



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Issue 59

Christian Individualism

A Way of Life for the Believer in Jesus CHRIST

by – Otis Q. Sellers (edited and abridged)

NO INTERMEDIARY BUT JESUS CHRIST, NO OTHER AUTHORITY SAVE THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD

The God-inspired declaration of Paul the apostle tells us that all who determine to live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (II Timothy 3:12). In most lands today, this persecution will usually take the form of dis-fellowshipping, ostracism, separation, and mis-representation and misunderstanding of one's high and holy purpose. Along these same lines, I would add that if anyone does determine to live godly in Christ Jesus, he will have to do it as an individual. The one who gives his time searching for some group or company that is living godly in Christ Jesus, and to which he may attach himself, is doomed in advance to failure and disappointment.

A most positive aspect of living godly in Christ Jesus is that the one who has so determined has "chosen the way of truth" (Psalm 119:30). He joins the Lord Jesus in saying, "Thy Word is truth" (John 17:17). And once this choice has been made, the only question that can ever be asked concerning any teaching or practice is, "Is it the truth?" If it is, it must be embraced and declared; if not, it must be repudiated.

It should be understood in advance that the determination to live godly in Christ Jesus, and the choice of "the truth way" rather than "the church way" is not an easy road to travel. It could be a very lonesome road. So, if one cannot decide in advance that, through the help of Jesus Christ, he can accept the isolation, the ostracism, and the

misunderstanding that may come from following such a course, he had better not start upon it. He would probably be happier if he simply cast his lot with some like-minded group of "food, fun, and fellowship" seekers. If one is going to be miserable living the life of a Christian individualist, he had better find some other way of life.

If, among those who read these lines, there are those who have had a true encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ; if they have judged themselves as sinners and received Him as their Saviour; if they have come face-to-face with the fact of God's Truth versus man's error; if they have chosen the way of Truth, and it has become their determination to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ – they will find it necessary to find a way of life in Christ Jesus that will allow them to live out to the limit the relationship which they now bear to God through Him. If Jesus Christ, rather than some sect or denomination, is to be the molder of their lives, I recommend to them Christian individualism as being the true and best way of life for the active believer in Christ Jesus.

The believer whose knowledge of the Bible is ever

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Greetings and love in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Otis Q. Sellers

Over the years the writings of Otis Sellers have proved to provide many wonderful jewels. In past issues of the BSN we have run some wonderful articles from his collection. In addition to a number of quotes in other articles, we have run "God's Present Purpose: The Dispensation of Grace" (BSN #5), "You Need a Saviour" (BSN #3), "Religionless Christianity" (BSN #57), and "The Seven Millennium Theory" (BSN #45).

In this issue we will be adding another of his excellent works. This particular article, entitled "Christian Individualism," has had great meaning to me in my own life. I appreciate the great insights that he has provided, as well as the fellowship and encouragement that this dear brother has given across the plains of time. I encourage you to take your time reading it, giving it a chance to speak to your heart as well.

We are presenting the Seller's article as a balance of sorts to many articles that we have run on the subject of body life. We encourage our readers to re-read (or read for the first time!) the following articles from past issues of the BSN. Together they will help provide a more rounded view of this topic. Basis for Fellowship (BSN 39); Be Likeminded (BSN 42, 44); Believer's Body Life (BSN 21); Body Building (BSN 47-52); The Household of Faith (BSN 12); Prerequisites to Body Life (BSN 30).

H.C. Bowker

Through some interesting circumstances I recently came into correspondence with a man who was married to a descendant of one of E.W. Bullinger's closest friends and associates, H.C. Bowker. Bowker was the one who took over the editorial responsibilities of *Things to Come* and the *Companion Bible* upon the death of Bullinger.

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This biweekly publication (24 times a year) is dedicated to:

- the proclamation of the riches of God's abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7)
- the affirmation of God's purpose to save all mankind through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11)
- the "preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began" (Romans 16:25)
- true freedom and liberty apart from the law (Galatians 5:1)
- the organic nature of the church, the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12)
- the distinct ministry of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13)
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15)
- the recovery of *rich* Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding, and fear (Mark 7:7, 13).
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with ...
 - total forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1:14)
 - identity in His death, burial, and resurrection (Romans 6)
 - adult sonship position (Galatians 4)

This publication is a joint effort of a few members of the body of Christ. It is a product of our individual lives and ministries together. We do not claim infallibility for its contents. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any "Movement," "Organization," "Mission," or separate body of believers, but is sent forth to and for all "saints."

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PATRIARCHS

Remember that it is our responsibility as husbands and fathers to take the truths we learn from God's Word, the truths that we hold dear, and impart them to our families.

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(recompiled and edited)

increasing, whose appreciation of the person and work of Jesus Christ is ever growing, with this resulting in a determination to give Him the preeminence in all things, will find that he quickly becomes persona non grata (an unacceptable person) in any "church" today. His unwillingness to go along with the popular schemes and make-work activities of today's religions will cause him to be branded as a divisive factor, and any protests he makes will bring the charge that he is a troublemaker.

The "churches" want bodies to help swell the attendance; they welcome purses that will help with the finances, but they insist that everything that means so much to the active believer in Christ must be forgotten and left at home. He can play and he can pay, but is allowed nothing to say. And if he insists in raising his voice in protest, he can expect a visit from the board of deacons who will insist that he keep quiet and conform or else face a more drastic action. This can be such a frightening prospect to many that they will seek to avoid it at any cost. So, they become amenable and complacent, usually giving as an excuse that they are doing it for the sake of their families.

However, for many others, such compromises are impossible. The truth as it is in Christ Jesus means more to them than any organization, and they cannot remain silent when grievous errors and practices are promulgated. Thus, the only course open to them is one of Christian individualism. This means a commitment to Christ and to His Word while standing apart from any commitment to any religious body.

"WITHOUT THE CHURCH THERE IS NO CHRISTIANITY"

These are the bold words posted on a "church" sign, a challenge to all who passed by. The one who was responsible for them being there probably believed what they said, and I suppose that many who read them nodded in assent, there being many who would never dare challenge anything written on a "church" sign. But I repudiate and reject them with all the strength of my being.

I am personally acquainted with hundreds who are Christians in every Biblical sense that can be given to this exalted word, yet they are Christians wholly

apart from all institutions and organizations that are called "churches." In fact, they actually reject "the Christ of the 'churches'" in order that they may fully exalt and give the preeminence to the Christ of the Scriptures.

I claim to be one of these; therefore, I reject the intolerant and dogmatic declaration proclaimed by this "church" sign to all who passed by that without "the church" there is no Christianity.

If this were true it would make the institution called "the church" to be the mediator between man and Christ. It would mean that the life that He would have us live cannot be lived apart from a "church," that he who receives and becomes a part of one must also receive and become a part of the other, and that only those who are identified with some "church" are identified with Christ. All this I repudiate as being contrary to the Word of God.

It has been my joy to recommend Christian individualism as a way of life to many believers in Christ. It is my belief and my experience that it is the privilege of any individual to establish relationship with Jesus Christ in which all that He can ever be to any man in this dispensation, His rich blessings, and fellowship can be enjoyed wholly apart from any institution called a "church." Such things as nearness to God, likeness to Christ, devotedness to His Word, and separation from the world can all be attained and maintained by the individual believer in Jesus Christ without his being any part of an organized company. The believer can be attached to Christ, to His Name, to His Word, yes, even to His people, without being any part of any "church." I offer my own life as proof of this.

These words may come as a shock to many who hold the popular conception that the chief expression of a man's relationship to Christ is to attend a "church" on Sunday morning. Today as a rule men are classified under "those who go to church" and "those who do not go to church." All who go to "church" are considered to be good, honest, moral Christians. And even though this may not be true, men persist in believing this lie. On the other hand all who do not go to "church" are considered to be heathen unbelievers whose morals are open to question. This is a greater falsehood than a fact.

While it is true that many sincere and true believers in Jesus Christ are found in the “churches,” there is no need for me to follow them there in order to have their friendship and enjoy their fellowship. To submit or defer to an organization where, as a rule, matters of great spiritual importance are settled by a majority vote is too high a price for me to pay for the friendship and fellowship of any man. The true believer in Jesus Christ should never deny friendship and fellowship to another believer just because he does not cast his lot with a “church” organization. The sectarian minded will do this, but the fellowship of such is hardly worth having if some surrender of principle must be made to gain it.

Most of my readers, I am sure, are quiet familiar with the pressure that in this day is brought upon people to join a “church.” It is much easier to yield to this pressure and join up than it is to withstand it and stay out. Vigorous programs of visitation evangelism are carried on in order that membership roles may show a gain, the Sunday services may be better attended, and the budget may be balanced. Men are pressured into putting on “the form of godliness” and becoming members of a “church.”

Christian individualism is not for those business and professional men who know the value of the contacts they can make in a “church” organization, nor is it for those who are seeking for community or neighborhood acceptance and approval by belonging to the right organizations, one of which must be the right “church.” This is not for the status seekers, nor is it for those who value so highly the “country-club religion” provided by so many “churches” today.

Christian individualism if for the active believer in Jesus Christ who has discovered that his interest in God’s truth and his growth in the knowledge of Jesus Christ has brought him into conflict with the status quo that is so fervently maintained by the organizations that call themselves “churches.”

By the term active believer I do not necessarily mean a believer who is an active worker. In fact the active believer may find it very difficult to do much work. One of the most difficult things he will face, and must accept as part of his lot in Christ, is the limitation which “living for Christ” is going to force upon him in regard to those activities which so many engage in under the guise of Christian service.

Since faith in Jesus Christ is belief in the record God has given of His Son, the active believer is one who is never satisfied with his knowledge and understanding of God’s record. Creedal statements concerning Christ may satisfy many, but they do not satisfy the active believer. “That I may know Him” is the motive behind his perpetual and progressive studies in the Word of God.

The word individualism and individualist have no fixed meaning until they are given a context. If any should turn these words against me and make them to mean egoism and egotist, they will have to ignore the prefix Christian which I always place before these words.

There are many egotists today who are motivated by an excessive love and thought for themselves with a complete disregard for the feelings and wishes of others. My individualism is something that is reserved almost entirely for the Lord Jesus Christ. It is for His glory, not mine.

The primary value of Christian individualism is that it permits a faithful presentation of Jesus Christ to others. It permits one’s eye to be single when he seeks to win men to Christ. There is no demand upon him to bring men to Christ and also into some “church.” He is able to plead God’s cause and feels no need of pleading the cause of any “church” or denomination.

Christian individualism lifts a man to a position of sublime independence of all the religions of this world. The Christian individualist knows that a man can be joined to God through Jesus Christ, and that he does not need to face or become involved in all the divergent issues created by religious organizations. He knows the satisfying value of having gone directly to God, knowing no intermediary but Jesus Christ, His Son, and no other authority save the written Word of God. He smilingly refuses the officious cries of churchmen who declare that he cannot have Christ as his Saviour until he has first acknowledged and received them.

The Christian faith was from the very first the personal faith of individuals. This is clearly seen in the declaration of Paul who tells us that after God’s dealings with him on the Damascus road, he did not confer with any human being. Neither did he go up

to Jerusalem to them that were apostles before him; but he went into Arabia, then later came back to Damascus (see Galatians 1:15-19).

The believers of the Acts period were not always scattered; and wherever possible, they moved and acted as a fellowship of individuals. But when one of them found himself cut off from all others, he stood alone, finding his all in Christ.

Before determining to live godly in Christ Jesus, before choosing the way of truth, before starting out on the path of Christian individualism, the believer had better make sure that he can “go it alone” spiritually. It may be necessary for him to do this. Let him be determined in advance that he is able to say with godly Asaph of old: “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee” (Psalm 73:25).

Christian individualism is a way of life, not a way of escape. It consists of that which an active believer in Christ does, not what he does not do. Let no one take this high and holy position unless his life is to be lived for the glory of Jesus Christ.

Christian individualism does not mean that the believer stands alone. But it does mean that he knows how to stand alone, and that he will without complaint stand happily alone if he deems it to be a part of the worthy walk of his calling. He does not need to look to the right or to the left to see what someone else is going to do. He has a profound sense of his personal responsibility to God, therefore, he will put Him first and every other consideration must be subservient.

While he earnestly desires fellowship and community with others, he refuses to allow this desire to be the reigning influence of his life. He dislikes isolation and aloneness as much as anyone, yet he will not compromise in order to belong. He cannot yield allegiance to any organization, since all organizations are composed of human beings who err and whose judgments are always less than divine truth.

There are active believers in Jesus Christ who are members of “churches” and who have found a place of service within its membership. Some of these feel that they have solved the great problem of how an individual can also be a member of a group and

secure all the benefits of both ways of life. This is their right as an individual. I neither command this nor condemn it. A believer’s right to freedom certainly gives him the right to unite with a group. However, a difficulty arises when he begins to think that it is the duty of others to do the same. And it needs to be recognized that individualism has ceased when a man’s acceptance by a group is based upon his silence.

“HOW CAN ANYONE WORSHIP IF HE DOES NOT GO TO CHURCH?”

This is the question often asked. This query does nothing more than reveal the ignorance of the one who asks it concerning the meaning and character of true worship. Here is another quid pro quo which would make worship to be that which men do in “church” on Sunday, therefore, he who does not attend church does not worship. This is denied.

True worship is always a personal and individual matter, which while it may be done with a company, it will not be at all unless it is done by an individual. True worship is heartfelt adoration of God because of who He is, what He is, and what He does. It is not dependent upon place or ritual. It needs no established forms or ceremonies. Whenever because of revealed truth a heart responds with adoration and gratitude because of what God is or what He has done, that is worship.

Quite a few believers who have considered Christian individualism as a way of life have asked about fellowship with other believers. And to this there is only one answer – fellowship with others to the very limit. Christian individualism is not an anti-social way of life.

So, after all has been said, and all arguments pro and con have been exhausted, there is only one method of dealing with God in this dispensation; and that method is personally and individually. This is the way we must start, and this is the way we should continue. In this way of life, we can best fulfill our position as believers in an unbelieving world as students of God’s Word in a world that is Biblically illiterate. ■

Some Personal Observations and Reflections of Modern Family Life

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE DOCTRINE OF THE HOME

Part XXIV

by – Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

The things that I am about to present here are very personal in nature. They are addressed primarily to husbands and fathers. They are also very unconventional for our contemporary day. In fact, some may even find them quite extreme and shocking, if not outright “offensive.” They are not intended to be sensational, but are simply the result of years of personal struggle with modern family life in light of what I have learned from the Scripture about the family.

Please let me say up front that I do not offer these reflections as some form of higher “spiritual standard.” I do not desire to raise some type of “law” for the life of Christ in HIS Body. Nonetheless, I believe that there are principles that will be addressed here that merit the thoughtful and prayerful consideration of the family head.

For this reason, I am addressing this to family heads. For we are the ones who stand before the Lord, responsible as the heads of our homes. So, this is meant – more than anything else – to be an encouragement for us to re-evaluate the direction that our homes are going, and be emboldened to pursue a course different from that of our western gentile culture.

I believe that a family is intended, by divine design, to share their lives together. By that I mean that they should *live* together on a *daily* basis. Now, what I am talking about is not the norm for families (even Christian families) of our modern western culture. Let me explain.

The norm of most of history was that families would actually spend their lives together, day by day, every day – all day. They would spend their *entire* days together. Things that take up large blocks of daily time in western culture, such as education and business, were simply a part of *normal* family life. In fact, almost everything else was as well.

THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

Modern western culture introduced some movements that would drastically change the nature of standard family life. First entered the *Industrial Revolution*, which engendered a “factory” mentality that *removed* the *HEAD* (husband/father) from the home for the *majority* of waking hours! The father would get up (often before the rest of the family), leave home, and go “off to work.” Counting work and travel time, he would come home with very little time or energy left for his family. The family was thus made practically “headless” for most of the waking hours.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Then came *Public Education*, which brought about a “classroom” mentality that *removed* the *CHILDREN* from their God-given authority and *coverture* for the *majority* of waking hours! Now, the children would get up, leave home, and go “off to school.” While at school they would have their lives shaped, trained, and influenced independent from the rest of the family, independent from the family head –

by “outsiders” (secular or Christian! – and what is “Christian” about having others assume our own God-given responsibility?) Counting school, travel time, and then coming home to do “homework” for the educational system, they would have very little time left for the other members of the family. The family was thus made practically “childless” for most of the waking hours, and the wife/mother was left by herself at home.

THE WOMEN’S LIBERATION MOVEMENT

Then arrived the *Women’s Movement*. With the “liberated female” mentality, now finally the *WIFE/MOTHER* was *removed* from the home for the *majority* of waking hours! (After all, no one else was at home with her anyway!) She would get up, leave home, and go “off to work.” Counting her work, travel time, and continued domestic responsibilities (cooking, cleaning, washing, etc.) she would have very little time or energy left for anyone! Now the family was made practically “motherless” for most of the waking hours.

THE EMPTY HOME

Now we have a “home” with *NO ONE in it* (excepted maybe a cat and a dog) for the *MAJORITY OF WAKING HOURS!* Does that sound like “family” as God intended it to be? – each “family member” off living their own personal independent daily life.

Next occurred the invention of “quality time” (whatever that is!). The family would “enjoy” this “quality time” at times like the evening family meal. This meal time took on a whole new significance and importance in the early “modern” times. Here the family could learn of each other’s separate, segregated, isolated, independent “day lives” (or at least the parts that anyone was willing to share). But this particular event, along with other evening family interaction was about to be brought to a screeching halt!

ENTERTAINMENT

Then appeared *television* (and later the computer!) Now the husband, the wife, and the children (all

who have spent the majority of their waking hours *ISOLATED* and *AWAY* from each other) return home for an evening of muted “family togetherness” in front of a TV. Or, as progress and affluence allowed each family member to have their own TV (or computers!), finally this last strand of “family togetherness” was spent with each one in their own separate room! Thus, the story of the American family life!

As family heads, I think it is time that we consider these issues. Let us return to the Scriptures for a true assessment of God’s design for the home. Is the family life of the western culture as God intended it to be? In fact is it family *LIFE* at all?

CHURCHIANITY

At least there was the weekend – *BUT*: off to “church” we go! – the mad rush of busy activities “for the Lord.” Once again our modern western *religious* culture has managed to separate and isolate the family – this time in the name of Christ! First there is “Sunday School” where all the family is divvied up, each going their *own way*, independent of the rest of the family. While at “Sunday School” they would have their “spiritual” lives shaped, trained, and influenced independent of the family, independent of the family head – by family “outsiders” (and what is “Christian” about having others assume our own God-given responsibility?)

Then there is “children’s church,” and a host of other clubs, unions and programs (Awana, Vacation Bible School, etc.) that by design separates the family. Just where is the pattern for such activities found in the Bible? Dare we even question such firmly established norms? Have we come to value our religious traditions and customs so, that we cannot stop and reflect on their Scriptural basis? Just how Biblical are the concepts of “Sunday School” and “Children’s Church?” After thoughtfully reading the Bible, does not one begin to ask himself, for example, “What would Paul think about all our ‘improvements’?”

Just where do these western Sunday religious traditions and rituals find their roots and base?

There is no biblical basis, but rather it is the forsaking of the Pauline tradition (II Thessalonians 3:6) and pattern (I Timothy 1:16) of “the church in thy house” (Romans 16:5; I Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2). Family heads, do you not see the connection? There has been another abandoning of the home, this time for the man-made institution, so-called “the church.” Once again there is a leaving of the home environment—this time for supposed “spiritual life.”

This abandonment of the home for religion does not stop on Sunday, for there is a “good,” “spiritual” man’s commitment to the Monday night board meeting, Tuesday night choir practice, Wednesday night prayer meeting and Bible study, Thursday night visitation, Friday night youth programs, and Saturday “church” cleaning. The religious system will ever keep one occupied with make-work.

THE HOME AND THE FAMILY BUSINESS

The first issue of the father away from his family has to do with the way a family makes a living. Let’s start in the garden of Eden. God made man. He placed him in the garden of Eden. God also gave Adam a job related to the garden that He had put him in: “*to dress it and to keep it*” (Genesis 2:15). Therefore, Adam’s home was also his workplace.

Then God gave Adam a help meet. She was to help him with whatever he was doing, like his work in the garden. So, God created Adam and Eve, placed them in a home, which was also their workplace as well as their home – thus, God set up the first “family business.”

Now, if a man leaves his wife and spends all day “at work,” how can she be fulfilling her God-given role of “help” meet? Moreover how would the husband fulfill his role of “cleaving” to his wife (Genesis 2:24) when he is “leaving” his wife all day? When a husband “leaves” his home and “goes to work” where many times *another man’s wife* becomes his “helper” all day, is this proper? Is it the design of God for *another man’s wife* to be his “help” meet? In many homes the husband is

off being “helped” all day by another man’s wife, while his wife is off “helping” another man! Is this divine design? Or is this human confusion? Are not men designed by God to love, and have sexual feelings and passions for their female “helper?” Isn’t that *only natural* by the design of God? Maybe it is not the *feelings* that are unnatural, but the *circumstances*! It’s a wonder there is not more adultery and divorce!

THE PROVISION OF FAMILY

Adam was given a job, and Eve was his God-ordained helper. The further design of God was for the children to be trained up as “servants” (Galatians 4:1). Who would they be “serving?” Their parents! So, they would be working, by divine design, in the “family business.” In fact, the provision of the family is seen in Scripture to be a family affair. This provision encompasses the extended family, and it is this extended family that constitutes a “household.” We know this from Paul’s instruction concerning widows. Nephews are clearly a part of the “household” and responsible for the care of their aunts (I Timothy 5:3-4).

Allow us to speak more freely, on a personal level. Here is how I have taught this to my own children. I have taught them that when they are grown with spouses and children, they all will still have a collective responsibility to each other’s homes. Example: my daughter gets married and her husband becomes sick and unable to provide. We have four other homes (my wife and I, and my three sons and their wives) to pick up any slack that may be caused as a result, and to do so as long as needed. By sharing the load (1/4 each) we should have no undue “load.” That’s a part of what families are for. To do less is to “deny the faith” and be “worse than an infidel” (I Timothy 5:8).

In fact, I have talked with my children about how this same principle could apply to the “honeymoon.” In God’s law to Israel, he made a provision that a husband cheer up his new wife for a year without business and government distractions (Deuteronomy 24:5). Now, granted this is the law of Moses, and we are no longer

under the law – we are Christ’s free men – but let us pause to consider: exactly what was God’s intent in the provision of this law to Israel? Was it not that the husband and new wife would have sufficient *time* together to “cleave?” What a great foundation to a new home a year would make! Now, I am not proposing that we re-institute the law on this matter, but rather that we recognize the important principle that underlies this law. How important it is that the husband make his new wife the absolute focus of his attention as the foundation of their beginning relationship!

A return to basic principles of family life is how this could have been even possible – by the family business and extended family life! I have told my children that it is not in the realm of the impossible for us to provide this for each of them as they marry – all the rest us pitching in to help cover them for a good start. Then each of them, as they got married, could be free – if but for a little while – to focus on nothing else but cheering up their new wife (or being cheered up, in the case of my daughter)!

THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

Now let’s go back to the education of the children. What were Adam and Eve to do when they had children? They had no classrooms off to which to send them. Education is, by the design of creation, a parental responsibility. We again can see this principle stressed under the law of Moses (Deuteronomy 6:7), and Paul instructs the fathers, regarding their children, to “bring them up” in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). Paul did not say “send them off” in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, or “farm them out” in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, or “field them out;” he said to “bring them up.” This would seem to be rather difficult to do if they are only together for a small amount of time before bed.

THE WESTERN CLASSROOM

It seems to me that the *western classroom* is not a natural learning environment for children (or maybe even adults!) either. Where did we learn this method? How did we come to embrace it

as the standard? I believe that the most natural learning environment would be the home and the family business – children learning from life with their parents – and they are learning that which is practical and applicable to everyday life and making a living.

I have *NO* desire for any of my children to go to college and have “careers.” I do not aspire for any of them to be “professionals” – but I do greatly desire that all of them be family oriented: to have family businesses and enjoy daily life *together* with their spouses and children! I don’t want them to be required to “leave home” to make a living *for* their family. I want them to make a living *WITH* their family.

I am not attempting to paint a rosy picture of this style of family life. In fact, in many aspects it may be the harder road. There could be many more pressures and difficulties, especially in the area of finances. These things may require a different level of lifestyle to be adopted. It may mean on occasion (or even as a rule) that beans and rice become the staple of life instead of steak. Still, if that is what is needed to stay together as a family, then it seems like a very small price to pay! A common American approach is for parents to want their children to have the best of *things* – to shower them with *things*, to provide for them the *things* that they themselves did not have growing up. I contend that this may not be the best course of action. I would rather attempt to give my children more of me – more of my time, my attention, and my love – with or without *things*. This is true of our wives as well. Flowers, candy, dinner and a movie may be nice, but again, they are no substitute for our time, attention, and love. Our wives and children need us to give them our *lives*! If need be, I would rather eat the simplest of foods, and live the most modest lifestyle in order to enjoy the rich benefits of daily life with my family.

I am *not* suggesting that anyone who adopts the *normal* western family life has chosen a sinful course, or that they are less spiritual. *Neither* am I advocating that men and women quit their jobs, rip their children out of school, throw out all their

TVs and computers and stop going to “church.” Such an abrupt action may cause more damage than it would ever attempt to correct. What I am advocating is for us to pause and consider. What I am suggesting is that there is possibly another way to live – one that is deliberate and thought out. I am proposing that we ask ourselves, “In light of the Scripture, is the American family lifestyle really the way we want to live? Is this the way I want my children to grow up and live?”

There is a sense in which we must deal with the hand we are dealt, so to speak. We must learn to deal with the circumstances that are currently before us. BUT, if we see this overall problem, we should not just give in to the course of this world’s system. We can start thinking differently and slowly begin working on change. This change may not be fully realized in our own personal lives, but much of it may be, and as we share these truths and principles with our children and grandchildren we may be able to free them from the bondage that has our minds and activities in such disorder, and may thus greatly impact the next generation of our own families.

My wife and I (even including our own home life as children) have had a great advantage over the majority of those in our culture. My wife and I (and children) have spent the majority of the days of our 24 years of marriage *TOGETHER*; but so much more needs to be accomplished. There were so many things that I did not understand early on. I trust that my children and grandchildren will reap from the present purpose and passion of my heart.

A WORD ABOUT ADULT CHILDREN AND GRACE

Since I have intended this to be personal in nature, I would like to touch briefly on my own attitude about these things in relation to my children. Over the years I have attempted to teach these things to my children. I have also attempted to model them as best I could in light of my own circumstances. I have done so because I have a firm conviction and passion about them. I trust that they have sensed how important these matters are to me. I have sought to instill the same principles in them.

As my children have begun to reach adulthood (22, 20, 18, and 16 this year!), I have also tried to communicate to them that I do not require them to share my convictions on these issues (or any other ones for that matter!), nor do I require them to follow my lifestyle. I do not desire that they believe what I believe, or practice what I practice, just to please me. I want them to follow the Lord out of a pure heart of personal faith. I want their faith and walk to be their own before God. I could desire nothing more or less of my children.

If their studies and convictions lead them elsewhere (even if it is in an opposite direction from me!), I have told them that I would support and encourage them in those things. All I desire to see in them is a genuine heart to honor the Lord with what they understand – and I’ll be there to stand behind them as best I can even if it is contrary to my own convictions and practices. This is because there are greater principles that have preeminence in my own heart – the principles of pure grace, unconditional love, genuine acceptance, individual faith and personal liberty. Paul taught that two men with opposite beliefs and practices (even if one may be weak in the faith) could both live their lives in honor unto the Lord.

Now, this does not mean that I could always walk with them in all things, but it does mean that I can support and encourage them to be faithful unto the Lord based on the understanding of their own hearts.

Dear husbands and fathers, I write this for us, as simply from one head to another. This has been meant to be an encouragement to us, not a discouragement. I trust that we will give these issues thoughtful and prayerful consideration in light of God’s Word. I trust that they will help to impel us to an active role as heads, unlike the passive role that is so prevalent in our culture. I would appreciate any light or insight that you may be able and willing to share with me – one head to another! We are fellows together with such an important responsibility before the Lord. Let us encourage and help one another. ■

A Portrait of Jesus

by – Samuel E. Hyde, Sr.

By Him were all things created.
He was typified by, the blood shed in
Eden.
He was pictured by, the lamb slain in
Egypt, to take away the sins of the
world.
He was Isaiah's Lamb led to the
slaughter.
He was born to die, So we could be
born to live.
He was The Rose of Sharon among
the curse of thorns.
He was The Lilly of the Valley, so He
could lead us through the valley of
the shadow of death.
He came as the Son of man that we
might be the sons of God.
He was the Rock in a dry land.
He is the manna from Heaven that we
may eat and not die.
He is Jacob's ladder, the only way to
Heaven.
He is the substitute Lamb of Mount
Moriah.
He is the cup bearer who tasted death
at Gethsemane.
He is the Bright and Morning Star
which is the Light of the World.
He is the Kinsman Redeemer who
bought back the lost possession.
He is the Best Heaven had, who came
to redeem the worst earth had.
He was born poor that we might be
rich.
He died under a curse that we might
live under Grace.

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I was thrilled to look back over the issues of Things to Come, and search through the Bullinger's biography and be reminded of the wonderful testimony that came from this dear man! As I re-read the following lines from the pages of the biography I was deeply touched and encouraged! I trust that you will be too.

"He gave up much in his early days for truths which he held strongly; but was patient with all men, and slow to strive, for, he frequently said, 'all of us err somewhere, and I may be erring here.' He was a ripe scholar, and a Christian gentleman."

Notes From Our Readers

"Just about 3 years ago confusion reigned as hearing truths never heard before in the 18 years of being a believer in Jesus Christ. ...

What enlightenment burst forth as I became a Berean, searching the Scriptures. ... Coming out of Roman Catholicism and Pentecostalism ... what clarity and full assurance of understanding have come with the Pauline epistles being for us church age believers. There are fundamentalists who build doctrine for the church age upon Christ's earthly ministry, John the Baptist's ministry, and the twelve apostles with Paul's epistles. No wonder I was so confused. How true is II Timothy 2:15.

"Many of us can no longer support the unbiblical, check your brain at the door, shut up and go along with the program, 501 C 3 corporation church. I'd rather have the reduced fellowship, than answer to GOD for having gone along with it. ... I cannot with a clear conscience, support the local 501 C 3 corporation church, even if it is a 'grace' church." – Email