your wife." He thought, "Yes, this is necessary, but why then...?" He continued to read, "Praise your wife and encourage her a little."

He looked up and muttered, "That's right! Praise costs nothing. But how should I praise my grumpy wife? She makes this home miserable with her grim face."

He read further: "She makes your home comfortable

and pleasant for you. Even if this does not seem like much, praise her anyway. Look for and find something praiseworthy. It will do her and you much good."

Were these words not written precisely for him? As he continued reading, his conscience began to stir. His wife, Marie, had made their home pretty and pleasant, yet he had never thanked her. He had never praised her; he had only criticized her here and there. As Andrew sat thinking, Marie came out of the kitchen, took out her work basket, and sat down to do some sewing. She was working on a shirt, and Andrew knew that she was mending it for him.

"Marie, you are doing beautiful work," Andrew remarked casually. She didn't reply, but she slowly relaxed her furrowed brow as she sewed. Andrew continued, "In fact, my shirts are the cleanest and most wrinkle-free at work."

"Really?" Marie finally responded. She did not look up, but Andrew sensed the ice was breaking. "Yes, Marie. More than once I have heard comments like, 'That man must have a good wife.'"

Her eyes lighting up, Marie looked up from her work and searched her husband's face. However, there was still something in her expression that puzzled her husband.

"Do you think so too?" asked Marie dryly.

"What a question!" he replied as he stepped closer. "How can you ask such a question?" he repeated as he stood before her.

"Do you really think so?" was her only reply.

Bending down to kiss her, he replied in a tender voice, "Yes, darling." Now Marie stood up, leaned her head on Andrew's chest, and wept silently. Then, Andrew whispered, "How strange that you should ask that!"

A light dawned upon the man. He had never expressed his sincere gratitude for all the love that his wife had shown him daily. As a result, doubts about his love for her had entered her heart and had stolen all her joy.

"You are good and faithful, Marie. I love you. Your happiness makes me happy too. If you are cheerful, I find

that our home is the dearest place on earth.”

“Andrew,” responded Marie through her tears, smiling, “your words are a balm to me! Whenever I think about these words, I will cheer up as I do my work.”

How hard and yet how simple it was for Andrew to find what he had been looking for. He had lifted the curtain

behind which the happiness of his home was hidden. Suddenly, sun shone brightly in his house, and all because of a small realization.

A simple, kind word can sometimes be difficult to bring out in times of stress and misunderstanding. But it always has a powerful and positive effect.

Children Learn by Example

There he stands before the judge, a pale, frightened young man. He does not seem to be the same boy the police caught robbing a store only days earlier. Nothing remains of his defiance. Now he just stands there with head bowed, waiting to be sentenced. The verdict? Prison time. His parents weep. His mother cries out, “What have I done? How can God be so cruel? I can no longer believe in Him!”

How did the boy learn to do wrong? His father worked in a factory. When he came home in the evenings, he often brought home specialized tools, electrical wire, and light bulbs that he had taken from his workplace. Over time, his son could see no great difference between stealing from the factory and robbing a store.

Several years ago, the boy had been apprehended by the

police as he and a friend were found taking things from a neighboring salvage yard. The police brought the boys home to their fathers. The first thing his father did was to stomp over to the salvage yard and asked his neighbor why he had reported his son. The father should have been grateful for the lesson his son had learned! It would have been an opportunity for him to start a new way of living uprightly as a family.

These may have only been two incidents, but in them lay the fate of this pale, trembling boy, much too young for prison. In these two seemingly small occurrences we find the root of the issue.

Children learn by example. May God help us as parents and grant us the wisdom and grace we need to live lives that are upright and honest.



Why Marriages Fail

Part 2

Last month we were made aware of how detrimental it is when a couple neglects Christ in their marriage. Misplacing Christ in marriage leads to a misplacement of values and priorities within the family and home. God's reward for making His kingdom our priority applies as well to the realm of marriage as any other. This article identifies more dangers that can threaten a healthy marriage.

Neglect in one's duties by either partner toward the other causes some marriages to break up. Various authorities who try to solve personality issues say that we are all essentially the same: our greatest need as a person is love, acceptance, security, and the desire to accomplish something.

You can go to your spouse and say, "I love you." You can express your love in a thousand different ways. An act of love can be demonstrated by giving small surprises that your spouse enjoys, but also by being patient with your spouse's shortcomings. If your partner does not respond to your act of love in the way you expected, do not give in to self-pity and disappointment. For example, your husband may not have been taught to sensitively and tenderly express his feelings in his childhood. Nevertheless, as his wife, you know that he loves you. Be satisfied with that and continue to show him by example how to express his love.

Be attentive and ready to compliment your partner. Praise them for a job well done, for the discovery of a new talent; give encouragement even in times of failure. Acknowledge small courtesies and acts of kindness done to you. Repeatedly pointing out mistakes and shortcomings is a very destructive. But if you are quick to celebrate even the small successes, you can help your partner gain self-confidence, achieve goals and do their best.

While a man is distinguished by good work in his business or profession and develops confidence there, a woman who is not employed outside of the home can have the feeling that her achievement is given no recognition. She also works,

whether this is done through housework or by other work, relative to her gifts and talents, within or outside of the home. A problem arises when a wife and mother neglects her home because of her career. She needs to understand that her greatest opportunity to impact society is the work she does within the home, even if these tasks and duties can sometimes seem monotonous to her.

It takes a lot of effort to make 27,375 meals in 25 years, set and clear the table, keep laundry and clothes in order and prepare the children for school. It also requires a lot of prayer. But it is worth it. All efforts of a father and mother are worthwhile. As the wife strives to look after her home to the best of her knowledge and ability, she can find daily satisfaction in it if she puts her whole heart and effort into it. She should always remember that only her best is worthy to be presented to God, whether in cooking or reading Bible stories with her children. Then she can be content with having done her best.

To experience true security, our relationship and connection with God must be in order. When we are in a right relationship with God, we can build a faith that is strong enough for all situations. This security is even stronger when both husband and wife walk closely with the Lord. There is also a security in the possession of our own home, in life with our fellow man, and in the joyful performance of our work. We feel secure because a harmonious relationship with the congregation, the pastor, and with fellow Christians binds us together.

Another marriage destroyer is when the bad habit of disagreeing develops. Two people who love each other should beware not to fall into the habit of mutual accusation, quarreling, bickering, fault finding, blaming, etc. However, it can easily happen in your marriage if you persist in your stubborn, selfish ways instead of seeking the well-being of your spouse.

Friction with in-laws often leads to disruptions in marriages. As a wife, winning the love of your mother-in-law may mean just as much to you as it does to her. You can share with her some things you would not tell others. Hopefully, she seeks to understand you. You both love the same man, with certain differences. However, this should never be cause for jealousy.

Although children are supposed to be a link between parents, sometimes they are a cause for friction. Problems can arise regarding their discipline. For example, if the mother threatens the children that she will tell their father what they did wrong, or if she takes a stand against him. It may also happen that if a mother gives her full attention to the children, her husband feels neglected and becomes jealous of the children. The wife's attitude of respect towards her husband greatly affects the attitudes and respect of the children towards him. And he, as the head of the household, should share responsibility for the children and not leave this only to his wife.

Friendships with other couples can become too intimate and lead to the break-up of a marriage. Today, many married men and women flirt openly with people of the opposite sex, luring them out of the intimate, committed relationship they have with their spouse. No friendship between a man and a woman is safe if the spouse is not included in that friendship. While two married couples can enjoy a close friendship, too great an intimacy is as dangerous as playing with fire. Every couple should nurture a separate, intimate identity, and all other friends, no matter how close, should be considered to be guests.

Let us pray for the salvation and the preservation of our families, because our people and our nation depend on stable Christian families. Will you as a couple work and pray together to strengthen your marriage? Say loving words to one another often: "I am so thankful and blessed to have married you. I need you. I love you."

Despite all the external elements that are trying to destroy your home, a marriage can survive and thrive as long as each spouse knows that they are desired, needed, and loved.

Verna Joiner



Mother's Devotion

"Mom! I need help with my homework!" Sammy called as he ran down the stairs from his room.

Mother sighed quietly to herself and put down the book she had intended to read. She joined her son at the dining room table, ready to listen to his assignment.

"What do you need help with?" she asked.

"I have to write a few paragraphs that use my vocabulary words, and talk about our field trip to the zoo. I don't know how to use my vocabulary words. They aren't words about animals." Sammy looked worried. "My vocabulary words are *devotion*, *sacrifice*, *patience*, and *protection*."

"Well," said Sammy's mother, "that is tough. Tell me what you learned at the zoo."

Sammy's eyes lit up. "We learned cool stuff about animals and their babies. Did you know that animal mommies take care of their babies for a long time? Sometimes they go without food for months and months, and they work really hard to make sure their babies grow up safe."

"Do they now? That's amazing! And what words would you use to describe these mothers?" asked Mother.

"Cool!" Sammy shrugged. "That's not one of my vocab-

ulary words."

"That's all you can think of? What about me? I'm a mother. I doubt if "cool" is the word you think of to describe me," was Mother's response.

Sammy looked at his mother blankly for a moment, and suddenly he had an idea.

"Oh! I know what I'm going to write. I'll show you when I'm done." He ran back up to his room and worked hard for a while. When he was finished, he came back to his mother. He proudly showed her the title of his little piece of writing: "Animal Mothers." Then he cleared his throat and began to read:

*Many animal mothers are very good to their babies. Cheetahs are **patient** with their cubs and teach them to avoid predators and how to hunt for two years before they are ready to be on their own. Alligator moms care for their babies by carrying them in their jaws for **protection**. I think they would be safe there. Nobody will reach into an alligator mouth with all those huge teeth.*

*Mother elephants show **devotion** to their children*



by feeding them milk and caring for them for up to six years.

Polar bears **sacrifice** a lot for their babies. A mother polar bear digs an underground den to protect her babies from the cold and stays there for up to eight months, feeding her babies. By the time the babies are ready to travel to the sea, the mother has been fasting for up to eight months. Octopus mommies sometimes **sacrifice** even more. Female octopuses watch out for predators, provide oxygen by blowing water over these eggs, and they won't leave their eggs to hunt. Some hungry moms will end up chewing off one of their eight arms so they don't starve to death rather than leave their eggs.

These animal mothers show **devotion** and **sacrifice** and **patience** as they give their babies food, shelter and **protection**, but my mother does all of these things every day and has been **sacrificing** for me for even longer than an elephant mother.

Every day she gets up before I do to make breakfast and lunches before she wakes me up. She **sacrifices**

sleep. She drives me to school before she goes to work. She makes sure I have warm clothing, that I do up my seatbelt, and she teaches me about safety. She does these things for my **protection**. When we get home, I play outside or on the computer, but my mother works more. She makes dinner, cleans the house, does the laundry, shops for groceries, and lots more. The many things she does so that I have a happy life show **devotion**. Even when she is tired, if I don't understand my homework, she has **patience** when I ask her for help.

One of the dictionary definitions of sacrifice is: "an act of giving up something valued for the sake of something else regarded as more important or worthy." Every day I see that my mother thinks I am more important than she is, because she sacrifices for me. She is the most amazing mother of all.

Has God given you a mother who sacrifices for you and takes care of you? Be sure to thank God for her. And then thank her for her devotion, too!

Benita Tovstiga
Hamilton, ON

Experiences with God

*Oh, when we remember the goodness,
And marvelous grace of our God,
We thankfully bow in His presence,
And joyfully praise Him aloud!*

- D. S. Warner

These words have blessed me in a special way. God is my Helper and Physician. I am so thankful to Him for His help and am filled with praise. I never want to forget all the things God has done in my life.

In the past year God especially helped me in a wondrous way. While I was doing my housework, I slipped and broke my left leg just below the knee. The bone was shattered and was out of line by about 9 millimeters. When the doctors

told me they could not do much for me because of my heart condition, I cried.

On the second day in the hospital, Pastor Harry Semenuk visited me and comforted me with the Word of God. I requested that he ask the congregation to pray for me, and I placed my trust in God. I told myself that God could heal my leg and a miracle happened. I give Him all the praise and glory.

My leg was placed in a cast and I was transferred to a different hospital. The nurse was kind and encouraged me by saying that I would stay there until I could walk again.

Two weeks later I received some sad news. I was told that my leg had not even started to heal yet. One night I woke up and especially felt the presence of Jesus. It made me so

happy. I told the night nurse of my experience and said that many people were praying for me.

Four weeks later my leg was x-rayed again and the doctor told me my bone was completely healed and that I would be able to walk. This good news made me rejoice. I was able to walk again. Even at my advanced age, God had performed a miracle. I was so thankful!

During my stay in the hospital, I took a walk in the flower garden on the hospital grounds with one of the other residents. Then I stayed in the garden by myself for a while longer and enjoyed the fresh air and the beautiful scenery. On my way back to my room in the elevator, something went wrong and the elevator doors would not open. I pressed the emergency button and called, all to no avail. The doors remained shut. I cried out to God and reminded Him of the verse in Psalm 50:15, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you and you shall glorify Me". I said to Him, "You are still the same today and can help". When I opened my eyes I saw that the elevator door was open just a crack. Then it opened completely and I could get

to my room. Praise God!

I found the Lord as a teenager and He has made me very happy. There were many storms in my life, but God always brought me through them and for that I will remain forever grateful.

Another experience from the past: my husband, my brother, my sister and I wanted to drive to a funeral. It was autumn and it began to snow. Our car spun out, we lost control, and ended up in the oncoming traffic lane. A car was coming towards us. I cried, "Lord, please protect us". Our car turned and ended up in a deep ditch but remained upright. On one side there was a bridge and on the other a light post. Our car was standing right between them. We were completely in shock yet no one was injured. When we were finally pulled out of the ditch, the police officer said to us, "You must have had a guardian angel watching over you". My husband said, "Yes, God sent him to us". These are the kinds of experiences one never forgets.

Ida Benkendorf,
Edmonton , AB

Experiences with God

"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me." Psalm 50:15

We would like to testify of God's great help in a time of trouble in our lives. We had just moved to the Steinbach area and were expecting our first child, a son. Twenty-five weeks into the pregnancy, Kathryn began having problems and was admitted to the hospital. Even though the doctors were not giving much hope, we were trusting that our baby would live. Then came the devastating news that both Kathryn and the baby only had about a 15 percent chance of surviving. Many questions and fears filled our hearts, but God's children began crying to Him along with us.

On December 2, 2012 a crisis arose and the doctors performed an emergency Cesarean section. Our son Isaac was born 16 weeks premature, weighing only 813 grams. God spared both his and Kathryn's lives. Over the next 18 weeks, after Kathryn recovered, we travelled the long distance from our home east of Steinbach to the hospital in Winnipeg and back almost every day. We experienced many trials during this time, but also many joys: reaching into the incubator, holding our son's little hand and having him squeeze back after a time. And then finally the thrill of being able to hold him for a short while! But there were also hard times when we had to pray harder for God to sustain our son's life.

Isaac was born with a heart valve that had not closed.

He was scheduled for open-heart surgery as soon as he was strong enough to have a chance of surviving it. During our time in the neo-natal ICU, we observed other families struggling through similar situations, often with heart-breaking results. As the time for the surgery neared, God's people once again began to earnestly pray. And then a miracle happened! The day before the surgery, the hole in his heart closed and the surgery was not required!

We praise God for His wondrous works! We know it is only by His grace that we have walked safely through this valley. While we would not wish for any family to have to go through the things we have experienced, we have learned that all things are possible with our heavenly Father. He still performs wonderful miracles today, and we have seen them happen right before our eyes!

Today our son Isaac is over a year old and is a happy, strong, and growing boy. We are so thankful to God for the joy He has brought into our family by allowing our son to live. We wish to thank all who prayed for us. God heard those earnest prayers and answered in a mighty way. All praise and honor to Him!

Albert and Kathryn Jansen
Steinbach, MB

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Church Conventions 2014

Germany

Pentecost Conference in Herford: June 7-9

Bible Study Conference for Youth: August 3-8

Canada

Fest Services in Winnipeg: May 17-19

Fest Services in Aylmer: June 28-29

60th Anniversary and Fest in Chilliwack: August 2-4

Fest Services in Edmonton: October 11-13

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Mother's Legacy

*Deep in my heart, o Mother dear,
A place for you I'm keeping.
As long as I am living here,
For you my heart is beating.*

*You cared for me my whole life long,
As long as you were able.
Your love for me was always strong,
So generous and stable.*

*Your smile, it gave me confidence,
You blessed me with your presence;
Your eyes were full of radiance,
You are a gift from heaven.*

*Your prayers, they protected me,
You showed me loving favor.
Your trust and faith, they guided me,
And taught me of my Savior.*

*O Mother, we will meet again,
When life is o'er in glory.
Rejoice, you have not lived in vain,
Your legacy's my story.*