



Foundation of Faith

Being a Christian In Everyday Life

THE BIBLE

ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN?

THEORY AND PRACTICE

THE POWER OF GOOD EXAMPLES

THE MODERN AGE CHRISTIAN

Contents

BEING A CHRISTIAN IN EVERYDAY LIFE

- 4 Genuine Christianity**
- 4 Terrifying Prayer**
- 5 A Role Model**
- 5 A Good Testimony**
- 6 Are You a Christian?**
Where does the name “Christian” come from, and who is entitled to bear this name?
- 7 Can Christ Be Seen In Your Life?**
- 8 This Age Needs Christ**
- 9 The Hallmark of a True Christian**
- 10 Fight According to the Rules**
Without God’s equipping, we cannot be victors in the spiritual battle.
- 11 Christians**
- 12 The Power of Good Examples**
- 14 Theory and Practice**
- 15 The Modern Age Christian**

3 Editorial

YOUTH PAGES

16 How You Can Use Your Time Wisely

CHILDREN’S CORNER

18 The Bible

Interesting Facts about the Origin of the Bible

21 The Wrong Book

SERIES—WAYWARD CHILDREN

24 Eagerly Waiting

SENIORS’ PAGE

26 Growing Older Gracefully – Part 2

Practical Advice for Growing Older

26 Do Not Be Deceived— God is Not Mocked!

POEM

28 Daily Anew

FOUNDATION OF FAITH

Editor

Hans-Dietrich Nimz

Editorial Team

Niko Ernst

Harry Semenjuk

Ron Taron

Hermann Vogt

•
The FOUNDATION OF FAITH is a journal of vital Christianity, published in the interest of the Church of God, that takes a clear and decisive stand for full salvation in Christ, the unity of all true believers, and the truths of the Bible.

The editors reserve the right to abridge and edit all materials and information submitted for publication. Research sources are listed for information only and should not necessarily be construed as an endorsement or recommendation.

•
Questions and suggestions can be sent to:
contact@foundationoffaith.cc

Please address all other correspondence and subscription requests to:
Christian Unity Press
5195 Exchange Drive
Flint, MI 48507
Tel.: (810) 732-1831
or email us at
cupress@thechurchofgod.cc
www.christianunitypress.com

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.

FOUNDATION OF FAITH (USPS 9008) is published monthly by Christian Unity Press, 5195 Exchange Dr., Flint, MI 48507, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Flint, MI, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Christian Unity Press, 5195 Exchange Dr., Flint, MI 48507, USA Volume 21 Issue 7

FOUNDATION OF FAITH is a trademark owned by Christian Unity Press in the United States and foreign countries.

Printed in USA.

FOUNDATION OF FAITH is published free of charge. All expenses are covered by freewill donations.

Editorial

Dear Reader,

I'm sure you look back fondly on times when God was able to speak to you. For me, one such moment occurred in Mexico City, when the Lord asked me, "What is the point of your life?" I still vividly recall having to answer, "I live a selfish, materialistic life and I'm unsatisfied. I want to change." The Lord saw my sincerity, and several months later, I was able to seek and find Him.

What a wonderful heavenly Father we have! He forgives our sins, grants us salvation, and lets us move from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, where His dear Son reigns. We are saved through grace, not through our own efforts. Our salvation is entirely a gift from God, for we are now His creation, born again in Christ Jesus to do good works.

Following Jesus means walking in His footsteps. He is our example and the Master we obey. By helping, encouraging, and blessing others, just as Jesus did, we live out our daily testimony and shine our light to the world.

Our world is full of fear and insecurity. Many who call themselves Christians are spiritually dead and have no life in God; unfortunately, despite having the appearance of godliness, they reject His power (2 Timothy 3:5). This empty shell of Christianity brings shame to God's name and leads to perdition. In the words of the Savior Himself, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

Therefore, dear readers, let us serve God with all our hearts and follow Him. If we do so, it will be as Jesus said: "Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!" (Matthew 13:43).

H. D. Nimz

Genuine Christianity

The English General Charles Gordon (1833-1885) required a servant while in Egypt. His eyes fell on a young Muslim who he thought could be helpful. He approached him and asked him if he would be willing to work for him. To his amazement, the young man refused, although it was a good opportunity.

When Gordon asked him the reason for not wanting to work for him, the young man gave the odd reply, "Because you would make a Christian of me." Gordon, keen to have him as a servant, promised him not to speak anything of religion to him and to leave him quite alone in that respect. However, the Muslim could not be persuaded. When Gordon tried to convince him, he finally declared that he was yet afraid of

becoming a Christian due to regular interaction with him, because Gordon's conduct, without him saying a word of his religion, was so convincing. To this he did not wish to expose himself because he certainly did not want to become a Christian.

In Gordon we have an example of genuine Christianity. This general had an influential Christianity, because the new life given to him through our Lord Jesus Christ was convincingly visible. Gordon did not need to talk much about it. His open faith was clearly recognizable, and more persuasive than any words.

Now let us look at the Christians of today. How many, or rather how few among them can be compared to Gordon? Just between you and me, would you be among those few? Surely that is how it should be! ■

Terrifying Prayer

Samuel Gilpin, a man of God, met a group of workers one evening who were just finishing for the day. Without warning, one of the men happened to pass by in very close proximity, uttering the most terrible curses.

When Mr. Gilpin got home, his conscience was troubled. Why had he not rebuked the man? That night, he had great difficulty sleeping. To make up for his omission, he got up early the next morning and went to the place where the man would have to pass on his way to work. When the man in question appeared, Gilpin said to him, "I am glad to see you. I have been waiting for you."

"You're definitely mistaken, sir," was the reply. "I don't know you."

"Nor I you," said Gilpin. "But I saw you yesterday for the first time, and I have something to say to you."

"That's impossible," said the man again. "I have never seen you before."

"But I have seen you," Gilpin replied. "I heard you praying yesterday."

"Oh, you're completely mistaken. I've never in my life prayed before."

"Yes, you have!" said Gilpin. "And if God had heard and answered your prayer, you would not be here this morning. You told Him to curse you and condemn your soul."

The man before him turned pale and said with a trembling voice, "Well yes, if you call that praying, I certainly did."

"So you admit it? Well, I want to ask you from now on to plead for the salvation of your soul just as diligently as you have done up to now for its damnation. I will also ask the Lord to have mercy on you."

The blasphemer was greatly moved by the man's courageous and compassionate love. This man then sought forgiveness and found peace with God. ■

A Role Model

Two church-going friends had a falling-out over an unpleasant matter. One day, one of them heard that the other had spoken rather harshly about him. So he approached him and said, “Dear friend, will you be so kind as to tell me straight out what I did wrong? Your honesty will help me to do better in future.”

“Yes, if you wish, I can do that,” replied the other.

They sat down in a quiet corner, and the first took the lead again. “Before you begin to tell me my mistakes, I would like you to join me in asking the Lord to open my eyes, that I may be humble and see my error.” Then they prayed.

“So,” the visitor spoke after praying together, “now I am ready to hear. Please also be complete-

ly open and tell me everything that’s wrong about me.”

“Well,” replied the other, “now that we have prayed about this issue, your faults seem so small to me that it is not worthwhile to talk about them. In fact, I’m totally to blame. Now I see quite clearly that I served the devil’s purposes when I spread these comments. Please ask God for me, to forgive all the wrong I have done to you.”

How many embarrassing misunderstandings could be avoided if on every such occasion people sought in true humility to put into practice the Master’s word, “Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother” (Matthew 18:15). ■

A Good Testimony

A native missionary in Madras (today known as Chennai), East India, met a Hindu on the street, whose body language indicated a certain inner restlessness. This was precisely the case. The Hindu had a large sum of money in his possession and was afraid of being robbed or even murdered in this foreign city.

When he spied the missionary, he recognized by the clothing he wore that he was looking at a Christian. So he said to him, “I would appreciate it if I could spend the night in your home.”

The missionary replied, “My dear sir, I am a Christian and you are a Hindu. Why don’t you go to one of your kinsmen? After all, there are many thousands here in the city.”

The man replied, “I want to stay with you precisely because you are a Christian. I can trust a Christian!”

“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). ■

Are You a Christian?

Let's imagine someone came to us and asked, "Are you a Christian?" What would we answer? Without a doubt, the questioner would be looked at in astonishment, because he would have to know that we live in a Christian country, belong to a Christian church, and uphold what we believe. He should also know we are not pagans. Then why such a question?

If the questioner were from a pagan nation, then we would grant him the right to ask like that. However, the man must have noticed something that prompted him to ask this question. Surely it must have been the great difference between people who simply profess Christianity and those whose lives demonstrate a changed lifestyle. He must have expected that a Christian should live and walk in a Christ-like manner. But now he had come to realize that there is so little of Christ in Christendom. Christ is preached about, but who lives it out? The life of Christ is considered an example, but who does what He exemplified?

These are all things that the questioner had to notice. He came to this Christian country with great expectations and found that Christianity lacked the living Christ.

A highly-gifted missionary student from Africa, named Timur, returned home from Germany. He had passed his state examinations with excellent grades. Now he had to report to the small native church congregation. He did so, describing the country of Germany with its institutions and social welfare. But when he concluded, the local pastor said, "Young man, I no longer understand why you have come to us. Why don't you convert your countrymen? Why don't you preach the Gospel to the pagans back home? Return as a missionary to your homeland, and share the Gospel with your people! We can quietly follow our Lord Jesus here alone." This appeal should speak earnestly to our responsibilities as Christians. Is Christ the essence of what people see in us?

In Acts 11: 25–26, we read, "Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great

many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." This designation did not come from them but from the non-Christians. No doubt these people heard the testimony of Christ and found the disciples not only speaking about Him, but also living according to His teaching. Christ took the first place among these people, and was worshiped and glorified. Outsiders could see they were serious about serving God. God's way was their way, and they walked according to the words of Jesus Christ. This must have persuaded them that here are those who live the confession of Christ, and are therefore "Christians."

Clearly, these people were not Christians before. They belonged to the class of whom the Apostle Paul spoke, "that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). This was the condition of those who were later called Christians.

A tremendous change had taken place in their hearts, giving life a new direction. They had heard the glorious Gospel of Christ preached and had accepted it in faith. The Word of God being shared had begun to work in their hearts, and the result was that they were converted to the Lord. The old way of sin was forsaken and abandoned. A complete break with the world and its dealings had occurred, for they had experienced what we read in Colossians 1:13, "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love."

This great change took place in the hearts of these people. They were saved from the present evil world. For them, grace had won the victory, and the power of sin had been overcome. Faith in Jesus Christ and in His Word is necessary to become a Christian. Without true conversion, man is lost.

You say you are a Christian. But did your Christianity commence as was testified of the first Christians? Does it bear fruit today?

G. Sonnenberg

Can Christ Be Seen In Your Life?



Every Christian carries a great responsibility. He bears the name “Christian” and confesses that Jesus dwells within. If his life is consistent with his confession, he bears fruit to the glory of God. But if his life does not confirm his testimony, he brings shame on the name of Christ and on Christianity.

The character of God must be revealed in how we live, not merely in what we say. Since the world has often been deceived by so-called “Christians,” it will not be mere words and testimonies that convince it of God’s existence, and of His offer of salvation from sin. But actively living a consecrated life may convince a poor sinner of the power of God’s saving grace.

In many a heart there is a longing for God, and the soul cries out, “Is there a God who can save and wants to save me? How can I find Him? Can I be certain that He really exists?”

The Apostle Paul said, “For to me, to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain” (Philippians 1: 21). Every Christian should live in such a way that the sinner can see and know much of God by looking at the Christian’s life. Daily, the Christian should live a holy life and exude his love for Jesus Christ with a truly God-honoring walk. If we profess to be Christians, the world around us should receive a clear concept of Christianity through our lives. May our lives reflect a true pic-

ture of Christianity and the holiness of God to those around us.

God is love. As His children, we know Him as a God of love. We feel this love and its power in our lives. But the unbeliever knows nothing of God’s love for him; he cannot see it. We can tell him about it, but he cannot comprehend it. What can be done? As Christians, we must let him see and feel this love through our own lives.

The world must see in us a love that causes us to do for our fellow man what the unsaved cannot do. They must feel in us a powerful current of love that convinces them of a power that is beyond human capacity. Children of God, we can let the sinner know that God loves him by being the hands and feet of our loving Savior, Jesus Christ.

A great responsibility rests on us. We are the pure spring that should be filled with love. The unsaved must see God’s love in us. In us, they must see the beautiful character of God so they can “taste and see that the LORD *is* good” (Psalm 34: 8).

Has the world around us ever seen Jesus? We should live so that when people are asked if they have ever seen Jesus, they can say that they have seen Him in us. The world desires to see the love of God. Let us show them, not in words but with our lives. ■

This Age Needs Christ

Everyone has their own life experiences. Most have gone to school for many years. Everyone has some knowledge of a few things, and some have knowledge of many things. In today's culture, people consciously or subconsciously make an effort not to display vulnerability in any respect, so they talk about new vehicles or about the newest and latest developments. It would be fair to say that all of us like to know something of our culture going on in our world.

Besides, we are all more or less people of this century. We have both feet on the ground; we are perceptive, and usually make use of our five senses, intent to be on top of everything. After all, we only go through life once.

Yet today, after a very busy day, we experienced something extraordinary on our way home. A young man was on the street, handing out invitations to an evangelistic meeting. The person on the receiving end of the pamphlet crumpled it up in rage and shouted loudly and angrily, "Is this nonsense starting up again?"

Perhaps a few bystanders thought, "Why can't these people just leave us alone? After all, I know what I need to do, and want to do, and I don't need them to tell me to do these things!" Some believe that taking God's Word seriously and conforming their lives according to its truths would portray them as foolish and unfit for life.

Others however, even in our modern age, testify from the depths of their soul, "Only the Word of God, the Gospel, has made me wise." By the way, this is not a new discovery. Several thousand years ago, people already happily testified to this reality: "Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:104).

But how can we identify the truth? What is true wisdom, and what is extreme folly?

Most likely, only a few are convinced and will admit that many things in our world are broken, corrupt, and perverse. Because so much of our world is depraved,

humans constantly endeavor to improve it. They have been striving to do so for millennia. There is no generation that has not recognized these problems and hasn't tried to tackle the dilemma in new ways, with new strength and courage. To this day, the results are often unsettling, humiliating, and even devastating for all humanity.

Justifiably then, we should consider whether it isn't simple-minded to try to generate a "new and improved world" without first renewing its people.

If one hasn't been transformed, hasn't confessed their sins, the evil within, forsaking it, then how can "good" triumph? One may have the will to do good, do right, but the strength to do so is simply lacking. And finally, millions of "intelligent" people declare this condition to be "normal."

All the mending and patching on an old, tattered, and moth-eaten dress simply will not help. There is only one solution: a new dress. All the alterations, corrections, and doctoring of ourselves cannot fix the problem.

A new world can only be "built" with those who have become new, and such newness can only be achieved through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Bible says, "If anyone *is* in Christ, *he* is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). That is wisdom.

Many of our time are educated and enlightened. Yet hardly any choose to acknowledge the most important event in the history of the world—the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The Way of Truth has already been revealed for centuries, paved by the Lord Jesus. It was the way out of despicable egoism and materialism, out of the slavery of sin, to a way of peace with God and to forgiveness. What a pity it is that people take a path that results in a dead end!

To this day, many believe in the existence of God, if only as Schiller's *Ode to Joy* proclaims: "Brothers, above the starry canopy, there must dwell a loving Father." To live a life without seeking and desiring

peace with God is tragic. Peace with God is given only through Jesus. God says in His Word, “For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only *that*, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation” (Romans 5:10–11). How dangerous to leave the matter pending until eternity, when all will be lost and it will be too late! Hastening towards death is utter foolishness without earnest concern for one’s eternal salvation. What is the benefit of our modern idols? Our money, our car, our beauty, our expensive

clothes, our prestige, all the pleasures and joys? We make many errors in life, and sometimes we can smile about them. However, all excuses and frivolity must cease in light of this matter: Will you choose eternal life or eternal death?

If we are so passionately devoted to earthly and temporal things, how much more should we do our utmost to ensure our lives are really in order with God? This will only happen when we venture to forsake our old way, and in childlike faith, entrust our new life with all its trials, fully to Jesus. That is true wisdom!

A. Stäheli

The Hallmark of a True Christian

The hallmark of a true Christian is a great, true, and active love for. Jesus Christ said to His disciples: “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35). If we love our neighbor, we have fulfilled the law. The commandments against adultery, murder, stealing, bearing false witness, and covetousness, as well as all other laws, can be summed up in one law: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Since love fulfills the entire law, all actions undertaken in love towards others inherently avoid inflicting harm on them.

Love for our neighbors must suffuse and transform the daily life of a Christian to heal, comfort, and encourage others’ hearts. Through our love, we can show those in despair how to believe in a loving God again. All the hate and jealousy in the world, and all the differences between people and nations cannot be overcome and resolved through force—whether fists or guns or nuclear bombs—but only through love and mutual understanding.

J. F. Oberlin once recounted an experience he made as a young man: “One cold winter’s day, I set out from

Strasbourg on foot. I had planned to hike for several hours, but growing exhausted from hunger and exertion, I sat down in the snow on the wayside and fell asleep. Suddenly, I felt myself gripped in strong arms and lifted into a cart, which brought me safely to the next town. Realizing the driver had saved my life, I thanked him sincerely and tried to give him some money, but he would not accept. ‘At least tell me your name,’ I begged.

“He answered, ‘I see you are a pastor. Tell me, what was the Good Samaritan’s name?’ I could not answer.”

At the end of the parable of the good Samaritan, the Lord said, “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37).

If Christ lives in us, He leads us into His love and throughout our lives, through all times, through suffering and hardship, through the dread of death and to our living hope’s goal, the heavenly Jerusalem, illuminated through the glory of God.

All water flows to the oceans, and yet they do not overflow. The more we love, the happier we are. How much love you have given helps determine the value of your life. ■

Fight According to the Rules

“**A**nd also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules” (2 Timothy 2:5).

With these words, the Apostle Paul addressed his young friend in the faith and spiritual son Timothy. This second chapter is full of good exhortations. What was good and useful to young Timothy in his day is also useful to all of God’s children in our day, young and old.

These earnest words are addressed to children of God, for in the hour when a man surrenders himself to Christ and has the blessed experience of salvation, he becomes a fighter. As an experienced man of God, Paul wanted to make it clear to all of us that there is a wrong and a right way of fighting.

The natural man is spiritually dead. He lives in sin and serves Satan’s kingdom. He wanders through this life homeless and aimless. He wanders unsteadily and fleetingly until he can no longer resist the lure and call of the Savior. He becomes convinced of his lost, sinful condition, and of the service he renders daily, even hourly to the devil. As he is sinking, he can grasp the saving hand of the living Savior reaching out to him, What a privilege to praise the great love and grace of God as one who is now saved! Through Jesus Christ, God gives glorious and free redemption from sin to everyone who comes to Him in sincere repentance and childlike faith. Once redeemed, we must fight the good fight of faith, so we do not lose the salvation we have gained.

The saved one is now a fighter in God’s kingdom. Only now do we see the danger we are in and the efforts Satan is making to snatch us from kinship with God. We were not redeemed and saved from sin in order to give ourselves up to rest, but rather, to work and fight in the Lord’s kingdom. Daily, even hourly, we must struggle against the powers of Satan. We are to rule over sin, and we can only do so through the power and grace of Christ.

Thank God His grace is greater than the power of sin and the devil! He has promised us victory in every battle against the devil’s powers. When we fight ac-

ording to God’s rules, there will be glorious victory and we will be crowned.

If we desire to be victorious, we must always fight according to God’s rules. We must know who our enemy is, and the strategies he tends to employ. Secondly, we must be clear about who and what we are fighting for. We are at the service of our Heavenly Lord and Master, Who has overcome sin and the world. Therefore, we also fight not in our own strength but in the strength of the Lord.

Do you have complete victory daily and hourly over the power of sin? Have you grown in your experience and become more skilled in spiritual warfare? Has your inward man grown? We must be victors over sin and Satan, who is our ancient archenemy.

Once the soldier is equipped with his battle gear, he is able to go into combat. Writing to us in the sixth chapter of Ephesians about the spiritual armor necessary for God’s children, Paul says, “Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness” (Ephesians 6:13–14).

God’s Word teaches us that only those who persevere in this struggle to the end will win the crown. God has promised us a crown; let’s make every effort to obtain it.

Today, many believe, “Once saved, always saved.” In other words, they believe salvation cannot be lost, once they have received this gift and tasted the grace of God. But Paul writes to Timothy that only those who fight according to the rules will be crowned; only the victors will receive the crown.

Fighting according to the rules includes service in God’s kingdom. Love for God, His kingdom, and His children must burn within us. We should become bearers of His gospel. As we allow “self” to take a back seat, our time and money must all belong to the Lord, Who has called us into His service. Obediently and willingly, we must be subject to Him and carry out every command for Him. We cannot possibly fight ac-

cording to our own will and convenience and expect to press forward in our own strength and armament. No, God cannot use such a soldier. He desires fighters who live daily by His grace and keep their eyes on the goal, which is the heavenly calling. He needs victorious soldiers who resist sin, who grow strong in the battle and become mightier, bolder, and more capable day by day.

Are you one of those who fights according to God's rules, my dear reader? Do you have victory in your life? Or are you perhaps one of those who fights wrongly and therefore is defeated, who does not celebrate victories because you live for yourself? Let's each

examine ourselves and see that we fight according to God's Word.

"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). And so also these words of the Apostle Paul: "And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules." The crowning ceremony is in God's hands, but the weapons are in ours. Let's make use of them and be tireless soldiers who obey the commands of Christ, and win victoriously! ■

"So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" Acts 11: 26.

Christians

The designation "Christians" might have been a derogatory term given to Jesus' followers, because the disciples of that time were earnestly striving to be like their Teacher, Lord, and Master, Jesus Christ. After all, they had learned from Him while He was still physically among them. Thus, by following what Jesus had instructed them to do after His ascension, they experienced something that was foreign to the world. They received something the world cannot give: the Holy Spirit, and His power from on high, by which they were made Christians so genuine and complete, that they became true witnesses of their Lord.

The change in these first Christians was evident to all; the miracles they performed and the signs that were manifested marked them as true followers of Christ. There-

fore, they could rightfully bear the name of Christ.

They were people like everyone else, and yet they were different than those about them. Peter, who had denied the Lord, now stood rock solid for his Lord and Master. Having previously been intimidated by a servant girl, he now feared neither the high council nor for his life, which he later gave for the sake of Christ. He and those with him brought honor to the name "Christians."

Paul, a persecutor of Christians and Jesus, became a follower of Jesus, the Christ.

Many today know about Jesus: He was born into this world, lived, suffered, and died here; He rose from the grave and went to heaven; and He now sits at the right hand of the Father, representing us. Possessing such knowledge is very good, but it is not enough. We must become true followers of Christ.

The Christians of the early church detached themselves from everything contrary to their Christian experience. What they had found in their Lord surpassed everything this world could offer them. Not only had they learned from Jesus, but Jesus had taken possession of their hearts, which they fully consecrated to Him. This also explains why they were so successful in their work for Him and His cause. They were Christians in deed and in truth.

In their time, it was necessary to be such followers of Christ in order to be called "Christians." It is just as important today for all who call themselves Christians to act and walk as these first followers of Jesus did. Only then can we be a blessing to those around us and show them the true meaning of the name "Christian."

V. C. Wilson

The Power of Good Examples

Certainly, we are all very grateful for the good, helpful examples people have shown us through their lives and have left behind for our encouragement. These examples have often encouraged, comforted, uplifted, and helped us in our lives. Thank God these people existed and that they still exist today. Remembering the heritage of faith left to us by our fathers and forefathers, and examining their lives to the end is a worthwhile endeavor that allows us to follow their example faithfully. Their lives of faith are also presented to us in Scripture. Let us first think of Abraham, the father of faith. The Bible says he

reached a great age and never weakened in his faith. In Romans 4: 20–22, we read, “He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore ‘it was accounted to him for righteousness.’”

This man of faith lived many years ago, but his life’s example still speaks today. Abraham had devout servants, and his son Isaac was also a man of faith. We read of him, that “he went out to meditate in the field in the evening” (Genesis 24: 63). This was certainly due to the power of his father’s good example. May we too be faith-filled role models.

I too have been able to experience the power of good examples in my life. As a young man, I once came to the apartment of a pastor’s family. Though the apartment was cramped, they had to take in some displaced relatives. They chose to sleep in a corner of their kitchen themselves. Their selflessness impressed me deeply. Unexpectedly, this active model of faith demonstrated by the pastor and his family also had an effect on the village youth. The only son of



this servant of God met his former school friends after several decades, and they told him, among other things, “We still remember your father, and how he became known throughout the village because of his exemplary character. He made a great impression on us all as young people.”

It simply cannot be denied that good examples proclaim a profound message and have a powerful effect. A sister wrote about three special “memorials” God had placed in her life and for which she was truly grateful. She was referring to the lives of three people in whose household she was privileged to learn many things. One she called a “disciple of love,” the other she described as a “disciple of faith,” and the third as a “disciple of sanctification.” She was especially impressed by the power of their faith and prayer. The strength of their positive role modeling allowed them not to be forgotten. We can be truly grateful for such “living memorials” in our lives. “The memory of the righteous is blessed” (Proverbs 10:7).

Anyone familiar with Hebrews 11 knows of the list of faith heroes who led exemplary lives. For instance, Abel received the clear testimony from God that he was righteous. We read of Enoch who pleased God and lived a godly life until his death. We read of Noah who lived a godly life and was blameless in his day. During his lifetime, the people were very wicked, which causes one to consider the cost associated with his blameless life.

Even today, an exemplary life has assorted aspects: seclusion, abstinence, obedience, a firm heart and faith, faithfulness to God, and active prayer. Noah honored God by his faith, since one command from God was enough to build an ark to save his household, although there was no body of water nearby in which to float it. He found favor with God and survived the flood along with his family. God rewarded him for his obedience.

Many more people of faith are listed, including Moses. Of his faith, we read that he chose to suffer tribulations with the people of God rather than have the temporary pleasures of sin. He considered the disgrace of Christ to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he was mindful of the reward. By faith he left Egypt and did not fear the king’s wrath, for he clung to the One he did not see as if he saw Him, Christ (Hebrews 11:24–28).

Thank God that people of faith live among us even today. They are those whose lives bear witness to faith, faithfulness, sacrifice, devotion, and sanctification. Therefore, following the example of our Lord, let us be careful, by necessity, to set good examples. Jesus says, “A disciple is not above his teacher; but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40). May the Lord help us to be godly role models for those in our sphere of influence.

Friedrich Krebs, Edmonton (CA)



Theory and Practice

There are those who know the will of God and the teaching of the Bible, yet they are not Christians. Others confess to being followers of Christ for years, and have much knowledge; yet their lives are barren and lack the fruit of the Spirit. It is difficult to help such people. Sadly, both groups are in a dangerous predicament. They know everything so well, but they do not put their knowledge into practice. Although they know better, they do not act the way they should.

The Lord Jesus said, “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:17). Jesus’ advice to His disciples is also relevant for those who are nominal Christians. The blessing lies not in knowing, but in doing. How many people will only first realize on the Day of Judgment the real tragedy of their fruitless lives?

Generally, knowing comes before doing. Once we know what needs to be done, then we can proceed by putting knowledge to practice. On the job, we apply our knowledge to do what needs to be done. How much more should this be true in our spiritual lives. This leads to a closer walk with God and helps us serve Him better.

Parents are not pleased with children who are deliberately disobedient. In the same way, God is not pleased with those who know His will but do not do it. In 1 Samuel 15:23, King Saul is told that “rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry, because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from *being* king.” King Saul knew what God’s command was, but he did not obey it. Some people are hypocrites. When they’re together with the people of God, they act like them and speak and do as they should. But when they are not being observed, they go against their better judgment and do not hesitate to sin. Jesus confronted the hypocrites. The Apostle Paul said, “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27).

One may claim to be a Christian, but if they exhibit the fruit of the flesh and live in sin, how can anyone recognize them as a person of faith? Jesus shows us how to recognize what a person is really like. In Matthew 7:16, He says, “You will know them by their fruits.”

Not only do nominal Christians deceive themselves, but they are also bad examples for others. Instead of being light, they are a stumbling block. They bring dishonor to the name of the Lord and shame on the church of God. God will judge them accordingly.

If we do not strive to put our knowledge into practice, then we will tend to lose that knowledge. May God protect us from engaging in such a careless and useless type of Christianity.

When a teenager asked her youth pastor, who knew her well, what his opinion of her Christian life was, he replied, “Your theory is good; your practice is excellent.” If only we would all strive to have such a testimony before the Lord one day.

Theoretical knowledge is very important. But theory must be put into practice by sacrificial living, passion, and time in prayer so God’s pleasure may rest upon us. The world would be a much better place if all the theory of the Christian faith were put into practice. The Kingdom of God would make greater progress and greater blessings would flow if there were not so many Christians in name only, hindering the truth through their unrighteous living.

To have been born again in practice is much better than to be able to know and explain well the theory of the plan of salvation. A proverb tells us that words are leaves and fruit are deeds. Yet both leaves and fruit belong to the tree. Therefore, theory and practice are both important in our lives. The word of God declares, “Be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves” (James 1:22).

How is your theory, and how is your practice? God help us to be good in theory but also to live that theory out in practice. ■

The Modern Age Christian

What kinds of things come to mind when you think of living a Christian life in today's world? I asked myself if by living in our modern culture, we are confronted with different challenges than former Christians have had.

Today, it's all about the individual. The main goal is to satisfy one's own desires and wishes. Everyone lives according to their own ideas and understanding. Self-determination is high on the agenda. How this affects others is given little regard. The authority God has over our lives is not acknowledged. Lack of faith and godless living confront us in most aspects of society.

Love of money is evident through dishonest business practices and the black market. Much of social media focuses on the desire for recognition and honor. In essence, this is nothing but idolatry. The love of money and the love of honor have first priority. Our first love is to be reserved for God alone. We are to love God with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength (Matthew 12:30).

Pagan practices like yoga and esoteric pursuits have found their way into our society. But this is nothing new. Christians before us had to deal with the same sorts of issues. I want to encourage you by showing you that we are not facing new challenges. Solomon wrote many years ago, "That which has been *is* what will be, that which *is* done is what will be done, and *there is* nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which it may be said, 'See, this is new'? It has already existed in ancient times before us. There is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come by those who will come after" (Ecclesiastes 1:9–11).

Therefore, the Bible must remain the foundation for our decisions and way of life. It is not an outdated book. Today, it still has authority and contains the answers to the challenges we face. Even if the Bible may not address all of our specific challenges by name, it

still deals with applicable roots and causes, offering a solution in every situation.

Although the former generations of our Western society were influenced by Christian values, today there is increasing alienation towards them. We can compare this with the experience of the first Christians. Their differences compared with the Jewish inhabitants were less pronounced due to their common background, but the contrast to the pagan way of life was enormous.


It is so important that our lives be strongly Bible-centered and that its principles be so strongly embedded in our practical living that the contrast is clearly recognized by the world. Jesus says, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

Let our love be evident towards colleagues, neighbors, and anyone we may encounter. Let's serve instead of insisting on our own way. Honesty should be evident in all we do. We should have no self-seeking motives. We must not become entrapped in pagan practices, and our relationship with God should be our top priority. Let's be thankful people rather than complainers.

Be an employee one can depend on, whether or not you are being watched. Be a true friend and faithful spouse. Be selfless when dealing with others. Avoid sexual temptations. Do not cheat (neither on tests nor on your income tax). Do not engage in gossip, slanderous talk or negative remarks about others, whether they are present or not. Confront this type of behavior. Speak the truth. Give God the glory. All we have and all we are belong to Him.

Being a Christian today means to live according to biblical principles and to be an exception in a society that is increasingly alienated from godliness.

Stefan Schmelzle,
Pforzheim (DE)



How YOU CAN USE YOUR FREE TIME WISELY

For many of us, summer brings a time of rest. While we're still students, summer affords an opportunity to sleep in, perhaps go on vacation, or maybe even get a temporary part-time job. Even if we work full-time, we might take time off to relax, travel, or spend extra time with friends and family. We may also find time for rest during evenings and weekends throughout the year. What do we do with this time? How can we make the most of it?

God's Word has a lot to say about the topic of rest. In fact, in the very first chapters of the Bible, we read of rest. Scripture tells us in Genesis 2: 2 that after God worked and finished creating the universe and everything in it, "He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done." In doing this, He provided an example for us to follow.

God continued to place importance on rest, which is why He instituted the Sabbath for His Old-Testament people, the Israelites. After bringing them out of Egypt and providing them manna from heaven to eat, God commanded them to rest on the seventh day, saying, "'See! For the LORD has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you on the sixth day bread for two days. Let every man remain in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.' So the people rested on the seventh day" (Exodus 16: 29–30). God had a plan for His people, and that plan included rest.

Our best example from Scripture is always Jesus. As a man, Jesus was subject to human frailties, which included the need for rest. We often think we are busy. In fact, we probably often tell others just how busy we are, but it's unlikely we've ever been as busy as Jesus was during His earthly ministry. His days were filled with preaching, teaching, healing the sick, casting out demons, feeding large crowds of people,

*“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).*

and often being surrounded by multitudes.

In Mark 6: 7–13, we find the account of Jesus sending out His disciples to work for Him. He sent them out in pairs to preach the gospel of repentance, and He equipped them with the power to cast out demons and heal the sick. When the disciples returned from their travels and told Jesus what they had been doing and how they had been working for Him, He said to them, “‘Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.’ For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat” (Mark 6: 31). Later, the multitudes returned, and after teaching and feeding them, He sent His disciples and the crowds away. Then “He departed to the mountain to pray” (Mark 6: 46).

In this scriptural account, we find at least two wise ways of how we can use our time of rest. The first example is of the disciples taking time to be with Jesus. They had been busy working for Him and doing what He asked of them. When they finished what they were doing, they came back to Him and told Him about it. We know from other accounts how they sometimes returned with

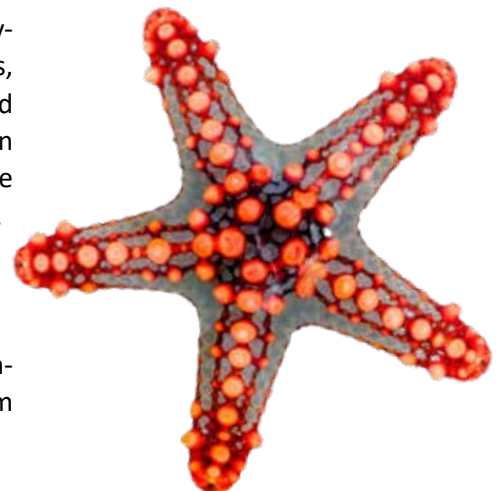
questions. They used their free time to be with their Master. We can do the same. Free time is an excellent opportunity to open God’s Word and read it slowly and prayerfully. Perhaps we can listen to a sermon that was meaningful to us in the past. Spending time with Jesus also means spending time praising Him. We can lift our voices and sing His praises. If we play an instrument, we can use our gift to glorify Him. It can be especially reviving to spend our time with Jesus outside in His creation. Go for a walk and think of His Word. Sing a song aloud or in your head while you admire a scenic view. Read Scripture outside in the sunshine.

The second example is seen in Jesus’ actions. He used His free time to pray. Although He was God, He still set the example for us and took time to pray. He desired to commune with His heavenly Father. On several occasions, we read how He took extended periods of time to pray, like when He prayed before choosing the twelve apostles (Luke 6: 12–13). He also prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane for strength before His arrest. His Father heard His prayer and sent an angel to strengthen and revive Him

(Luke 22: 41–43). God continues to strengthen and revive His children today when they come to Him in prayer. He invites us always to come to Him and to seek His help. Jesus said, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11: 28).

Of course, we are always invited to spend time with Jesus and to go to Him in prayer, not just on vacation or when we happen to have free time. However, when we designate time to rest, the best thing we can do for our soul is to use some of that time specifically to draw near to God and be revived inwardly, so we’re better equipped to face the work and challenges before us.

Karina Knelsen, Seminole (USA)



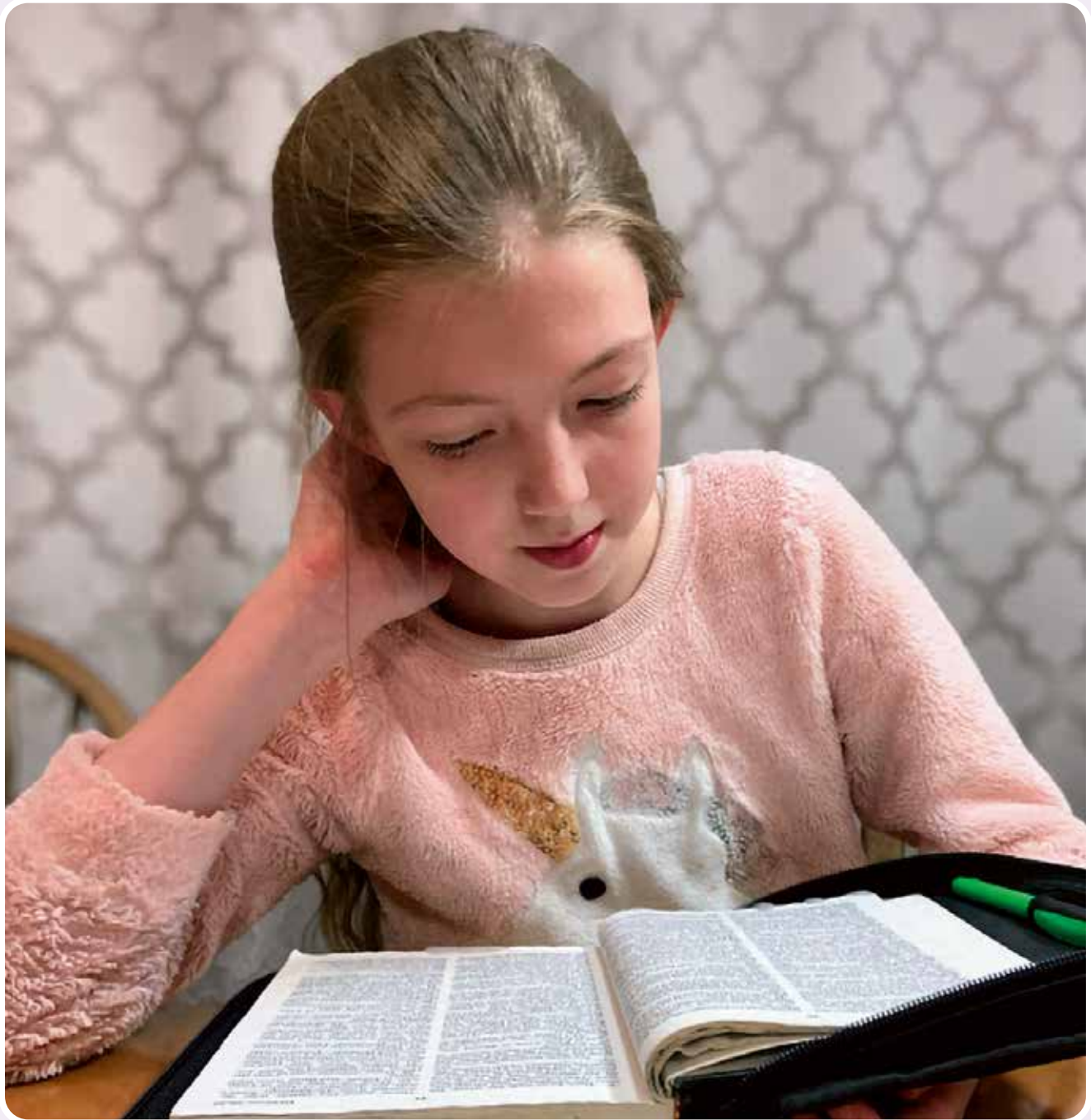
The Bible

God's Word on Paper

When I travel, I always take a Bible with me. One is so small that it fits in my jacket pocket.

The people of Israel were also to have the Word of God, the Law, and the words of the prophets with

them at all times. How did that work? After all, they moved long distances several times. Later, the Apostle Paul traveled a lot. He did not yet have a pocket Bible. How convenient our lives are today, and yet we forget the Bible so easily!



The “book” of antiquity was the scroll. The first “paper” was made in Egypt from the water plant, papyrus. It was so fragile that it had to be rolled. Parchment was invented in the city of Pergamon in Asia Minor (look for it on the map at the back of the Bible). Real parchment is specially tanned animal skin. Parchment was also rolled. Such a roll could be up to 40 meters long. The rolls were kept in leather covers or sealed clay jars. Later, many such scrolls were found in caves. Now we can compare the text of our Bible with the text on these scrolls. God has wonderfully kept His hand over His Word. It was not allowed to become lost.

The scrolls were written using ink and copied repeatedly by hand, of course. This had to be done very conscientiously to avoid mistakes. This is how God’s Word came to us through the centuries and to you, too!

God’s Word in Stone

“[The LORD] gave Moses two tablets of the Testimony, tablets of stone, written with the finger of God” (Exodus 31:18). How beautiful this writing must have been!

You may say, “We don’t have those tablets anymore. How can we know what God has written?” But we have the words, even though the tablets are no longer there. The words are in our Bible.

At the time of Moses (about 1500 years before Christ), people wrote on clay tablets. The clay (a kind of loam) was kneaded and flattened. Then they took a sharp stylus and pressed letters into this soft clay. If the text was no longer needed, the tablet was flattened again; it could now be rewritten. But if the writing was important, if it was to be stored, then the clay tablets were dried.

Large stones or stone tablets were used when something very important was written, and the letters were chiseled into the stone. In this way, they could be kept for a long time and read again and again.

God took His words so seriously that He wrote them in stone with His finger. We all need these words from God so we can know His will. Therefore, we should read the Bible every day and think about what it says. Have you done that today?

The Unity of the Bible

The Bible is a miracle book. Take it in your hand and count all the books in it. How many are there?

There are about 1600 years between the authors of the first and the last book. How many changes of opinion might there have been in such a long time? People often change their minds after only a few years. Not so God. Although the Bible was written over a span of 1600 years and contains 66 books, it only has one opinion, because it has only one author.

This is not the only miracle. The Bible was written in different places: in the desert, in Canaan, in Babel, in Rome, on journeys, in prison, and elsewhere. It was written in different languages. Yet it has only one theme because it has only one author!

Only one author? More than forty men wrote the Bible! There were shepherds, fishermen, statesmen, priests, Pharisees, musicians, a doctor, and many more. They all wrote one book, on one subject, most of them without knowing each other.

All this is possible only because the Bible has one author, and that is God, the Holy Spirit. In His power, under His guidance, people wrote His book.

The Author of the Bible

“God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by *His Son*.” While this is written in Hebrews 1:1–2, the whole Bible testifies to the fact that “God spoke.” In the Old Testament alone, you will find “God said,” or “God spoke,” many times. The Bible also says how God spoke: through the prophets—through the Son.

Some people imagine it occurring something like this: God spoke or revealed some truth; then the inspired author sat down and made a retelling by writing an essay, a historical book, a piece of poetry, or an account. There are those who think some of the written words are no longer relevant or important to us, or may not be true at all; other accounts may well be a message from God to us. To those who believe such things, the Bible says, “You are in error because you do

not know the Scriptures,” for the *whole* Bible is God’s word to us. True, God used human beings, and thus their language and idiosyncrasies to write down His Word. But the Holy Spirit guided them and gave them the right words. Carefully read 1 Corinthians 2:13 and 1 Thessalonians 2:13 for yourself and memorize the verses well.

“For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). Therefore, we can be sure the Bible is God’s Word.

The Bible’s Theme

Although different men wrote the Bible, it has only one Author—God Himself. But the Bible also has only one subject: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who became man to die for us and reconcile us to God.

The Lord Jesus says, “You search the Scriptures, . . . and these are they which testify of Me” (John 5:39). Jesus speaks of the Old Testament because the New Testament was not yet written in His time.

Already in Genesis, we find Jesus Christ, appearing like a very small bud. Everything is already inside, but it must gradually unfold. When we read the Old Testament, this bud unfolds more and more, and we see Jesus more and more clearly. Think of the many promises that speak of Jesus.

John says, “And the Word became flesh” (John 1:14). When Jesus became Man, the many passages in the Old Testament that speak of Him came to life. They were fulfilled.

So, when you read the Old Testament, you have Jesus in front of you—and the same is true of the New Testament. If you love Jesus, you love the Old Testament. He who criticizes it criticizes Jesus. Whoever is engaged with the Bible engages with Jesus. How great is this book!

The Bible’s Language

Many men have translated the Bible into the language of their country. Among them, Martin Luther is well-known to us. Even today, hundreds of missionaries are working to translate the Bible into foreign languages. Won’t you pray for them to do it accurately? Just think, there are still many who do not have God’s Word in their language. The Bible asks us, “How shall they believe if they do not hear?” Who knows, maybe one day

the Lord will also send you to people who have never heard His word.

Have you ever thought about what language God speaks? He can speak all languages! He also understands all languages: the prayer of the tribesman as well as that of the Indian scholar.

The Bible was written in the languages spoken by the people of Israel. First, it was Hebrew. During the Babylonian captivity (around 600 BC), the language spoken by the Jews changed from Hebrew to Aramaic, the language of the common people. Not surprisingly, the books of Daniel and Ezra were therefore written in Aramaic. Eventually, Alexander the Great of Greece conquered all the surrounding lands, creating one of the largest empires of the ancient world (356–323 BC). Since Greek then became the dominant language, the Old Testament was translated into Greek. At the time of Jesus, Greek was still written and read, so the New Testament is written in Greek.

Reading the Bible

“So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah” (Acts 8:30). In ancient times, reading aloud was prevalent. In Jewish schools, people even read half aloud to themselves.

So, we can understand that many who could not read and write themselves nevertheless heard God’s message. This could still be a way for us to share God’s Word today. You could read to your grandma who can’t see well anymore, or to your little brothers and sisters. Maybe someone in the neighborhood is sick and would be happy if you read them a passage from the Bible.

When Philip heard the eunuch reading, he knew right away what kind of book the eunuch had bought in Jerusalem: the prophet Isaiah. But how was the Ethiopian court official to understand a Jewish prophet?

The Bible says the Spirit of God has the task of making the Bible understandable to us. Therefore, ask Him to open your heart and mind so you understand what you read. After all, the Bible was created by the Spirit of God, so He is the best One to interpret it. It doesn’t matter if you don’t understand everything you read right away. Practice reading the Bible, and it will become more and more familiar and meaningful to you.

From “Many Days Has a Year”

The Wrong Book

In a small bookstore in a city in Spain, an apprentice, José, had just been severely scolded by his master because the books on the shelves were completely out of place. Still struggling to understand how the books were supposed to be organized, José endured his employer explaining the procedure yet again.

“The cover, number of pages, and price do not matter. All that matters is the content. The shelves are split into sections: travel, family, technology, agriculture, religion, and so on. If the title does not fall into a clear category, open the book and read a few paragraphs. It will not take long to find out where the book should go.”

Some time later, José came across a small book with a black cover. The book’s title did not tell José anything, so he opened it and began to read. The first thing he saw was,

“Behold, a sower went out to sow.” José skimmed the following lines, reading about thorns, good soil, and hundredfold yields. That made things clear for him: The book clearly needed to be filed under agriculture. So he placed it on the corresponding shelf.

One day, a farmer entered the store and asked for a book about cultivation because he wanted to further his professional knowledge. Since the store owner was not present, José had to advise the client. Remembering the small, black book, he grabbed it from the shelf and showed it to the farmer, pointing out that it must have been written specifically for farmers because it discussed sowing, harvest, weeds, and good and poor soil. The customer accepted the advice and bought the book.

The farmer intended to begin studying his new book that very evening, but he was soon disappointed to realize it was actually about religion. Annoyed, he slammed it shut and put it back on his shelf. Religion was not one of his interests. He intended to exchange the book the next time he

was in town and to complain to the bookseller about the young salesman’s poor advice.

Several weeks passed with the small, black book still on his shelf. Then, the farmer suddenly fell ill and was confined to his bed for several days.

As his health slowly recovered, boredom set in, so he asked his wife to bring him something to read. Trying to decide which of the books on their shelf to choose for her husband, she saw a small, black book she had not noticed before.

“What is this one about? Have you read it already?” she asked. After he explained how he had come to buy it, his wife handed him the book and suggested, “Why don’t you take a look? It might turn out to be worthwhile after all. You have to pass the time somehow.”

Although reluctant to accept the book, it did not take long for the farmer to become engrossed in its contents to the point that he forgot everything around him. He read without stopping until he came to the passage, “Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). Here, he paused for quite a while to absorb these words.

Finally, he continued. Everything was so new to him that he did not want to take a break; he even skipped supper. He was so impressed with what this small book had to say about the life, suffering, and death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God! Time and time again, he felt that the book was addressed to him personally.

One sentence especially spoke to him: “The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out” (John 6:37). Pausing again, the farmer went back a line to read, “Come to Me.” He recognized that the Lord was calling him. In Acceptance, he knelt down in his room and cried, “Lord Jesus, Son of God, Savior of the World, I want to come—here I am!” And he found peace and calm for his heart and conscience. ■



Wayward Children

Part 8

Eagerly Waiting

M. Schmelzle

When the son was still far away, the father already saw him coming. What does this tell us? Several years may already have passed. But he had not forgotten his lost son. He had not given up on him. He had no idea whether he would come or not. But eventually, he saw him coming from afar. Every day, morning, noon, and evening, he must have looked out the window or would have opened the door to keep a lookout. If he took a walk, it would have led him quite by “chance” to the place where he had last seen his son as he left.

When he hosted travelers, he would have pricked up his ears to hear or learn any tiny piece of news about his son. At night, he would have dreamed of him. He would have left his son’s room untouched so if he would return, he could go right back to it. At mealtimes, his eyes would have fallen during every meal on that empty chair.

Was his son still alive? He had never received a letter. No one ever told him they had seen or met him. But he never gave up hope.

Learn from your Heavenly
Father, Who has been
merciful toward us, and
sent His Son for us.

Or could he have been told about his son, how he threw all his money around and did not deny himself any worldly pleasures? Perhaps he was forced to hear how his son had lost everything and was now reduced to herding pigs. Would this second possibility have been any better? To suffer inwardly, to be ashamed because others also heard about it and whispered and pointed at him?

No matter what the reality was, it would have been such a hard time for the father, a time full of painful waiting. He was a father filled with affection and love.

When he was on the lookout, he was not full of anger; he wasn’t on the lookout to grab his son and rebuke him for his outrageous behavior and to punish him. Only merciful eyes were searching the horizon, a merciful heart that longed for the sight of his son, merciful arms outstretched to embrace the son, merciful lips to kiss the son.

Dear Mother, dear Father, allow the peace of God to ease your pain. Embrace the mercy of God. And

“And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.”
Luke 15:20

when you wait for your child, be full of mercy. Be open to building a new relationship with your child.

Learn from your Heavenly Father, Who has been merciful toward us, and sent His Son for us.

Lamentations 3: 22: “*Through* the LORD’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not.”

Search your heart and consider how you feel toward your child. Are you ashamed of your son or daughter? Are you angry about what has been done to you? Are you disappointed and can’t get over what happened? Are you allowing self-pity to plunge you into depression? Has your grief negatively affected your own life of faith? Have you perhaps even distanced yourself from “your Father”? Have you allowed your faith in Him and your trust in Him to diminish? Has your love for your Heavenly Father cooled off because of what happened?

Whatever our child may have done, we must never allow this to lead to sin in our own lives. Psalm 139: 23–24: “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.” Put the past behind you; you can’t change it. Don’t be tempted to blame others.

Stop asking, “What if . . .” all the time. Isaiah 43: 18–19 reminds us, “Do not remember the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I will do a new thing, now it shall spring forth; shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness *and* rivers in the desert.” Give the future to God. Let Him create something new. God gladly gives “second chances.”

Peter was given another chance. John Mark received another chance. God in His love gladly gives everyone another chance and does not give up on them. He is full of longsuffering and patience. Let God take the time He needs to carry out His plan.

Trust that God is constantly at work. Sometimes we do not even expect it. But when you pray for your child, you can trust that His Spirit is working in your child’s heart. God has made your request His task. Where you have no chance, God can make all the difference. If your words roll off your tongue unheeded, remember that “God is able to raise up children . . . from these stones” (Luke 3:8).

- To be continued -



Growing Older Gracefully

PART 2

Growing old is an inevitable fact of life. However, how we age is in our hands. We have a tremendous impact on our final years. In collaboration with other brothers and sisters, I have compiled some thoughts to help us in this process.

As followers of Jesus Christ, it is a given that we keep our eyes on the Lord. Our priority is to follow Jesus. Nothing should be more important to us than being faithful to Him.

Today, we are closer to the goal than ever before. Let's look at what really matters at this moment. As an airplane approaches its destination after a long flight, you will hear the announcement via the public address system to prepare for arrival. Everyone knows what that means: We've almost reached our destination.

What really matters? Here are some points to consider.

Prayer

You would be right in pointing out that prayer is important for all ages. But for older people, prayer plays an especially significant role. In addition, we have more time for it now than we used to. You often hear, "I'm bored." Why not use this time for prayer? It helps us to cope more easily with all the changes we're experiencing. The body is slowly declining, and mobility is less than desirable. On top of that, we usually struggle a bit with forgetfulness and much more. We don't wish to add to the list of things we can no longer do, lest it becomes too depressing. God's Word invites us to speak

with the Lord about it. We can bring every complaint to Him. You can pour out your heart to Him. The Lord understands us and is able to help. Make it a habit, and let it be your first response before expressing your need to others. Talk to your heavenly Father about it first. In Philippians 4:6, Paul writes, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God."

"Are your sorrows hard to bear? Do you worry? Is peace rare? Jesus understands and cares; turn your sorrows into prayers" (Dora Rappard).

This way of praying, this intimacy with the heavenly Father, must be learned. Start early and turn every obstacle or situation into prayer. Build this foundation of trust early in life. Those who learn to pray will continue this habit as they age and will thereby unburden themselves and make life easier.

The Word of God

When tempted by the devil to turn stones into bread, Jesus replied, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). This application is not difficult to understand. Bread has its place and is part of nourishment, and yet there is more to life than food. The inner man, however, is sustained by the Word of God. The prophet Jeremiah also spoke in this sense: "Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O LORD God of hosts" (15:16).

How wonderful it is to find an open Bible when visiting older brothers and sisters! Sometimes there is a magnifying glass on it; as we age, reading can often become challenging. We become “refueled” by the Word of God. Should our eyesight fail, we can still recall God’s Word. Hearing conversations where someone recites Bible verses memorized long ago brings delight to the soul. During my Bible school days, Sister W. Sonnenberg used to exhort us, “Children, memorize Bible verses.” This practice is part of preparation for growing old.

The Worship Services

As long as you are able, attend the services. Be present where God’s people gather and sing together, study God’s Word, and pray together. Regular attendance at worship is part of the life of a child of God. Hebrews 10:25 urges us to “not forsak[e] the assembling of ourselves.” This attitude, this faithfulness and joy in attending meetings must be developed at a young age. It should be a given to be present where brothers and sisters gather.

In old age, unexpected circumstances can tempt us to just stay home. We’re no longer as mobile, and everything takes longer. Perhaps we depend on a walker or cane, and some adversity sets in. Yet, attending meetings is very important for us, for we are blessed by the singing together, the preaching, and the fellowship. Through our presence, we can also be a blessing to others. The pastor and the congregation are encouraged when they see our peace and gratitude, our Bible in our hands, our smiles, our prayers. Our actions show that it is rewarding to serve the Lord. As long as it is possible, attend the meetings. Your presence is desired.

The Ministry of Witnessing

Sharing the Good News is the responsibility of all ages. We no longer meet classmates or work colleagues ev-

ery day. That time is history. But even now in retirement, we associate with various people. They may be people we live with, perhaps peers in a nursing home. One brother moved into a nursing home. Prior to eating his meal in the dining room, he bowed his head to give thanks. Then a thought crossed his mind The next mealtime, he stood up before the meal and asked his fellow residents if it would be all right with them if he said grace before each meal. The suggestion was gratefully accepted. So he instituted grace and faithfully carried out this privilege until his death. Another brother takes a walk every morning to stay fit. In his case, it could also be called a “missions trip” because he always carries and distributes some New Testaments on his walk. Many a time I observe him pocketing some New Testaments after the service. When he distributes them, they are often gratefully received. At times, he even engages in spiritual conversation with those receiving them.

You’re surrounded by people, too, aren’t you? It may be your doctor or the technician repairing your hearing aid or perhaps the optometrist who is trying to sell you a new pair of glasses. If you haven’t already done so, put some tracts in your pocket. Yes, even in your old age you can still do missionary work. But start early so it comes naturally to you. This mission changes our perception. How someone is dressed or how their hair is styled no longer affects you. You see the soul for whom the Savior died.

This article has attempted to share advice on aging gracefully. Let’s prepare ourselves and start this long before we actually grow old. It will make our lives much easier and enable us to touch the lives of others as well. Take time to pray about these thoughts and let the Lord guide you in your personal preparation.

Harry Semenjuk
- *To be continued* -

Do not be Deceived—God is not Mocked!

On November 12, 1872, two men were walking along the Baltic Sea coast. They had come from the city where they had business, and were trying to quickly reach their solitary village. The wind from the northeast was blowing fiercely, and the roar of the foam-capped waves sounded eerie. But they did not care, for they had seen worse, and besides, they were having a fervent conversation. Having already arrived at the village and standing at the crossroads, they now had to part ways.

The farmer reached out his hand to the teacher and said, “How true it is! Whoever wants to believe everything the Bible says must wrap both his eyes and his common sense with thick bandages. It is written, ‘Whoever says to this mountain, “Be removed and be cast into the sea,” and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.’ Sure, believe this if you can!” With that faithless comment, he pointed to the great dune that protected his barn and home from the wind and waves.

The teacher looked at him seriously and replied, “And I do believe it. ‘God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent.’”

The farmer shook his head and said, “Well, Teacher, if you are such a Bible-believing man, then say it. I give you permission—venture with my house and farm.”

“It is written again, ‘You shall not tempt the LORD your God’” (Matthew 4:7), the teacher replied, turning as he prepared to go on.

Then the farmer called after him, laughing, “So I will! Watch out, Teacher!” The blaspheming man raised his right hand toward the dune and said loudly, “Arise and throw yourself into the sea!”

But the mount stayed and did not give way, and behind it roared the surge and the billows of water. Again,

the farmer laughed and continued, “Even more, Teacher! I give the mountain twenty-four hours to think, and if it lies in the sea tomorrow night, there shall not be a word in the Bible book I would not believe.”

When the teacher heard this, he strode up to him with earnestness, laid his hand on his shoulder, and said solemnly, “My friend, ‘do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.’”

This conversation took place the night before the great storm surge.

In just a few more hours, the fury of the elements broke loose. When the farmer arrived home, he stretched out comfortably on his bed and said to his wife, “It’s good to be here!” and then fell asleep without prayer.

At midnight, he was startled and jumped up from his bed. The sound of the roaring and whooshing through the air sounded to him like the trumpet of the Last Judgment. His wife and children also jumped out of bed. The roof beams creaked and groaned as if they were only barely holding together in all their joints. But no need to fear; the new house was built of solid stone, of sturdy beams, planks, and rafters. But when the cuckoo in the wall clock announced the second hour of the morning, the farmhands rushed out of the stable and shouted, “For God’s sake, sir, hurry out! The dune must have broken somewhere. The tide is pouring everywhere into the village!”

Pale and trembling, the farmer hurried out. The cattle were already up to their ankles in water. “Chase the cows out of the barns and drive them inland! Harness the horses so we can save ourselves, if necessary,” he ordered.

After a few seconds, the bellowing cattle rushed from the farmhands’ sight. In no time the horses were



harnessed, but rescue was out of the question. The horses were also driven off and left to their fate.

Only with great difficulty were the master and servants able to get back into the house through the torrent of water. The storm raged with increasing ferocity, the sea thundered wildly, and the waves rose even higher. Now the elevated house was already standing in the midst of the rising tide, and the waves were crashing high upon the massive walls. The water penetrated through the doors and filled the rooms and chambers.

They brought what they could to the attic. But then it was as if the thunder rolled with tenfold force, as if everything about rattled and cracked. One impact after the other crashed against the seemingly faltering house. With pale, fearful faces, the men stood as pillars. On and on came blow after blow, as if giant hammers were pounding on the walls from outside. Then one of the farmhands said, "God have mercy on us; we are lost!"

The farmer said likewise, "We are lost!"

At these words, the mother embraced her children, the ten-year-old boy and the twelve-year-old girl. She covered her face and wept softly.

When once again the whole roof trembled, the girl clasped her hands and prayed in a loud voice:

"Spread Your wings upon me,
Oh Jesus, my joy,
Protect and be my guard.
Should Satan crave to devour,
Then let thy angels proclaim:
This child, Lord, shall be unharmed."

"Spread Your wings upon me," the boy also prayed. But the mother said, "Call on Me in the day of trou-

ble; I will deliver you," said our Lord and God. "God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent."

Although the hail pelted against the attic window and a cold draft blew through the loft, drops of sweat stood on the farmer's forehead, and he sighed, "Lord, help us, not for my sake but for the sake of my poor children! Save us!"

As the day dawned, hope stirred again in every heart. The farmer climbed to a gable and looked out through the window. Suddenly, he sank to his knees, covered his face with his hands, and began to weep. What had made his heart tremble? What had he seen?

The dune to which he had pointed with a free-wheeling hand a few hours before was gone, torn and swallowed up by the waves! The barn with all its contents had been swept away by the torrent. The large, thatched roof, however, lay pressed against the family home and fortunately protected it from the destructive impact of the waves.

The same hand which had unleashed the sea and broken the dune had thereby erected a protective dam to the family home. And the same voice, which in former days, when Christ walked upon earth, rebuked wind and sea, also commanded the waves of the Baltic to bow their proud heads and become calm as if nothing had transpired.

Following this terrible experience, the next time the farmer and teacher met, the farmer reached out his hand and said with lowered eyes and gathering tears, "'God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent.' Thank God, I have come to believe!"

The teacher replied, "Yes, because this is the work of God!" ■

Daily Anew

*Daily anew, sufficient grace is given,
Daily anew, the sun again has risen,
Daily anew, there's room to learn and grow,
Daily anew, no evil striving know,
Daily anew, avoid all vice and sin,
Daily anew, don't let temptation win,
Daily anew, practice humility,
Daily anew, live righteously and free,
Daily anew, pray fervently with passion,
Daily anew, love deeply with compassion,
Daily anew, suffer with dignity,
Daily anew, let hope your ally be,
Daily anew, not living here in vain,
Daily anew, in losing you will gain,
Daily anew, trusting His faithful Word,
Daily anew, growing closer to the Lord,
Daily anew, climbing higher day by day,
Daily anew, that is the Christian way.*

