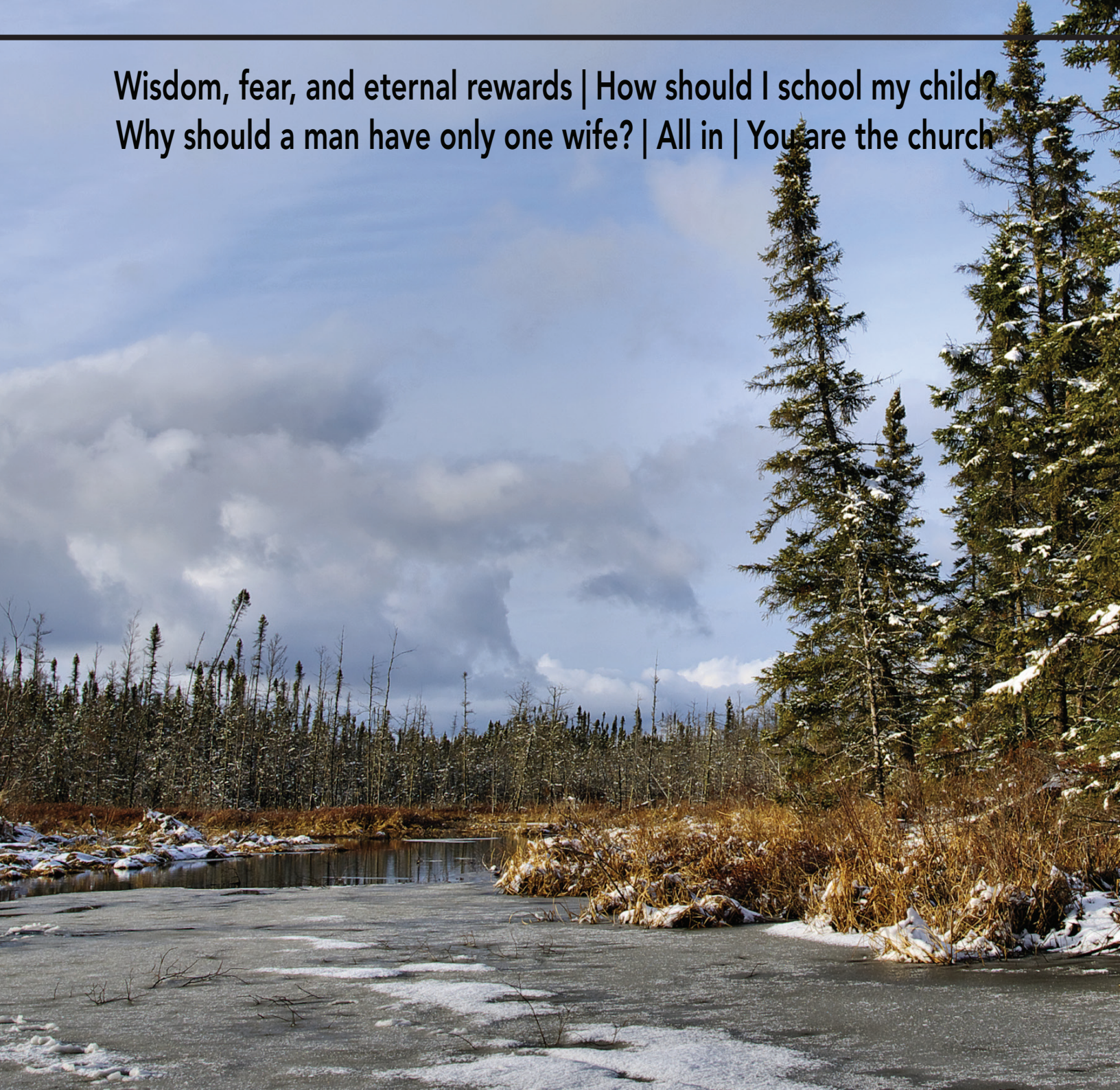


2021 Issue 1

MENBUILDERS

Building Godly men on the foundation of Jesus Christ **MAGAZINE**

Wisdom, fear, and eternal rewards | How should I school my child?
Why should a man have only one wife? | All in | You are the church



Wisdom, fear, and eternal rewards



If one were to conduct a survey in which respondents were asked “How do you become wise?” one could almost guarantee receiving answers along the following lines: “Become highly educated,” or “Acquire vast life experience,” or “Embrace the teachings of your culture.”

Let’s see how Scripture teaches us to acquire wisdom. Consider the following verses:

Proverbs 1:7 “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

Proverbs 9:10-11 “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. For by me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you.”

In the preceding verses we clearly see that true wisdom is not merely acquired from a textbook or from many years mastering one’s trade. Sure, there are many ‘smart’ people in the world—say, astronauts and brain surgeons—but that does not necessarily make one ‘wise’. Many highly educated people have made very poor (and infamous) life decisions. And what does Scripture say about ‘smart’ people who deny our Creator’s existence? Consider Psalm 14:1: “The fool has said in his heart,

‘There is no God.’” So, how does one acquire true wisdom? In short, it develops out of a relationship with the Lord. Let’s reconsider the preceding verses from Proverbs. To me, the phrase “The fear of the LORD is the beginning...” leaps out of the page. Scripture clearly instructs the reader that true wisdom comes out of respect, awe, and reverence (that’s the meaning here for the underlying Hebrew word for ‘fear’) towards our Maker. The word ‘fear’ can also mean (perhaps unsurprisingly) ‘to be afraid of.’

How does this strike you? We live in a culture where authority figures are disrespected, continuously questioned, and publicly maligned. Obviously there have been many authorities that have abused their position of trust and responsibility. Nonetheless this does not permit one to throw respect and submission ‘out with the bathwater’ so to speak. Unfortunately, this pessimistic attitude toward authority in general has also polluted our attitude to our ultimate authority, the Lord God.

Let’s consider additional Scripture, from the book of Proverbs, to see how the “fear of the LORD” is a necessary condition for acquiring true wisdom:

Proverbs 8:13 “*The fear of the LORD* is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverse mouth I hate.”



Proverbs 10:27 “*The fear of the LORD* prolongs days, but the years of the wicked will be shortened.”

Proverbs 14:26-27 “*In the fear of the LORD* there is strong confidence, and His children will have a place of refuge. *The fear of the LORD* is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death.”

Proverbs 15:16,33 “Better is a little with *the fear of the LORD*, than great treasures with trouble...*The fear of the LORD* is the instruction of wisdom, and before honour is humility.”

Proverbs 16:6 “In mercy and truth atonement is provided for iniquity; and by *the fear of the LORD* one departs from evil.”

Proverbs 19:23 “*The fear of the LORD* leads to life, and he who has it will abide in satisfaction; he will not be visited with evil.”

Proverbs 22:4 “By humility and *the fear of the LORD* are riches and honour and life.”

Proverbs 23:17 “Do not let your heart envy sinners, but be zealous for *the fear of the LORD* all the day.”

Proverbs 29:25 “The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the LORD shall be safe.”

The preceding verses clearly teach that having a submissive, respectful, and loving attitude toward our heavenly Father will

allow us to flee from evil and have the deeper riches: confidence through Him, wisdom, fruitful days, and true satisfaction in life.

In an earlier paragraph I mentioned that fear of the Lord can also imply that we should be afraid of the Lord. How can this be? Does not “perfect love cast out fear” (1 John 4:18)? Let’s now consider the times when it is appropriate to be afraid or fearful of the Lord. To properly consider this we must also distinguish between the position of the unbeliever (non-Christian) and the believer before the Lord. Let’s first consider the position of an unbeliever. If an individual has not placed their faith in Jesus Christ, Scripture makes it abundantly clear that they are in a disastrous position. 2 Thessalonians 1:8-10 prophetically describes the Lord doing the following in the future: “In flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be glorified in His saints and to be admired among all those who believe.” Truly an unbeliever should have fear of such a day coming upon him. Thankfully, by the Lord’s mercy, we are not left without a provision for avoiding such doom. Scripture clearly describes the gracious gift that has been offered to all. Consider the following ‘well known’ verses: “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23) “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten son of God.” (John 3:16-18)

Let’s now consider the position of the believer. Should a believer ever be fearful of the Lord? First, let’s clarify our position concerning one issue that has confused many Christians over the years. It is this: a believer never has to be in fear of their ultimate position in Jesus Christ. That is, a believer can never lose their salvation. We are saved by Christ’s record, not ours. This fact is theologically referred to as ‘eternal security’. Although the fact of eternal security is continually under attack it is clearly supported by Scripture such as the following:

1 Peter 1:5 “Who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Ephesians 2:8-9 “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.”

Hebrews 13:5 “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’”

John 10:28 “And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of my hand.”



Romans 8:31-39 also instructs us that a believer can never be separated from the love of Jesus Christ. (Please consider reading this portion from Romans.)

I believe that much of the confusion within the church concerning the teaching of eternal security actually arises out of confusion surrounding the role of eternal rewards for believers at the end of the age. Let me also preface the following discussion by stating that while Scripture teaches that all believers are **loved** by the Lord it does **not** teach that all believers are **well pleasing** to the Lord. This is a crucial distinction that must be understood in order to properly interpret certain key passages concerning rewards and the need to hear “well done” after Jesus returns. Consider 2 Corinthians 5:9-10 in which the apostle Paul boldly states: “Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

Paul’s objective, his ‘aim’, was to be well pleasing to His Saviour. If every believer is automatically well pleasing to the Lord there would be no need for Paul to have made this his goal! Note also that these verses from 2 Corinthians teach that all people (including believers) will stand before the Lord and give an account of their actions. At this juncture, we must be careful to distinguish between the two judgments that Scripture discusses.

The unbeliever will ultimately stand before the Lord at what is commonly referred to as the ‘great white throne judgment’ (see Revelation 20:11-15). At this judgment any person whose name is not found in the Book of Life will be “cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:15) and will be eternally separated from the Lord. The judgment taking place at the ‘great white throne’ is for condemnation and eternal punishment. In the case of believers, which is our primary focus, their judgment occurs at what is referred to as the ‘judgment seat of Christ’ (2 Corinthians 5:10) or ‘bema’ in the original Greek. This tribunal, if you will, is for assessment and distribution of rewards, **not for eternal condemnation**. That is, at the bema seat, believers will not be assessed to determine whether or not their works merit salvation. Rather believers’ lives will be assessed to determine if they have been found well pleasing to the Lord. Rewards will be distributed according to one’s faithful and obedient service to the Lord. The usage of the bema seat terminology in Paul’s letter is thought to refer to the elevated seat that a judge at the Olympic Games, or at other sporting events, sat upon and from which they distributed awards and crowns to victorious participants. Many other passages, written to believers, plainly teach and exhort us to live God-honouring lives. Failure to do so will come with consequences, primarily the loss of rewards but not the loss of salvation. Please ponder the following:

Matthew 16:27 “For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.”

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 “Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

Romans 14:10,12 “But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat [that is, ‘bema’] of Christ...So then each of us shall give account of himself to God.”



Colossians 1:9-10 “For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.”

2 Timothy 2:3-5 “You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier. And also if anyone competes in athletics, he is not crowned unless he competes according to the rules.”

2 Timothy 4:7-8 “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.”

Hebrews 12:28-29 “Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.”

1 John 2:28 “And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.”

Revelation 22:12 “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.”

Also, one may read the parable of Matthew 25:14-30 to understand that servants of the master are neither equally faithful nor equally rewarded. So it is amongst believers.

Much more could be said about wisdom, fear of the Lord, and rewards. If we are a believer, our minimum takeaway from this teaching should be a deep recognition that Scripture definitively instructs us that true wisdom and kingdom purpose is found by walking in the fear of the Lord. The faithful lives that ensue will be found to be worthy of His pleasure and receipt of rewards upon Jesus Christ’s return. Therefore, we should live consecrated, kingdom-focused lives while we have breath! Until our mortal body perishes we should be encouraged from the following words of the apostle Peter: “In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:6-7)

ALL IN

What are you ‘all in’ for?





ictures, they say, are worth a thousand words. The accompanying photograph, taken at the Blohm & Voss shipyard in Hamburg, Germany, has its own story to tell. The date was June 13, 1936, and the occasion was two-fold. First, shipyard workers were witnessing the launch of the new German navy training ship *Horst Wessel*. Second, to commemorate the ship launch, workers had gathered to hear a speech filled with Nazi propaganda from Deputy Fuhrer Rudolf Hess. Adolf Hitler was reportedly at Hess' side. Possibly due to agreement with Nazi teachings, or possibly due to sheer compulsion, all shipyard employees in the photo have their right arms raised to publicly display their allegiance to the Nazi party. Except for one.

With arms crossed, the conspicuous worker in the photograph apparently refused to salute the Fuhrer. Due to the passing of time and the lack of clarity in the photograph, the identity of the worker remains difficult to definitively establish. Two names have been put forth over the years—August Landmesser and Gustav Wegert. Both names have been put forth for good reason. Both were reportedly employees of Blohm & Voss in 1936, both had a physical resemblance to the uncompromising man in the photograph, and both had reason to distance themselves from the Nazi party. August Landmesser had joined the Nazi party in 1931 in hopes that it would strengthen his employment prospects. He was expelled from the party in 1935 when he became engaged to Irma Eckler, a Jewish woman. History records that Landmesser refused to break off the engagement and eventually married Irma. They had two daughters together but the Nazi party during World War 2 would not forgive them for breaking the Nuremberg intermarriage laws concerning Germans and Jews. Irma was eventually killed in the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp and August died in Croatia while serving, under draft compulsion, in a Nazi penal battalion. Gustav Wegert has also been advocated in more recent years as the non-saluter's identity. He was a Christian and was reported to respond with "Guten Tag" ("Have a good day") when someone greeted him with "Heil Hitler". Gustav believed that much of the Nazi party's teachings contradicted that of the ultimate authority—God Himself. Although warned by his employer multiple times regarding his 'insubordination', Gustav was spared significant punishment as his superiors viewed him as a qualified and valuable company employee. Despite Gustav's life being spared by the Nazi party, he was willing to risk paying the ultimate price for a belief he could have chosen to hold only privately.

Scripture is also replete with examples of men who were willing to pay a price for standing for righteousness and truth. Think Paul, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego, the apostles, king David, Noah or even Jesus Christ Himself. One could list dozens of other saints from the Scriptures. Countless others, nameless in the annals of history, have also refused to bow to the conforming pressures of the world. Some were spared their physical lives while some, under the Lord's sovereign hand, were martyred. However, they all suffered in a variety of ways. Some had their character and good works maligned. Others

had their physical well-being under frequent threat of harm. The apostle Paul told Timothy, his younger son in the faith, that "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12) Peter wrote, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy." (1 Peter 4:12-13)

What then does suffering for Christ look like? Using Luke 6:27-36 as a pattern, we suffer for Christ in our daily lives when we:

- love our enemies and do good to those who hate us and our Saviour
- bless those who curse and malign our reputation
- don't fight back out of pride and strife
- give sacrificially to those who cannot repay us
- love the unlovable, whether they are family, neighbours or strangers

Living this type of life is a work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. It can only be genuinely accomplished via the Lord's power. We cannot conjure up this ability from our human nature.

There is also a type of suffering that the Lord does not desire for a Christian. What could this be? 1 Peter 4:15 says, "But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters." Some suffering comes upon us as a result of our disobedience to the Lord rather than from our obedience to Him. This suffering is not glorifying to Him. We need to discern if our trials are a result from ungodly living or for living for Christ. If our sin is the cause we need to repent from our sin rather than merely asking the Lord for grace to persevere. I would suggest that a high percentage of suffering amongst believers in our culture arises from knowingly making poor life choices and stubbornly refusing to mend broken relationships. Sadly, many relationships in our lives are broken, not because of our Godly testimony, but because of our unforgiveness towards others to whom we should be showing mercy.

Let's consider the photograph once again. Two 'camps' are clearly represented. On one hand, the majority camp is 'all in'. They are following the mainstream viewpoint of the time and appear unable or unwilling to stand for the side of truth and righteousness. The lone man in the photo (his identity is unimportant now) is also 'all in' despite being alone. You see, we are always 'all in' for something. The question remains: Are we 'all in' for the Lord's kingdom or for the fleeting pleasures and distractions of this life?

"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth." (Matthew 6:24)

Why should a *man* have *only 1* wife?



Admittedly,

this article has an intriguing title. In our culture's current headstrong quest to exercise its sexual 'freedom' and perceived 'rights' the Biblical standard for marriage has been attacked from all quarters. Accusatory questions include the following: Why get married? Isn't marriage antiquated? Why can I marry only one wife? Why can't a man just marry another man? Or two? And so on. There is seemingly no limit on the desire to redefine the most basic of terms. It is as if confusion is the intended result. And perhaps it is.

Nevertheless Scripture provides clear answers for these sort of questions. Actually I suspect it is the fact that Scripture provides clear answers which motivates so many to now question the fundamentals. The vital picture of marriage is clearly weaved throughout Scripture. This is the primary reason why Satan wants to attack anything that resembles a Biblical marriage. He hates what marriage represents and the fact that God Himself created it.

Is marriage an 'old' concept? Well, yes, and that's a good thing in fact. In the beginning we see that God instituted marriage (Genesis 1:27-28; Genesis 2:21-25). Sure, there was no record of a signed marriage certificate or the cutting of a cake and there were no human witnesses. But it was a marriage nonetheless—one man and one woman committed to each other for life. They were to raise children while simultaneously keeping and tending to the work the Lord God had assigned to them in the Garden of Eden. This marriage was to be a glorious means for expanding God's visible dominion.

Note that the Biblical picture of marriage hinges on the notion of a 'counterpart'. A quick search online provides a decent definition. A counterpart is a "person or thing holding a position or performing a function that corresponds to that of another person or thing in another place." Physiologically speaking one can clearly see that the physical counterpart of a man is a woman. All the 'pieces' fit together, if you know what I mean, and the seed from the man is what produces life in the

woman. There is no other natural arrangement that comes close to matching this reality. Any other attempt is self-contrived and artificial. A byproduct of the the intimate physical union between a man and a woman is children. Malachi 2:15 states, "He [God] seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth." Scripture, too numerous to mention really, only advocates for a sexual relationship between one man and one woman for life. In any instance where even a believer deviated from this pattern trouble quickly ensued. Think of Abraham with Hagar, David with Bathsheba, the church at Corinth, etc. Nowhere in Scripture does the Lord ever instruct a man to simultaneously have two wives.

But the physical picture of marriage reflects an even deeper picture of the relationship between the Lord and His 'called out ones', the church. Many times in the Old Testament we see a picture of the Lord as the husband of Israel. For example, Isaiah 54:5 says, "For your Maker is your husband, the LORD of hosts is His name; and your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth." After the giving of the Holy Spirit and the church life was born we see a mystery more fully revealed. Husbands should love their wives and wives are to submit to their husbands (Ephesians 5). Why? Because a marriage is to reflect the relationship that Jesus has with the church! Just as Christ leads and loves His followers so should a man lead and love his wife. Just as the church is to submit to its Saviour so should a wife to her husband. "This is a great mystery," Paul writes, "But I speak concerning Christ and the church." (Ephesians 5:32) At the return of Jesus, as foretold in Revelation 19:7, we see that the Lamb (Jesus) will come and His wife (the church) will have "made herself ready." Now for a simple question: Is Jesus returning to earth to marry two churches? Of course not. There is only one church and it consists of those individuals who have placed their trust solely in Jesus Christ.

So, one wife it is.

Beyond Olympic Glory

by Dr. Albert Mohler, Jr.



The medal ceremony at the Olympics is a moment of rare pomp and ceremony in this informal age. The ceremonies represent both climax and catharsis, with athletes awarded the coveted gold, silver, and bronze medals placed around their necks.

It was not always so.

When Eric Liddell, “the Flying Scot,” won the 400 meter race and the gold medal at the 1924 games in Paris, there was no awards ceremony. Back then, the medals were engraved after the games and mailed in a simple package to the victors. But, even without the medal ceremony, there was glory. Liddell instantly became a hero to the entire United Kingdom and was recognized as one of the greatest athletes of his age.

Americans of my generation remember Eric Liddell largely because of *Chariots of Fire*, the 1981 British film written by Colin Welland, produced by David Puttnam, and directed by Hugh Hudson. The film was a surprising success in both Britain and the United States, winning four Academy Awards including Best Picture. The musical score for the film by Vangelis won another of the Oscars, and its theme is still instantly recognizable to those who have seen the movie.

To its credit, *Chariots of Fire* recognized Eric Liddell’s Christian faith and testimony. His story is inseparable from the drama of his refusal to compete on Sunday, believing it to be a breaking of God’s commandment. Though this determination was well-known before the 1924 Olympics, it became

internationally famous when heats for Liddell's best race, 100 meters, were scheduled for Sunday.

The dramatic plot of *Chariots of Fire* presented a personal competition between Liddell and Harold Abrahams, another top runner who had experienced the agonies of anti-Semitism as a student at Cambridge. When Liddell withdrew from the 100 meter event, Abrahams won, bringing Britain glory. Liddell had become a figure of ridicule, with everyone from athletic officials to British leaders unable to persuade him to sacrifice his moral convictions for the Olympic glory he was promised.

Liddell was left to run the 400 meter race, an event for which he was not favored and to which he knew he brought liabilities in terms of his racing form. But run he did, and he ran right into the history books, winning the gold medal with a personal story that shocked the world, even in the 1920s. His intensity of Christian conviction was already out of style and often ridiculed, but Eric Liddell became one of the most famous men in the British Empire and the larger world of athletics.

Those who have seen *Chariots of Fire* well remember how it ends, with the magnificent and sentimental music of Sir Hubert Parry's anthem "Jerusalem" and William Blake's famous words: "Bring me my Bow of burning gold; Bring me my Arrows of desire; Bring me my Spear: O clouds unfold! Bring me my Chariot of fire!"

Then the screen fills with these words in text: "Eric Liddell, missionary, died in occupied China at the end of World War II. All of Scotland mourned."

The end.

But in those few words was the real story of Eric Liddell. Yes, he was one of the most famous athletes of modern times and the Olympic glory of Scotland. He was also a Christian who refused to compete on Sunday and refused to compromise. Unquestionably, Eric Liddell was made to run. And yet, more than anything else, Eric Liddell believed that "God made me for China."

Many Christians are proud to quote Liddell's most famous lines from *Chariots of Fire*: "God made me fast. And when I run, I feel his pleasure." God did make Eric Liddell fast, and he ran for God's glory, but those words were not actually from

Liddell. They were written by Colin Welland and put in the voice of Liddell, as played by actor Ian Charleson.

What Liddell did say, and more than once, was that God made him for China. This is what the viewers of the movie never learned. Liddell was born in Tientsin, China to missionary parents in 1902. James and Mary Liddell were in China under the commission of the London Missionary Society. As Duncan Hamilton, author of a very fine new biography of Liddell explains, as a young boy Eric Liddell simply considered himself to be Chinese.



Later, Eric and his brother would be sent to boarding school near London and would know their parents only through correspondence and brief visits. But China was always on Liddell's heart. As a student at the University of Edinburgh, Liddell became very well known as both a runner and a preacher. He was especially powerful as a preacher to young men. Liddell spoke passionately but conversationally, explaining that the best preaching to young men took the form of a simple talk, in Duncan Hamilton's words, "as if chatting over a picket fence." But Liddell's clear biblical and evangelical message came through, and powerfully.

He preached before, during, and after his Olympic glory. He returned to graduate from the University of Edinburgh shortly after the 1924 Paris games and made preparation to go to China as a missionary, also under the

direction of the London Missionary Society.

He taught school, preached, and eventually found a wife, Florence. With her he had three daughters, though he was never to see the third. After decades of internal warfare and turmoil, China was thrown into the horrors of Japanese occupation during World War II.

Those horrors are still unknown to many Americans, but much of China was submitted to massive rape and murder by the occupying Imperial Japanese forces. Liddell eventually sent Florence, then pregnant with their third child, and their two daughters to Canada for safety. It was just in time.

Along with members of the China Inland Mission and many others, Christians and non-Christians alike, Eric Liddell was forced into a foretaste of hell itself in the Weihsien Internment Camp. He would die there shortly before the end of the war. In

the concentration camp, Liddell became legendary and his witness for Christ astounded even many of his fellow Christians.

As Hamilton writes: “Liddell can sound too virtuous and too honorable to be true, as if those who knew him were either misrepresenting or consciously mythologizing. Not so. The evidence is too overwhelming to be dismissed as easily as that. Amid the myriad moral dilemmas in Weih sien, Liddell’s forbearance was remarkable.” He became the moral and spiritual leader of the horrifying reality with that camp.

Chariots of Fire was released when I was a seminary student. Like so many other young Christians, I saw the movie and was greatly moved by it. But, even then, I wondered if Liddell could really have been what so many others claimed of him.

Not long thereafter, a professor assigned me to read *Shantung Compound* by theologian Langdon Gilkey of the University of Chicago Divinity School. Gilkey was in many ways the opposite to Liddell. Gilkey was a theological liberal whose father, famously liberal, had been the first dean of the chapel at the University of Chicago. Langdon Gilkey had gone to China to teach English after graduating from Harvard. He found himself interred with Eric Liddell.

In *Shantung Compound*, Gilkey analyzed what happens when men and women are put under extraordinary pressure. He argued that the worst moral dilemmas in Weih sien came not from their Japanese captors, but from the prisoners themselves. His point was that, for many if not most of the captured, the experience brought out the worst in them, rather than the best. He changed the names of those inside the camp when he told their stories.

There were a few moral exceptions. Gilkey wrote of one exceptional individual, a missionary he named “Eric Ridley.” Gilkey wrote: “It is rare indeed when a person has the good fortune to meet a saint, but he came as close to it as anyone I have ever known.” Gilkey described how Liddell had largely single-handedly resolved the crisis of a breakout of teenage sexual activity in the camp. In the midst of a moral breakdown, with no societal structures to restrain behavior, few even seemed to want to help.

Gilkey made this observation: “There was a quality seemingly unique to the missionary group, namely, naturally and without pretense to respond to a need which everyone else recognized only to turn aside. Much of this went unnoticed, but our camp could scarcely have survived as well as it did without it. If there were any evidences of the grace of God observable on the surface of our camp existence, they were to be found here.”

Gilkey had renamed individuals as he wrote about them, but he described “Eric Ridley” as having won the 400 meter race at the Olympics for England before going to China as a missionary. Eric Ridley was Eric Liddell, and Langdon Gilkey was writing of a man he has observed so closely as a living saint. I realized that Langdon Gilkey had told the most important part of Eric Liddell’s story long before *Chariots of Fire*.

Gilkey closed his words about Eric Liddell with these: “Shortly before the camp ended, he was stricken with a brain tumor and died the same day. The entire camp, especially its youth, was stunned for days, so great was the vacuum that Eric’s death had left.”

Liddell indeed died of a brain tumor, suddenly and unexpectedly. The cause of his death only became clear after an autopsy. Eric Liddell died in the nation where he had been born. Indeed, he has sometimes been listed as China’s first Olympic medalist. He never saw his third daughter.

“God made me for China.” Eric Liddell lived his life in answer to that calling and commission. As Duncan Hamilton explains, Liddell “considered athletics as an addendum to his life rather than his sole reason for living it.”

Eric Liddell ran for God’s glory, but he was made for China. He desperately wanted the nation he loved to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ and believe. David J. Michell, director for Canada Overseas Missionary Fellowship, would introduce Liddell’s collected devotional writings, *The Disciplines of the Christian Life*, by stating simply that “Eric Liddell’s desire was to know God more deeply, and as a missionary, to make him known more fully.”

Christians must remember that Olympic glory will eventually fade. There will be medalists for all to celebrate. But, will there be another Eric Liddell? At the very least, his story needs to be told again. The most important part of his story came long after his gold medal arrived by mail.

This article by Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President R. Albert Mohler, Jr., Ph.D., first appeared on albertmohler.com on July 25, 2017 and is reprinted here with permission. Duncan Hamilton’s 2016 biography, “For the Glory: Eric Liddell’s Journey from Olympic Champion to Modern Martyr,” is published by Penguin Press.



Was St. Francis a Sissy?

by Ray Comfort

One hundred and fifty thousand children had been on the brink of starving to death, but thanks to the kind gift of a very generous billionaire, every child now had enough food to keep him alive. That gift had arrived in the form of one big check. The horror was now over. It was finished. It was just a matter of distributing the food using the few relief workers we had. Without them to get the food to the children, there would have been many more deaths. Some days later, a frantic worker burst into the camp and cried, “Some of the relief workers have stopped distributing food. Masses of children are dying!”



Why would the workers stop when there was plenty of food? It didn't make sense. The distraught man said, "It's because one of them held up a sign that said, 'Feed the starving children. Where necessary, use food.' That has caused some of the workers to simply befriend the starving children without giving them food. It's insane!" I'm sure you have heard of Saint Francis of Assisi. The first time I ever heard of him was back in 1965. It was during the surf movie "The Endless Summer." Four surfers who were chasing the sun discovered the perfect wave, at a place in South Africa called "Cape Saint Francis." The sight of the perfect wave excited me beyond words. The next time I heard of him was when I heard that he said "Preach the Gospel at all times. Where necessary, use words." That statement upset me beyond words, because it was a philosophy that I knew sounded deeply spiritual ...to those who were spiritually shallow. It made as much sense as "Feed starving children. Where necessary, use food."

On July 16, 1228 Francis of Assisi was pronounced a saint by Pope Gregory IX. That's a long time ago, so it's a little late for questions, but if I could I would like to find out why anyone would say such a strange thing? Was it because he was fearful to use actual words to preach the truth of the Gospel? Or was it because he thought that people would see that he had good works and hear the message of salvation without a preacher, something contrary to Scripture's "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14). Whatever the case, 800 years since Francis we have many who profess faith in Jesus, and are no doubt using this popular philosophy to justify being speechless. To them salvation truly is an "unspeakable" gift. Recently someone told me about a conference where 100,000 Christians gathered to worship God. When I asked if they were exhorted to go out and preach the Gospel to every creature, it was no surprise to me that they weren't. Instead, they were exhorted to live a life of worship. Again, that sounds spiritual, but you can't worship God without obedience to His Word, and His Word commands us to preach the Gospel to every creature. I regularly meet those who think they can obey the Great Commission without using words. When they hear the Gospel preached they are usually offended and say things like, "I appreciate what you are saying, but I don't like the way you are saying it." With a little probing, they are the relationship folks, who think preaching the Gospel means building relationships with the lost, and never mentioning words like "sin," "Hell," and "Judgment Day." They think that real love is to withhold the Bread of Life from those that are starving to death. Remember that Jesus said, "Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels." (Mark 8:38) According to the dictionary, a "sissy" is "a timid or cowardly person." From what I understand of Saint Francis, he was no sissy. He was a loving man who was not afraid to use words when he preached. He wasn't frightened to

preach repentance to a sinful world. However, there have been times when I could have been called that name. I have felt the grip of fear and have wanted to drop words such as sin, Hell, repentance and Judgment Day when I have preached to sinners. I don't want to come across as being unloving or judgmental, but I fear God more than I fear man. So when God's Word tells me to use words, I use words, despite the consequences. Listen to the Apostle Paul's sobering warning to his hearers: "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:26-27) Perhaps he spoke about being free from their blood because he was familiar with God Himself warning Ezekiel of his responsibility to warn his generation: "When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand." (Ezekiel 3:18)

When someone thinks that they can feed starving children and not use food, that's their business. But when their philosophy spreads throughout the camp, it becomes an unspeakable tragedy. If we become passive about the Great Commission because we are more concerned about ourselves than the eternal well-being of others, we may be able to hide our motives from man, but not from God. He warns, "Deliver those who are drawn toward death, and hold back those stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, 'Surely we did not know this,' does not He who weighs the hearts consider it? He who keeps your soul, does He not know it? And will He not render to each man according to his deeds?" (Proverbs 24:11-12). There's an interesting irony to this story. After a little research I came across a quote about the famous saying. It is from someone who had been a Franciscan monk for 28 years—and had earned an M.A. in Franciscan studies. He contacted some of the most eminent Franciscan scholars in the world to try and verify the saying. He said, "It is clearly not in any of Francis' writings. After a couple weeks of searching, no scholar could find this quote in a story written within 200 years of Francis' death." So if it wasn't Saint Francis who said not to use words, who was it? Who is it that would like to see the truth of the Gospel hindered from being preached to every creature? That doesn't need to be answered. The time is short. The laborers are few. Please, cast off your fears and equip yourself to preach the Gospel with words. They are necessary.

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How many *human* *races* are there?

One would have to be living under a rock to be unaware of recent (and historical) conflicts arising from what is commonly termed 'racism'. You may be surprised to hear that the secular (biological and social) sciences have recently discovered something that Scripture already teaches us on this vital subject matter.

Scripture definitively teaches that all human beings were created in the image of God and share a common ancestor. That is, there is one human race. In Acts 17:26 Paul declared to the inquiring crowd in Athens, Greece that "He [God] has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings." Paul could say this because he knew from the book of Genesis that Scripture teaches that all humanity has a common ancestry — Adam and Eve! Genesis 3:20 says, "And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living."

Furthermore, after the world wide flood, as recorded in Genesis chapters 6-9, Scripture remarks that the “whole earth was populated” from the three sons of Noah (Genesis 9:19). Given this teaching, believers over the years have written extensively on this subject. For example, see “How Many Races Did God Create?” from Answers in Genesis, a Biblically-based apologetics group.

Even secular sources now inadvertently confirm what the Bible has taught for centuries on this matter. Consider the following quote from a recent report from the Harvard Medical School:

“The popular classifications of race are based chiefly on skin color, with other relevant features including height, eyes, and hair. Though these physical differences may appear, on a superficial level, to be very dramatic, they are determined by only a minute portion of the genome: we as a species have been estimated to share 99.9% of our DNA with each other. The few differences that do exist reflect differences in environments and external factors, not core biology...Despite the scientific consensus that humanity is more alike than unlike, the long history of racism is a somber reminder that throughout human history, a mere 0.1% of variation has been sufficient justification for committing all manner of discriminations and atrocities.”² Back in 2000, an article from the New York Times (“Do Races Differ? Not Really, Genes Show”) clearly stated the position that “Race is a social concept, not a scientific one.”³

So, although cultural practices, beliefs, and languages differ across the globe this does not substantiate the notion of multiple, physical races. Despite external differences, Christians are instructed to have compassion and mercy when encountering varying people groups and nations. During this time of grace in the church age, Scripture teaches that “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” (Matthew 22:39) Extending mercy does not imply that we compromise the word of God but rather that we walk humbly, with understanding, and with truth spoken in love.

We must point out now that there is a problem within the human race that the biological and social sciences can neither discern nor solve. It is a problem that exists within all people groups and is irrespective of culture, income, and education. It is the fact that the human race has a sin condition and needs to be reconciled to its Creator! Romans chapter 3 clearly describes the spiritual needs of all humankind. Consider Romans 3:9-

11,23: “What then? Are we better than they? Not at all. For we have previously charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin. As it is written: ‘There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none who understands; there is none who seeks after God.’... For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Paul, in Ephesians 2:14-16, describes the creation of “one new man” since the Lord has now offered reconciliation to both Jew and Gentile. “For He [Jesus] Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself **one new man** from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”

Colossians 3:9-11 also describes the “new man” into which each believer in Christ is transformed. “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have **put on the new man** who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him [Jesus] who created him, where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised nor uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave nor free, but Christ is all and in all.”

Just as we read that the human genome evidences very strong similarities across nationalities we also see that the spiritual needs across so-called ‘races’ are strikingly similar. The ultimate need is for everyone to be reconciled to their Creator, Jesus Christ! No one is better (or worse) than another. “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” When we experience “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1)” we will then truly be able to experience peace with our fellow man.

References (accessed online October 2, 2020):

- 1 <https://answersingenesis.org/tower-of-babel/how-many-races-did-god-create/>
- 2 <http://sitn.hms.harvard.edu/flash/2017/science-genetics-reshaping-race-debate-21st-century/>
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HOW SHOULD I 'SCHOOL' MY CHILD?



Private school. Christian school. Homeschool. Unschooled. Public school. Vocational school. Remote Learning. The means by which we may 'educate' our children is quite diverse. There are committed proponents for each approach, each having anecdotal, statistical and emotional arguments used to support their position.

Perhaps many readers will now be skipping to the end of this article to see if in bold letters I advocate one approach over another. Sorry to disappoint but I have chosen not to take that overt of an approach. I think the best thing to do is to 'back up the car', so to speak, and to ask a few crucial questions. Perhaps asking certain questions will assist us in arriving at a conclusion that is God pleasing. Please consider the following:

- When you think of 'training your child' do you primarily think of academics?
- What is the safest environment for your child to learn in?
- Who cares the most for your child?
- How old is your child?
- What is the spiritual maturity of your child or your child's peer group?
- Who is the best suited to teach your child?

PRIVATE SCHOOL
CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
HOMESCHOOL
UNSCHOOLED
PUBLIC SCHOOL
VOCATIONAL SCHOOL
REMOTE LEARNING

- Who, from a Biblical perspective, is instructed to teach your child?
- Can your child's gifting(s) be consistently well met via one approach over another?

To be honest, until my wife and I had children, I gave little time of day to consider the preceding questions. This is pretty typical for many couples, I imagine. But as our children 'arrived' my wife and I slowly spent more time pondering these issues. We began paying attention to the choices that other parents, especially those a little older than ourselves, had made. We noticed a broad spectrum of child-training approaches amongst believers at large. We also began to notice that the chosen approaches yielded varying degrees of 'attractive fruit' in the lives of the children.

Let's be honest. Society places high priority upon a secular education and the pursuit of a career while almost completely disregarding the need for a spiritual foundation to be demonstrated to our children. Yet there is one crucial training that all fathers are instructed to accomplish in the lives of their children. Ephesians 6:4 says, "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." Whether we realize it or not, we parents are the first teachers

of our children. It is a God-delegated responsibility. When we have a low view of this calling it will seem only to be a burden. Perhaps we would even prefer to excuse ourselves from fulfilling this calling. However, when we begin to grasp the eternal vision and worth that God has placed upon the family we may find ourselves amazed and humbled that He would invite us into such a grand plan! So, how are we doing? If we are not pointing our children to the Lord then we are failing in our fundamental responsibilities as a father. It is true that we cannot *cause* our children to follow the Lord; it is ultimately a work of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless we are to be the primary life guides and spiritual instructors of our young sons and daughters. Education, as our culture currently defines it, must not take the preeminent position in the training of our children and we certainly shouldn't embrace a system of learning that contradicts what the Lord's heart is for our child.

Let's be clear. Training our children for the Lord does not merely mean loading them up with Bible verses to memorize or teaching them Sunday school songs to sing before bedtime. Rather it is a day-to-day demonstration of our obedience to the Lord as we pursue more of Him in our lives. Are we regularly feeding on the Lord for our strength and joy? Do we realize that our children are watching how we treat their mother? Our children also hear us as we remark about fellow believers in the church. Do we bad-mouth our boss to our children? Are we living a life that demonstrates the Lord's humility and shows that His Kingdom is priority one in our lives? These things are 'caught' by our children and are 'taught' via life lived out together as a family. It is not simply acquired from textbooks or formal classroom settings.

If we choose to present a system of education to our children that negates or belittles the role of a Godly father (and mother) we need to reconsider our choice. We must not view 'education' as something separate from spiritual training. All that we do to facilitate the spiritual, intellectual, and academic growth of our child must be brought under the umbrella of that which properly builds the Kingdom of God.

Finally, I would be dishonest to suggest that I meet this high calling every day. I have failed many times. I have had to ask my wife and children for their forgiveness on more occasions than I care to recall. Praise the Lord, they have been gracious in their responses to me. We also have a very merciful heavenly Father who daily offers us His grace and forgiveness as we call out to Him. Men and fathers, we are in this together for the glory of our Lord and Christ!



Only One Life

by C.T. Studd, 1860-1931

Charles Thomas (C.T.) Studd was an English missionary to China, India, and lastly within Sudan where he founded the Heart of Africa Mission. C.T. Studd also wrote several books including *The Chocolate Soldier* in which he boldly encouraged Christians in evangelism and giving all for Jesus Christ in this life. Prior to his commitment to the Lord to serve overseas C.T. was an accomplished cricketer having represented both Cambridge University and Eton College in England. In 1882, C.T. Studd played for England against Australia in what turned out to be the origin of The Ashes, a Test cricket series still played between England and Australia. The following poem, *Only One Life*, expresses C.T.'s heartfelt commitment to serve the Lord while leaving temporal earthly distractions behind.





Two little lines I heard one day,
Traveling along life's busy way;
Bringing conviction to my heart,
And from my mind would not depart;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, yes only one,
Soon will its fleeting hours be done;
Then, in 'that day' my Lord to meet,
And stand before His judgment seat;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, the still small voice,
Gently pleads for a better choice
Bidding me selfish aims to leave,
And to God's holy will to cleave;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, a few brief years,
Each with its burdens, hopes, and fears;
Each with its days I must fulfill,
Living for self or in His will;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

When this bright world would tempt me sore,
When Satan would a victory score;
When self would seek to have its way,
Then help me Lord with joy to say;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Give me Father, a purpose deep,
In joy or sorrow Thy word to keep;
Faithful and true what e'er the strife,
Pleasing Thee in my daily life;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Oh let my love with fervor burn,
And from the world now let me turn;
Living for Thee, and Thee alone,
Bringing Thee pleasure on Thy throne;
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.

Only one life, yes only one,
Now let me say, "Thy will be done";
And when at last I'll hear the call,
I know I'll say "'twas worth it all";
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done for Christ will last.



What comes first to your mind when you hear the word ‘church’? Do you picture a building? Or something to do with Roman Catholicism and the pope? How about a pastor preaching to a congregation? In our North American culture we often say that we are ‘going to church’. But the church is not a building or another inanimate object. Let’s consider what Scripture has to say about this crucial subject. May this provoke a paradigm shift in our understanding.

Ephesians 1:22-23 says, “And He [God] put all things under His [Christ’s] feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.” In the New Testament, the Greek word for ‘church’ is

ekklesia meaning a group, or assembly of people. The Scripture in Ephesians specifically uses ekklesia to refer to all people who are called out of the world; that is, Christians. Furthermore, we see that the church is Christ’s body, of which He is the head. Christ is the controller and life-giver of the church which is a living organism not a building constructed from stones or concrete. The preceding phrase “to the church” in Ephesians 1:22 implies a sort of life impartation from Christ to His followers. What Christ has obtained is available to the church. The church is Christ’s body on this planet. This transmission between Jesus Christ and the church means that as believers we share in Christ’s life. This includes our future resurrection from the dead, our current position as being seated with Christ,

the church



power over sin, and being accepted in the Beloved. What an inheritance!

During the Old Covenant we observe that King Solomon built the original temple in Jerusalem using stones shaped and finished at a quarry (1 Kings 6:7). This building project literally employed tens of thousands of able-bodied men (1 Kings 5:13-18). Workers went as far as Lebanon, in monthly shifts consisting of 10,000 labourers, to procure wood, stone, and various building supplies for the temple. Fast forward to the current church age, under the New Covenant. Peter, in describing the church, declares that: “You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...But you

are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:5,9)

The church is not built out of granite, limestone, or gold-covered stones; rather, it is comprised of all people who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ. The church is literally a living, breathing, and expanding organism. Under the Old Covenant one could only be in the temple priesthood if they were of the tribe of Levi. Now, in Christ, we are all priests! Jesus Christ exemplified the shifting of the priesthood as He was from the tribe of Judah (Hebrews 7:13-14) not Levi. If you are a Christian you are a priest. Unfortunately, when we think

of the word ‘priest’ today many times we think of something from Roman Catholicism or perhaps Old Covenant Judaism. A priest in Old Testament Biblical times functioned as a sort of intermediary between the ‘common man’ (non-priests) and God. They offered sacrifices of atonement, thanksgiving, etc. on behalf of the people and in a certain sense communicated with God on behalf of their fellow Israelites. Now, under the New Covenant, Christ is our High Priest (Hebrews 4:14) and has brought us all into the priesthood as we are an extension of His body on earth (recall Ephesians 1:23). Are we then to sacrifice the blood of bulls and goats like priests in historical

all that is meant by the preceding statement but let me summarize the current state of things just a little. When we hear the word ‘church’ today, sadly most people think of only a building. Much time, effort and cost is given to build elaborate and costly ‘churches’ that are used for only a fraction of the hours that exist in a given week. The success of a local church is often gauged by the curb appeal that the building generates. Furthermore, most churches today are run by a confident and Type A ‘senior pastor’ under a model that mostly mirrors a business. In medium to large churches, a senior pastor typically has paid helpers (be it an assistant pastor or two, a youth pastor, a wor-



times? No. We are called to offer up “spiritual sacrifices” (recall 1 Peter 2:5). A spiritual sacrifice could be something as simple as a praise to God (Hebrews 13:15). It could also be something more entailed as we serve using the spiritual gifts sovereignly distributed to us by the Holy Spirit (Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12) as believers. One thing is for certain, we are to actively participate in strengthening the spiritual quality of our local church.

Please consider the following excerpt from “What makes a real man?” (Menbuilders Magazine, Issue 1 [2020]):

Before I lay any responsibility upon the shoulders of men for their local church, I first must point out that, by and large, the typical church life in North America does not follow the Scriptural model. The scope of this article cannot begin to address

ship pastor, etc). Effectively the church life is run by paid staff and most of the church ‘members’ typically show up only for a brief Sunday morning service to hear the senior pastor exercise his spiritual gift of teaching or preaching. In such meetings the rest of the body does not get to function in their gifts, they merely go home after the service. If the members are asked to function in any capacity on a Sunday morning it is typically to give money in order to support the substantial costs of this hybrid church / business model. This is not the highest model for the church life. The North American church model effectively renders the typical male useless and unneeded (aside from giving money). The Scriptural pattern is for a plurality of spiritually mature elders to provide Godly teaching and discipleship to equip the next generation of believers (see 2 Timothy 2:2 and Ephesians 4:11-14 for starters). There is no room for ‘mini

popes' or for larger-than-life individuals to run their personal 'ministry' out of ego or show. All men who desire more of the Lord must be able to spiritually function within the parameters of a properly conducted church life. Seek the Lord as to where you may function. Ask your church leadership where they envision you serving according to your gifting. Mature church leaders will not be threatened by such requests but rather highly encouraged! There are many ways that the 'brothers' in a local church can properly function. This can be accomplished by having various men speak over the course of the year rather than having every Sunday message coming from one individu-



al. Perhaps you can also function in a small group setting, in outreach in the community, meeting one on one with others, etc. The options are many. Again, be in prayer and be in fellowship with church leadership concerning how you can be properly invested in the church life. Our church family lasts for eternity! It is wise to begin living in this reality even now.

I wrote the preceding (italicized) portion in the first half of 2020 for Menbuilders. At that point in time I didn't fully grasp how readily applicable this teaching would be, given the year's events. As COVID related restrictions began to impact the meeting of the church throughout Canada, and much of the world really, it became apparent that meeting in large gatherings would be prohibited in many places. Suddenly church life didn't entail the need for large buildings and scripted Sunday

mornings after all! We have all received a real wake-up call—have we been paying attention? In my lifetime I have never observed a more critical need for the 'brothers' (Christian men) to step up in all areas of their spiritual walk. This is an extraordinary opportunity to be ambassadors for Christ. Rather than reacting out of fear (of a virus) or striving (about government imposed restrictions) let us remember our highest calling. We are sons of the Most High God. Truly, we offer the only 'good news'. It is that Jesus Christ has come to reconcile men to God by providing forgiveness of sins and a means for transforming their minds to be in agreement with His eternal purpose. We cannot use any of our current frustrations, or fears, at this time to justify a lukewarm walk. We must be even more intentional in the following critical areas of our life:

- (i) We are to find our life from the Word and prayer
- (ii) Our satisfaction and identity must come from Jesus Christ
- (iii) If married, we are to love our wives as Christ loved the church
- (iv) We are to be the primary example to our children
- (v) We are to actively participate in strengthening the spiritual quality of our local church
- (vi) We are to be 'salt and light' in the workplace
- (vii) We must not give place to apathy, fear, or striving with other believers and authorities

I don't believe that our calling as a church in the New Testament age is to defend our 'rights' using the methods of the world. Anger, frustration, head-line grabbing protests, and argumentative debates are the world's frequent tactics for 'solving' problems. The fruit of the Spirit includes peace, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5). Paul in 1 Timothy 2:1-2 instructs us: "Therefore, I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence." We must rise above the current political, financial, and spiritual landscape with the life of Christ. We know from 2 Timothy 3:1 that "in the last days perilous times will come." But we also know from Jesus: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (John 16:33). My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." (John 18:36)

May we all seek Jesus Christ as our life supply and strength for the day at hand. Nothing else will suffice to strengthen our inner man and the local church.

Jesus Christ

Our Living Hope

Future resurrection from the dead
Made alive together with Christ
Kept by the power of God through faith
Faith that is more precious than gold that decays
Chosen before the foundation of the world
Accepted in the Beloved
Redemption through Jesus Christ's blood
Forgiveness of sins
Sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise
An incorruptible inheritance
Made alive together with Christ
Ambassadors for Christ
His workmanship, created for good works
Our peace
Reconciled to God
Access to God by the Holy Spirit
Members of the household of God
A dwelling place of God
A holy temple in the Lord
Living stones

The purpose of *Menbuilders* magazine is
'to advance the Kingdom of God by building Godly men on the foundation of Jesus Christ'.

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In every season of our lives, He is faithful.