

# UNTO YOU, YOUNG MEN

By

**BILL NICKS**

*A three month study course designed to help in the  
instruction of young men from 12 to 18  
years of age.*

*Published by*

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## DEDICATION

*To Gerry, the wife of my youth, in whom I still rejoice, and without whose help and counsel my life would not have been as rich and full.*

## INTRODUCTION

It is my privilege to commend to the reading public this valuable book by my brother in Christ, Bill Nicks. Young Christians face tremendous challenges in our day. It seems that Satan has targeted them for special attack. Young men, even more than young women, bear the heavier weight of this warfare. There is a continuing need for relevant, Biblical lessons that apply the ancient precepts of God to the problems of today. *Unto You, Young Men* meets this need in an effective way.

The author grew up in a wonderful Christian home where he learned to love the Lord, his word and his church. At an early age, he began his life of service to Jesus. Trained in a Christian school, he has preached the gospel now some 38 years. In those years of ministry, he has worked with hundreds of young people, instilling in them the lessons of this book. Bill and his devoted wife, Gerry, have raised 3 lovely daughters. They are experienced parents, and that qualifies him further to author these studies.

Brother Nicks is now engaged in the training of young men to serve God as gospel preachers. He is director of the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. If this book helps to encourage even one young Christian to volunteer to serve the Lord in this capacity, the author will be well rewarded.

Every young man would be blest immensely if he would read and heed these timeless truths. Adults would do their sons and grandsons a choice favor by putting the book in their hands.

John Waddey

## INTRODUCTION FOR SECOND PRINTING

The young men of our day are in great need of help. They may not realize it or admit it, but they need help, nevertheless. *Unto You, Young Men* by Bill Nicks was written with that thought in mind. We believe in it so strongly that we are printing it for him. It is our prayer that we can put it into the hands of our young men and that they will read it for the good it will do them. We also pray that our church leaders will see the need of teaching this material to their young men in class situations.

Brother Nicks and his family have lived as missionaries in Nigeria and Liberia in past years. He served for a time as the Director of East Tennessee School of Preaching at Knoxville, Tennessee and he continues to teach there. We deeply appreciate Bill and Gerry and their dedicated lives to the cause of Christ.

J. C. Choate  
Winona, Mississippi  
January 30, 1985

## PREFACE

My appreciation for young men, as well as young women, stems from the will of God that we love all, young and old alike. But also it is based upon my memories of the frustrations of youth, and the need for many questions to be answered peculiar to youthful needs. These lessons are also given with the belief that young people have high spiritual capacities, which need to be cultivated early, "before the evil days come" (Ecc. 12:1). There is no need for young people to heed Satan's advice to "sow wild oats" in the time of youth, while "vital juices are virile" within.

The advice of Solomon is: "walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes (do your own thing is the modern expression): but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore, remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity" (Ecc. 11:9, 10).

These lessons to young men are sent forth with the earnest hope that meditation upon the truths discussed herein will save many from tragic mistakes which would have led to suffering and heartaches unnecessarily. May each one who studies them, "lay up the word of God in his heart that he may not sin against him" (Ps. 119:11).

May each one "trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. 3:5, 6).

## **Preface**

May God bless you as you study, and as you build a life that will influence many for eternity to “shine as the brightness of the firmament; and turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever” (Dan. 12:3).

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## STATEMENT FROM THE PUBLISHER

For a long time I have been encouraging brother Bill Nicks to do some writing for the work in this part of the world. Being a very busy man with local preaching in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, U.S.A., it was not easy for him to find the time to do so. But with his desire to help in whatever way he could, he has now written this special series of lessons with emphasis on young men. I am more than pleased to have them and to be able to pass them on to you. We have so many fine young men who are in India and if we can just reach them for Christ they will not only be blessed themselves but through their lives many others likewise can be helped. I am confident that this book will do much good in that direction.

Brother Nicks has preached the gospel of Christ for many years in the U.S.A. and has served as a missionary, along with his family, in the country of Nigeria, West Africa. He has participated in many lectureships and conducted numerous gospel meetings. Just recently he became the director of East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions in Knoxville, Tennessee, U.S.A. In that field of labor I know that he will render a great service as he helps to teach and to mold young men to become workers for the Lord.

As I said, I am happy to have this material and to be able to share it with you, for the good it will do. I want to encourage you to read it and to study it, along with your Bible or New Testament, and to apply it to your life. If you will, I am confident that you will benefit much for having done so.

J. C. Choate  
Church of Christ  
New Delhi  
October 3, 1980



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## CHAPTER ONE

### YOUR BODY

“I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one” (I John 2:14b).

Although John is speaking of spiritual strength in this passage, it is right for each of us to want to have strong physical bodies. In fact, in another epistle, John says, “Beloved, I pray that in all things thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth” (III John 2). It is right to pray and work for strong, healthy bodies. There is no reason why a strong, healthy spirit cannot at the same time be in a strong, healthy body. This lesson is designed to help you see what God expects you to do to keep yourself healthy and strong physically.

First, observe that you are created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27), and that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 6:19). Your body is not, in the final analysis, your own. You were bought with a price, the blood of Christ, so you are to glorify God in your body (I Cor. 6:20;

Acts 20:28). You might put it this way: God is letting you rent out your body for 70 years, more or less. How long you live, as well as your eternal destiny, depends a great deal upon you.

## YOUR NATURE

As to your nature, when God created man, He created him with three parts: body, soul and spirit (I Thess. 5:23). The original pair were created from dust of the ground, and a rib from man's side, but the law of procreation was set in motion. Afterwards, all people are born of human flesh from the father and mother of all living, Adam and Eve (I Tim. 2:13; I Cor. 15:22; Gen. 2:19-24). The evolutionary theory that says you descended from a lower form of animal is not only unbiblical, it is also unscientific. Humans cannot come from non-humans; there had to be a living, intelligent creator.

Satan tempts you through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life (I John 2:15-17; James 1:13-15). That is why you must be fortified with the word of God to be able to "stand against the wiles of the devil" and to "quench all of his fiery darts" (Eph. 6:11, 16).

Your body is flesh, but your soul is animal life, the part that has blood, and which breathes (Gen. 2:7; 1:30). At death this leaves and goes

back to the dust along with the body, but the spirit lives on, surviving the body. The spirit is therefore the eternal nature of man, meaning that it never dies. The breath is not all there is in the body; there is something like God in us. He is the “father of our spirits” (Heb. 12:9). Sometimes, the word “soul” is used interchangeably with “spirit,” in which case the soul does not die. But observe the use of “soul” in I Sam. 24:11. Now contrast its use in Matt. 10:28. The first refers to animal life, which man can take; the second use refers to the spirit which no man can kill. Its use determines its meaning. We inherit our bodies from parents, and on backwards, from Adam. Our spirits come from God. The spirit goes back to God at death, but the body goes back to the dust (Eccl. 12:7). The “Jehovah’s Witnesses” are wrong in saying that soul and spirit are always the same, and both end at death, thus annihilated. Study also II Cor. 7:1 and I Pet. 3:4 on “spirit.”

## YOUR BODY AND STRONG DRINK OR DRUGS

Both drinking alcoholic beverages and using drugs are harmful to the body. They abuse the body God has given to us. In times like these, we need cool, clear heads, not addled and stupid

ones. Drinking and drunkenness are not new sins; they are as old as Noah (Gen. 9:20-26). Drunken sons were to be put to death under the law of Moses (Deut. 21:18-21). At a drunken feast Absalom killed his brother, Amnon (II Sam. 13:26-29). The first High Priest was commanded to drink no wine (Lev. 10:9), or strong drink. All Christians are priests today (I Pet. 2:5, 9), and are to abstain from strong drink (Eph. 5:18; Matt. 12:45). Men start drinking because they are deceived (Prov. 20:1; Gal. 6:7). Satan deceives them through evil men who trap them like an animal (II Tim. 2:24-26). Half of all people killed on our highways are due to drunken drivers. Notice the effects of strong drink on one, (Prov. 23:29-35; 21:17). Wife-beaters, child-abusers, murderers and arsonists are usually drunkards. And dope addicts are blowing their minds which God intended for them to use to His glory. People who engage in such works of the flesh are going to have a rude awakening in the judgment, but it will be too late for them. Many alcoholics have wished too late never to have taken the first drink!

## YOUR BODY AND SMOKING

A recent *Reader's Digest* (1979) reported that health hazards of smoking look even grimmer

than the report from the same office 15 years ago. Cigarette smoking is definitely implicated in heart disease and cancer, the nation's leading killers. Now it is also linked to many bronchial diseases, allergies and adverse reaction to drugs. The weed is killing 350,000 Americans each year! There is no doubt about it: smoking is harmful to your body! And God says it is a sin to willfully destroy your body. Notice these reasons why smoking is wrong:

1. I Cor. 3:15, 17. Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit of God. We have no right to abuse that which is sanctified for such a holy use.

2. I Cor. 6:12. Excess of freedom brings bondage. One may reason: "I have the lawful right to smoke," and by so reasoning, he excuses himself. But he fails to see that in so doing he brings himself into slavery to a weed. Why do millions who desire to quit find it impossible to pull away from the hold of this unnaturally developed habit. It is not a natural appetite; one must develop the craving. Why start? Some young men start because they want to be "big men." Forty years later they try to quit (and often can't) also to be "big men." The original pride deceived them.

3. Rom. 14:13-23. This discusses the eating of meats sacrificed to idols, but the principle is the same. If in doing something we think we have the right to do becomes a bad influence, to the point of “destroying him for whom Christ died,” we have the obligation to forego our bodily appetites for the sake of edifying our brethren. “It is good not to do anything whereby thy brother stumbleth.” How many are you leading, by your indulgence, into something that may cause them to violate their conscience, and thereby to sin against God? Mothers and fathers don’t want me as a preacher, or any other child of God, to smoke before their children, and so influence them in the wrong way.

I have never seen anyone who said smoking is a clean habit. Yet, we are told to “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit” (II Cor. 7:1). I say to you, young men: “Keep thyself pure” (I Tim. 5:22).



## CHAPTER TWO

### YOUR PARENTS

Before you give your parents the low score of one in a scale of ten, read the following passages, and consider what your parents owe you in the form of instructional and correctional discipline: Prov. 22:6, 15; 23:13, 14; 29:15; Eph. 6:4. It is your duty to help them accomplish these things.

Having a happy and successful home is a two way street, so far as parents and children are concerned. Regardless of how good a job parents may be doing with their children, there will be failure without your response. Each person has a responsibility before God to do His will as it pertains to him or her. Here are some passages of scripture that tell you of your duties in this regard: Prov. 17:25; 23:12, 15; 23:19-25; Eph. 6:1-3.

#### WHAT YOUR PARENTS WISH FOR YOU TO HAVE AND TO BE NOW

If they are both Christians, they want you

to have a Christian environment at home, and are trying to provide you with a matrix of love to help you develop right attitudes toward God and your fellow man. Your early and impressionable years are so important. You are extremely well-blessed if you have parents who take time to explain the finer things of life to you, as well as to care for you in other ways.

They also want you to have a good education. They will no doubt back you to the hilt in this, since most parents want their children to have an even better chance in life to be educated than they themselves had.

They want you to have a happy time in your youth. They wish for you a life filled with joy. If at times it seems they are hard on you by not allowing you to participate in some things, it may be that they see pitfalls which you do not in your immaturity see. They want to shield you from that which may be harmful to you, and cannot truly bring happiness.

They are interested in your physical, mental and spiritual training. In order to be well-rounded, a full-orbed individual, you not only need to have a sound body, and a growing intellect, but you must also have moral and spiritual ideas. Jesus grew in all these areas as you will notice in Luke 2:52. This means they want you to be a sincere Christian, a child of God. When

they think you understand enough about salvation, and have sufficiently learned the distinction between right and wrong, they want to see you act on your own powers of thought and serious consideration to become a member of the body of Christ. This is not a decision they can make for you, although they can be helpful. Each one must act on his own to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, (Acts 2:38). You will then be raised to walk a new life where you will seek to live on a high plane before your fellow men (Col. 3:1-4).

Another major thing they expect of you is to marry a wife who can share with you these high ideals. This means you should select as your companions those who are Christians, for it is from those with whom you associate that you will select your life's companion (I Cor. 15:33). They do want you to have the very finest of friends as your associates. Remember that marriage is not just for babies, and it is for keeps, that is, it is permanent. More on that in Lessons Five and Six.

They also want you to prepare for and be engaged in some honorable occupation in which you can be a blessing to society, and can provide a livelihood for your family, when you establish your own home.

## DON'T EXPECT TOO MUCH OF YOUR PARENTS

Your parents love you more than anyone else in the world, therefore, they must discipline you as they see it is needed. You can make it hard on both them and yourself by a stubborn and rebellious attitude. Do not be angry with them for doing what God wants them to do for you. Such sons were put to death under the law of Moses (Deut. 21:18-21). Try to be a better son so they will be proud of you. They can't make your decisions. They can only teach you and pray for you to respond in the right manner. You are growing into manhood and must act responsibly as all people must. Your parents want to be fair with you. Give them a chance. Be fair with them.

“Discipline” comes from the word meaning “teach”:

1. This discipline is by word and example (Prov. 22:6).

2. Timothy was disciplined wisely as a child (II Tim. 3:15). His mother and grandmother started from a baby to teach him the truths of God. It is not any wonder Paul could later pay him this high compliment: “I know of

no man like-minded who can truly care for your state” (Phil. 2:20).

3. Discipline seems hard for the moment, but does good (Heb. 12:5-13).

4. We must gradually learn to discipline ourselves (I Tim. 4:12, 16). It is in this way we can achieve the greatest success in life and for all eternity.

### SOME HELPFUL SUGGESTIONS

1. Cultivate an unselfish spirit. Selfishness breeds jealousy and caused the first murder (Gen. 4:1-16). You form your personality in your home. Try unselfishness with your parents, brothers and sisters, and others. You will surely see how it makes for a happier relationship. It is not an easy trait to develop and will require time and effort (Matt. 7:12).

2. Cultivate a forgiving spirit. Jesus taught us that we couldn't be forgiven from God if we do not forgive others (Matt. 6:14). Start this at home.

3. Cultivate an affectionate disposition. It is unnatural to show little or no affection for

parents and near of kin, as brothers or sisters. Paul said it was characteristic of the heathen world to act without natural affection (Rom. 1:31). It is good to let loved ones know we care for them.

4. Cultivate a spirit of gratitude. Don't ever forget you owe your life to father and mother. Also, many hours were spent caring for you. It is not possible for you to pay them back in money. They don't expect this. The best repayment is to live so they will always be proud of you, and never ashamed. Read Luke 17:11-19. Just to know that you are truly grateful and care for them is all they really want.

5. Cultivate a respectful and obedient spirit (Eph. 6:1-3). May you treat them with respect and love now so as to win their approval and respect.

## CHAPTER THREE

### YOUR RELIGION

The word “religion” means “binding back.” After man’s temptation and fall in the Garden of Eden, God planned to bind man back to him by making it possible for man to have his sins forgiven. This was accomplished when Christ died on the cross and purchased the church with his blood (Acts 20:28; Rev. 1:5).

God planned only one way, a harmonious system of religion revealed in the Old and New Testaments. The Old was designed to lead men to Christ, and when Christ came, the Old was taken away and “nailed to the cross” (Col. 2:14). We are now under the New Testament, or will of Christ. It is called the “faith once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). There are many false ways, or false religions, which men have devised without the approval of God. Some of them have no connection with either the Old or New Testaments, such as Hinduism, Buddhism and other oriental religions. The Moslem religion claims to believe in parts of the

Old Testament, but the Koran, their “Bible”, was written by Mohammed over 600 years after Christ. It is clearly not from God, for prophecy ceased when the faith was *once for all delivered* in the first century. Roman Catholicism claims to be Christian but resulted when men fell away from the original plan of God. It is not the true church for it is not identified with the one we read of in our New Testament. Protestant churches arose in protest to the Roman Catholic church. They reformed some things, such as breaking away from “traditions” but they retained some other traditions, such as sprinkling, titles for preachers, etc. They did not have in mind restoring the church as it was originally, but to reform the existing church.

You will often be called upon to defend your faith in Christ. Peter tells us we must be always ready to “give answer to any man that asks us a reason concerning the hope that is within you, yet with meekness and fear” (I Pet. 3:15). We need loyal defenders of the word who can adorn the doctrine with a life of purity and courage (I Tim. 4:12). This lesson is designed to help you study and prepare to this end.

## KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT THE LORD’S CHURCH

The first truth is that there is only one true



and right church, for Christ built, bought and saved only one, namely His own (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22; 4:4-6; 5:23; Col. 1:18; I Cor. 12:20; 13:). You will observe from many people, who are sectarian in their concepts, that this is an unpopular doctrine. They have been educated to believe: "One church is as good as another, and we are all going to the same place, so long as we believe in Christ." They do not think doctrine is important, yet we are told to "speak the things which befit the sound doctrine" and "in thy doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sound speech that cannot be condemned" (Tit. 2:1, 7f). In our discussion with them, we must not be self-righteous, and we must never display a "holier-than-thou" attitude, but "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15). We must let them know that we are painfully conscious of our own shortcomings and need to draw nearer to the Lord. We are not saying that *we* are perfect, but that the *Lord's plan* for the church is perfect. He has a perfect pattern which no man can, that is, has the right or authority, to change in any way (Gal. 1:6-9).

Christ prayed that all of His followers might be one, even as He and the Father are one, in order that the world might believe (John 17:20-22). The only way this can be achieved is for all who love Him to adhere to His teachings, the

sacred oracles, and not allow any doctrine to be added or deleted (I Pet. 4:11; Rev. 22:18f; Deut. 4:2). The apostles likewise considered divisions as a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21; I Cor. 1:10). Paul did not admit he was a member of a sect (an offshoot from the original), but that it was so called by the enemies of the Way (Acts 24:1-5, 14). *Sect* is from the Greek word *haeresis*, from which we get “heresy.” No one wants to be a heretic, or false teacher, but what is the difference in that and a sectarian person, or one who says, “My party, right or wrong?” The truth is that the religious world at large does not take division seriously. In modern efforts to have an ecumenical (world-wide) church, doctrinal differences are ignored, and the result is an amalgamation of false faiths. We must “seek the old paths, and walk therein” (Jer. 6:16).

Another important truth is the fact that Christ adds people to His church (Acts 2:47). The popular phrase is “join the church of your choice.” The Lord has chosen the way for us, and we have no right to choose another. The idea of joining is a human act, but when the Lord adds us, it is a divine act. *Join* is used 11 times in the New Testament, but never to “joining the church,” when referring to one’s original membership in God’s family. We must be “born of water

and the Spirit” to enter the kingdom (John 3:5).

Study the cases of conversion in Acts 2, 9, 10, 11, and 16 to see what they did. The real question is not “which church should I join?” but rather “what must I do to be saved?” When we do this properly, the Lord will add us to the right church, not to some sectarian body with a human name, doctrines, etc.

Also, you may distinguish the Lord’s church by true worship (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 11: 20-30; Heb. 10:25; I Cor. 16:1, 2; II Cor. 9:7; Eph. 5:19; Acts 2:24). There is also a correct organization, with each local church having its own elders and deacons, being autonomous (self-governing) and independent, with no ecclesiastical hierarchy (one man, or body of men, over many churches), I Cor. 14:23; Phil. 1:1; Acts 20:17-28; Heb. 13:17). All Christians are priests and in the Lord’s church we confess our sins to Christ and to one another, not some “priest” who is unmarried and takes his directions from the Pope (I Pet. 2:5, 9).

## **STAND FOR THE TRUTH COURAGEOUSLY AND UNCOMPROMISINGLY**

There is a great need for courageous men to defend the truth (I Pet. 3:15), and who are like Paul, “set for the defense of the gospel” (Phil.

1:15). Under proper circumstances and in the right spirit, it is right to debate, upholding truth on the polemic platform (Prov. 25:9; Jude 3).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### YOUR PURITY

Paul said to the young man, Timothy, “Keep thyself pure” (I Tim. 5:22). We all want purity when it involves our food, oil for our cars, or when dealing in monetary affairs. We want the uncorrupted truth from those with whom we deal in business. It is vastly more important that we expect and demand moral purity of our husbands, wives and our children. It is just as needful for young men to keep pure as for young ladies. Both of them have consciences, that built-in alarm system which tells when wrong has been committed, thus condemning for participation; or else excusing conduct when conforming to that which is known to be righteous. Both have haunting memories of evil doing which hurts the prospects of happy marriage later. Both have bodies which can be defiled. Both must stand accountable before God to “render account for deeds done in the body” (II Cor. 5:10). In this lesson we are appealing to young men to consider seriously the importance of keeping yourself

pure until marriage, the only state recognized by the Bible in which sexual cohabitation can be lawful. Your adherence to this teaching will determine your health and happiness, both now and eternally.

## FORNICATION

The word "fornication" is from the Latin word, *fornix*, meaning "vault, or underground." To patronize the underground brothels of ancient Rome was to fornicate. The heathen religions practiced fornication in their temples. For example, there were 1,000 sacred slaves (prostitutes) dedicated to this practice in the temple of Aphrodite in ancient Corinth. Let no one deceive you into the belief that this practice is a "new morality" thus making you sophisticated and up-to-date. This practice is nothing more nor less than the old immorality, and has always been, and ever will be, sin in the sight of God, regardless of how clever men are to deceive you into thinking otherwise. The Bible pictures fornication as sin, an old sin, a heinous sin, and one, unless repented of, that can lead the soul to eternal ruin, as well as misery and unhappiness here.

Fornication is a broad word in meaning, and includes all kinds of sexual sins: whoredom,

adultery, incest (unlawful sexual relations with one of close kin; as mother, sister, father or brother); it includes homosexuality, lesbianism (male with male, or female with female), and all sexual immorality or uncleanness. In the Old Testament, adulterers were put to death (Deut. 22:22). They were told, "But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul" (Prov. 6:32). In the New Testament, the first time the word hell (Gehenna) is used is in connection with the teaching of Jesus on this sin. "Everyone that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her that is put away committeth adultery" (Matt. 5:32). Just prior to that he had said that "every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart;" then he said, "if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell" (Matt. 5:28f). Unless one is trying to restrain and control the temptation, and prevent a lascivious heart, Jesus considers it sin, even before the overt act is committed. How much more then is it sin when one yields sufficiently to revel in the mire

of fornication! (Read also Prov. 7:6-27; Matt. 19:9; 15:18f; Acts 15:20, 29; Rom. 1:25-29; I Cor. 6:9-11; 5:1-13; I Thess. 4:3-8; Rev. 21:8). To summarize: any sexual act outside of scriptural marriage is fornication. Marriage the Bible recognizes is monogomous (one husband - one wife) I Cor. 7:2.

## YOU SIN AGAINST YOURSELF

“. . . but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body” (I Cor. 6:18). Doctors say the only way to get venereal diseases (gonorrhoea and syphilis) is by sexual contact with one infected. These diseases destroy the body, at least weakening it (Prov. 2:16-19; 5:3-5, 11). But destruction of the body is not as bad as destruction of the soul. One must repent or be lost (Luke 13:3).

## YOU SIN AGAINST YOUR PARTNER

“Give no occasion of stumbling, either to Jews, or to Greeks, or to the church of God: . . . seeking . . . the profit of the many, that they may be saved” (I Cor. 10:32f). “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in *purity*” (I Tim. 4:12).



There is no greater thief than the boy who robs a girl of her purity by seducing her (or vice versa). In the Old Testament, we read that Simeon and Levi killed the whole city of Shechem because one man defiled their sister, Dinah, saying, "Should they treat our sister as a harlot?" (Gen. 34). Then, in Genesis 39 we read of the attempt of Potiphar's wife to seduce Joseph. She was a heathen woman, and, to them, fornication was not scorned as it was among God's people. Joseph, who had been taught from his youth the ways of God, said, "How can I do this thing and sin against my God?" He knew he would not only be sinning against himself, but also his partner, as well as God.

## YOU SIN AGAINST YOUR PARENTS AND FAMILY

After warning the young man against the strange woman (evil woman), saying, "Remove thy feet far from her, and come not nigh the door of her house: Lest thou give thine honor unto others, and thy years unto the cruel: Lest strangers be filled with thy wealth, and thy labors be in the house of a stranger." Solomon encouraging faithful marriage: "Let thy fountain be blessed: and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and

pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times: and be thou ravished always with her love” (Prov. 5:9-12, 18-20). Fornication causes you to give up your honor, and brings shame on your family. It leads to the loss of your influence for good, the loss of your saving power and spiritual leadership. When one gives in to his lust in this fashion, he becomes a selfish weakling, thinking only of his depraved passion, not the way of godliness. Parents and kin of such a one bow their heads in shame at the very mention of their ungodly son or brother.

## YOU SIN AGAINST SOCIETY IN GENERAL

God’s word makes a civilized society, breeding a society respecting good morals and the rights of others. “Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34). “But because of fornications, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband” (I Cor. 7:2). If everybody in our society committed fornication, this would destroy God’s law of marriage, and lead to lawlessness, and the breakdown of the home as a sacred institution. It would be a curse to children, and prevent them from having a physically safe and psychologically sound haven in which to be reared. It is essential for the

preservation of a civilized society to return to God's way. This involves self-restraint, self-control, and practice of the golden rule (II Pet. 1:5-9; Matt. 7:12).

## YOU SIN AGAINST GOD

Joseph said to Potiphar's wife, "How can I do this thing and sin against my God?" (Gen. 39:9). He had been taught by Jacob and Rachel, his parents, that fornication was a sin against God. God has always, in every dispensation, taught this eternal truth. In the Mosaic age, it was punishable by death (Deut. 22:22). But the New Testament declares the punishment for this sin will be eternal death (Rev. 21:8; I Cor. 6:9-11). Ungodly people in our evil society wink at this sin, but they are under God's law, whether they realize it or not, and will be held accountable (II Cor. 5:10; Matt. 19:9). "Whosoever" in Matt. 19:9 includes everyone. God's moral laws are universal. "Let marriage be had in honor among *all*, and let not the marriage bed be defiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### YOUR COURTSHIP

Courtship is that “court of inquiry” in which two sincere young people are seeking to find out who will make the best companion in life, the best wife and mother, or the best husband and father. Courtship should not be a game of make-believe, nor of deception and hypocrisy. It is more than merely “falling in love.” It is a no joking matter but it is dead serious business. It is surely not a game for children, whether they be 15 or 75. Nor is it something one should pursue without diligent prayer. Above all, those who are serious minded should ask the blessings of God, making supplication for wisdom in the choice of one who will be his/her life’s partner. “In everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known to God” (Phi. 4:6).

Sex is the creation of God, and therefore is good. “Therefore shall a man leave father and mother, and cleave unto his wife; and the two shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). Sex is ugly only

as sinful humans drag it into the mire. God intended that it be a beautiful relationship between husband and wife, characterized by happiness and fulfillment (Heb. 13:4). But it is a “hell” on earth for those with wrong ideas and motives.

## FOR WHOM ARE YOU LOOKING?

Many fail in courtship because they are not right themselves. Those who are living in adultery, or who by marriage would become adulterers, have forfeited the right to marriage. They have no right, according to the scriptures, to a companion (Matt. 5:32; 19:9; Gal. 5:19-21). You can succeed only if you are a faithful Christian, for only then are you truly worthy to be the companion of a Christian boy or girl.

There are two kinds of beauty, inward and outward. Inward beauty, even without the outward, is preferable. The “worthy woman whose price is far above rubies,” described in Prov. 31:10ff, is not merely a physically beautiful woman. Dimples, blond hair, and beautiful figure will fade, and love will be gone unless there is inward beauty of the soul, or character (See I Pet. 3:1-6). Her neatness and modesty with “shamefacedness” (I Tim. 2:9) are vastly more important than outward beauty without them. Sparkling and a good countenance are more to be sought

than an array of costly jewels and expensive clothing. It would be folly to reject a beautiful spirit for outward beauty. The sons of God once saw that the daughters of men were "fair" and intermarried with them. This led to the corruption of God's children and necessitated the flood (Gen. 6:1-6). Young men, do not be deceived. Ask these questions in your inquiry: Do other girls like her? Does she dress modestly or shockingly? The answer to these will reveal much about her character. Also, what of her speech and conduct? Is she obedient to her parents? How has she been taught? Can you trust her? Would she make a good helper, or would she be a detriment to you?

Above all, is she a Christian? "Be not deceived: evil companionships corrupt good morals" (I Cor. 15:33). "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" (Amos 6:3). You will be wise to judge her by the "hidden man of the heart, which is in the sight of God a pearl of great price" (I Pet. 1:4) rather than by worldly standards. If she has a meek and quiet spirit, you will be immeasurably blessed. The ruin of many fine Christian people is an unwise choice in marriage. You may think you can change her, but remember that the marriage rites do not *right* her; nor does the marriage altar *alter* her. There is no hokus-pokus about a

marriage ceremony to change a person's entire nature, and make a wicked person automatically into a righteous one. A Christian yoked to a sinner who is a scoffer of the Christian religion is an unequal yoke (II Cor. 6:14). A Christian who is faithful yoked to an unfaithful Christian is also unequal. If you marry a child of the devil, you will have trouble with your father-in-law. A child of God should not marry a child of the devil (John 8:44; I Cor. 7:39; I John 3:10). It is wise to think beforehand how much you have in common in religious matters with the one about to become your partner for life. If you will be unable to pray and worship together, or to agree on principles which will be taught to your children, it would be a thousand times better to call it off than take a plunge you will regret forever. The increase in divorce among the "beautiful people" should prove to you that more is needed to take into marriage than a beautiful body.

### WHERE ARE YOU LOOKING?

We do not look for a new car in a junkyard, nor for a good piece of meat in a garbage can. Bars, dope parties, dance halls, gambling dens are among those places *not* to look. You will surely not find the kind of companion who will bring

stability to your marriage in these places. You will come far more near finding the right kind at church, where Christians worship, or at some church related school, or Christian camp. If you want a partner of like "precious faith" (II Pet. 1:1), you will find your ideal at places where character is emphasized and where home ties are strengthened.

You will marry from among your associates. Be sure they are of the right kind, not "evil companions" (I Cor. 15:33). Often, the answer to the question: "I don't know any eligible ones in my congregation; they are not suitable for my companions in this congregation," is to attend Bible colleges, Christian camps, or gospel meetings at other congregations in order to get acquainted with other Christian young people. Leaders of your congregation will be wise to encourage intercongregational fellowship to make possible wider acquaintance.

### WHAT OF TRIAL MARRIAGE, PREMARITAL SEX?

Both of these are anti-Christian and thus sinful. The only sexual union approved in the sight of God is in proper marriage. Jesus rebuked the woman at the well who had five husbands, "and he whom thou now hast is not thy



husband” (John 4:18). Taking up with someone and living with her does not constitute marriage. There must be an acceptance of responsibility, a mutual and open, public declaration that this couple is being wedded for life, and willing to conform to laws imposed by civilized society (which are for our good and for our protection). Sex is good only if both are ready to assume the responsibilities of marriage and of parenthood. If this maturity is absent, it is far better to wait until later. Marriage is not for those who are yet too immature to accept its serious responsibilities. The stable home which is most desirable to you is too precious to risk by a plunge which has led untold thousands down the road to misery, divorce and broken homes, broken lives and psychologically unfit children. If the girl you are about to marry is unwilling to become a homemaker, a good mother who will love and care for your children, this is a sign she would perhaps do well to seek elsewhere than for your life’s companionship. There are many forces seeking to destroy the home. Let us everyone encourage our young people to study early in their courtship period what these forces are, and let us help them to avoid tragic mistakes. Let us teach them the permanence and the purity of marriage, and to enter into this sacred relationship, which represents the oneness between Christ and the church (Eph. 5: 22-33), with the fervent aim to continue “till death do us part.”

## CHAPTER SIX

### YOUR MARRIAGE

“Marriage is an institution ordained of God for the honor and happiness of mankind, in which one man and one woman enter into a bodily and spiritual union, pledging each to the other mutual love, honor, fidelity, sympathy, forbearance, and comradeship, such as would assure an unbroken continuance of their wedlock as long as both shall live.” — H. Leo Boles, *Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage*.

#### MARRIAGE IS ORDAINED OF GOD

In the beginning, God said, “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). Jesus added, after quoting this verse in Matt. 19:5, “So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” It is clear from both the Old and New Testaments that God originated the home, and that He must

rule it if it is to succeed. God took woman from man's side that she might be a help meet (suitable) for him (Gen. 2:20). He did not take her from man's head that she might rule over him, "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is also the head of the church" (Eph. 5:23). Nor did he take her from man's feet that he might abuse and trample upon her. "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it . . . even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself" (Eph. 5:25, 28). Paul explains that God gave to woman the holy responsibility of childbearing, and that her role is to be pursued in modesty, shamefacedness and sobriety, godliness and good works. Her role is one of submission to man, therefore she is not allowed to teach or exercise dominion over the man, but be in quietness. This was according to God's design (I Tim. 2:9-15). Both the man and woman are to be one in aim and purpose, in love for each other and for their children.

God ordained one wife for each man (I Cor. 7:2; Gen. 2:18, 24, 25). This was not a rule that applied only to elders (I Tim. 3:2), for we are "to imitate their faith," that is, we have a like responsibility to respect God's law

on marriage, and other principles (Heb. 13:4, 7). Monogamy is ordained of God, not bigamy, or polygamy. Bigamy is having two wives; polygamy is when one has many wives.

## MARRIAGE IS PERMANENT

No one should enter marriage without understanding that it is until death parts. The laws that prevail which are less strict than God's word are not for the Christian to accept. God hates divorce (Mal. 2:15, 16). Jesus says, "every-one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery" (Matt. 5:32). You must understand you are making a *lifetime commitment*. You must be old enough, and mature enough to take on this lifetime responsibility. God's will is for you to "cleave", that is, cling, to your wife, and not to allow a third party to break up this sacred relationship.

This heterosexual bond is the foundation of society which makes it strong. Anything, such as divorce, homosexuality, and tensions in marriage due to infidelity, will weaken this bond and will cause the children to be psychologically crippled, and maybe even morally unsound. Often, criminals come from broken homes. The

ruination of civilization is often the result of broken homes. The order of ruin in nations is: marriage violated, homes decay; homes decay, morals lost; morals lost, nations doomed. It is inevitable that our nation will be weakened and perhaps eventually be doomed, unless the present trend of broken homes is reversed. Our nation was made strong by strong men and women who believed in the kind of marriage God ordains; it will be kept strong only by strong men and women who will adhere to principles of God's word with reference to marriage and family. But more important to you is the fact that when you become a violater, your soul is lost, for fornicators cannot inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 6:9-11). Obviously, the laws of God in regard to fornication, which many in our modern loose society regard as too strict, were made so for the protection of the home and for the general good of mankind.

## PURPOSES OF MARRIAGE

Man is a social being and needs human companionship. God saw that "it is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18), so he made a help meet for him. One of the several purposes of marriage is to provide that needed companionship.

Without marriage, there would be no legitimate offspring. After God created them male and female, he blessed them and said, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it" (Gen. 1:28). The human race is to be propagated in the right way by a marital commitment which is lifelong, assuring of care, training and protection, and allowing husband and wife to grow in love one toward another.

Instead of becoming burdensome, the task of rearing children provides a matrix of love, in which the father and mother can pour out their love, not only toward themselves, but toward their children God has granted them. Paul presents the picture of the ideal family in Eph. 5:21 - 6:4 in which the wife is in subjection to the husband as unto the Lord, the husband loves the wife as Christ loved the church, and the children obey the parents, honoring them that it may be well with them. The fathers are to assume the role of spiritual leader, and nurture the children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord.

Marriage is also to prevent immorality (I Cor. 7:2-4), and to develop each spiritually (I Pet. 3:1-7). Marriage is a model of man's relationship to Christ (Eph. 5:23-30). Marriage is a two-way street, with mutual obligations. The husband is to love his wife and cherish her.

The wife is to obey her husband, love him, bear children and rule the household well (Eph. 5: 22-29; I Tim. 2:15; 5:14). Our modern society is perverting God's way for the home. Husbands are being unfaithful to their wives, wives are forsaking the home and leaving children in care of others, and as a result, children are not receiving proper emotional and psychological care. Many homes are being broken, and more and more one-parent families are the result. Children need both *father and mother*.

## MARRIAGE IS A RELIGIOUS INSTITUTION

God has always demanded that parents teach their children of His ways. Unless the parents are mature enough to accept this responsibility, it would be far better if children were not brought into the world by them, for they would grow up ignorant of God and of His truth. In the Mosaic age, as well as the Patriarchal age, the parents taught the children of God (Gen. 18:19; Deut. 6:6f; 4:9). It is an eternal principle that parents are to "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). Fathers are to take the lead in their home to train the children in the right way (Eph. 6:4). The Bible should be read at home, as well as at Sunday school and church.

Parents cannot delegate all of this responsibility to others. Unless the parents are dedicated servants of God, they cannot expect their lives to reflect love for God in the eyes of their children. It is not enough to teach the truth. Parents must set examples before the children if the teaching is to be effective. Edgar Guest's poem is applicable here.

*"I'd rather see a sermon, than to hear one  
any day;  
I'd rather one would walk with me than  
merely tell the way.  
For the eye's a better pupil and more  
willing than the ear;  
Fine counsel is confusing, but example is  
always clear."*

Paul said to Timothy, "Take heed to thyself and to thy doctrine; continue in these things; for in doing this, thou shalt save both thyself and those that hear thee" (I Tim. 4:16). Parents must be careful of the way they live and of what they teach. Be sure it is the pure word of God taught and put into practice. Then they can produce morally and emotionally sound children.

In conclusion, let us observe what wisdom comes from a marriage counselor:



“What is a sound code of sexual conduct? There is no doubt in my mind as to the answer. Sex must be the servant of love, of parenthood, of home life. A sound code of sexual behavior, therefore, is one which leads to a state of society in which marriage and family living are happy and wholesome, stable and secure.”

—David R. Mace  
“Is Chastity Outmoded?”  
(*Reader's Digest*)

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### YOUR ROLE AS A HUSBAND

The word husband is from “house-band.” Truly, he is the band of strength, that is, if he measures up to the Biblical standard, around the home, protecting it, and keeping it from falling apart. So much responsibility is his. The role of the young man is first of all as a Christian, then as husband, then as father. As a member of the church, he is to give God “glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations” (Eph. 3:20). It was God’s purpose that every Christian “should be unto the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:12). God said to the woman, “thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Gen. 3:16). And Paul gave the divine order in this wise, “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (I Cor. 11:3).

#### WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF A HUSBAND TO HIS WIFE?

1. *He is the head of his wife.* “For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is also

the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23). That is why he needs to be grown up enough spiritually to assume the great responsibility of being a husband. Immature children are not ready to marry. The very great responsible position a husband has to be over his wife demands that he be sufficiently grown to control his tongue, his temper and his passions. Solomon said, “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city” (Prov. 16:32). One might conquer others by force, but he cannot be a successful head by force. He has to do this by commanding their respect, and he commands their respect only when he can control himself. Alexander the Great could conquer the world by force, but he could not conquer himself and died at the early age of 33 in a fit of drunken debauchery.

2. *He is to love his wife.* “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it” (Eph. 5:25). Love is a many-faceted disposition. The word *agape* means having the highest good will for the other person. The highest good will one can have for another is to desire that one’s eternal salvation. One does not truly love his wife if he is not trying to help her get to heaven at last.

If he leads her to the gutter of drunkenness, fornication and other worldly perversions, he does not truly love her. Notice how an inspired man defines love: "Love suffers long, and is kind; love envies not; love vaunts not itself, is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly, seeks not its own, is not provoked, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (I Cor. 13: 4-7). A Christian husband is a gentleman to his wife at all times. He is unselfish. He puts her needs before his own. He has a love for her like Christ had for the church, so deep that he would die for her if needs be. But especially he must live *for* her, *before* her and *with* her, as well as *over* her. Love takes away the tyranny and cruelty of headship and makes the woman pleased to serve under the leadership of one so devoted and who is such a good example.

3. *He is to honor her.* "Ye husbands, in like manner, dwell with your wives according to knowledge, giving honor unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heirs of the grace of life; to the end that your prayers be not hindered" (I Pet. 3:7). A husband needs to know that the way he treats his wife determines whether or not his prayers will be answered before the throne of grace. She is not just a piece

of flesh, or chattel, as that which is to be used and cast aside. She is a creature made in the image of God like the man, and is to be respected as such with all the dignity that is to be accorded to one who shares the benefits of life here and hereafter. That is the hope of this series of lessons: namely, that it will equip young men with the *knowledge* which Peter talks about in this passage, which is needed for him to dwell successfully with his wife. A young man needs to know at least as much as his wife, if not more. He needs to know where his rights end and hers begin; he needs to know how to control himself so as to win her respect; he needs to know God's word to be able to influence her and the children in the way of truth and holiness; he needs to know how to manage, or care for a family. This is important enough to be considered as a qualification for an elder, "for if he know not how to care for his own house, how can he care for the house of God?" (I Tim. 3:5). Knowledge is needed to rule his own household. Ignorance has always been a curse, and it is especially so when the husband does not know what God expects of him in the important role he is to play as the head of his wife.

There is no better way to honor his wife than by being a sympathetic, understanding, tender and affectionate husband who proves

worthy of her love and trust.

4. *He is to be faithful to her.* “But because of fornications, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband” (I Cor. 7:2). “Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4). “Whosoever puts away his wife, except for fornication, and marries another, commits adultery; and who so marries her that is put away commits adultery” (Matt. 19:9). These plain passages of scripture teach that a husband is to commit himself to his wife only till death do them part. He is not to allow a third party to come between himself and his wife. Out in the world of sin, people do not even have guilty consciences when they cheat on their married partners. It is because of ignorance of God’s word, or else it is because they have hardened their hearts and have abandoned their former knowledge. In the latter case, “their last state is worse than the first” (II Pet. 2:20), for it would be better, Peter goes on to say, never to have known right, than once to know it and turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

5. *He is to support her.* “But if any

provideth not for his own, especially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever” (I Tim. 5:8). He is not ready for marriage if he has no visible means whereby he can support a wife and children who may come. In another place, Paul said, “if any will not work, neither let him eat” (II Thess. 3:10). Paul went on to say, “Now them that are such we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread” (vs. 12). But physical support is not the only way in which a husband can give support to his wife. Financial problems are great, but even greater perhaps is emotional and spiritual support. He can be a comfort and consolation to her in times of fears and difficulties. When stresses and strains come, he can be strong in the Lord and sustain her so that they may both come out of traumatic experiences even stronger because of their faith in God to keep them in the hollow of His hand. “Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have: for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: What shall man do unto me?” (Heb. 13:5, 6).

## WHY MANY HUSBANDS FAIL

Generally speaking, marriage fails when it

fails to be what God would have it to be. As a future husband, you are duty-bound to study your responsibilities as a husband, and resolve to make your home a heaven on earth.

*With the same letter heaven and home begin,  
And the words dwell together in the mind;  
For he who would a home in heaven win,  
Must first a heaven in home begin to find.*

Your marriage will fail when you and your partner fail to understand that you have made a lifelong commitment. Couples who enter frivolously, thinking as one young couple did: “Oh, well, if it doesn’t work, we can always get a divorce!” – This flimsy foundation will most likely crumble for a lack of commitment. Marriage is “till death do us part.” When I perform a marriage ceremony, I always ask each of the two: “Do you promise to forsake all others and be faithful to your husband/wife until death do you part, do you?” If a person understands language at all, he/she understands that this is a lifelong commitment, not a mere scrap of paper they are signing that can be broken at will, or at the first disagreement or quarrel. The person who says these words and has no intention of keeping them is a deceiver and a liar. The person who says them sincerely will be blessed by recalling them at varied times during his marriage



to renew his commitment to his wife. "Rejoice in the wife of thy youth" (Prov. 5:10).

Your marriage will fail when you fail to reach maturity. Marriage is not for children, but for mature people. "But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18). "Long for the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby unto salvation" (I Pet. 2:2). Note how we grow: (1) from dependent children, to (2) adolescence, during which time we seek to establish our place as independent beings, and (3) to maturity, when we assume full responsibility. One should be in the third stage before he or she marries. A judge of a Family Relations Court said, "The greatest cause of divorce is emotional adolescence."

Your marriage will fail when you are too caustic in your remarks, too critical and when you fail to be kind, considerate, courteous and forgiving. A daily practice of the Golden Rule will prevent you from falling prey to these failures.

Your marriage will fail when you are overly sensitive, having no sense of humor, and when you take everything as an insult. Someone has said that even God must have had some sense of humor, else he would not have made monkeys, pelicans and some of us. It often helps to laugh off some trivialities. We must not make mountains out of mole hills. Couples who can laugh

together, even often at themselves, can usually get along fine.

Your marriage will fail when you fail to be trustworthy. When trust cannot abide in a marriage, love cannot abide. How can your wife truly love you if she cannot trust you to be true to her, and when you will not tell her the truth? Take these words from the wise man seriously, "To keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the foreigner's tongue. Lust not after beauty in thy heart; neither let her take thee with eyelids. For on account of a harlot a man is brought to a piece of bread; and the adulteress hunteth for the precious life. Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Or can one walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be scorched? So he that goeth in to his neighbor's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be unpunished . . . He that commiteth adultery with a woman is void of understanding: He doeth it who would destroy his own soul" (Prov. 6:24-32).

Your marriage will fail when you fail to understand the deeper, spiritual meaning of sex. Your wife is not a thing to be used, but a person made in the image of God. Sex is beautiful because God planned it. It only becomes ugly when it is perverted by men and women. The Christian principle is to love people and use

things. We must not reverse this into using people and loving things. A husband who is considerate will consider the feelings and needs of his wife, and treat her with tender affection. Remember Peter's admonition, "dwell with your wife according to knowledge, giving honor unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, as being also joint-heir of the grace of life; to the end that your prayers be not hindered" (I Pet. 3:7).

Your marriage will fail when you cease to love your wife as Christ also loved the church (Eph. 5:25). Christ gave himself for the church; will you for your wife?

Your marriage will fail when you fail to grow spiritually. The goal in marriage is not merely to stay together, but to enjoy the richness of Christian service and maturity together. "But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18). The writer of Hebrews rebuked people for not growing into capable teachers, and being able to distinguish between good and evil (Heb. 5:12-14). When you are a mature husband, then and only then can you assume your rightful role as spiritual leader in the family. This is what God expects of you. All too many men think that the spiritual leadership belongs to the woman, and that the man only has financial leadership. This is a false notion. May each

husband or prospective husband learn the following prayer:

## PRAYER FOR A CHRISTIAN HUSBAND

*Lord, may there be no moment in my life  
When she regrets that she became my wife.  
Help me to do the utmost that I can  
To prove myself her measure of a man.  
Since years must bring to all their load of care,  
Let us together every burden bear.  
And when death beckons one its path alone,  
May not the two of us be parted long!*

—M. V. Caruthers.

## QUESTIONS FOR HUSBANDS TO ASK THEMSELVES

Clyde Naramore suggests these 12 questions for husbands to challenge them to maintain a successful home:

1. Do you still court your wife?
2. Do you share recreational hours?
3. Do you help care for the children?
4. Do you encourage her to develop intellectually?

5. Do you take part in social activities with your wife?
6. Do you encourage her to talk her problems out?
7. Do you tell your wife every day that you love her?
8. Do you make it a point never to criticize your wife in the presence of others?
9. Do you show as much consideration for her relatives as you do for your own?
10. Do you make an effort to understand her needs?
11. Do you allow her an appropriate amount of money to spend as she may choose?
12. (Last but not least - BN) Do you take spiritual leadership and encourage your wife in spiritual matters?

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### YOUR ROLE AS A FATHER

We can recall many good fathers in the Bible. Some of them are Abraham, the father of Isaac; Jacob the father of 12 sons who became namesakes for the 12 tribes of Israel; David, the father of Absalom; the father of the prodigal son in Jesus' famous parable; and God, the Father of all. It is proper for one to learn early some Biblical principles regarding fatherhood. Abraham was commanded to train his children to walk in the way of the Lord (Gen. 18:19), and so must we. We must not spare discipline in our homes if we expect to "yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Heb. 12:5-11).

### THE DUTIES OF A FATHER

1. *He is to provide for their support.* We will say more about this in the next chapter. It is sufficient here to remember I Tim. 5:8. Only a heartless father would let his children starve. If anyone has to do without, it should be the father first. A man who spends money on alcohol and

tobacco will sometimes put his depraved appetites before the food for the table of his family. He is not a worthy father who neglects the physical necessities of his family.

2. *He is to be an example of righteousness.* Paul's admonition to Timothy, "be thou an example to the believer, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity" is equally applicable to every father. That little fellow who follows in your footsteps is going to be led astray, or else in the path of righteousness, depending on your steps. How wonderful to have a great leader, "who suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow in his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (I Pet. 2:21f).

3. *He is to train his children.* "Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). The word *chastening* in this passage involves "the training of a child, including instruction; hence, discipline, correction, instruction 'chastening', Eph. 6:4, R. V., 'nurture', A. V., suggesting the Christian discipline that regulates character" — W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary*, p. 183. This word is also used in Heb. 12:5-8 (chastening) and II Tim. 3:16

(instruction). Involved in training children are instruction, which may be called instructive discipline, and correction, or corrective discipline. Both of these are designed to build character according to godly principles.

One of the great themes in Proverbs is the duty to train children in the home. "A wise son heareth his father's instruction" (13:1). "He that spareth his rod hateth his son; But he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (13:24). "A fool despiseth his father's correction; But he that regardeth reproof getteth prudence" (15:5). "A wise son maketh a glad father; But a foolish man despiseth his mother" (15:20). "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (22:6).

It is criminal neglect to fail to teach the children God's word. The God of Israel commanded that children be taught "when thou sittest in thy house and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou riseth up" (Deut. 6:6, 7). When they failed to teach, the result was ignorance, one of the greatest curses. "My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). This kind of ignorance crucified Jesus. "If the rulers had known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (I Cor. 2:8). A father needs to take



time with his children and teach them righteousness. One of the most important principles to teach them early is to respect proper authority. If they do not respect the authority of parents in the home, they will not be prepared in life to respect the authority of school teachers, policemen, elders of the church and, above all, God. By realizing that you have in your possession a child who is precious in God's sight, and that you have an opportunity to mold and shape a soul for eternity, will challenge you to do your best to give the child not only good teaching, but a good example before him. At the judgment, fathers will have to answer for the manner in which they have brought up their children.

*He swung on the gate and looked down the street,  
Awaiting the sound of familiar feet,  
Then suddenly came to the sweet child's eyes  
The marvelous glory of morning skies;  
For a manly form with steady stride,  
Drew near to the gate that opened wide  
As the boy sprang forward and joyfully cried,  
"Papa's coming!"*

*The wasted face of a little child  
Looked out of the windows with eyes made wild,  
By the ghostly shades in failing light,  
And a glimpse of a drunk man in the night,  
Cursing and reeling from side to side.  
The poor boy trembling and trying to hide,  
Clung to his mother's skirts and cried,  
"Papa's coming!"*

Get acquainted with your children. You will have a large role in developing their young hearts for eternity, as well as for usefulness in this life. A little boy saw a shirt in a window and asked his mother if he could have it. "I don't know, ask your father," said the mother. "But you ask him for me," the boy replied. "You ask him, he is your father," said the mother. "But you are better acquainted with him than I am," said the boy. You should not allow your job or anything else to interfere with an intimate relationship with your children. If you are aloof from them, at the time you may want to influence them properly, they may not feel you are interested in them and their welfare, and may spurn your advice.

Senator Edward Carmack, of Tennessee, met his old school teacher, Professor Webb, of the famous school at Bell Buckle, Tenn., on the street of Nashville one day. The Senator said, "I'm worried about my son, Ned, Professor." "What is the trouble, Senator?" said the Professor. "Well, he seems to be hard to handle. I am thinking of sending him to a military school where they will discipline him." "Let me give you some advice as your old school teacher," said the Professor. "What Ned needs most of all is a father to give time to him. You are the one God has charged with the responsibility of giving

the training and discipline he needs. While he is in the tender years up to and through his high school days, you are especially needed by him to mold and shape his character for future times.” This is good advice to any father. We cannot evade our responsibility regarding our children’s training.

### FATHERS DON’T TALK TO THEIR CHILDREN

Dr. James Dobson quoted an article in which a study was made concerning time fathers spent directly in contact with their children. Of 1,000 middle class families surveyed, each was asked to estimate the time per day that fathers spent with their families. Results estimated 40 minutes per day. In order to test this figure accurately, traveling microphones were placed on children’s clothing when fathers were home. Tape recordings were made of father-child interchanges when direct conversation was made by the father and child. The average was only 2.7 direct verbal interchanges with direct conversation between father and child averaging 37.7 *seconds* per day!

The conclusion reached was that although fathers are around their children about 40 minutes per day, the time they actually communicate with their children averaged about *half a*

*minute* per day! How can fathers *train* up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” when spending such a small amount of time with them? How can the church expect to have leaders in the future if fathers are not trying to teach their children at home, as well as encouraging their faithful attendance at classes where the Bible is taught, and at worship where the word of truth is sounded forth from the pulpit?

### A BOY TO HIS DAD

*To get his goodnight kiss he stood beside my chair  
one night,  
And raised an eager face to me with love alight.  
And as I gathered in my arms the son God gave to  
me,  
I thanked the lad for being good, and hoped he'd  
always be.*

*His little arms crept 'round my neck, and then I  
heard him say  
Four simple words I can't forget—four words that  
made me pray . . . . .  
They turned a mirror on my soul, on secrets no  
one knew.  
They startled me. I hear them yet. He said, “I'll be  
like you.”*

—Selected.

## THAT LITTLE CHAP WHO FOLLOWS ME

*A careful man I want to be,  
A little fellow follows me.  
I do not dare to go astray  
For fear he'll go the self-same way.*

*I cannot once escape his eyes.  
Whate'er he sees me do he tries.  
Like me he says he's going to be,  
That little chap who follows me.*

*He knows that I am big and fine  
And believes in every word of mine.  
The base in me he must not see,  
That little chap who follows me.*

*I must remember as I go  
Through summer suns and winter snow,  
I am building for the years to be,  
That little chap who follows me.  
—Anon.*

## LIKE FATHER – LIKE SON

The following story is from Joy Davidman's book, *Smoke on the Mountain*. There is a tremendous lesson involved for both fathers and mothers to learn:

Once upon a time there was a little old man. His eyes blinked and his hands trembled.

When he ate, he clattered the silverware distressingly, often missed his mouth with the spoon, and dribbled a bit of his food on the tablecloth. Now he lived with his married son, having nowhere else to live, and his son's wife was a young woman who knew that in-laws should not be tolerated in an offspring's house.

"I can't have this," she exclaimed. "It interferes with a woman's right to privacy and happiness."

So, she and her husband took the little old man gently but firmly by the arm and led him to the corner of the kitchen. There they sat him on a stool and gave him his food, what little there was of it, in a pottery bowl. From then on he always ate in the corner, blinking at the table with wistful eyes.

One day his hands trembled rather more than usual, and the earthenware bowl fell and broke. "If you are a pig," said the daughter-in-law, "you must eat out of a trough." So they made him a little wooden trough and he got his meals in that way.

These people had a four year old son of whom they were very proud. One suppertime they noticed their boy playing intently with some bits of wood and asked what he was doing.

"I'm making a trough," he said, smiling up for approval, "to feed you and mama when I get big."

The man and his wife looked at each other for a while and did not say a word. Then they cried. And then they went to the corner and took the little old man by the arm and led him back to the table. They sat him in a comfortable chair and gave him his food on a plate, and from then on nobody ever scolded when he clattered and spilled or broke things.

### CHILDREN APPRECIATE THEIR DADS LATER FOR DISCIPLINE

Hardly any children appreciate the discipline at present, but maturity of later years enable them to recall, and thank Dad for his loving hand of stern discipline:

*Dad tried his best, when I was young,  
To fix it in my mind  
That "as the tiny twig is bent,  
So is the tree inclined."*

*And when he'd lay me cross his knee  
On punishment intent,  
I used to cry, "Say, Dad, look out,  
Or I'll grow up all bent!"*

*And when he'd say, "Come on, young man,  
And weed this onion bed,"  
Just when I'd planned a fishing trip  
With Jimmy Jones instead,*

*I used to scowl until my face  
Was black as black could be,  
And mutter, "When I do grow up,  
I'll be humpbacked – you'll see!"*

*But years have come and years have gone,  
With many a care and trouble,  
With many a load that for a time  
Has bent me nearly double:*

*But always I've sprung back again  
Before it was too late;  
For though he made me bend a bit;  
'Twas Dad who made me straight.*

—Author unknown.



## CHAPTER NINE

### YOUR ROLE AS A PROVIDER

“Even in the meanest sorts of labor, the whole soul of a man is composed into a kind of real harmony the instant he sets himself to work. Blessed is he who has found his work; let him ask no other blessedness.” — Thomas Carlyle in *Past and Present*.

Christianity exalts work. God expects everyone to pursue some work in life as one of its purposes. Indolence is condemned: “If any man will not work, neither let him eat” (II Thess. 3:10). There are many Biblical evidences to prove that work is honorable. Often some are heard to draw too fine a line between the secular and the spiritual. Is a person less spiritual because he works at some menial task? Is a mother less spiritual because she sweeps the floors and washes clothes clean for her family? The proper answers to these questions will show that spirituality includes honorable work.

### ALL WHO ARE HONORABLE WORK

“And on the seventh day God ended his

work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made” (Gen. 2:2). “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork” (Psa. 19:1). The earth and all that is therein were made by God (Acts 17:24). “He made of one every nation” (Acts 17:26), and he “works in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). Jesus was asked the question: “What must we do that we may work the works of God?” Jesus answered, “This is the work of God, that you believe on Him whom he hath sent” (John 6:28, 29). Our God is a God of work.

“Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work” (John 4:34). “We must work the works of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4). “If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do them, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father” (John 10:37f). Jesus was, like every Jewish boy of his time, taught a trade of work. His father was a carpenter, so he was taught this trade. “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? and are not his

sisters here with us?” (Mark 6:3).

The “virtuous woman,” whose “price is far above rubies,” is a woman who “worketh willingly with her hands.” With the “fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.” She makes clothing for her family, and “looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.” This is why her children rise up and call her blessed, and her husband also praises her, (Prov. 31:10-31). Dorcas, whom Peter raised from the dead, was such a woman who “was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.” Upon her death, the widows whom she had helped stood by Peter “weeping, and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas made while she was with them” (Acts 9:36-41).

It was considered honorable in the New Testament for men to work, even men of the stature of the apostle Paul. At times churches did not fully support him because of their weakness. In such cases, he made tents, along with Priscilla and Aquilla, who were of the same trade (Acts 18:3). God had commanded the Jews, “six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work” (Ex. 20:9). Among the Jews of Moses’ day, God filled a man with wisdom in all manner of workmanship to cut stones, carve wood, weave, engrave and embroider on fine linen. God has always approved of men who work (Ex. 35:30-35).

God wills that Christians do good works. "Let your light so shine that men may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). When a woman anointed Jesus from an alabaster cruse of precious ointment, Jesus said, "she hath wrought a good work upon me" (Matt. 26:10). We are told "let us provoke one another unto love and good works" (Heb. 10:24), and "be ready unto every good work" (Titus 3:10). We are told that Abraham was "justified by works, in that he offered his son Isaac upon the altar," and that "faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect (complete)" (James 2:21-24). In fact, when Paul was with the Thessalonians, he commanded, "if any will not work, neither let him eat" (II Thess. 3:7-10). Work is honorable.

## IT IS GOD'S WILL FOR US TO BE PROVIDERS

God himself is a provider for man. He provided a lamb for the burnt offering when Abraham's faith was tested in the offering of his own son, Isaac upon the altar. Therefore, Abraham called the place: Jehovah-jireh, or "God will provide" (Gen. 22:7-14). "He provides for the raven his food" (Job 38:41). He provides the earth with water and prepares corn and food for men (Psa. 65:9). "He gives good things to them that ask him" (Matt. 7:11).

As a means of stimulating men to industry, God says, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise; which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest" (Prov. 6:6-8). Furthermore, we are told, "But if any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (I Tim. 5:8). In all of our providing, there is one principle that hovers over all, that of honesty. "Render to no man evil for evil. Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men" (Rom. 12:17). "For we take thought for things honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (II Cor. 8:21).

## WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

It is good for every person to learn a skill of some kind. It was a Jewish motto, "He who does not teach his son a trade, teaches him to steal." There are technical schools which teach trades and many useful things. One is wise who takes advantage of such opportunities. It is good for a young man at an early age to learn to be useful with his hands in such as carpentry, masonry, electrical, plumbing, medical or

mechanical. It is also good to become useful with the mind in such as teaching, preaching, sociological or psychological fields. But let Christian principles permeate all trades. In other words, be a *Christian* plumber or doctor, etc.

God expects in whatever trade you may engage yourself, that it be characterized by honesty (Rom. 12:17), and that it be productive of good (Gal. 6:10). "Let us work that which is good toward all men." There are some occupations that are not a blessing to men, but a curse. In such occupations, a Christian cannot engage.

There is nothing in the word of God that encourages idleness and/or laziness. It is not only good to work to provide for one's own (I Tim. 5:8), but also because it occupies one's time usefully. To be on welfare when one has the physical stamina and opportunity to work is a shame to one's self, his family, his country and his God. To spend time and money gambling is also a shame, because it is an effort to detour around honest work, and is a vain effort to "get rich quick and easy." God honors the every day worker who engages in honest toil, and who produces something worthwhile.

The work in which you engage will be in vain unless you are a Christian. In the days of Haggai, the prophet rebuked his people for

“living in paneled houses,” that is, luxuriously providing for their own needs, while letting the Lord’s work go begging. They had been home from captivity 16 years, but had not made any effort to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem (Haggai 1:1-6). The prophet told them their wages were going into “a bag with holes.” Their labor was in vain unless they considered the spiritual needs. Jesus said, “Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life, which the Son of man shall give unto you” (John 6:27). It is ordinary food which perishes, but the word of God never perishes, but “lives forever” (Matt. 24:35). “Heaven and earth passeth away, but my words shall not pass away.”

Charles Kingsley, in the *Letter*, said, “Thank God every morning when you get up that you have something to do that day which must be done, whether you like it or not. Being forced to work, and forced to do your best will breed in you temperance and self-control, diligence and strength of will, cheerfulness and contentment, and a hundred virtues which the idle never know.”

## CHAPTER TEN

### YOUR ROLE AS A CITIZEN

Every Christian must also be a good citizen of his country. Christians must love all people of every country. We must be patriotic, loving our country, but not to the point of excluding from our love those of other countries. We must be nationalistic in that we are devoted to improving national interests, but not to the point of hurting the interests of other nations. We must never be racists, or holding racial prejudice or hatred toward those of a different race than our own.

Since Christ died for all men, the Christian must love all people of the world (John 3:16). Since God is the Father of all men (Eph. 3:14, 15), and “made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth” (Acts 17:26), it is necessary for us to love all men. If we love God, we love those whom He loves, and He loves all. In one sense, all men are brothers, since God made us all from one common source. “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek: for the same Lord is Lord of all, and is rich unto all that



call upon him” (Rom. 10:12). Christ has broken down the middle wall of partition (the Law of Moses), which separated Jews and Gentiles, and has “reconciled them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.” This was accomplished when he died on the cross, nailing the old law to the cross (Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:14-16).

## FIVE PRINCIPLES TO GOVERN CHRISTIAN CITIZENS

1. *God has ordained the government for our protection* (Rom. 13:1-4). We have a duty to submit to the government in the land in which we live, because such “powers that be” are ordained of God. The government is even given the power to use capital punishment, “for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, an avenger for wrath to him that doeth evil.” The “sword” is not used merely to “whip” people but to execute the criminal. This is a protection to the people who want to do good. The ordinary citizen is told “thou shalt do no murder” (Rom. 13:9), but the government may kill for the protection of its citizens against unruly men. The Christian is told to “turn the other cheek” and practice non-retaliation against his personal enemies (Matt. 5:38-48).

Obviously, this does not mean anyone is to do evil simply because a government may require it. Daniel did not obey the King when it conflicted with obedience to his God (Dan. 6: 1-28). Peter said, "We ought to obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29). But ordinarily, the rule is that men are to obey the government to which they owe allegiance.

2. *We are told to pray for kings and rulers* (I Tim. 2:1, 2). "I exhort therefore, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings, be made for all men; for kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity." We must pray for our President and those surrounding him in our government that they may rule wisely. God rules in the affairs of men, and often uses even evil men to bring about good to his people (Rom. 8:28).

3. *By well-doing we put to silence evil men* (I Pet. 2:13-17). "Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as sent by him for vengeance on evil-doers and for praise to them that do well. For so is the will of God, that by well-doing ye should put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free and not

using your freedom for a cloak of wickedness, but as bondservants of God. Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the King.”

When we honor the government, we not only put to silence evil men, but in so doing we honor the God who gave the commandment, and it is also for “the Lord’s sake.” Our freedom in Christ does not mean we have the freedom to ignore laws of the government, and in so ignoring them, use such freedom as a cloak of wickedness.

4. *We are to pay any taxes that are due.* “Render to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor” (Rom. 13:7). It is dishonest for any Christian to evade any taxation imposed by the government whether income taxes, or any other kind. Our Lord set the example by paying taxes for himself and Peter (Matt. 17:24-27), even though the Roman government of His day was a usurping nation.

5. *We may appeal to the government to render justice.* When Paul was about to be scourged he asked, “Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?” When the chief captain found that Paul was Roman born, he loosed him and allowed

him to address the chief priests and council (Acts 22:22 - 23:1). Paul used his Roman citizenship to appeal unto Caesar. This gave him opportunity to preach the gospel, though as a prisoner, in the capital of the then known world, Rome (Acts 23:11; 25:10-12; 26:32). It is obviously right for us to appeal to the sheriff, police or court to do justice in our behalf, or to protect us from any threats or evils.

## VARIOUS QUESTIONS REGARDING CITIZENSHIP AND BIBLE ANSWERS

1. *What of civil disobedience?* If a government is bad, may we rebel into a revolution? No, we are to seek peaceful means to resolve our grievances. Christians are not people of violence, but of peace. If any laws are bad, they are to help change them peacefully. We can have no part in assassinations, or any form of violence toward governmental rulers. We have polls where such men can be defeated on election day. And we also have a Congress which has the power of impeachment. Our Constitution has made provisions for redress of grievances. Read again I Peter 2:13-17.

2. *What of going to law against a brother?* Read I Cor. 6:1-11. In this passage Paul

points out these three things which prevent us from going to law against each other:

- a. It is better to suffer wrong than do wrong yourself.
- b. There should be wise men in the church who can mediate between alienated parties.
- c. When going to court, you often go before the unrighteous. This subjects both Christians to unrighteous judges and judgment.

3. *What of swearing in court?* When one swears to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, he is merely affirming that he will tell the truth, and not a lie. It is not the same as swearing profanely, which is forbidden and condemned (Matt. 5:33-37; James 5:12). Profanity is lightly esteeming that which is sacred, as Esau did his birthright, thus was profane (Heb. 12:16). When we use God's name or the name of Christ in a vain and flippant way, it is swearing in the wrong sense (Deut. 5:7-11). When the words God, Christ, Jesus, Jerusalem, Heaven, Hell, or Hades are used as interjections, it is cursing or swearing. Also consider these euphemistic contractions which are usually considered

to be “nice”, but are actually mild forms of cursings:

- a. *Gee Whiz*: contraction of Jesus plus something extraordinary.
- b. *Gosh*: “A minced form of God, often used as a mild oath.”
- c. *Gad, Egad*: Interjections used for God euphemistically.
- d. *Golly*: Also an interjection used for God.
- e. *Good Gracious; Good Grief; My Goodness*: These are expressions all of which are mild oaths used euphemistically for God.
- f. *Heavens, Good Heavens, For Heaven’s Sake*: All these are slang, or by-words, and when used flippantly violate Matt. 5:34.

## OUR REAL CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN

Peter tells us that we are merely strangers and pilgrims in this life. “I beseech you as

sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul” (I Pet. 2:11). Therefore, we are to let none speak evil of us for evil doing. “Having your behavior seemly among the Gentiles; that wherein they speak against you as evil-doers, they may by your good works, which they behold glorify God in the day of visitation” (vs. 12).

“For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phil. 3:20). The word for citizenship is the same as for colony. The Romans away from home, such as those in Philippi, where Paul addressed the preceding passage, were a little Rome away from home; they wore Roman dress, had Roman customs and ways. In the same manner, our real home is heaven, but while on earth we conduct ourselves as citizens of heaven, which is our real abiding place eternally. Our speech, dress, and all we do is to “become the gospel of Christ” (Phil. 1:27). “For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evil-doer, or as a meddler in other men’s matters: but if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in his name” (I Pet. 4:15-16).

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

### YOUR JOURNEY TO SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Jesus said, “He that is not with me is against me” (Matt. 12:30). There is no neutrality in Christianity. Either we are growing spiritually or we are slipping backward. We are told, “speaking truth in love, may grow up in all things into him, who is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15). Reaching maturity is the goal of the Christian. It does not come about simultaneously upon one’s conversion, nor by a sudden impact of Holy Spirit baptism, but is a steady, lifelong process. “Wherefore leaving the doctrine of the first principles of Christ, let us press on unto perfection (full growth)” (Heb. 6:1).

There are two kinds of growth, namely, outward (bodily) and inward (spiritually). “Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is renewed day by day” (II Cor. 4:16).

#### WE ARE COMMANDED TO GROW

Just as it is abnormal physically not to



grow, so it is spiritually. Diseases retard physical growth and cause one to be deformed or dwarfed. In like manner, spiritual diseases (sins) retard spiritual growth. That is why we are commanded to put away sins that we may be able to grow (I Pet. 2:1, 2). Growth is a commandment of the Lord. "But grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18).

Failing to grow as Christians is a sin for which we are severely rebuked. "For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But solid food is for full grown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil" (Heb. 5:12-14).

Physical maturity does not necessarily mean spiritual maturity. There are physical giants who are weak in body. There are also 50, 60 and 70 year old babes in Christ. It is not bad to be a babe; the sin is in remaining a babe when one has opportunity to grow, but has neglected the opportunity.

## COMPARISON BETWEEN PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

There are many similarities between physical and spiritual growth.

1. *We must desire to grow.* There are people who do not want to live. They are depressed for some reason or other and give up. They will not take sufficient food, and soon become emaciated and die. "As newborn babes, long for (desire) the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation" (I Pet. 2:2). Jesus said we are to "hunger and thirst after righteousness, for ye shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6). Jesus used the strongest drives within us to represent the strong desire which must motivate us to grow and become righteous people. Men will make great effort to plant and cultivate in order to have food for physical growth. They will dig deep into the earth for water to slake the physical thirst. In like manner, we must have such a strong desire to satiate our spiritual appetite.

2. *Food is essential to growth.* The baby starts out feeding on the milk from the mother. When the baby becomes more mature in growth, he can eat solid foods. God has

provided for every need of man. He has provided the earth with natural foods to satisfy every need for our bodies. Likewise he has provided His word to satisfy our spiritual needs. Paul says we will remain babes in Christ if we continue to feed on milk, that is, first principles. This shows that there is in the word of God both the simple teaching for those new born babes, and also the more difficult teaching for those who are mature and can understand the deeper things of God. All we need to make us full grown children of God is found in the word of God. "Seeing that his divine power has granted us all things pertaining to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue" (II Pet. 1:3).

There are many people who are careful to eat three meals a day for the growth of the outward man, but who let their souls starve! Human beings are prone to neglect the things of the spirit, and place more value on the outward man. This is a perverted conception of values, since the spirit of man is eternal, but the body goes back to dust (Eccl. 12:7). This points out the need to study both at home and in Bible classes, as well as attending regularly the church services. Faith grows in proportion to the food taken. Paul prayed that "your faith groweth exceedingly" (II Thess. 1:3).

3. *Time is needed for growth.* It requires years for the baby to reach manhood. Parents spend much time helping the babe at first, they teach him to feed himself, etc., until eventually he is an independent human being. We must not expect a newly converted person to be automatically mature. He needs time to grow into the likeness of Christ. "Look therefore carefully how ye walk, not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:16). After telling us the days of our years are three score and ten (70 years), or if by strength longer, the Psalmist tells us: "so teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom" (Psa. 90:10-12). By realizing that we have such a short time, comparatively, to live on the earth, we must be wise, and make the best use of our days. Young people don't really have time to "sow their wild oats" because they too must die and sometimes in their youth. Consider the wisdom of Solomon: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and walk in the ways of thine heart, and in the sight of thine eyes: but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment. Therefore, remove sorrow from thy heart, and put away evil from thy flesh: for childhood and youth are vanity. Remember now thy

creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Eccl. 11:9 - 12:1).

Wasted time in youth means wasted opportunities for spiritual growth. Young people have temptations, but they also have tremendous spiritual capacities. Some of the Lord’s finest are young people who follow Paul’s admonition, “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity” (II Tim. 4:12). It takes long years to develop good preachers, elders and other great servants of the Lord.

4. *Care is necessary for growth.* When baby is ill, Doctors, experts in their fields, are called in to give the best of baby care. This is as it should be, but tender, loving care is also needed for the spiritual needs. When young men and women are straying like sheep, they need expert care from loving hands in the church and family. It is a tragedy of the first magnitude that half of our converts are lost from the church to the world. It emphasizes that not enough care is being given to prevent this great loss. Here are some instructions that need to be followed: “Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one

in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:1, 2). "Remember them that had the rule over you, men that spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life, imitate their faith" (Heb. 13:7). "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17).

Not merely elders and preachers, but everyone should join in the effort to care for the spiritually needy. "And we exhort you, brethren, admonish the disorderly, encourage the faint-hearted, support the weak, be long suffering toward all" (I Thess. 5:14). "If therefore there is any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through faction or through vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind each counting the other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others" (Phil. 2:1-4). This is having the "mind of Christ."

5. *Exercise is needed for growth.* If an arm or leg is not used for a long period of time, the muscles will become useless and the member will atrophy. Exercise is essential to physical growth. Paul said if we do not exercise ourselves in godliness, our senses have not been trained to discern good and evil (Heb. 5:14). The Christian is commanded to work “while it is day for the night cometh when no man can work” (John 9:4). “Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; for as much as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (I Cor. 15:58).

6. *The right atmosphere, good air, is essential to growth.* It is a well known fact that breathing poisonous gas can bring death. Also, breathing stale, unhealthy air can give lung diseases and retard proper growth, even bringing death. The proper spiritual atmosphere is for the Christian to be in good company. “Be not deceived: evil companionships corrupt good morals” (I Cor. 15:33). Just as mud or coal will spoil a white suit or dress, bad company can, and often does spoil good men. It is true that we must at some time associate with evil people for the same reason Jesus did, that is, to elevate them by teaching them the gospel. But if our purpose

for associating with evil people is to dote upon and enjoy their company in evil talk and corrupt practices, we will soon find that, instead of our lifting them up, they are bringing us down to their level. When Peter was warming himself at the fire of the enemy while Jesus was being crucified, he found himself denying Christ (Matt. 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72). It is true that we must love the sinner, but we must also hate the sin. The only way we can be vessels of honor is by “purging ourselves from the dishonorable.” Only then can we be “vessels of honor, sanctified, meet for the master’s use, prepared unto every good work” (II Tim. 2:20-22).

## THINGS THAT INVARIABLY RETARD SPIRITUAL GROWTH

1. *Wrong reading matter, or pictures.* Pornography is more available than in former days. You cannot afford to let your mind be a trash can to collect such garbage. There are more pictures designed to excite lust being shown now than formerly. You will have to be discerning as to the kind of movies and TV programs you watch. It seems that advertisers that pay for such programs care more for money they get in selling their products than they do for the eternal welfare of the people who watch their



productions. “Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just . . . pure, . . . lovely . . . of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8). “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). “As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7).

2. *Wrong girl friend or boy friend.* Again, “Evil companionships corrupt good morals.” You will most likely marry from among those with whom you associate.

3. *Marrying a non-spiritual person.* There is nothing more tragic that can happen to you than to fail to consider how important your lifetime companion is to you. A good and spiritual person can be a great blessing, so much so that this can work out for your eternal salvation. On the other hand, a worldly minded person can mean your spiritual destruction, at least it can weaken you and hinder your influence for good. We are told, “Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness?” (II Cor. 6:14). There is no hocus-pocus about marriage that changes a person who is carnal minded into a spiritual

minded companion for you. You must think seriously about this beforehand, for it may be too late after you have made a lifelong vow to her. And marriage is, as we have seen, a permanent union. Paul told the widow to marry "in the Lord," and this equally applies to a single person who has never married (I Cor. 7:39).

4. *Engaging in questionable business.* If you work for a liquor or beer industry, this will make it difficult for you to take a firm stand against these evils. If you work for gamblers, or for nightclubs, even though you may not participate in the main stream of these activities, the very fact you are employed to assist them, is a minus to you spiritually. Couldn't you find a job where you can have a good conscience, knowing that what you are doing, though less money perhaps, yet is a blessing to society?

5. *Excessive love for things right within themselves, but taken to extremes.* You can be such an avid participator in sports, or even a fanatic of sports, that you have no time left to develop yourself spiritually. Granted that sports can be helpful, they can also be harmful if they claim all or most of your time, so that there is no time left for God. You must learn the lesson of priorities. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God,

and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).

In any activity, or pursuit, ask yourself: “Does this contribute to my spiritual growth? Is it causing me to lose interest in the Bible, the church, in prayer? Is it a lascivious act? Would Jesus do it? Will it hinder my influence for good?” If you face these questions soberly and honestly, you will be given by the Lord the right answer to your problems.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### YOUR BOUT WITH SATAN

The greatest battle you will ever have in life, because of its eternal consequences, is your bout with Satan. For great generals of armies to be successful, they must know thoroughly the tactics of their foes. Your number one foe, your arch enemy, Satan, is very clever. To be ignorant of his tactics will be fatal to you.

Notice some of the names by which he is called in the Bible: Adversary (Job 1:6f); Deceiver (Gen. 3:4); Murderer from the beginning (John 8:44); Prince and god of this world (John 14:30; II Cor. 4:4); Prince of powers of the air (Eph. 2:2); Prince of demons (Matt. 12:24; Mark 3:22); Source of all evil (Matt. 13:38; Acts 13:10); Subtle (Gen. 3:1; II Cor. 2:11); and Serpent (Rev. 12:9).

The devil is not just a mythical character. He is a real live being. He is the invisible leader of the kingdom of darkness, even as Christ is the invisible leader of the kingdom of light. Jesus believed there is a real live devil. In the parable of

the sower (Luke 8:11-15), he taught that “those by the wayside are they that have heard; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word from their heart, that they may not believe and be saved.” After the seventy returned with joy, “saying, Lord, even the demons are subject unto us in thy name, Jesus said unto them, I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18). Jesus is superior to the devil. “Because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world,” said John to the children of God (I John 4:4). Jesus told Peter that “Satan asked to have you, that he might sift you as wheat: but I made supplication for thee, that thy faith fail not” (Luke 22:31f). He also told the Jews that they were children of their father, the devil, “and the lusts of your father it is your will to do” (John 8:44). Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil after fasting forty days and nights. He won the bout with Satan through knowledge of God and His word (Matt. 4:1-11).

The apostles of Christ also believed there is a devil which tempts men. Luke records in Acts 5:3 that it was Satan who filled the hearts of Ananias and Sapphira to lie unto the Holy Spirit, and quoted Peter as saying it. Peter said, “your adversary, the devil, goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”

(I Pet. 5:8). Paul delivered certain evil men unto Satan “that they may be taught not to blaspheme” (I Tim. 1:20), and taught that the fornicator should be delivered to Satan “for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (I Cor. 5:1-5).

Perhaps Satan was an angel, who was cast out of heaven, along with other wicked spirits, because of pride (II Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; I Tim. 3:6). Satan was in Eden and tempted the original pair in the Garden of Eden, which led to the fall of man and expulsion from the Garden (Gen. 1-3). God is superior to Satan and only allows him power to a limited extent (Job 1:6-12). It was Satan who provoked David to number Israel, which thing displeased the Lord and brought a pestilence upon Israel (I Chron. 21:1-17). It was Satan who entered Judas to betray the Lord (Luke 23:3-5). But notice that Peter held Ananias and Sapphira responsible for letting Satan into their hearts. “Why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land?” (Acts 5:3). We have power to keep him out. He cannot force his way into your heart.

### WHAT ARE HIS DEVICES?

Paul said that we should let “no advantage

be gained over us by Satan: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (II Cor. 2:11). One of the first things to learn about Satan is that he works through men who are his ministers. “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (II Cor. 11:13-15). Such men are hypocrites, deceivers, like their master, the devil.

Another important fact to learn is that he appeals to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride of life (I John 2:15-17). These are the avenues of temptation.

Still another device of Satan is by perverting the scriptures. “But the Spirit saith expressly, that in the later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron” (I Tim. 4:1, 2). In the temptation of Jesus, the devil quoted scriptures, but perverted them in an effort to get Jesus to cast himself off the pinnacle of the temple. Jesus answered, “Again it is written, Thou shall not make trial of the Lord thy God” (Matt. 4: 6, 7). He showed that the devil had placed the

wrong interpretation on the scriptures he had quoted. False teachers, who are working for Satan today, practice the same methods. The devil is very crafty. "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ" (II Cor. 11:3). He seeks every means to turn men away from purity and godliness.

The devil tries hard to devour you (I Pet. 5:8). He does this in several ways:

1. By trapping and enslaving you. Paul said men in sin needed to be corrected for they oppose themselves, and need repentance that "they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him unto his will" (II Tim. 2:24-26).

2. By taking advantage of your ignorance of God's way (II Tim. 2:25).

3. By urging you to do his will, not God's will, for Jesus said to Jews, "ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do" (John 8:44).

4. By hindering the work of God, and God's servants. Paul said, "I would have come unto you once and again, but Satan hindered us" (I Thess. 2:18).



5. By sending messengers to buffet. Paul said, "And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch" (II Cor. 12:7).

6. By sending stumbling blocks and temptations. "Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man: but each man is led away by his own lust and enticed. Then the lust when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is full grown bringeth forth death" (James 1:13-15).

## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO COMBAT HIM

First of all, don't be ignorant. Learn the truth. Paul said to Timothy, "From a babe thou hast known the sacred writings which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (II Tim. 3:15). Become studious. Satan makes people think, if they listen to him, that study of the Bible is bad, and will perhaps drive you to insanity. It is sin that does this, not Bible study. But the devil and his agents, turn it around and try to discourage

study of God's word. It is natural for him to do this since the Word is his greatest enemy. It is God's power to save (Rom. 1:16).

The following are trusted and tried methods which God has provided as "ways of escape, that we may be able to endure" the temptations (I Cor. 10:13).

1. *Flee temptation.* "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body" (I Cor. 6:18). It is not always cowardly to run away from things. It is never cowardly to flee temptation, for if you stay in the presence of it, you will most likely fall prey to it. Remember how Joseph in Potiphar's house dealt with it when his master's (Potiphar's) wife tempted him to adultery. He ran away from it because he knew better and could not do "this thing and sin against my God" (Gen. 39:9). God blessed him eventually, though temporarily he had to suffer. He would have suffered a worse fate had he yielded. Paul said, "flee youthful lusts" (II Tim. 2:22), and "flee these things" (the love of money), I Tim. 6:11.

2. *Follow righteousness.* "But thou, man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience,

meeekness” (I Tim. 6:11). Paul was sent to the Gentiles, that he might “open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts 26:17, 18). Paul said the God of peace would be with those who think on the things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely and of good report (Phil. 4:8, 9).

3. *Fight against, or resist the devil.* “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Sometimes he may flee “at” you, as well according to the nature of some of his servants, but it is sure he will not flee from us if we love to stand, walk and sit in the counsel of the wicked (Psa. 1:1). We are not only obligated to fight against the devil, but “fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life” (I Tim. 6:12). We must be positive in our fight for truth, but when we are negatively in opposition to Satan, that is because we are positively *for* Christ and righteousness. Let no one frighten you away from this fight by charging you with being “negative.” Eight of the ten commandments are negative. A Christian must be negative when the occasion of sin demands it.

4. *Pray regularly.* Every person spoken

of favorably in the Bible was prayerful. Jesus taught his disciples to pray: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in heaven, etc." (Matt. 6:9-11). Paul said, "Pray, without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:17). This means to have regular times for prayer, and not allow days and weeks to go by without thinking of God, and our need for Him. James said, "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much in its working" and gave Elijah as an example of God's answer to the prayers of a righteous man, (James 5:16-18).

5. *Use the word of God skillfully as Jesus did.* In each temptation, Jesus used the scriptures to combat temptation. He could have worked miracles to defeat the devil, but he anticipated the time when we would be unable to accomplish such feats, and set an example for us in a manner which we could duplicate, by following him in a skillful handling of the word of God. After Jesus had been successful, "the devil departed from him for a season" (Luke 4:13). We cannot successfully combat Satan without the help of God, Christ, the Bible and our brethren in Christ. Let us not think that once we have a victory over him on one occasion that he will leave us forever. We never become immune to sin and temptation. The devil may leave us "for

a season,” but he will come back, and we need to “take heed lest we fall” (I Cor. 10:12).

Let us remember that even Jesus was tempted, “yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15). The sin is not in being tempted, but in yielding to the tempter. The blessing is pronounced on the one who “endures temptation” (James 1:12), by taking the ways of escape (I Cor. 10:13).

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

### YOUR ROYAL HERITAGE

If you are a member of the church of the Lord, you are a member of a royal family. The church is called a kingdom, along with other figures of speech, in order to portray to us its true nature. Always in these figures, Christ occupies the preeminent position. In the figure of a kingdom, Christ is the king, we are the subjects, the Bible is the law (in particular, the New Testament) and the entire earth is His dominion. Notice that Paul says, "God delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins" (Col. 1:13, 14). We are "born again, of water and the Spirit" into this kingdom (John 3:3-5). In a non-figurative way Jesus plainly says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

The church is also called a family, in which figure, God is the Father, Christ our elder brother

and we are the children of God. "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named" (Eph. 3:14). The church is called "the house of God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15). Christ is called "a Son, over his house, whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:6).

It is a distinct honor to be a child of a king on this earth, but how much more is it an honor to be a child of "the King of kings and Lord of lords" (I Tim. 6:15). If you are a Christian, it matters not how lowly your earthly position, or how little money you may have in the bank, you may walk the earth with firm tread and unwavering confidence, because you are truly a "child of the King."

The devil also has a family. "You are of your father, the devil" (John 8:44). He has many children, in fact, the majority follow him. They are walking the broad road "that leadeth to destruction and many are they who go in thereby" (Matt. 7:13). The few are on the strait and narrow road that leads to life eternal. The reason is that it requires fighting against temptation to walk that narrow road. The majority do not want to fight Satan. They love and enjoy his service. They can leave his service anytime

they choose to have courage to fight against him and let God lead them. The devil is a “prince and a god” of this world (Eph. 2:22; II Cor. 4:4), and he imitates Jesus in order to deceive. Sin does not always fly under that banner. Sometimes it flies under the banner of religion in order to gain more followers. Many don’t care what religion they espouse as long as it smacks of something religious. The devil knows this and appeals to mankind through false doctrines (II John 9-11). The devil seems to enjoy working through his ministers who “fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness” (II Cor. 11:13-15). That is why you see many of them occupying pulpits and positions of authority in churches that foster human traditions, not according to the truth.

## HOW TO ENTER THE ROYAL FAMILY

You will need to read your Bible carefully, especially cases of conversion in the book of Acts, in order to learn how people were saved in the first century, after the establishment of the church. False religions do not rightly divide the Bible, and often use the thief on the cross, who lived before the establishment of the church, and before the ratification of the new law of Christ, as a model case of conversion (Luke 24: 39-43).



As we have seen, we are born again into the family of God (John 3:3-5), which Jesus explains later as hearing the gospel preached, believing it with all our hearts, repenting of every sin, confession of his name before men, and being baptized, or buried with him in a watery grave, after which salvation, or remission of sins is our precious right to claim on the merits of his blood (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:47-49; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26, 27; I Pet. 3:20, 21). After obedience to the gospel (Rom. 16:26; 10:16, 17), each obedient soul is added by the Lord to His church (Acts 2:38-47). In conversion there is a begetting, as in a natural birth, and the begetting is by "the word of truth" (James 1:18; I Pet. 1:23). Then there is the birth, or being raised with Christ to a new life, after being buried in baptism (Rom. 6:3-5; 6:17, 18).

Those who try to be saved, or enter the family of God, some other way are described as thieves and robbers (John 10:1-18). Christ is the door into the sheepfold (the church), and there is no way of entrance except through his divinely appointed way. Many refuse true heirship into the royal family by being deceived, or considering all too lightly their salvation (Matt. 22:1-5). The Holy Spirit bears witness to the fact that we are the children of God by giving his testimony

in his word, and we testify to the fact that we have obeyed the teachings of the Holy Spirit. Thus we have the two most credible witnesses in all the world to our salvation, the Holy Spirit and our spirit (Rom. 8:16, 17). It is in this way that we become “children of God, heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17).

The popular fantasy is that everybody will be saved unconditionally. Universalism, or that all will be saved regardless of whether they are obedient, is only wishful thinking. “To them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation” (Rom. 2:8). Often at funerals families are led by false teachers to believe that the deceased is saved even if he rejected the gospel plan of salvation, or once having accepted, fell away into disobedience. But the truth remains that Christ is “the way, the truth and the life, no one cometh unto the Father but by me” (John 14:6).

Following are some blessings to be received by being in the family of God:

1. Citizenship in the family here and hope of heaven later (Phil. 3:20, 21).
2. The forgiveness of sins (Eph. 1:7; Rev. 1:5; Acts 22:16).

3. The gift of the Holy Spirit (non-miraculous), but a precious promise of the quiet working of the Spirit in our lives as we obey His word (Acts 2:38; 5:32; Gal. 5:6).

4. Wearing the family name, Christian (Acts 4:11, 12; 11:26).

5. The privilege of having our prayers heard by the Father through Christ (John 9:31; Psa. 119:11; Matt. 6:9; I John 5:14).

6. Having Christ as our advocate and High Priest (I John 2:1, 2; Heb. 4:14-16).

7. Being heirs in the royal family of God (Rom. 8:17; Eph. 1:13-18).

## THE FAMILY RESEMBLANCE

It is true that in families on earth, the children wear the family resemblance. Upon seeing the child of an old friend for the first time after many years, I witnessed the same smile, facial expression, similar build and that honest straightforward look. I would have known, even if it had not been told me, that this was the son of my old friend. In the same manner, in God's family. We bear the resemblance to our Father.

Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:15). Since “God is love” (I John 4:8), it follows that we must have this characteristic toward our brothers. If we say we love God and do not love our brethren, we are liars (I John 4:20). We prove our love for God by loving our brethren, and also we prove our love for the children of God when we love God and do his commandments (I John 5:2, 3).

If we are really interested in God and love Him, we shall be intensely interested and actively engaged in the affairs pertaining to His family, the church. Paul had “anxiety for all the churches” (II Cor. 11:28). What we do for the brethren we also are doing for Christ (Matt. 25:40; Acts 9:4). Also, what we do contrary to the best interests of the church, we do this to Christ, the head of the body. Edward, Prince of Wales, former King of England, rushed home from America to England shortly after World War II, because he was a member of the royal family of England, and was vitally concerned about the family and their suffering during the experiences of war.

You are a member of God’s royal family. We shall all be like Him one day (I John 3:1, 2). “And every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (I John 3:3).

## FAMILY REUNION

We always enjoy family reunions here below because we are privileged to see loved ones we have not seen in a long time; sometimes those never having been met before. In heaven, we will go to our Father's house and see all the redeemed ones who are our brothers and sisters, children of God of every age. There will be no broken circles then, but God will wipe away all tears, sickness and death (John 14:1-4; Rev. 21:1-4).

May we all appreciate our royal heritage, the great blessings God has bestowed upon us His children. May we show by our conduct and our speech, and our loyalty to His kingdom, that we love Jesus and appreciate the wonderful provisions made so abundantly in our behalf.