

ISSUE 04

Menbuilders

MAGAZINE

THE ATTACK ON THE BIBLICAL FAMILY || THE HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION
ABORTION: THE CULMINATION OF SECULAR THOUGHT

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Menbuilders 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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DEL TACKETT

The Attack upon the Biblical Family

This article is used with permission from Dr. Del Tackett and, at time of this printing, is accessible at www.deltackett.com. Dr. Del Tackett presents biblical worldview teaching in an engaging and convicting manner. He has produced a number of widely viewed series such as The Truth Project and The Engagement Project. More information on his current work and writings can be obtained from www.TruthEncounterMinistries.org.

Of all the social institutions designed by God, I suppose none is under greater attack than the family. This shouldn't surprise us, for destroying relationships is the ultimate scheme of Satan and it is here we find the most intimate. Indeed, it seems that the entirety of the world, the flesh, and the enemy are today aligned against the biblical family. And the family is the heart of a culture. If you pierce the family, you pierce its society.

To understand the depth and immensity of this attack, we must go back to the 'beginning,' as Jesus put it in Matthew 19:3-5: "The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?' And He answered and said to them, 'Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"?' " Jesus was responding to an insincere question that was intended to trap Him, but it was a question about marriage, so He took them back to the creation of male and female to answer it. And, it is in that creation narrative that God reveals His purpose for creating them this way. Adam was to "be joined to his wife" becoming "one flesh." Malachi reiterates this purpose: "But did

Concentrate on building and nurturing your family with a fierce determination, for the attacks of the enemy here are ever-present and relentless.

He not make them [husband and wife] one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring..." (Malachi 2:15)

What is drawn from these passages is radical in our culture today, maybe even fighting words, for it not only angers the culture around us, but angers even some Christians. The reason God made "male and female" was for the purpose of bringing them together into a divine unity, a 'oneness' that brings our thoughts to the unity within the Triune God. And it was this unity of the male and female that would bring forth godly fruit. We certainly are not animals, but we see the same purpose of God for them as well: after creating the animals male and female, He charged them to be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth. This is the same language given to Adam and Eve after they were created. And it is here that we find the fundamental purpose for God creating us male and female, rather than some androgynous being. Any understanding of human sexuality outside of this context leads to serious error. In contrast, today we believe that one's sexuality stands on its own and becomes, in large part, the essence of my identity. This is the same message heard in Helen Reddy's famous song "I am strong! I am invincible! I am woman!" Reddy's view is one that has become ubiquitous throughout our culture today. It has severed human sexuality completely from the context and the design of the family. The prevailing view is that the individual and their sexuality is a private, personal, and fundamental aspect of their identity and it has nothing to do with marriage or family.

The biblical worldview has no place for this notion. Nowhere does the Scripture lead us to think that your human sexuality is the essence of your identity. And when we disconnect human sexuality from its divine context, we then begin to think we can redefine not only marriage and family, but also human sexuality.

Ergo, Miley Cyrus can declare that she is 'pansexual,' believing she can be male or female or anything in between, anytime she chooses. Men and women, now even little boys and girls, can declare themselves something other than their biological sexuality. We can make up our own personal pronouns and, in the most egregious of examples, get our dads and moms put in jail if they don't address us as such. Why? Because we selfishly declare our sexuality to be "the essence of who I am!" This sexual disconnect also degrades sex and causes it to descend into nothing more than a commercial product or a casual hook-up and nothing more. I can bend it, mold it, use it, and exploit it... all for my own pleasure and purposes.

Anything, therefore, that attacks human sexuality, is ultimately an attack upon the family.

When Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels declared "Abolish the family!" their worldview reflected the heart of Satan's strategy to destroy relationships because that attacks the very heart of the nature of God. This includes the destruction of every other social institution because they also carry the relational design of God. But the family is the headwaters for them all. It is the biblical family that produces children with a biblical work ethic. It produces the hard workers and ethical employees and business owners that make ethical products. It is the biblical family that produces a righteous citizenry and statesmen who lead with integrity. It is the biblical family that produces a moral society and all that it stands for. So, destroy the biblical family, and you destroy its culture.

When the Black Lives Matter website went up and its leaders announced they were "well trained Marxists," it wasn't surprising to see "abolish the family" in a prominent place. Although it has since been taken down for public relations reasons, it remains this worldview's fundamental objective. Yet, one may argue that they don't really have to do anything

except sit back and watch, because we are destroying the family ourselves:


- Marriage is increasingly in disfavor. Hollywood has made having a baby without a husband fashionable. The majority of babies born in our culture are now born to single women.
- Movies, television, music, and media all present sex outside marriage as the preferred norm. Today, the traditional family is almost always presented in a negative light or not presented at all.
- Pornography is now mainstream. It distorts and destroys the beauty and intimacy of divine marriage, yet it is rampant in our society. Ninety percent of young men in the U.S. watch porn videos regularly. The U.S. is awash in pornography and we flood the world with it. Ninety percent of the world's pornography is produced and exported from the U.S. Of the top 15 websites accessed in the world, three are porn sites. In a recent survey of young people to assess their view of things that were 'wrong' to do, using pornography was way down on the list. "Not recycling" was rated as a much greater evil.
- Welfare policy encourages women to have babies without marriage. The new tax laws encourage people to not get married.
- The Supreme Court (1971) declared it "right" for a woman to kill her offspring. And over 2,000 babies die every day on the altar of personal peace.
- It is almost impossible to assess the damage to marriages and families due to addictions. Few families are not torn apart in some way by alcohol, drug, and other addictions, including sexual addiction.
- Feminism (as an "ism") is destroying both the 'virtuous' female and the 'noble' male. Indeed, the young male in our culture today is overwhelmingly pressed by one mandate: "You will be accepted only if you become more feminine in character, thought, and deed. Your maleness is toxic, out of favor, and you will be rejected unless you conform." In fact, it may be accurate to concede that the overall bent of our culture is deeply feministic.
- And, of course, there is the rapid and penetrating attack upon human sexuality. Homosexuality, bi-sexuality, pan-sexuality, and trans-sexuality are all presented to us as normal and even desirable.

Not long ago, I was addressing a large Christian school and had an opportunity to meet with the elementary grade school faculty. When I asked them what the number one issue was they had to deal with? "Gender identity." Their kids were struggling with it because the cultural message that they "need to discover their true gender identity" is being pounded into them from every media quarter.

Don't be fooled. This attack is ubiquitous. It is like an evil smoke that silently slips under our doors, penetrating everything, everywhere. Yet, the clear blessing of God's design remains. Nearly all of what we would call 'positive' social indicators are related to a strong family life, from emotional wellness to psychological wellness to social health. Intact families provide the primary discriminator to keep someone out of poverty. Gang members rarely come from intact families, yet it is estimated that 80% of all crime is gang-related. What would our society look like if we were a culture of intact families living in the blessing of little poverty and little crime? I grew up in such a place. It was extremely abnormal to find a broken or dysfunctional family. No one locked their doors. No one was afraid to walk the roads or streets at night. And yet, as though we have some sort of suicidal wish, all of the major players in our culture today are working to destroy the family, from the media to the State to the subtle worldview messages that permeate our marketing world, like the Progressive Insurance ads that seek to drive a wedge between children and parents.

I am reminded of the warning God gave to Israel when they were brought into a land flowing with milk and honey. Assembled before two mountains, they were given the choice of either blessings or curses, depending upon whether or not they would choose to follow God.

It certainly seems as if we are pressed today with the same choice, for nothing but curses await us along the road we are travelling.

How do we live in a culture like this, dear Remnant? Stand strong and do not lose hope. Stay true to God's Word. Be the virtuous female or the noble male. Concentrate on building and nurturing your family with a fierce determination, for the attacks of the enemy here are ever-present and relentless. 



The Hope of the Resurrection

and the Current Location of the Dead Believer

THE FOLLOWING IS A COMPILATION OF EXCERPTS FROM THE BOOK,
'IN HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION', BY **DAVE LOUDEN**.

I would like to address some matters concerning the death of the believer and the hope of the resurrection. Here I will seek to provide a concise Biblical exploration regarding the believer's location and environment upon death, while awaiting the resurrection from the dead.

We know that at the time of death the spirit and soul of the person who has died departs the body. Traditionally, the body is then buried, awaiting the resurrection from the dead. According to historical church teaching before the 1900s it was generally understood that Scripture placed the spirit and soul of the dead believer in the paradise section of Hades awaiting the resurrection from the dead.

In 1909 the *Scofield Reference Bible* was published. In his notes on Luke 16, C.I. Scofield explained his view as to the place of the dead believer awaiting the resurrection. In doing this he popularized a new idea regarding the alleged location of the believers after Christ's ascension. Mr. Scofield stated that before the ascension of Christ all believers were in the pleasant part of Hades in the lower parts of the earth. After Christ's ascension, Scofield reasoned, paradise was emptied and the saints were taken to the third heaven along with Christ. Consequently, when a believer dies, they go directly into the presence of God in the heavenly paradise, i.e., 'heaven.' The following pages will be used, in part, to assess the validity of Scofield's proposition.

With the exception of the truth of our salvation, the location of the dead and the future hope of the resurrection of the saints is as vital a theme as can be discussed. Therefore, we must be sure that we are presenting the truth to people. Only the truth

will set us free. Here we will undoubtedly meet the blinding wall of religious tradition which, historically, has overpowered the clear teaching of Scripture. All believers should have a holy fear of misrepresenting the Scripture and the Lord to other believers as well as to the lost. This teaching is to seek and to present the truth.

First things: The Hope of the Resurrection

We must go back to the truth of the Word of God to see that the resurrection is the unique and blessed hope of the believer. Through this we see that the

resurrection is the power of the Gospel and provides the defeat of Death and Hades. Christ's bodily resurrection was the first fruit of this future reality and provides the hope for the dead believers as well as for those who are alive and remain. All believers will be changed in the "twinkling of an eye" (1 Corinthians 15:52). This will occur, not at physical death, but rather at the second coming of Christ; that is, at the end of days.

It is a clear statement. Therefore, the believers are still in the comfort section of Hades awaiting the resurrection from the dead.

The following small selection (one could choose many more) of Scriptures highlights some of the hope, anticipation, and details surrounding our future resurrection.

Job 19:25-27

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!

Isaiah 26:19

Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in the dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.

Daniel 12:2,13

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt...But you [Daniel], go your way till the end; for you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.

Luke 14:14

And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you; for you shall be repaid at the resurrection of the just.

Luke 20:36

Nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection.

John 11:24

Martha said unto Him [Jesus], "I know that he [Lazarus] shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Acts 3:21

Whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began.

Acts 4:33

And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.

Acts 24:15

I [Paul] have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust.

Romans 6:5

For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15:50-55

Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— in a

moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"

1 Thessalonians 4:16-18

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught

up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore, comfort one another with these words.

1 John 3:2

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

Revelation 20:13-14

The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

No One Has Ascended into Heaven

In John 3:13 Jesus plainly says, "No one has ascended to heaven." From this we can establish a time line. At this point, according to Jesus who cannot lie, no one had ascended into heaven other than Him. Now we must address C.I. Scofield's teaching that the dead believer's location changed subsequent to this time; i.e., subsequent to Christ's resurrection. To do this, let us consider Peter's teaching found in Acts 2.

On the day of Pentecost, Peter was seeking to demonstrate that the Scripture from Psalm 16 did not refer to David, but rather was a prophecy concerning Christ. (To save space, only a portion of Acts 2 is printed below.)

Acts 2:25(a),27,29,31,34-35

For David says concerning Him [Jesus]... "For You will not leave My soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption"... Men and brethren, let me [Peter] speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day... He [David], foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption... For David did not ascend into the heavens, but

he says himself: "The LORD said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'"

Please notice: The words spoken by Peter in Acts 2 occurred on the day of Pentecost which was ten days after the ascension of Christ. According to Scofield's teachings, at this point David already should have been transferred together with the dead saints ten days earlier since, according to Scofield, "Christ emptied paradise in His ascension, and took the believers to the heavenly paradise."

Instead, Peter, full of the Holy Spirit, declares that David is "both dead and buried" and "did not ascend into the heavens." There is no deep interpretation required for this.

Limitations of the Intermediate State

Question: Is there a distinction revealed in Scripture between being "present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:8) and seeing Him "face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12)?

Answer: Much of the Scripture listed above (for example: Daniel 12:13; 1 Corinthians 15:50-55; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; 1 John 3:2) reveals that we will see Christ face to face at the resurrection of the believer, which occurs at Christ's return. How then shall we handle 2 Corinthians 5:8? It states: "We are


confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.” Does this verse imply that *immediately*, upon death, we shall see the Lord? This should not be inferred. We need to see that our relationship with the Lord in the intermediate state (after death but before the resurrection) is one of greater *awareness* of the Lord’s presence rather than one of closer *geographical* proximity. In Luke 16:19-31, we see that the sleeping (i.e., dead) believer is in a condition of conscious comfort and in a more heightened realization of Christ’s presence. However, note that the dead believer in this portion of Scripture has *not* yet experienced the time of the bodily resurrection from the dead.


Paul said that upon death that it would be “far better” (Philippians 1:23). However, this is not a description of final glory and victory in resurrection. It is “far better” in the sense that we will no longer have the body of flesh with its physical weakness or the body of death with its struggle against sin and Satan.

We must see that many believers are wrongly looking forward to dying by assuming that this is the final leg of their journey. Upon a believer’s death, I

have often heard it said that “they have gone onto their reward.” This is an incorrect statement. The conclusion that they are free from struggle and grief is also ‘leavened’ since at the judgment seat of Christ (Romans 14:10-11; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10), following the resurrection, believers will be judged for their works performed subsequent to salvation. Undoubtedly we will experience at least *some* grief as we come to grips with how we may have wasted our God-given time, money, and energy on fleshly pursuits subsequent to salvation.

Dwelling as a disembodied spirit and soul, in the comfort section of Hades, does not complete the eternal purpose of God, does not reveal the sons of God, does not produce the Bride and is not the blessed hope of the saints. Rather, the resurrection from the dead, with a new glorified body for all eternity, completes the truth of God. The resurrection completes the victory by providing the triumph over Hades and Death – the last enemy!

Please consider this teaching soberly. Are we speaking the truth or are we propagating religious fiction and error? 

A portrait of C.H. Spurgeon, a man with a full beard and mustache, wearing a dark suit and a white shirt with a dark bow tie. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera with a serious expression. The background is dark and indistinct.

**An excerpt of a sermon by C.H. Spurgeon
delivered on February 17, 1856
in Southwark, England**

The Resurrection of the Dead

"There will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." (Acts 24:15)

Reflecting the other day upon the sad state of the churches at the present moment, I was led to look back to apostolic times, and to consider wherein the preaching of the present day differed from the preaching of the apostles.

I remarked the vast difference in their style from the set and formal oratory of the present age. I remarked that the apostles did not take a text when they preached, nor did they confine themselves to one subject, much less to any place of worship, but I find that they stood up in any place and declared from the fullness of their heart what they knew of Jesus Christ. But the main difference I observed was in the subjects of their preaching. Surprised I was when I discovered that the very staple of the preaching of the apostles was the resurrection of the dead.

I found myself to have been preaching the doctrine of the grace of God, to have been upholding free election, to have been leading the people of God as well as I was enabled into the deep things of His word; but I was surprised to find that I had not been copying the apostolic fashion half as nearly as I might have done. The apostles when they preached always testified concerning the resurrection of Jesus, and the consequent resurrection of the dead. It appears that the Alpha and the Omega of their gospel was the testimony that Jesus Christ died and rose again from the dead according to the Scriptures. When they chose another apostle in the room of Judas, who had become apostate, they said, "One of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection," (Acts 1:22) so that the very office of an apostle was to be a witness of the resurrection. And well did they fulfil their office. When Peter stood up before the multitude, he declared unto them that David "Spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ." (Acts 2:31) When Peter and John were

taken before the council, the great cause of their arrest was that the rulers were grieved because "They taught the people and preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead." (Acts 4:2) When they were set free, after having been examined, it is said, "And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all." (Acts 4:33) It was this which stirred the curiosity of the Athenians when Paul preached among them. They said, "'He seems to be a proclaimer of foreign gods,' because he preached to them Jesus and the resurrection." (Acts 17:18) And this moved the laughter of the Areopagites, for when he spoke of the resurrection of the dead, "Some mocked, while others said, 'We will hear you again on this matter.'" (Acts 17:32) Truly did Paul say, when he stood before the council of the Pharisees and Sadducees, "Concerning the resurrection of the dead I am being judged by you this day." (Acts 24:21) And equally truly did he constantly assert, "If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty." (1 Corinthians 15:14)

The resurrection of Jesus and the resurrection of the righteous is a doctrine which we believe, but which we too seldom preach or care to read about. Though I have inquired of several booksellers for a book specially upon the subject of the resurrection, I have not yet been able to purchase one of any sort whatever; and when I turned to Dr. Owen's works, which are a most invaluable storehouse of divine knowledge, containing much that is valuable on almost every subject I could find, even there, scarcely more than the slightest mention of the resurrection. It has been set down as a well-known truth, and therefore has never been discussed. Heresies have not risen up respecting it; it would almost have been a mercy if there had been, for whenever a truth is contested by heretics, the orthodox fight strongly for it, and the pulpit resounds with it every day. I am persuaded, however, that there is much power in this doctrine; and if I preach it this morning you will see that God will own the apostolic preaching, and there will be conversions. I intend putting it to the test now, to see whether there be not something which we cannot perceive at present in the resurrection of the dead, which is capable of moving the hearts of men and bringing them into subjection to the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

There are very few Christians who believe the resurrection of the dead. You may be surprised to hear that, but I should not wonder if I discovered that you yourself have doubts on the subject. By the 'resurrection of the dead' is meant something very different from the immortality of the soul: that, every Christian believes, and therein is only on a level with the heathen, who believes it too. The light of nature is sufficient to tell us that the soul is immortal, so that the infidel who doubts it is a worse fool even than a heathen, for he, before Revelation was given, had discovered it—there are some faint glimmerings in men of reason which teach that the soul is something so wonderful that it must endure forever. But the resurrection of the dead is quite another doctrine, dealing not with the soul, but with the body. The doctrine is that this actual body in which I now exist is to live with my soul; that not only is the "vital spark of heavenly flame" to burn in heaven, but the very censer in which the incense of my life doth smoke is holy unto the Lord, and is to be preserved for ever. The spirit, every one confesses, is eternal; but how many there are who deny that the bodies of men will actually start up from their graves at the great day? Many of you believe you will have a body in heaven, but you think it will be an airy fantastic body, instead of believing that it will be a body like to this—flesh and blood (although not the same kind of flesh, for all flesh is not the same flesh), a solid, substantial body, even such as we have here. And there are yet fewer of you who believe that the wicked will have bodies in hell; for it is gaining ground everywhere that there are to be no positive torments for the damned in hell to affect their bodies, but that it is to be metaphorical fire, metaphorical brimstone, metaphorical chains, metaphorical torture. But if ye were Christians as ye profess to be, ye would believe that every mortal man who ever existed shall not only live by the immortality of his soul, but his body shall live again, that the very flesh in which he now walks the earth is as eternal as the soul, and shall exist for ever. That is the peculiar doctrine of Christianity. The heathens never guessed or imagined such a thing; and consequently when Paul spoke of the resurrection of the dead, "Some mocked," which proves that they understood him to speak of the resurrection of the body, for they would not have mocked had he only spoken of the immortality of the soul, that having

*There will be
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of the dead,
both of the just
and unjust.*

(ACTS 24:15)


There will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.

been already proclaimed by Plato and Socrates, and received with reverence. We are now about to preach that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust. We shall consider first the resurrection of the just; and secondly, the resurrection of the unjust.

The first proof I will offer of this, is, that it has been the constant and unvarying faith of the saints from the earliest periods of time. Abraham believed the resurrection of the dead, for it is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews that he concluded "That God was able to raise him [Isaac] up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense." (Hebrews 11:19) I have no doubt that Joseph believed in the resurrection, for he gave commandment concerning his bones; and surely he would not have been so careful of his body if he had not believed that it should be raised from the dead. The Patriarch Job was a firm believer in it, for he said in that oft repeated text, Job 19:25-26, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God." David believed it beyond the shadow of a doubt, for he sang of Christ, "For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow your holy one to see corruption." (Psalm 16:10) Daniel believed it, for he said that "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt." (Daniel 12:2) Souls do not sleep in the dust; bodies do. It will do you good to turn to one or two passages and see what these holy men thought. For instance, in Isaiah 26:19 you read: "Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." We will offer no explanation. The text is positive and sure. Let another prophet speak—Hosea 6:1-2: "Come, and let

us return to the Lord; for He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; on the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight." Although this does not declare the resurrection, yet it uses it as a figure which it would not do were it not regarded as a settled truth. It is declared by Paul, also, in Hebrews 11:35, that such was the constant faith of the martyrs; for he says, "Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection." All those holy men and women, who, during the time of the Maccabees, stood fast by their faith, and endured the fire and sword, and tortures unutterable, believed in the resurrection, and that resurrection stimulated them to give their bodies to the flames, not caring even for death, but believing that thereby they should attain to a blessed resurrection.

But our Saviour brought the resurrection to light in the most excellent manner, for He explicitly and frequently declared it. "Do not marvel at this," said He, "for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His [God's] voice." (John 5:28) Indeed, throughout His preaching, there was one continued flow of firm belief, and a public and positive declaration of the resurrection of the dead. I will not trouble you with any passages from the writings of the apostles; they abound therewith. In fact, Holy Scripture is so full of this doctrine that I marvel, brethren, that we should so soon have departed from the steadfastness of our faith, and that it should be believed in many churches that the actual bodies of the saints will not live again, and especially that the bodies of the wicked will not have a future existence. We maintain as our text doth, that "There will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." (Acts 24:15)

[End of Excerpt. Available in the Public Domain under the same title.] 

Charles Haddon (C.H.) Spurgeon (1834-1892) was a highly influential English preacher and pastor. He was considered a highly skilled orator by many who heard him. Many of his sermons were transcribed while he spoke and translated into multiple languages. His messages, commentaries, and other writings are still held in high regard due to their expository strength.

ROB WEBB

Abortion: The Culmination of Secular Thought

To effectively counter abortion arguments, we need to understand their anti-Christian and secular foundations and history.

Rescue those who are being taken away to death; hold back those who are stumbling to the slaughter. If you say, "Behold, we did not know this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who keeps watch over your soul know it, and will he not repay man according to his work? (Proverbs 24:11-12)

In Genesis 2, we see God's created institution of lifelong, monogamous marriage and his command for Adam and Eve (and, by extension, all humanity descended from them) to be fruitful and multiply. Family is the first institution established by God, long before the government's attempt to redefine it.

When Christianity confronted the Roman world, one striking difference between those who followed Christ and those who followed the false gods of the Romans was the value that Christians attributed to babies, children, women, and slaves—all classes of people who were seen as the chattel of the free Roman man. Contrary to the culture, Christians called men to love their wives and to see their slaves as fellow human beings and even brothers in Christ (e.g., Philemon 1). Christians not only rejected abortion and exposure for their own children but rescued children that others had exposed.

This Christian way (worldview) of seeing other humans as fellow image-bearers of God took time to seep into the pagan culture. Eventually, these

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We need to condemn the murder of unborn children in the clearest, strongest terms possible.

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cultures, after being sufficiently influenced by the Christian worldview, began to truly value children and women and became the first nations to abolish slavery—the first nations to even see slavery as a wicked thing. These nations also outlawed abortion and infanticide, not only because abortion was about as likely to maim or kill the woman as to kill her unborn child but also because the child was seen as a valuable image-bearer of God, even in the womb!

It should not be surprising that people who hate God also hate the family model that he instituted. As secular worldviews begin to dominate a culture, the family unit is always the first to be attacked, especially the vulnerable members who benefit the most from Christian influence. Consequently, every key element of the family gets attacked. The permanence of marriage is attacked through no-fault divorce. The definition of marriage itself is attacked through same-sex or “open” marriage. The fruitful design of marriage is attacked through premarital relations, unwed parenting, and ultimately, through abortion on demand, even in the context of marriage.

Secular activists (rebels against God) have been in constant war against God’s designed family unit. Today, we’re seeing commercials, cartoons, and even children’s books promote the message that families can have two mommies, two daddies, or any number of other family structures. For instance, popular commentator Dave Rubin and his homosexual partner recently announced that they had used donor eggs and two surrogates to conceive two babies and were roundly congratulated by “conservative” media figureheads.¹ This horrible scenario potentially turns babies

into commodities who can be created on demand by anyone with enough money to rent a womb, particularly when these distortions are presented as suitable, if not better, “alternatives” to the biblical family unit (with a mom and a dad who stay married for life).

In our current culture of death, a daily average of nearly 118,000 unborn children are systematically murdered through abortion worldwide.² Abortion is not only promoted but actually *encouraged* today (Romans 1:28–32) by those who hate the biblical family unit. And this hatred is fueling a deadly plague that’s killing millions of people around the world every year. This is the lethal result of a culture that is saturated in rebellion against God’s authority and his Word, which plainly states that those who reject God ultimately *love* death (Proverbs 8:36), and we’re seeing evidence of this truth today.

The Cultural Replacements of Christianity That Devalue Life

Those who oppose the cultural influence of Christianity need something to put in its place. Whether one examines Karl Marx’s philosophy or that of the Enlightenment-era skeptics, there has been a consistent, conscious attempt to elevate man’s thoughts above God. That is, man tries to define right and wrong apart from God’s revealed Word. And the deadly result of this rebellion against God’s Word was recently seen in the twentieth century, when hundreds of millions of people were slaughtered, all in the pursuit of secular “utopias,” such as in Soviet Russia, Maoist China, and other communist nations. This also includes the millions upon millions of unborn babies across the world who have been sacrificed on the altar of human autonomy.

People in the (past and present) culture have accepted secular definitions as a “good thing” to help progress humanity. For instance, Karl Marx promoted a Darwinian idea that the family unit is merely a “primitive stage” that needs to be abolished and ultimately “replaced.” More specifically, traditional socialists have advocated for the replacement of monogamous marriage with a system allowing much greater latitude for sexual passion . . . that monogamy was an institution contrary to human nature and was thus an impediment to human happiness . . . that children be raised communally, so society would be

one, big, harmonious family rather than fractured into competitive, squabbling family units.³

Today, most feminists are pro-abortion and see this as essential to women's equality. Biologically speaking, "free love" is more costly to women than men (because men don't get pregnant). And this results in them shouting for more access to contraception and abortion, which they believe are required to enable women to engage in the same promiscuity as men without the "consequences" of a baby.

Thus, abortion is frequently touted in our culture today by feminists and pro-death Marxist advocates as a reproductive right for women that's simply part of their "family planning" or "healthcare." But at its core, this ideology is really just an idol that is built on autonomy (emphasis on "bodily autonomy") that ultimately reduces babies in the womb to nothing more than simply "a clump of matter" (with perhaps less worth than cats, dogs, or even rocks). Some pro-abortion advocates unashamedly acknowledge that the unborn child is a human life from fertilization yet, nonetheless, still believe the child has less value than the mother's ability to choose abortion. As one pro-abortion advocate stated, "I would put the life of a mother over the life of a fetus every single time—even if I still need to acknowledge my conviction that the fetus is indeed a life. A life worth sacrificing."⁴

The Crown Jewel of Satan Is Abortion

Overall, this is the tragic consequence of the evolutionary worldview, which is really built on the religion of secular humanism. But this religion is actually nothing new and has existed since the fall of humanity. Behind these idols of presumptive happiness and comfort is our great adversary—Satan, the one who deceived Adam and Eve (Genesis 3) into the short-sighted thinking that they could be a law unto themselves, thus elevating their own autonomous thought/reason in rebellion against God's ultimate authority.

Satan has been using this same tactic for thousands of years on humanity (and especially parents) in retaliation against that first Messianic promise (Genesis 3:15). So in an attempt to destroy the "seed of the woman," his wicked desire has always been the destruction of the family unit. That is, by continuous enmity, his purpose is always to steal, kill,

and destroy humanity (John 10:10). This means Satan doesn't care whether parents sacrifice their child to Molech (as the Israelites did in the Old Testament era—Leviticus 18:21) or hand their child over to an assassin to be murdered at places like Planned Parenthood (the modern-day version of Molech); he is pleased anytime he deceives someone into murdering their offspring, who bears the image of God.

Despite Satan's head being victoriously crushed by Jesus Christ and ultimately destroying Satan's work via the cross (1 John 3:8), our enemy remains determined in his hatred of the church. And since he knows the victory is certain and imminent, he's looking to take casualties with him, prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour (1 Peter 5:8). So, in his feeble attempt to prevent God's kingdom from expanding (Matthew 6:10), Satan still deceives many to do his bidding and destroy our unborn neighbors, all under the pretense of "choice."

As the "ruler of this world" (John 12:31; Ephesians 2:2), Satan has blinded and ensnared many (2 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Timothy 2:26) to ultimately doubt the truth and authority of God's Word, which plainly states that every child is a gift and blessing from God (Psalm 127:3-5), who is fearfully and wonderfully made from the moment of fertilization (Psalm 139:13-16). And most importantly, the truth is that every child is made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), thus deserving of care and protection.

So biblically speaking, abortion is the literal destruction of image-bearers of God. And that is why it's Satan's "crown jewel" and his deadliest weapon against the church and the family unit, which has existed in different forms throughout history.

The Role of the Church

But how should the church respond to this evil afflicting our society today? The way the church has *always* responded. Just as the church both condemned abortion potions and the exposing of children, we need to condemn the murder of unborn children in the clearest, strongest terms possible. Just as Christians rescued children who were exposed by their Roman parents, we need to create a culture of adoption to rescue otherwise unwanted children. And just like Christians proclaimed the gospel to a world that hated and devalued entire classes of

humanity, we should be salt and light in our culture by proclaiming God's forgiveness extended to all who believe, including those who have committed the heinous sin of murder of the unborn.

In short, this darkness needs to be exposed by the *light* (Ephesians 5:11). As Charles Spurgeon (who, by the way, actually lived at the same time as Karl Marx) once famously put it, "A church that does not exist to reclaim heathenism, to fight evil, to destroy error, to put down falsehood, a church that does not exist to take the side of the poor, to denounce injustice and to hold up righteousness, is a church that has no right to be."⁵ Or, as my old pastor once put it during a sermon, "the culture around us is the report card of the church; how are we doing?"⁶

Simply put, our society today truly depends on the condition and well-being of the church—the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:25–27). Clearly from God's Word, we see that the church foundationally rests on the family unit (e.g., Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; Ephesians 5:31–32). Biblically speaking, the family unit is the establishment of God's kingdom in the home, where God originally commanded man to multiply and fill the earth (Genesis 1:28). And this is only accomplished by faithfully producing godly offspring through the biblical standard of the family (Malachi 2:15).

Throughout our recent history, the church has unashamedly brought this biblical standard of the family as redemptive liberation to pagan societies around the world. And this was considered radical to these civilizations that largely allowed men to leave their wives and children for any (arbitrary) reason. At the same time, as part of the biblical worldview, women were also elevated as equal in value to men (this was, and sometimes still is, unheard of in these cultures), which ironically is the "goal" of the modern feminist movement today (that logically and utterly fails due to their lack of commitment to biblical authority).

But really, starting with the "sexual revolution" (that primarily took root in the West in the 1960s), the church began letting the world influence it away from the biblical standard of the family by allowing godly institutions like marriage to be controlled and defined by popular opinion rather than by God. This also inevitably resulted in sexual immorality (e.g.,

pornography) rampantly becoming more normalized, where this lust of the flesh became not only tolerated but also "accepted" (and even promoted as having certain "benefits"). As a result, sexually immoral behaviors like prostitution and places like strip clubs became more permissible (e.g., if a woman was burdened and desperate for money). In the end, children in the womb became the victim of this new "revolution," being viewed as a "parasite" that women should have the "right" to murder at any time and for any reason.

We live in a culture today that sees the happiness and comfort of a mother as more important than the life of an innocent (defenseless/voiceless) child. So now is the time for the church to boldly start speaking truth once again into this culture of death to rescue those stumbling to the slaughter. And the church will not be able to make up any excuses like "we didn't know." For God knows every heart and will judge every action accordingly (Proverbs 24:11–12).

To the Pastors in the Pulpit

But what is the proper (biblical) role of pastors in the church to combat this evil? Sadly, in many churches today, pastors fear "troubling" their congregation by preaching on cultural issues like abortion. These pastors opt to take the "easy route" of just staying away from any real "controversial" matters and instead focus on topics that promote "self-help" (or "self-love") messages. As a result, critical issues like the murder of our unborn neighbors are avoided in the pulpit.

Although pastors may still decide to do their annual "pro-life" sermon on the third Sunday in January (commonly called "Sanctity of Human Life Sunday"), many will be cautious for fear of "offending" those in the congregation who have participated in abortion (and this includes men!). The problem is, rather than calling the sin of abortion what it is biblically (murder and child sacrifice), they simply skirt around the issue by describing abortion using the same language as the secular culture (e.g., using common euphemisms such as "terminating a pregnancy").

The Bible repeatedly warns not to conform to this rebellious world nor use its vernacular (e.g., Romans 12:1–2; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15–17). Instead, church leaders are called to disciple their congregation to be the *salt* and *light* in this world (Matthew 5:13–16). As Charles Spurgeon once said, "You are the salt of

Sharing this Good News
will genuinely save lives
and is really the most loving
thing we can do for others

the world, not the sugar candy; something the world will spit out, not swallow.”⁸

To equip the church to fight this war, pastors need to edify the saints by not “watering down” or truncating their messages. They need to speak biblically on repentance and sin (including abortion) from the pulpit. That is, they need to get back to preaching all of God’s Word (2 Timothy 4:2), speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), to ultimately please God rather than sinful man (Galatians 1:10).

Conclusion

There’s no doubt that this culture of death via abortion is being driven not only by deadly Marxist ideology, but really by our greatest enemy—*death* (1 Corinthians 15:26). That’s why we (especially as Christians) should not compromise at all with this evil and allow it to easily survive while destroying millions of innocent lives every year. Rather, it must be utterly defeated

and placed completely under the feet of our Lord (Psalm 110:1–2). But this can only happen by the church speaking the gospel message of repentance and faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16) to transform hearts and minds.

To drive this point further, I’ve personally spent numerous hours ministering and offering help to mothers and fathers outside of abortion “clinics” (i.e., mills), who were waiting to pay an assassin to rip apart their child. And due to their God-given conscience (Romans 2:15), they already knew what they were doing was wrong (i.e., they clearly knew their baby was about to be slaughtered). All this to say, it’s not a matter of merely providing the right scientific evidence to parents (which, in my experience, rarely ever helps). Rather, it’s about the proclamation of the gospel, enabling the Holy Spirit to make them into a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17), thus giving them the ability to turn away from that place of death and to let their baby live.

And this proclamation should remind everyone who hears that God’s laws, which undergird the gospel, are not “suggestions,” but actual *commands* from our holy God. Sinners are commanded to completely turn from sin, which includes abortion (child sacrifice), trusting alone in Jesus as their only hope for salvation from the wrath of God to come (Romans 5:9), and truly confessing he is Lord to the glory of God the Father (Philippians 2:10–11). Sharing this Good News will genuinely save lives and is really the most loving thing we can do for others (Romans 10:14–17). **M**

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Dean's Story

I was raised in a small community in northern Alberta. There were moments of family unity and I can remember happiness, at times. I believe that we all wanted to have good lives, but my parents had a cycle of binge drinking and in those times there was extreme violence. Sometimes my mother would leave my dad, take my two sisters and me, and live with another man where my sisters and I continued to be exposed to violence, alcohol abuse, and sexual immorality.

One of my best friends also had alcoholic parents. We spent a lot of time together, and became involved in vandalism and trouble with the law. Experimenting with alcohol from an early age, I had my first blackout experience at the age of 12. This was also the year that my mother informed me that my dad was not my real father. All my life, she had been keeping the secret that I had been conceived in an affair she'd had. At

home my abusive step-father projected his alcoholic anger on our family, being verbally abusive and also physically abusive to my mother.

My drinking continued and hangovers became more severe. I spent several nights in the drunk-tank; on one occasion I got out of jail in the morning and walked across the street to go to school. Finally, I was suspended from high school for being drunk and then was permanently expelled the next time. Depression intensified when I was also kicked off of our community hockey team as I came off of a one-week drinking binge. As I lay in bed, very sick, I could hear my parents hollering and fighting through the night. Finally, as the sun was coming up, I told myself that this was all I could expect in my future as this was the only life I had ever known. I honestly thought that was how life was! I attempted suicide that night. While I spent some time in the hospital, the doctor asked me if everything was

ok at home. I answered him in a surprised way stating that of course everything was ok; I guess I know today that I was in a lot of denial.

After that, I tried to get back to work and reestablished. But within a couple of years my drinking binges had become more intense and my recovery time grew longer. I was in trouble at work, financially, and relationally. In my depression I tried to roll my sports car off of a ravine at a high speed. I was thrown 50 feet from the car and I lay in the ditch overnight. When they found me, the ambulance drivers thought I had only minutes left to live, but I survived.

Again, I tried to regroup. This time I got married during a drinking binge. We separated within the first year and then I had a very bad motorcycle accident. She took me back while I was in a wheelchair, but as soon as I was able to walk again, I started to drink. We divorced and I moved to Calgary to go to school, where I was eventually expelled for my alcohol abuse. By this time I had three impaired driving charges and I had been in the drunk-tank many times.

In Calgary, I found myself at a point where I couldn't hold a job. I had to go on welfare and I couldn't keep a relationship. I believe it was ultimately my loneliness that opened me up to seeking Jesus. This happened with a street ministry team in Calgary. A fellow offered me a Bible and I asked him all the questions about God that I had struggled with and he gave me all of these great answers and then invited me to his church. I couldn't think of a reason not to go, so I went. After attending for a couple of months, I had another relapse. In my depression, tears, and brokenness I got on my knees and said "Jesus, I don't know who you are or what you are but I've been living my life for a long time in ways that I thought were right. I've been in a lot of pain and I've tried everything else my own way, but I haven't tried you. Please come into my life and lead me." I stayed sober for the first time in my life and I was the happiest I had ever been.

During this time, God gave me the courage to pursue some of my interests and goals. I was able to record a CD of my own songs. He also gave me opportunities in film and television as an actor. But, as I got better and more secure, my church attendance

dropped. I became distracted and developed gambling, overeating, work, and relationship addictions. I went to one more treatment center for 6 months in Calgary and then moved to Vancouver for a fresh start.

In Vancouver, I attended a one year long Christian healing program called "Living Waters." Before that, I had been going to a different twelve step recovery program every day of the week. I remember being afraid to even go outside my home, worried that I might start another addiction! I committed to doing whatever was needed to get better, putting work and relationships second to my healing. During this time I experienced significant healing. God helped me see people in my life through Jesus' eyes and I became aware of my bitter roots of unforgiveness. The Lord opened my heart to be able to trust in a relationship and to commit without fear of being abandoned or betrayed.

Following that program, I met and got to know my wife, Kira, at church. We married about two years later. God has blessed us with a healthy, loving marriage and four beautiful children. Also, I have just celebrated my 16th anniversary at the same job. Throughout this time, I have been able to serve the Lord as He has called me. We left the Vancouver area and moved to Winnipeg over 10 years ago. Today, my family and I are active in various ministries of evangelism and outreach. In the same way that I was once given a Bible, I have a heart to reach out to anyone, anywhere, with the hope and healing that Jesus has given to me. Praise be to God and to God alone. M



Those Sanctifying Effects of Suffering

A.W. TOZER


Instant Christianity tends to make the faith act terminal and so smothers the desire for spiritual advance. It fails to understand the true nature of the Christian life, which is not static but dynamic and expanding. It overlooks the fact that a new Christian is a living organism as certainly as a new baby is, and must have nourishment and exercise to assure normal growth. It does not consider that the act of faith in Christ sets up a personal relationship between two intelligent moral beings, God and the reconciled man, and no single encounter between God and a creature made in His image could ever be sufficient to establish an intimate friendship between them. By trying to pack all of salvation into one experience, or two, the advocates of instant Christianity flaunt the law of development which runs through all nature. They ignore the sanctifying effects of suffering, cross carrying and practical obedience. They pass by the need for spiritual training, the necessity of forming right religious habits, and the need to wrestle against the world, the devil and the flesh. Undue preoccupation with the initial act of believing has created in some a psychology of contentment, or at least of non-expectation. To many it has imparted a mood of disappointment with the Christian faith. God seems too far away, the world is too near, and the flesh too powerful to resist. Others are glad to accept the assurance of automatic blessedness. It relieves them of the need to watch and fight and


pray,

and sets them free to enjoy this world while waiting for the next. Instant Christianity is twentieth century orthodoxy. I wonder whether the man who wrote *Philippians 3:7-16* would recognize it as the faith for which he finally died. I am afraid he would not.

Philippians 3:7-16

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and

the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. 



Aiden Wilson (A.W.) Tozer was born in rural Pennsylvania in 1897. His walk with the Lord began as a teenager after hearing a street preacher declare Tozer's need for salvation. Tozer pastored several churches in the United States and Toronto, Canada where he died in 1963. His most enduring public legacy has been the prolific exhortative writings he left to the church. He wrote for, and later edited, the *Alliance Weekly*. He is likely best known for two of his books 'The Pursuit of God' and 'Knowledge of the Holy.' Tozer and his wife had seven children and were known for their simple and non-materialistic lifestyle. Tozer never owned a car and was reported to frequently give away royalties acquired from his many writings.



Conformed to Christ

Our motivating Scripture for this brief study is found in Romans 8:29; it says: “For whom He [God] foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

Unfortunately we often degrade the high calling of God’s eternal purpose for men and women into something much less grand than the Lord’s original intent. T. Austin-Sparks once wrote, “So many honestly think that all that matters is that you should be saved, and if you are saved you are done forever and you can get on with saving others. It is important to be saved, but the Word of the Lord makes it quite clear that to be saved from hell, saved from sin, to be saved from judgment, is only the beginning of things and that you may have that *and miss the very great purpose for which you were saved.*”¹

One of the highest callings of believers is to become more like Christ. This process is sometimes called ‘sanctification’ and it is used to describe the lifelong, spiritually maturing journey that believers undergo. We dare not underestimate the value of this journey and the finished product that it is meant to produce! Let’s consider the phrase from Romans 8:29 which says, “...conformed to the image of His Son.” The word ‘image’ comes from a Greek word which sometimes is translated as ‘icon.’ An icon is a high-definition representation of something else. An icon assumes a prototype, from which it is drawn and intended to resemble in great detail. An icon is more than a shadow, it is a replication. Dear brothers, we are intended to grow into the image of Christ as he matures us! This is the reality and direction toward which our Father in Heaven shapes and directs us. To be unaware of this will produce an inadequate vision for this brief life on earth.

¹ Austin-Sparks, T., *That Which is Born of the Spirit* (Writings of T. Austin-Sparks reprinted by Emmanuel Church, Tulsa, OK, USA (2010)), pp. 7, 14, 16-17.



Brother T. Austin-Sparks writes further on the matter of being conformed to the image of Christ: "This great dominating objective of God, to have all the sons coming to glory conformed to the image of His Son, is the explanation of all the Lord's dealings with us here; all the conditions of our lives which He has allowed to remain; all the strange experiences through which we go; all the deep trials which form part of our life...it is to bring out the features of Christ, and until you have got that you have not got the power to go through. If you begin to say the Lord is not with us, not able to meet this, or the power of God is not manifested, you have a lesser object and you begin to circle round yourself, not Christ in the glory to Whom the Holy Spirit is trying to bring you into conformity. It is necessary to get your objective and see what the Lord is seeking to do with His children and how He does it...Don't you become spiritually introspective and get yourself as the object in view. No! Don't you have *your* spirit always before *your* eyes and analyzing it...We want to be occupied with the Lord Jesus."¹

Carefully consider the following Scripture as well:

Romans 12:2 "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed [metamorphasized] by the renewing [complete renovation] of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

1 John 3:2 "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

Galatians 4:19 "My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you..."


Philippians 3:12 "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me."

Romans 12:2 clearly teaches that to grasp the objectives of God we must have our natural thinking entirely transformed. The word 'transformed' is translated from the Greek, from which we also get the word 'metamorphosis.' In school you may have studied the remarkable transformation of a caterpillar to a butterfly. It is a process that produces a creature that, to the naked eye at least, is completely different from which it began. As believers, the Holy Spirit is initiating an analogous spiritual transformation in our mind and thought processes. Without this occurring we cannot know the ways of God in any depth. That is why Paul can remark in 1 Corinthians 2:14 that "The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Our transformation into the image of

Christ does not come instantaneously or without intentionality on the Lord's part or ours. Consider Galatians 4:19 again and note that the book of Galatians was written by Paul to address the need for a proper walk according to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Paul himself labored on behalf of the churches in Galatia so that the believers there would experience growth and maturity. This did not simply happen by Paul being a passive, older brother and neither would growth occur should the saints be indifferent as well. It is a growth process that requires commitment and vision. It does not occur over night and it will not occur by accident. This is why Paul also writes in Philippians 3:12 that "I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me." Again, Christ Jesus has saved us for an eternal purpose! He has "laid hold" of us so that we can be brought to maturity. What does maturity in this life look like? I believe that John 15:8 gives some insight: "By this My Father is glorified if you bear much fruit; so you will be my disciples." The first handful of verses in John 15 clearly teaches us that to bear good fruit we must abide in Christ for without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). To abide in Christ is to have our lives completely spiritually sustained through Him. It is to joyfully acknowledge our dependence upon Christ. It is to have Him as our life, our living bread. Only then can Christ's transforming power within us produce the fruit of the Spirit such as proper love, kindness, endurance and gentleness (see Galatians 5:22-26).

In farming, the harvest always takes place in a season subsequent to the planting of seed. Indeed some fruit takes years to be fully realized. It does not come without the care of the farmer. The Lord is the farmer and in a spiritual sense we are the soil in which He plants His Seed (Christ). Are we willing to be vessels that produce lasting fruit? Scripture is replete with the teaching that not every believer will pursue all that Christ has for them. This is a sobering thought, that we could hear so much teaching yet pursue Him so little. If you have been a believer for a reasonable length of time you cannot help but notice that there is a spectrum of growth and maturation amidst the body of Christ. Quite likely some of this variability is simply due to the different lengths of time that various ones have been born again. But, significantly, there are cohorts of believers who, despite being born again for a similar length of time, have much disparity in

maturity and fruitfulness. I am constantly reminded that I have a role in pressing into what Christ has saved me for--to be like Him!

Let's revisit 1 John 3:2 again. The promise, "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is," definitely stands out. Obviously there is a future component to this promise that can only be completely fulfilled at the time of the Lord's physical return. Upon the resurrection of the dead we will receive glorified bodies and truly see Christ face to face (Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44) as He reigns upon the earth. What an amazing day to look forward to! But let us not also fail to see that there is a portion of Christ that we can 'see' even right now. When we read the Word, pray, or have genuine fellowship with one another, the Holy Spirit guides us into truth and into a deeper understanding of Christ and His ways. This 'revealing' of Christ occurs in our inner man, our spirit. It is what transforms us even while present in our failing human body. 1 Corinthians 2:9-10 says, "...eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God *has revealed* them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God." Unfortunately verse 9 is often viewed as only applying to our future state with Christ. But verse 10 clearly states that these things have been revealed to us now. There is a deep walk and daily fellowship with the Lord that is available to the believer right now. This portion is not meant to be revealed only at the end of time. Since our old mind has been replaced with the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16) we actually have the potential to walk in significant intimacy with Christ even in this mortal body. What truly restricts us is our lack of sight on these issues or our hesitancy to pursue Christ to the depths that He desires for us. But, dear brothers, it is our portion even in this life. May we fully come to appreciate the great truth that via the Holy Spirit, a member of the Godhead has taken up residence in every child of God. This was not done to make us God in ourselves but rather to conform us to the image of Christ. The grand effect is that the Christ in glory is also now the Christ within, our hope of glory. What an amazing reality; what a gift! 

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Money

Over the years, a close relative of mine has occasionally remarked how Scripture seemingly refers more often money than it does to important topics such as the lake of fire, heaven, etc. In a certain sense this is true. Money allows us to not only obtain the things we need but also the things we want. It is a potential master of the greedy soul or a tool used by the Lord and His faithful followers to invest eternally in the work of the kingdom of heaven. In this article we will consider the purpose and proper handling of money.

What we do with the money that we have reveals our heart's preoccupations. We may improperly pursue money for the fear of not having enough to meet our basic life needs. We may also pursue money in a quest to satisfy our selfish wants. In the world's perspective, money provides its owner with the ability to acquire peace of mind for the future, as well as power, prestige, relationships, and a comfortable life. As believers we may also struggle with related questions such as:

How much money is enough?
 If I buy this will I feel happier?
 Is this purchase a good deal?
 How much debt is acceptable?
 How can I get my finances 'under control'?

I first want to outline four *foundational issues* concerning money that Scripture addresses. I will then propose a number of practical guidelines for wise decision making in our financial decisions.

Scriptural Foundations

(a) The Lord will provide for our needs when we seek the Lord above all else

Consider Jesus' words in Matthew 6:31-34:

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles [the nations] seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.* Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

Jesus clearly declares that when we pursue Him above all else we will have our needs met; He will give us the employment and funds that we need. If we perceive that our needs are not being met, perhaps we need to examine whether or not we are pursuing the Lord above all earthly pursuits. I also want to point out that the Lord's financial blessings, though sometimes coming to us via miraculous and unexpected

means, are most often obtained via work. To be abundantly clear, the Lord is not asking believers to detach themselves from society and merely expect some sort of heavenly handout apart from work. We are warned in 1 Timothy 5:8 that a man not providing for the basic needs of his family is behaving “worse than an unbeliever.”

(b) It is the *love* of money that we are warned against. Money is not inherently evil. Indeed it has the capacity, if submitted to the Lord, to accomplish much for the kingdom of God. Rather it is the *love* of money that causes us to pursue things other than Christ (1 Timothy 6:10).

(c) Contentment is learned as we mature in Christ. No baby arrives toilet trained and walking upright. Similarly, no new believer will be perfectly content in Christ. There are initial high points, to be sure, when we come to Christ but inevitably circumstances in life will test our growing faith. Contentment is acquired over time as we obey Him and humbly apply the instructions of Scripture in response to life’s circumstances. Paul remarked that “*I have learned* in whatever state I am, to be content (Philippians 4:11).” Over the years, Paul definitely came to know the highs and lows of life that a believer may experience in the pursuit of the kingdom. But in this process, he saw the providing hand of Christ meet his every need. As a result, he could authoritatively write that “*I have learned...*”

(d) How we handle our money has *eternal* implications. Along with other God-given resources such as health, natural abilities and time, our financial decisions are to be made with eternity in view. 1 Timothy 6:17-19 instructs us: “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.”

Practical considerations concerning the use of money

(a) Make a budget and live within your means. The fleshly temptation is to pursue the next purchase that is just outside of your reasonable financial reach. It will be very useful to make a budget that clearly outlines your (say, monthly) income and expenses.

This isn’t rocket science, but your monthly expenses, on average, needs to be less than your monthly income. With that said, a budget doesn’t have to bring you into another bondage where every dollar and cent is accounted for, but it should serve as a useful guide. Lastly, stick to your budget! Many people make a thorough budget but fail to heed it.

(b) Beware of debt

The topic of debt can be a sticky subject. Some interpret Scripture as teaching that all debt is wrong. Others would teach that if your amount of debt is financially ‘manageable’ then it is reasonable. I think it is useful to consider a few cautions and then you may go before the Lord and see how He guides you in this matter.

When borrowing money you are, to some degree or another, presuming upon the future. This should at least produce a caution in one’s considerations before making a purchase. By incurring debt, you are assuming that your present income stream is at the very least sustainable, if not even growing in the future. You are also assuming that future interest rates on your debt will be manageable. For the last number of years, interest rates in North America have been incredibly low, thus causing many to incur debts to such levels such that if interest rates were to increase, they would find it difficult to meet their monthly payments. Be wary.

I personally believe that debt has a bit of a spectrum. Some debt (for example, home mortgages) may present an opportunity to avoid renting while simultaneously *potentially* yielding long term investment gains. Other debt appears to offer no benefit. For example, credit card debt is almost always associated with high monthly interest rates and seemingly perpetual minimum monthly payments. Many people, seeing their inability to control their credit card spending, have given themselves ‘plastic surgery’ and rid themselves of their credit cards. Sometimes drastic steps must be taken in order to bring things under control. Nevertheless, without the spiritual fruit of ‘self-control’ (Galatians 5:22-23) credit cards can be easily re-obtained and abused. It is only the Lord who will truly give us victory over our lusts.

(c) Consider buying gently used items rather than new

We live in a disposable society. From clothing to electronics to vehicles and tools, most people prefer

to buy new and replace often. With a little searching, said items can often be purchased gently used at a significant discount. Learning to fix or mend broken household items can also save money and provide a useful learning experience. Over the past couple of years, one of my sons has become quite proficient at fixing our older vehicles and yard care equipment. I believe that our family has already saved several thousand dollars as a result and my son has become a competent mechanic in the process.

(d) Don't improperly compare your 'stuff' to others. The eye of man is never satisfied (Proverbs 27:20). Advertising preys upon this fact and entices us to 'keep up with the Joneses.' Cultural peer pressure can also play a role. Just because our neighbour recently bought a new 'toy' does not necessarily mean we should too! Quite frequently we are content with what we have until the time we see a newer version of it. Again, the Lord promises to give us what we *need* not what we *want*.

(e) Beware of impulse purchases and 'too-good-to-be-true' deals

It is rare that we truly need to make a large purchase decision on the spot. If I followed my every feeling and whim I would be in a sorry financial state indeed. Beware if you feel pressured to make a quick decision! Pressure tactics and impulse buys are not the mark of a Holy Spirit led purchase. A fair seller will give you time to make a rational decision. Goods that are priced significantly below market value should be investigated a bit further before taking the plunge and making the purchase. It is possible that drastic underpricing implies damaged goods, poor material workmanship or other long term drawbacks for the new buyer. A God given sense of self-control and peacefulness should surround our decisions.

(f) Listen to the cautions of your wife (or parents, or brothers in the Lord)


If you are about to undertake a major purchase, strongly consider receiving advice from others. It

is a real red flag if purchases do not allow time for outside counsel. Sadly, we may not seek advice from others simply because we think they may frown upon our purchase. Our wives should always be consulted on major purchases. The Holy Spirit often grants our wives wisdom on these matters even if they don't possess the area expertise concerning the purchase. Spiritual authorities in our lives or Godly brothers that will give us a true word (and not just what we want to hear) may also be consulted. Many ruinous financial decisions have been made for the sad reason of not seeking, or heeding, Godly counsel!

(g) Look to the (eternal) future

Will the purchase I so desperately want to make in the moment have any value a month from now? Three years from now? Ten years from now? It can be useful to ask ourselves these sorts of questions. Many expensive purchases (for example, electronics and new vehicles) depreciate extremely quickly. Extrapolating our (dis)satisfaction from these goods into the future often brings me back down to planet earth and yields more sober decision making.

Finally, Luke 12:16-21 records the parable of a rich man who sought satisfaction from his worldly goods during times of increase. It did not end well for him.

"Then He [Jesus] spoke a parable to them, saying: 'The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. And he thought within himself, saying, "What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?" So he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build greater, and there I will store all my crops and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." 



The God who speaks

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. (JOHN 10:27)

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. (ROMANS 8:16)

You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. (JOHN 5:39)

But whatever He [the Spirit of truth] hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. (John 16:13)

These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches... (1 CORINTHIANS 2:13)

These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. (JOHN 15:11)

And they said to one another, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" (LUKE 24:32)

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. (2 CORINTHIANS 5:20)

As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." (ACTS 13:2)