



CURRENT

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CHRIST
OUR PROPHET

**DARING TO DATE
DIFFERENTLY**

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WITNESS IN THE
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RESTING IN PEACE

Dr. Stephen Pollock

Malvern Free Presbyterian Church hosted the memorial service for Colonel Frederick “Rick” Walker on Saturday, August 15, 2020. Colonel Walker served with great distinction for 25 years in the United States Air Force, earning multiple awards. In 1980, Rick was selected as the first commander of J6 Communications for the then-unknown Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC), a covert counterterrorism unit composed of the U.S. military’s elite special operations forces.

I had the privilege of meeting Rick as he confronted weakness and repeated illness in the latter years of his life. On a home visit, not long after my move to Pennsylvania, I encountered something new in my pastoral ministry. After I had read the Word and prayed, I was about to bid farewell, but before I could rise from my seat, brother Rick was interceding with His Savior on my behalf. It was a tremendous blessing to hear him lay hold on the Lord. And so began a pattern that continued up to his passing. On pastoral visits, I prayed, and he prayed. As he prayed, I had the privilege of looking into his soul as he faced death. In his prayers I heard faith and the theology that was the foundation of that faith.

There were dominant truths recurring in Rick’s prayers. In the midst of sickness and other concerns, Rick prayed in the confident knowledge that God was in control. The Lord knows the end from the beginning, but beyond that we know that the Lord is working out the end for His glory and the good of His people. He is in control of our illnesses

and our adversities. The Lord alone has the power to work “all things after the counsel of his own will” (Ephesians 1:11). Rick served his country, knowing the experience of the gospel centurion: “For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it” (Matthew 8:9). As a man of God, he understood that he lived under the authority of a higher power.

For some, the thought of God’s sovereign authority brings fear. Can this God be trusted? Is He good? Is He kind? Rick’s prayers were founded on the Word of God and personal experience. In them, I heard conviction that the sovereign God is good, kind, and full of compassion. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him” (Psalm 103:13). Rick prayed for himself, his family, and others, pleading for the God of all comfort to show kindness and grace in their lives. He knew that the Lord is seated at the right hand of God, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knew to go boldly to the throne to ask for grace to help in time of need.

Serving his country with great honor and dignity, Rick must have possessed great authority with his men. Courage and integrity are the descriptors of this man’s character. Yet for me, the mark of the man was how he lived his last days, by the grace of God. He was a righteous man who was not afraid of evil tidings (Psalm 112:7).

A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion. Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.

(Psalm 112:5-7)

It’s important for Christians to live well, serving Christ and others. It’s more important to die well. In life, Colonel Frederick Walker honored his country, but more particularly, in his death he honored his Lord. He was a true soldier of the cross, and I am thankful for the privilege of seeing his latter years. ❧

O Christ, He is the fountain,
The deep, sweet well of love!
The streams on earth I’ve tasted
More deep I’ll drink above;
There, to an ocean fullness
His mercy doth expand,
And glory, glory dwelleth
In Immanuel’s land.

With mercy and with judgment
My web of time He wove,
And aye the dew of sorrow
Were lustered with His love.
I’ll bless the hand that guided,
I’ll bless the heart that planned,
When throned where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel’s land.

O I am my Beloved’s,
And my Beloved’s mine!
He brings a poor, vile sinner
Into His house of wine;
I stand upon His merit,
I know no other stand,
Not e’en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel’s land.

Anne Ross Cousin
based on the *Letters of Rev. Samuel Rutherford*

CHRIST OUR PROPHET

“Never man spake like this man”

John 7:46



Jesus Christ is the one Mediator between God and men. As Mediator, He unifies three offices that were distinct in the Old Testament: prophet, priest, and king. Scripture reveals that those were the three functions necessary for the restoration of fallen man: Man must receive a revelation of true knowledge by an authoritative spokesman; he must be forgiven and justified by the offering of an atoning sacrifice; and he must be brought into submission and protected from his enemies by a powerful sovereign. The purpose of this article is to highlight the glory of Christ's prophetic ministry.

THE NEED FOR A PROPHET

One of the fundamental maladies of fallen humanity is ignorance. Man was originally created with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. By his rebellion, he forfeited that knowledge. Paul teaches us about our depraved minds in Ephesians 4:17-18 under four descriptions.

First, *our mind is vain*. It is empty and aimless. It wanders about without any goal. Our thinking is purposeless.

Second, *our understanding is darkened*. We have no natural light to illumine our ability to think through things with accuracy and in proper proportion.

Third, *we are ignorant*. Man does not deal with the facts. This is what we are bombarded with on a daily basis. Line after line, clip after clip, sound-bite after sound-bite ignores the single greatest fact: the existence of God. Devoid of the single greatest reality in the universe, natural man can only be superficial at best.

Fourth, *we are blind*. That particular word has to do with something that is as hard as stone—it has become petrified. When Mark tells us that Jesus was grieved at the hardness of men's hearts (Mark 3:5), he uses this word. We all know the difference between a rock and clay. The playdough that my children enjoy shaping is able to easily receive impressions from their hands. Not so with a rock. As hard as you press that rock, there is no sign that any force at all was applied to it. That describes our fallen minds—unable to receive impressions. Resistant to being acted upon from the outside.

Fallen man is plagued by a depraved, ignorant mind. He chooses what he does because he thinks like he does. And what he needs therefore is true knowledge. No wonder that the entire process of Christian transformation is spoken of in Scripture as the renewing of our minds.

But it requires more than the dispensing of knowledge to correct man's thinking. Paul, in Romans 1, describes the mechanism of our mind's rebellion. Creation constantly presents facts that reveal God's eternal power and Godhead, but we actively suppress the knowledge of God and choose to live in darkness rather than light (Romans 1:19-21). Our problem is a willful one.

Therefore, our redemption requires more than the presentation of knowledge. We need a powerful person to break through our aimless, ignorant, rock-hard minds and shine the light of revelation into that willful darkness. God has given us such a Person. Jesus Christ is our Prophet.

THE UNIQUENESS OF CHRIST'S PROPHETIC MINISTRY

Of course, there were many prophets in Scripture. The first man that God called

a prophet in Scripture was Moses' brother Aaron (Exodus 7:1). Recall how Aaron functioned as Moses' prophet: "And thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do. And he shall be thy spokesman unto the people" (Exodus 4:15-16). Note the chain of revelation. God would give the words to Moses, and Moses would give the words to Aaron, and Aaron would give the words to the people. The people of Israel would hear Aaron's voice, but his words were from Moses, who received them from God. So a prophet is a spokesman; he is one who speaks on behalf of another.

Following these initial prophets were dozens of other prophets. But each left the people incomplete. Just as the priests were unable to perfect the worshippers, and the kings were unable to subdue the people's rebellions and vanquish their enemies, Old Testament prophets were ignored, ridiculed, persecuted, and largely unsuccessful. This is because the success of a prophet depends not merely on the delivery of information, but the illumination and changing of the mind and will. No Old Testament prophet had the capacity to change the heart.

Illumination is a Divine prerogative. In this, Christ sits in a category of one. His prophetic office is not merely superior to all who came before—it is unique, because He alone has the sovereign power to reveal truth, grant spiritual understanding, and overcome hardened hearts. The beauty and success of Christ's prophetic office consists in its application to sinners both externally and internally.

THE REVELATION OF CHRIST'S PROPHETIC MINISTRY

Christ's prophetic office, and His absolute success in executing that office, was first predicted in Deuteronomy 18:15, "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken."

Note that this prophecy includes both aspects of Christ's prophetic ministry. He will reveal truth as God's spokesman, but He will have a further ability no other prophet ever knew: the power to make people obey. Christ does not merely dispense knowledge. He sovereignly causes truth to be understood and obeyed. He "opened the understanding of His disciples that they might understand the Scriptures" (Luke 24:45).

The various names and titles of Christ imply His prophetic office. He is called the Counselor (Isaiah 9:6), the Witness (Isaiah 55:4), the Messenger and Interpreter (Job 33:23), the Apostle (Hebrews 3:1), the Word (John 1:1), and the Truth (John 14:6). Further, Scripture describes Christ in terms consistent with His prophetic office. He is "the light of men" (John 1:4), "the light of the world" (John 9:5), "the light to lighten the Gentiles" (Luke 2:32; Isaiah 60:3), and the "Christ in whom are laid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). He says in Isaiah's prophecy, "The Lord GOD hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary" (Isaiah 50:4). He said, "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matthew 11:27). He is "made unto us wisdom" (1 Corinthians 1:30). It is no wonder that the Father declared, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye Him" (Matthew 17:5).

THE MERCY OF CHRIST'S PROPHETIC MINISTRY

Consider what a mercy it is that Christ executes the office of prophet. Ever since the fall, mankind has been engaged in a revolt against the Lord and His

Messiah (Psalm 2:1-2). Their objective is to break off the government of God. That is the whole history of the human race—a systematic, progressive effort to throw off the sovereign rule of God.

Everyone of us has had our part in that mutiny. We all were dead in sins, "walking according to the course of this world," all the while energized by "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). We are part of the insurrection against God and His Anointed One.

Later in the second psalm, Christ declares the decree of His Father who said to Him: "I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psalm 2:8). What will it take for Christ to be able, ultimately, to seize control of this earth and to exercise His Lordship over all of its peoples? He will have to "break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalm 2:9).

But astoundingly, the first advent of Christ wasn't to break anyone with a rod of iron. It was to *talk* to the rebels. This was Christ's own personal understanding of His mission, according to Luke 4:16-21. When He opened up the scroll of Isaiah in the synagogue in Nazareth, He chose to read the words of His own commission from Isaiah 61: "The LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek... to proclaim liberty to the captives... to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD." He came to speak to rebels. He came to preach good tidings, to proclaim the gospel. What a mercy!

THE CONTINUATION OF CHRIST'S PROPHETIC MINISTRY

Is this still His ministry today? It most certainly is. In the days of Christ's humiliation, Christ executed the office of Prophet personally and directly. "All bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth" (Luke 4:22). They marveled, because He spoke "as one having authority" (Matthew 7:29).

But Christ still speaks even after His exaltation to God's right hand. God "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Hebrews 1:2). Now, Christ executes His prophetic office through the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit acting upon the Word of God. Peter wrote, explaining the ministry of the Old Testament prophets, that the "Spirit of Christ... testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (1 Peter 1:11). Paul joins Peter in calling the third Person of the Trinity the "Spirit of Christ" in Romans 8:9 and Philipians 1:19.

By this same Holy Spirit, Christ "went and preached unto the spirits in prison" during the days of Noah (1 Peter 3:19-20). Those hardened sinners heard the voice of Christ in the preaching of Noah. The same was true of the Apostle Paul's preaching ministry. While sinners heard Paul's preaching, we know that through Paul Christ was opening their eyes, and turning them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God (Acts 26:18). The risen Christ has gifted His church with apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Ephesians 4:11). When they minister the truth of the Word of God, Christ speaks as God's great Prophet.

CONCLUSION

Blessed be God, that He has mercifully given ignorant, darkened sinners like us a powerful, authoritative Prophet to reveal God unto us. May the Lord give us grace to always receive Christ's prophetic ministry with gratitude, humility, and a tender heart.

"He speaks and, listening to His voice,
New life the dead receive;
The mournful, broken hearts rejoice;
The humble poor believe"
(Charles Wesley). ❧



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A Right Hearing of the Preaching of God's Word

Mark 4

The crowd that gathered that day along the shore of the Sea of Tiberias to hear the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ would have been the envy of any open-air preacher. Both Matthew and Mark tell us that a “great multitude” assembled to hear Christ’s teaching. But because they were all pressing to get near Him, the Lord Jesus had to get into a boat for His preaching platform. While the Savior “taught them many things by parables” that day at the seaside, the only parable cited in Scripture is the parable of the sower. The sight of a sower walking through a field, reaching into his bag and casting seed onto a field that had been plowed, was a very common sight in Israel.

The Lord used that ordinary event of daily life in Israel to teach a vital lesson about how we should listen when the Word of God is being preached. The metaphors are clear: the sower casting his seed represents the preacher engaged in preaching the Word. The ground or soil speaks of the heart that comes under the sound of God’s Word. What happens to the seed as it falls on various types of soil represents the results of

hearing the Word. This parable deals with both the *right* and *wrong* way to hear the preaching of God’s Word, and the point Christ was driving home to His audience that day was that it is only a *right* hearing of the preaching of God’s Word that produces any real and lasting benefit to the soul.

As far as benefiting from your minister’s sermons, much depends on how you listen to them. How vast is the multitude that has sat under the clear preaching of God’s Word for years, yet there has never been any indication that they have truly *heard* the doctrine that has been taught. How different is the outcome of those who have heard the Word of God as it should be heard and as it *must* be heard. The vital question is this: What is it that marks a true hearing of God’s Word?

Christ teaches us that a true hearing of the Word and a hard heart are totally incompatible. Some of the sower’s seed fell by the “way side.” The fields of the farmers in ancient Palestine were long, narrow strips of land divided by small roads. As the people and wagons went

up and down these roads every day, the soil became packed and hard, and completely unsuitable for planting seed. It was easy, however, for the birds to swoop down and devour it immediately.

Christ explains that these people “hear” the preaching of the Word, but they receive no benefit and remain completely unaffected by anything they’ve heard. They come to church and hear the sermons, but they can’t see any real connection between the Word of God and themselves. The problem is not the preacher or his message. The problem is that their hearts are *hard*. Does this describe you? You hear sermons week after week, but they don’t make any sense to you and the truth of the matter is that you’re really not interested in what the preacher is saying. Could it be your heart is sin-hardened and there’s not a place in it where God’s Word can be received and understood?

Unless the Lord plows up your hardened heart, all the preaching in the world to you is in vain. It is only the Spirit of God that can take away the hard, stony heart and replace it with a tender heart

of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). If this is you, then it's time to pray to God that He will break up that hardness and give you an understanding heart. Otherwise, you will die as you have lived with a hard, unrepentant, unbelieving heart, without God and without any hope of heaven. "Take heed therefore how ye hear" (Luke 8:18).

In the second place, the Lord shows us that a true hearing of God's Word and a shallow heart are not compatible. Some of the seed fell on "stony ground." This was not a field with a lot of stones in it, but parts of a field where there was "not much earth." In Palestine, there were parcels of land where there was a thin layer of soil covering a bedrock of limestone. As the sower cast his seed, some of it fell on the kind of soil in which the warm sun caused it to sprout very quickly and send down its roots for water and nourishment. But then it hit the bedrock, and as the sun got hotter, the plant soon withered and died.

Christ saw people in that large crowd who *seemed* enthusiastic about what He was preaching. As a result of His powerful preaching and miracles, the crowds thronged to hear the Savior. Many of them were even happy to refer to themselves as His "disciples." But it would not be long before many of these same disciples would go "back and walk no more with him" (John 6:66). What happened?

The Lord said that when such people hear the Word of God, they experience wonderful feelings, but they are shallow and fleeting because their understanding of God's Word is such. This is evident by the way they respond when persecution and trials come to them as a result of the Word they profess to believe. Like the hot sun withers the seed that falls on stony ground, so the fiery trials wither those where the Word of God has not taken deep root. Luke tells us that they believe for a while "but in time of temptation fall away" (Luke 8:13).

It is sobering to think that someone can have a deeply moving experience under the preaching of God's Word, but end up at the last without Christ and go to

hell. C. H. Spurgeon tells the story of a man who spoke to his minister just after the sermon about how wonderful a thing it was to see so many people weeping. The minister responded, "*I will tell you something more wonderful still, that so many will forget all they wept about when they get outside the door.*"

Beware of trusting in feelings and emotions when you hear God's Word. You may be moved to tears by a message. Your heart may be stirred by the comfort of its promises and the depth of its doctrines. Do not place your trust in what may well be passing impressions. There is nothing like affliction or tribulation to test whether or not the seed has fallen on good ground. "Take heed therefore how ye hear."

In the third place, Jesus indicates that a true hearing of God's Word is incompatible with a worldly heart. The Lord continued, "Some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up, and choked it, and it yielded no fruit." Some people hear the preaching of God's Word, and it seems like it has been received into their heart because of how their life begins to change. But Christ says that they become unfruitful and "bring no fruit unto perfection." What causes this spiritual barrenness? Thorns grow up and choke the seed, so it is unable to produce any fruit. Jesus said that these thorns are "the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things."

Although these thorny-ground hearers may *seem* to have received God's Word in their hearts and go so far as to abstain from many things which God's Word condemns, even adopting many habits which it requires, yet they go no farther. They never give their heart completely to Christ because the cares, riches, and lusts of this world have a choke-hold on them. This keeps them from a right hearing of God's Word, which will always produce real spiritual fruit. "Take heed therefore how ye hear."

The Lord speaks of a fourth and final kind of hearer of the preaching of God's Word: a true hearing of the

preached Word which will be followed by a true heeding. Three things stand out from the other three kinds of hearers. Unlike the others, the ground upon which the seed fell was "good ground." Unlike the others, the Word preached was understood. Unlike the others, the seed brought forth fruit, albeit of varying degrees.

Why was it "good ground"? The owner of the field had prepared the ground for the sower and his seed. God alone prepares a man's heart for a right hearing of His Word. The Holy Spirit alone can open the heart to God's truth and illuminate a man's understanding so that he grasps spiritual truth. Wherever these two works of God take place, there will always be fruit to prove it. Hardness of heart will be removed, the Word of God will take deep root in the soul, and all of life's fiery trials will be a means of drawing the true believer further and further from the cares, riches, and lusts of the world by drawing him closer to Christ and His Word. The work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of a man cannot be hidden. Thank the Lord, there *will* be fruit, "some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some an hundred."

The simple conclusion that must be made from this parable is this: It is what we do *after* hearing the preaching of God's Word that determines whether or not we really heard it. The only religion that saves and sanctifies the soul is the religion that not only *hears* the Word of God, but *harkens* to the God of the Word. Mere professions of faith, deep religious emotions, and even an understanding of Bible facts have never produced Christ-likeness and will never be able to give peace when it comes time to die. If, after hearing many sermons we bear no fruit, the gospel has been preached to us in vain. "Take heed therefore how ye hear." ■



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A PORTRAIT OF THE GRACIOUS WOMAN



Recently, I sat through the celebration of life of a dear departed friend, as her five adult children honored their mother as a godly Christian woman. They described Amy as holy, noble, caring, giving, generous, positive, patient, selfless, beautiful, sweet, artistic, fun, cheerful, genuine, wise, humorous, virtuous, valiant, vibrant, strong, active, and favored. Amy loved God, the Word, and preaching; she was a prayer warrior. She loved her children; she loved others. Obviously, Amy Frank greatly impacted her precious children, and was well loved by her entire family, her church family, and people that knew her. Amy Frank was a gracious woman.

Like Amy, women who love God should be concerned how they live their lives. Why? At the end of Paul's instruction to Christian women, he gives this most powerful reason: "That the Word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:5). To "blaspheme" means to speak irreverently about God and sacred things. Devaluing the qualities listed in Titus 2, many professed Christian women stunt their own walk with God and their wider influence by choosing worldly ways. Living our lives by the roles we fulfill will leave us empty when those roles no longer define us. So, what does the Bible say about *how* we should live? "A gracious woman retaineth honor" (Proverbs 11:16). A *gracious* woman knows the unmerited favor of God bestowed upon her when

her sins are forgiven and she is born of God. She values inner ornaments of noble character more than outward appearance. With honor and dignity, she attains a godly testimony before others and glorifies God as this inner principle becomes a deterrent against sin.

Each gracious woman's journey through life is a God-given pathway, one He promises to direct as she walks by faith through all of life's seasons and under all of life's conditions. Comparing life to a path is common in the Scriptures. The Lord shows us the path of life (Psalm 16:11), leads us in the paths of righteousness (Psalm 23:2), and ever-brightens the path of the just (Proverbs 4:18). For our trust in Him and our acknowledgement of Him, He promises to direct our paths (Proverbs 3:5-6). God brings a unique beauty to each season of a woman's life, making everything beautiful in its time. Continually, the Lord is the gracious woman's constant Savior, Friend, and Guide.

In her walk with the Lord, the gracious woman seeks Him in daily Bible reading, asks for abundant grace through prayer, and lives by faith through the nitty-gritties of each day. Each year of faithful keeping to His path produces the qualities of godly, gracious womanhood commended in the Scriptures. She grows sound

in doctrine, becomes sober (wise), discreet, chaste (pure), good, obedient, self-controlled, holy, loving her family and keeping her home. A gracious woman honors the Word of God with her life. Her prayer echoes Benjamin M. Ramsey's hymn, "Teach Me Thy Way."

Long as my life shall last,
Teach me Thy way!
Where'er my lot be cast,
Teach me Thy way!
Until the race is run, until the
journey's done,
Until the crown is won,
Teach me Thy way!

Whether life's seasons bring joy and the singing of birds or whether they are tinged with grief and sorrow, our lives will witness to God's faithful care. My friend Amy emulated the qualities of a gracious woman of God by the evident tribute paid by her children at her funeral. Can one gracious, godly woman make an impact on those around her? Amy did! Then, take courage, dear sister-in-Christ, as you "grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). ■



Mrs. Barbara Mooney
wife of Rev. Myron Mooney,
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Daring to Date Differently

Dr. Stephen Pollock

It has been called different names in different ages. It has certainly been conducted in different ways in different cultures and centuries. Somehow, a man and a woman come to the point of marriage. Do they get there through parental arrangement or by personal choice? Today they might even meet online just as much as in person. Do they court? Perhaps they should date? Or maybe we should call it “going out” or “going steady.” I’m surely causing some young people to bury their head in their hands as they determine how out of touch I am. To keep things simple, I’m going to use the word “dating” as a term for an unmarried man and an unmarried woman spending social time together as a couple, to the exclusion of other people.

In this area, a Christian must dare to go against the tide of today’s culture. The themes that we’ll cover in this issue and the next are distinctly Christian. In former times, there would have been little difference between the Christian and the non-Christian in this area. But the sexual revolution from the 1960s has led to such immorality and supposed freedom that the very idea of dating before marriage seems outdated. Today many are prepared to accept multiple dates with multiple people, involving sinful practices, often with the “help” of a cell phone. Sadly, today’s “Christian” young person is not immune from playing the field, sexting, and such like. Determining in our hearts that we will not be conformed to this world, but rather be transformed will ensure that we find the will of God to be good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:1-2). In other words, if we think through the subject of dating with our Bibles open, we will enjoy the benefit in our lives now and in the future.

Dating as a concept falls into the area of Christian liberty. For the purpose of this article, I’m defining Christian liberty as an area of life and conduct about which the Lord does not give explicit command and which is not in and of itself sinful. As we’ll see, there are areas of conduct in dating that are not areas of liberty, but dating as an act is not dealt with explicitly in the Word. There are various ways in the Word whereby a man and woman enter marriage. (Consider Isaac and Rebekah, or Boaz and Ruth). The Bible does not give us one way in which a man should find a wife. Therefore, we must allow some liberty as to the process. That being said, the Bible is sufficient as our rule of faith and practice so that even in areas of so-called Christian liberty we turn to the Word for important principles to guide us (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The crucial principle that we can glean from the Word of God is that dating ought to commence with the possibility of marriage in mind. Remember our definition of dating. Should this be purposeful or is it legitimate for young couples to simply enjoy each other’s company without any particular focus? Well, obviously it is not always sinful for a man and a woman to spend time in each other’s company. The Lord’s interaction with the woman in John 4 is sufficient to make that point. Furthermore, it would be foolish to suggest that every dating relationship must end in marriage given that one of the purposes of dating is to determine the suitability of a possible marriage.

If a single man desires social interaction with a single woman, the Bible presents principles that such interaction should have a

marital focus. Dating should not be an end product. It should be seen as a means to an end. That end should be marriage. The ideal boy-girl relationship in Scripture is not a sexless “platonic” relationship, but rather Christian marriage. The first boy-girl relationship in the Bible is a marriage. God commends marriage as a good thing (Hebrews 13:2) and so, by implication, dating that is marriage focused is commendable. God’s ordinance of marriage gives propriety to activities leading to that end. The Bible presents a close tie between romantic love and marriage and presents several negative examples of social engagement where marriage was not the overarching focus (Genesis 38; Judges 16; 2 Samuel 13).

When we ask the Bible for other goals for dating, we are met with silence. Why are you dating? For some young people the answer is that they desire the benefits of marriage without the commitment. To defend other reasons for boy-girl pairing up and exclusive social interaction is to deny what we know to be true regarding such relationships.

So far in this series of articles we have noted that marriage is a covenant of companionship and that dating should have marriage as its goal. These principles will help us answer some of the questions that arise around the subject. Whom should I date? When should I date? For how long should we date? What should we do and not do when we date? Perhaps we’ll consider some of these matters in the next issue. In the meantime, if marriage is a long way off, then don’t rush to date. Spend time with people in group settings without the pressure of the need to pair off. Get before the Lord and ask Him to prepare you for marriage and prepare a spouse for you—if that would be His will. ■

GENESIS

GOD'S BOOK OF BEGINNINGS STUDY NOTES

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 7:

In Genesis 7 God gave Noah a final seven-day warning that the flood was to begin. Noah was to act immediately for the safety of his family and the required quota of animals. The date is stated as the 600th year of Noah's life and down to the very day of his life which enables us to determine the exact time he and his family spent inside the ark.

While there were 40 days of rain (Genesis 7:12), and the waters covered the earth for 150 days (Genesis 7:23), there was a total of one year and ten days spent in the ark (Genesis 8:14). Only Noah and his family entered the ark, eight souls in all. The whole earth, even every high hill was covered with water by a depth of 15 cubits (Genesis 7:20). The record is clear that all land creatures outside the ark died. That included man, land creatures, and birds. The fate of fish and other aquatic animals is not mentioned.

Key verse:

"In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened" (Genesis 7:11).

This verse records that, along with unprecedented rainfall, the world was "broken up." This implies deep fracturing of the earth's crust accompanied by earth movements, volcanic eruptions, and devastating earthquakes. It is surmised that these gigantic forces of destruction account for the global geologic formations evident today. When we look at rock-faced mountains with multiple layers of sedimentary rock containing immense numbers of fossilized trees, large and small animals, and fish, we must think of God's judgment upon the earth.

Observations on this chapter

1. The animals went into the ark two by two, but there were more than single pairs.

The clean animals and birds which were for food and for sacrifice were brought on board in pairs of seven. This was God's plan to sustain their species and provide for sacrifices (Genesis 8:20) and for food (Genesis 9:3). It is possible that due to a loss in vegetation and a harsher climate, God allowed men to eat meat to survive. Because verse 15 says they went in "two and two", we must reject the idea that they went in by sevens forming three pairs with one extra for sacrifice.

2. The animals were brought to the ark by God.

The record shows that they came to the ark and went in of their own accord. Note: "They went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two..." (Genesis 7:14-15). Noah did not need to hunt for them, nor drive the animals into the ark.

3. The numbers of animals, birds, and creeping things were limited to their "kind."

When you consider the difference between "kind," which

means species, and variety, out of one pair of animals come many varieties. So, all varieties of dogs were not in the ark. This applies to cattle, sheep, and all species of animals. New varieties of the same species are developing in the world to this day. If we work backward in time and eliminate all the varieties of one species, we would come to a much smaller number of animals that would have entered Noah's ark.

4. The maintenance of animals in the ark could have been eased by hibernation.

Some animals hibernate naturally, and some enter a hibernation when in an enclosed area. It is possible that many hibernated during their one year and ten days in the Ark.

5. The Genesis record thoroughly declares the world-wide nature of the flood.

- As stated in a warning to Noah, "...and every living substance that I have made will I destroy from off the face of the earth" (Genesis 7:4)
- In the reference to the height of the waters so that "all the high hills that were under the heaven were covered" (Genesis 7:19)
- In the statement, "The waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth" (Genesis 7:19) which means that the waters triumphed over the cursed earth and all its rebellion to God
- In the clear statement, "And all flesh died..." etc. (Genesis 7:21-23)
- In the clear statement that limits survivors of the flood to Noah and those in the ark (Genesis 7:23).

To adopt any view other than a world-wide flood resulting in death to all men and animals, except those in the ark, is

to blatantly deny the clear statements of Scripture. To explain away the world-wide nature of the flood requires the reader to reject the deliberate emphasis of the Genesis record upon the world-wide nature of the flood as God's judgment upon all flesh.

6. The extent of destruction that acted upon the former earth's appearance is revealed in the words,

"The same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up" (Genesis 7:11).

During the flood large cracks or fissures must have opened unlike anything we see today. Afterwards, seas formed from water flowing into them as mountains rose creating dry land. We live in a vastly different world from the old world before Noah's flood.

Application

There are gospel lessons in the history of Noah and the flood.

- God's sovereignty is seen in graciously choosing Noah and his family.
- God's longsuffering to the wicked is seen in His granting 100 years to build the ark and for raising up Noah as a preacher of righteousness to warn sinners. It is also seen in the final seven days of grace given before God shut the door of the ark.
- God's drawing animals into the ark parallels with God's gracious but effectual drawing power exerted on sinners to leave their sins and seek salvation.
- There was one ark with one door, so there is one Savior from sin and He is the one and only door by which sinners must enter heaven.
- The safety of the ark during the turbulent waters pictures the care the Lord takes of the souls of His redeemed people. All who are in Christ are kept by the power of God (1 Peter 1:5).

- Judgment upon the wicked is not inconsistent with the character of a good and gracious God. His wrath is justified. His justice allows for no tolerance of sin. All who are out of Christ are under the judgment of God every day. This incident of God judging the pre-flood world is good grounds to warn men of the judgment to come upon the present world of sinners who defy God and reject His Son.

in days, not years, and certainly not billions of years.

Remember that the massive supplies of oil, coal, and natural gas we enjoy today are a result of vegetation that was rapidly buried in layers of rock. Decide whether you will take your stand for a young Earth, or become an evolutionist who denies the global flood and God's judgment upon the "old world" of Noah's time. ❏



Things to do in light of this study

- Look for evidence of the global flood in stratified rocks. There is clear evidence of layers of differing types of rock in mountains.
- Look for igneous rocks—the kind used for landscaping, which are the result of volcanic activity spewing out magma (but wait till they cool!).
- Look for traces of animals, fish, and vegetation, etc. that have been fossilized in rock.
- Check out www.answersingenesis.org/fossils to learn of fossils being made



Rev. Ian Goligher
pastor of Cloverdale FPC,
Vancouver, BC



People from the work in front of the sanctuary we rent, during the visit of Miss Hannah Allison, summer 2018.

A SEPARATED WITNESS IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.
Jeremiah 6:16

THE LORD PREPARED THE WAY

September 2020 marks twelve years since the Lord brought us to the Czech Republic—a land where I was born, but left as a child. In 1981, my father, a Baptist minister, was called to a church in Toronto, and so our family moved to Canada. Toronto became my home where I grew up and spent the next 27 years of my life.

Both my father and grandfather were leaders and influential figures in evangelicalism in the former Czechoslovakia. We were largely unaware that we were a part of neo-evangelicalism, a mixed multitude of much compromise and apostasy. After the fall of communism, my father returned to his native land, while I remained in Canada with my wife Martina (also Czech-born), whom I had just married.

In 1997, the Lord providentially brought us to the Toronto Free Presbyterian Church by way of the

Whitefield Christian Schools. I was a teacher looking for a position and despite my efforts to the contrary, through a series of unlikely circumstances, I was brought by the Lord to a ministry of which I had no previous knowledge. Ultimately, this led to membership in the Free Presbyterian Church and departure from our family denomination in the face of great opposition and trouble. Much of this continues to this day.

I thank the Lord for enabling me to complete my theological studies at Geneva Reformed Seminary, and last

year I was ordained by the Free Presbyterian Church of North America to the gospel ministry in the Czech Republic.

THE LORD PLACED A BURDEN

Our personal history and background is vital for a better understanding of the context in which we labor and the ministry to which the Lord has called us. The Lord's primary call to us was to be a voice of warning to the church in the land of our birth. After 11 years of instruction and preparation in the Free Presbyterian ministry in Toronto, the Lord called us from His Word: "And go, get thee to them of the captivity, unto the children of thy people...I have made thee a watchman unto the house of



The Solc Family Left to right: Caleb, Timothy, Milos, Levi, Martina, Abigail, Milos Jr.

Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me” (Ezekiel 3). This has always been, and by the grace of God will continue to be, the main thrust of this ministry: to be a voice of warning against the compromise and declension in the church. This is what I have sought to do in the strength of the Lord, and there has been ample opportunity.

I pray that this separated witness would be a witness against all apostasy, disobedience, compromise, and worldliness in the church, because such a church has nothing to offer to man. When there is departure from the old paths, the church is completely robbed of power. Sometimes, there may still be some form of godliness, but there is no power. And God’s power is what we all most vitally need—in our lives, in our homes, in our churches. We need the Spirit of God moving in our midst.

Our mission is not just to warn, but also to continue to establish a work where the Lord’s Name is honored, where His people are built up in the faith, and find a true spiritual home and shelter. It has been my great desire for the glory of God and for the extension of His Kingdom to lead men and women, young and old, to the old faith (Jeremiah 6:16), not for the oldness of it, but for the truth of it. It is only in that living and true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that people will find God’s blessing and rest for their souls.

THE LORD’S POWER DESIRED

As well as taking a stand against the fallen church and seeking to establish a faithful work, the Lord has sent us to the highways and byways to call others in. For the first six years in the Czech Republic, I taught English at the Technical University of Liberec, about one hour north of the capital city of Prague. Hundreds of students have heard my testimony and various contacts were established. We also ministered to people in our neighborhood and to everyone with whom we came in contact. Then in 2010, we moved to the town of Rychnov, about 20 minutes south of Liberec. The ministry and witness has continued to all of the people in our new neighborhood. It is very difficult to penetrate a society which has built up so many walls to keep out any thoughts of God or eternity. The people require much time before accepting you into their lives.

One of the explanations for reservation and suspicion is the very unique and complex history of the country. During the Middle Ages it was known as the Kingdom of Bohemia. When godly John Hus appeared on the scene, there was a great reformation movement in the fifteenth century which led to the formation of the church of the Czech Brethren. This was a pre-reformation Protestant church. The Lord moved mightily, and for 200 years the Czech Kingdom was largely Protestant. But in 1620, the Czech

Protestants lost what proved to be the decisive battle to the Roman Catholic Hapsburgs and a period of fierce re-catholicization began. From then to the present day the country has had 300 years of Romanism, 20 years between two world wars, 40 years of communism, and now we can say 30 years of secularism. The result: godlessness, wickedness, hardness, suffering, trouble, apathy, emptiness, and darkness. This country, which is in the very heart of Europe with a population of about 10.5 million people, is one of the most atheistic and least religious countries in the world, with almost 80% of the population not declaring any religion or faith in the latest national census. It is a spiritually devastated land, and this is the context in which we find ourselves.

There is a great stigma attached to religion and belief in God—a true remnant of communism. Czech society has been fed the theory of evolution as scientific fact for generations and the people’s thinking is that anyone who has any education or intelligence *knows* there is no God. It is very difficult to overcome this mindset, particularly in the 30 to 70 age group. We have had many situations where a younger person started to show an interest in the things of God and was greatly discouraged by someone from the older generation. For example, one dear young woman who made a profession of faith was threatened when she started to show a desire to regularly attend worship services. Also, a boy came to our Sunday school but was forbidden by his parents to return the next week when they found out what it was all about. A young man who was affected by the gospel told me that if he would become a Christian, he would have no friends. These are some of the things we contend with in this society. Oh, how we need to *be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves*, and how we need the Holy Ghost to break through into the hearts of the people and help them overcome these fears and threats, even as they are convicted of their sin and recognize their urgent need of peace with God. May the Lord give victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil.



A meeting in our home, summer 2019

THE LORD'S PEOPLE INVOLVED

In this hardened, atheistic society it takes much time before people will even start to listen to you about matters of their soul or faith in God. But blessed be the Lord, after all these years we are beginning to see the impact of this



Sunday school children in church, December 2019.

witness. By the grace of God, we have been able to build up a level of trust in our community. The Lord is opening doors and giving new opportunities that were not there in earlier years.



Rev. Milos Solc in Prague.

Last year, my wife began to teach at the local school (grades 1 to 9) and I began to teach English once a week. The principal is a man who has observed us from a distance for many years, and has showed us great respect. He was most appreciative of our involvement in the school. New relationships have been formed and new doors opened.

Over the years, our children have been witnesses for Christ in their own environments—places which we could not otherwise reach. People watch us and as they experience Christian love and kindness, there is hope that they will be drawn to the Lord. Our 19-year-old son Timothy recently wrote: “As a young person in the Czech mission field, I have been taught the great importance and responsibility of having a consistent and vital relationship with the Lord. In this land so set against belief in God, I have realized the depth of the following words from 1 Peter 2:15 all the more: ‘For so is the will of God, that through well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.’” It is my continuing prayer that we and the children whom the Lord hath given us, be *for signs and for wonders* in this land (Isaiah 8:18).

The work of the Lord goes forward. We have a band of about 15 to 20 faithful people, including children, along with a wide circle of friends. Some have come and gone, but we are thankful for what we have and look to the Lord for the future. For over 10 years we have had regular morning and evening Sabbath



The younger boys at the local lumber yard with the owner, a man we are ministering to, summer 2020.

services, along with mid-week prayer meetings. Despite the many challenges of the work and the hostility and opposition we have faced, as a family and as a church we have known much blessing and the keeping hand of the Lord. The Lord promised that He would be to us *a little sanctuary* in the country to which we would come (Ezekiel 11:16), and that He would give us the land *by little and little* (Deuteronomy 23:30). “We wait...only upon God; for [our] expectation is from Him” (Psalm 62:5). Unto Him be the glory and honor, forever and ever. ☒



Baptism in local outdoor pool, summer 2019.

Rev. Backhurst's Installation



L to R: Dr. Larry Saunders, Mr. Andy Roersma, Rev. Andrew Simpson, Rev. Paul Backhurst, Rev. Ian Goligher, Mr. George Robinson



L to R: Mr. Dirk Struck, Rev. Paul Backhurst, Mr. Bob Niemi, Mr. Caleb Struck



The Undercover Revolution

by Iain Murray

The Undercover Revolution reveals how fiction changed Britain. Prior to Charles Darwin's embellished fictions, the English people were serious readers of the Holy Scriptures. His *On the Origin of Species* presented a fictional theory of evolution that had been already postulated by many ancient Greek philosophers. After its publication, the gullible of England and beyond believed his fiction as truth. Fiction and fantasy have adversely impacted the civilized world ever since. While fiction is not inherently evil, its contamination has not only permeated cheap romance novels, but also some classics of English literature.

Particularly, Murray investigates the lives and writings of two notable authors whose works are considered classics by many: Robert Louis Stevenson and Thomas Hardy. In their youth, both seemed to be very promising Christian believers. Stevenson had a godly nurse that carefully instructed him in the Holy Scriptures and the *Shorter Catechism*. Thus, his first production as a young writer was a book defending and praising the Scottish Covenanters; however, a year after that publication Stevenson left his affluent, sheltered Presbyterian home

for Edinburgh University. Tragically, he fell in with an ungodly crowd and began frequenting pubs, getting drunk, and reading immoral literature. By his own admission, his depravity included "frequenting the lowest order of prostitutes." His life was duplicitous because he tried to outwardly clean up his life when he went home for visits. But one day his father found something he had written and after questioning him, learned that he no longer believed in Christianity.

Similarly, Thomas Hardy was considered by many to be "the most eminent figure in English literature." His mother was deeply attracted to the powerful ministry of Rev. Henry Moule, vicar of Fordington. Teenaged Thomas was also a faithful attendant upon the vicar's preaching. He developed a close friendship with one of the vicar's sons, and that friendship included regular reading together of the Greek New Testament. The 1859 Revival in that district had a tremendous impact upon young Hardy. He "threw aside" Homer and Virgil and gave himself to daily hours of Scripture study. He also admired the strict thoroughness of some of his intimate Baptist friends. Hardy professed to love the crucified

Savior, and his meditations of April 17, 1861 emphasized, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord" (Ephesians 5:8).

Something happened that began a pathway to Hardy's apostasy. As some of his godly friends relocated to other parts of the world for their careers, they continued corresponding with Thomas. They encouraged him to go on in his walk with the Lord, but gradually he fell away. Hardy confessed autobiographically that he "lapsed from his Greek New Testament back again to the pagan writers." He soon became enamored with the skeptics, even admiring Thomas Huxley and his agnosticism. He came to believe that only a Christ-rejecting philosophy can define reality.

Tragically, both Stevenson and Hardy lost whatever temporary faith in God they had and endeavored to be their own "god." They worshipped themselves and lived for themselves, thereby making themselves, their women and their wives all very miserable. Such is the pitiful condition of sinners without God and without hope in the world. Not only did they spread misery to their closest relations, but they wanted to destroy Biblical Christianity along with H.G. Wells, George Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell, and others like them. They believed that their grossly immoral writings were better for the world than the moral virtues taught in the Bible. Through this well-documented, historical investigation of these authors, Iain Murray has performed a great service to the Lord, the Church, and to the world, giving us some reasons for the deepening apostasy that exists in the year 2020. ❏

The Undercover Revolution, by Iain Murray is published by Banner of Truth and is available online for under \$10.00.



Rev. Myron Mooney
minister of Trinity FPC,
Trinity, AL

Sheep

NOT SO STUPID



Over 60 years ago, I attended a VBS where the speaker wore a straw hat, red plaid shirt, and blue jeans and spoke with a “country twang.” He told us about the high-walled sheepfold that shepherds in Bible times needed to protect their flock from predators at night. He emphasized that it was the way sheep entered the sheepfold that illustrated their lack of intelligence. The first sheep had to jump a low rung to get in. Then, in single file the rest of the flock proceeded nose to tail to execute the same jump to enter the fold. Even after the shepherd removed the rung, the sheep still jumped to get in. I still remember the speaker repeatedly proclaiming, “Stupid! Sheep are so stupid that all they know to do is to follow the sheep in front of them!” I do not remember his application, but his “stupid sheep” idea stuck in my mind.

Later sermon and Bible lesson illustrations reinforced the idea of sheep needing a shepherd because they lacked mental ability. In time, one begins to question why God made such a “stupid” animal? Perhaps that is the reason why one of Adam’s sons became “a keeper of sheep.” Without a shepherd’s care, sheep could not have survived. Really?

Measuring Intelligence

Animal intelligence tests are notoriously

lopsided. A classic example involves suspended food. Putting a hungry animal in a room with movable objects and food suspended just out of its reach was deemed an equitable test of animals’ mental abilities. Rabbits ignored the food as they explored the room. The dog jumped at the food for a while and then lay down and watched the food. The ape looked at the food, moved some objects, climbed on them, and got the food. Problem-solving, the ape was deemed intelligent. The others—not so much.

Wild apes move around in trees to get to the proper vantage point to reach for their food. Canines catch food when it is available. In the experiment, the dog was waiting for a change so he could get the food. Rabbits generally forage until they run into food and then eat it. Although scientists thought the need of food would make the test equitable, the test favored animals with depth-perceiving vision, movable arms and legs, and opposable thumbs and toes. Can we really say that the other animals lack intelligence because God did not give them those attributes?

Although sheep probably would not have scored well on the out-of-reach food test, today their mental score is higher than it used to be. Tests have shown that sheep can recognize face

pictures of about two dozen different sheep and retain memory of them for over two years. Sheep have been judged to have a range of feelings: fear to anger, despair to happiness, interest to boredom. They appear to form long-term relationships. When needed, they intervene on behalf of friends, but ignore the same situation when a sheep they do not know is involved.

A Sheep’s Niche

Today’s domesticated sheep are descendants of mountain dwelling ancestors that lived in small groups and were able to climb steep inclines to reach tiny patches of grass. Sheep have been bred for characteristics that humans want in them: lack of horns and the year-round production of fleece which does not fall off. But sheep retain many characteristics that were useful when they lived in their wild, God-ordained niche.

In the mountains when a predator approached, the sheep would run single file, nose to tail along a narrow path. It was the flock’s main means of escape. The lead sheep could see an obstacle or ravine and easily jump it. But the next sheep had no chance to make such judgments. It could not stop, take a few steps back, then muster the momentum to jump without putting the last sheep

in the predator's jaws. By instinct, each sheep would put its hooves in the same place and make the exact same maneuver as the sheep in front of it. Lacking that instinct, predators were often stymied, and the sheep could escape. Were the sheep intelligent for working out this tactic? Did they learn to execute it by drill and practice? No. Despite what I learned in VBS, this behavior is not an indicator of sheep's mental abilities; it is a demonstration of their Creator's wisdom and power.

Some people believe Bible passages describing sheep and shepherds are implying that sheep lack intelligence. Look carefully at the passages. Try to forget the illustrations of sheep "stupidity" you may have heard and remember that God did not make animals stupid or intelligent as we generally apply those terms. God created and mentally programmed each animal to thrive in the niche He intended for it to inhabit. If the animal needs to be able to reach and grab its food, it can do so. If it needs to execute incredible gymnastic feats to escape predators, it can do that. Credit goes to the Designer-Creator, not to the creature's intelligence or lack thereof.

Flocks of Sheep

As mankind sought more wool, milk, and meat they gathered sheep into large flocks. Large flocks require large pastures and sheep in large pastures must be protected from predators, led to places to graze, and supplied with water. When a shepherd brings sheep to an environment they were not designed for, many of their natural behaviors are no longer useful. Tiny flocks of sheep in rugged mountains survive without a shepherd, but for the larger flocks a shepherd must provide for his sheep.

As Christ compares Christians to sheep, He is not indicating that we lack intelligence. Look carefully at passages like Psalm 23 and John 10. Often, He is pointing out the shepherd's obligation to the sheep because of the situation the sheep are in. Once a person is saved, he belongs in God's heavenly Kingdom; however, God's plan for most of us is to remain in this earthly pasture for a

time. He wants us to be a testimony for Him while we grow to love and trust Him more. We are placed here for His purposes.

Through direct instruction, examples, and parables, Christ teaches us how He wants us to live in this pasture. In all we do, we are to serve Him first. We are to love our neighbors and even pray for our enemies which "despitefully use" us. We are to offer "the other cheek" and give our "coat also" (Luke 6:27-38). These practices do not always square with worldly intelligence, but it is by seeking to live by these standards that we grow spiritually and are the testimony He wants us to be.

For example, a Christian with just enough income to supply his needs gives a tithe to the Lord and then works with what is left. The world says he should let those with abundance support the church, while he should save that tithe money for an emergency. Christians, however, trust their Shepherd's promise to supply the needs of His sheep. Giving to the Lord will measure and strengthen a Christian's faith and be a testimony to the world. But the world seeks to apply the same intelligence test to all (as the suspended food test sought to do for animals) and is amazed that a seemingly intelligent person does not prepare for the future. Christians should prepare for the future. But in choosing to do what God wants and trusting Him for our future, we may make decisions that seem foolish to the world, but reflect an intelligence that the world's test does not measure. Until the unsaved realize the wisdom of trusting

God, they will not understand all the choices an obedient Christian makes.

Sheep of His Pasture

Just as sheep in a large pasture are not in their natural environment and their normal behaviors are out of place, so Christians are not yet in our spiritual home and our behaviors often seem to display a lack of intelligence. Such godly behaviors may cause the world to pass by, wagging their heads. This can be hurtful to some Christians. They need consolation and comfort from the Shepherd. Sometimes godly behavior will put Christians at risk of life or limb (think of past, present, and future martyrs). These Christians need an extra measure of strength and grace to be the testimony God has called them to be. Our Shepherd will supply their needs.

Modern scientists are often surprised as they discover a sheep's God-given abilities. The world is often surprised at what Christians do. Yet the individual and the church thrives, often in ways the world does not understand. Eventually some nonbelievers will realize that this is because of our Shepherd—One who cares for each of us individually and is capable of supplying all the needs of the entire flock. Jesus proclaimed that He is that Good Shepherd, and we are blessed to be the sheep of His pasture. ❧



Mr. William Pinkston
served as a science teacher at Bob Jones Academy for 50 years. He is a charter member of Faith Free Presbyterian Church of Greenville, SC.





Jesus Loves

the Little Children

Something very exciting happened for us on July 5 when we welcomed baby William James into our home! We are so thankful to the Lord for this wonderful gift.

Since William's birth, I've thought a lot about children in the Bible. You might know the chorus "Jesus loves the little children/All the children of the world..." In Matthew 19:14, Jesus says, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven." *Suffer* here means *allow*. Jesus' disciples were trying to keep children away from Him, thinking they would bother Him, but Jesus wanted children brought to Him. What a kind Savior who loves children just like William and just like you! Not only does Jesus love children, but He often uses them to do wonderful things for Him. The Bible gives several examples of little ones whom God used to fulfill His promises.

In Genesis 21, we read about a baby named Isaac who was born for a very special purpose. Isaac's parents, the prophet Abraham and his wife, Sarah, had wanted children for a long time but

were old when God gave them a son. They were older than your grandparents when Isaac was born! From birth, Isaac was chosen by God to be the grandfather of the twelve tribes of Israel. When Isaac was a little boy, he had no idea how God would use him later in life!

Then, in Exodus 2, we read of baby Moses, a Hebrew child born into slavery in Egypt. Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt, ordered that all Hebrew baby boys be thrown in the Nile river because he didn't want them to grow up to be too powerful. How terrible! Jochebed, Moses' mother, hid him in a basket and placed it on the river. As he floated down the river, Pharaoh's daughter discovered him, and, instead of killing him as her father had commanded, she adopted Moses. Moses' sister, standing near the river to make sure he was safe, greeted Pharaoh's daughter and suggested someone to become Moses' nurse until he was old enough to live at the palace. Pharaoh's daughter didn't know the "nurse" was Moses' own mother! Moses grew up to lead the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt. Also, God gave him the ten

commandments to teach to the Israelites and God parted the Red Sea so they could safely cross to the other side. God used Moses to lead and teach His people for many years until his death.

God prepared these little ones for service when they were young and then He used them mightily in His service later in life. Just like them, God can use you now, which may lead to doing something more for Him when you're older. I encourage you to read these stories of Isaac and Moses in your Bible. Then, ask God what you can do for Him.

Next time, we're going to talk about two very special babies in the New Testament who were cousins. One was the most important baby ever born! Can you guess who He is? Be sure to read next time for the answer! ❏



Rachel Huffman
is a member of Lehigh Valley FPC, PA.

A WORD WORTH KNOWING

Prophet

A man who is chosen by God to proclaim His Word



Summer 2020

★ **Maggie Bowman**
Grace FPC

★ **Peter Messer**
Grace FPC

★ **Lilyanna Seifert**
Malvern FPC

★ **David Vosekalns**
Phoenix FPC

★ **Elise Vosekalns**
Phoenix FPC

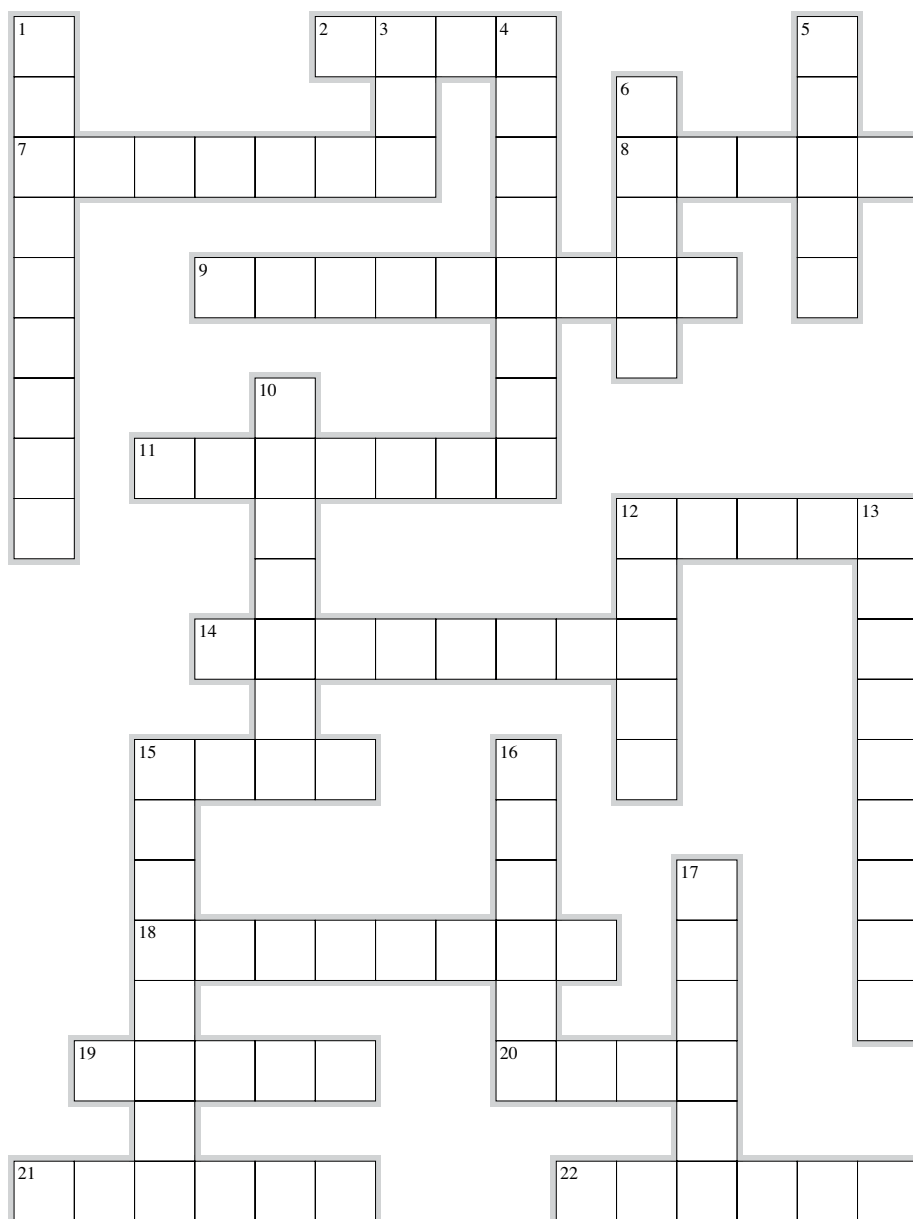
Kids' Crossword Puzzle

Answers are found in: Genesis 17:15-21; 18:1-15; Exodus 1:8-22; 2:1-10; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:5-45, 57-66 (KJV)

Answers must be spelled correctly.

Across

2. An angel said he would not drink wine or strong drink.
7. Abraham & Sarah did this when God said they would have a child.
8. A mother of nations
9. Speechless until after his son was born
11. His daughter found a baby in the river.
12. Where was Abraham when three men visited him?
14. They were told to kill baby boys.
15. Dinner for three visitors
18. Means "God with us"
19. Sarah's name before it was Sarah
20. Where was Sarah while the men talked?
21. Who nursed baby Moses?
22. Childless
13. Her baby leaped in her womb for joy.
15. God said he would establish what with Isaac?
16. The office or job of John's father
17. She watched over the baby in the ark in the river.



Down

1. Used to make an ark for a baby
3. Sarah thought she couldn't have a child because she was ____.
4. Mary's hometown
5. Plants by the river
6. What name did God tell Abraham to give his son?
10. Angel who announced coming births
12. Hidden for three months after he was born

PLEASE NOTE: Please send your completed puzzle to Current Kids' Corner, c/o Judy Brown, 651 Ponden Dr., Greer, SC 29650, or by email to ljsbrown2@gmail.com by Nov. 30, 2020. Include your name, address, age, and the name of the church you attend. Five winners will be drawn from all correct submissions received. The contest is open to young people ages 5-12. Winners will receive a \$10 cash prize.



— A COMMAND TO — BELIEVE

Rev. Stephen Hamilton

“And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment” (1 John 3:23).

Salvation is given to those who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Sinners are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. Scripture is explicit on this matter: He that believes is saved, and he that does not believe is damned (Mark 16:16). Believing on Christ is essential.

THE SCRIPTURAL OBLIGATION OF FAITH

Every sinner is commanded to “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.” Faith in Christ is necessary to salvation. In regeneration—the new birth—God enables one to repent and believe; however, in the gospel message the responsibility of the sinner is clear. No man will ever be saved unless he is brought to actually trust in Christ. This is taught throughout the New Testament. You must believe if you are to be saved. C.H. Spurgeon once wrote: “A road to York will not take me there. I must travel along it for myself. All the sound doctrine that ever was believed will never save a man unless he puts his trust in the Lord Jesus for himself.” God’s commandment is that you believe on His Son. You must not only believe the record God has given concerning His Son—the historical facts contained in the Bible—but consciously place your trust in Him as your Lord and Savior.

THE SOLE OBJECT OF FAITH

Our only hope of salvation is in the Lord Jesus. It lies alone and completely in Him. There is a general object of faith in salvation: it is the Word of God. You must believe its warnings, its commands, and its promises. You must believe all that God has recorded concerning sin and your need of salvation. But saving faith also has a specific object: the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:14-16; Acts 16:31). True faith looks to Christ’s spotless Person and sacrificial work. In Galatians 2:16, 20 Paul refers to “the faith of Christ.” In the original language, this is the “objective genitive”—meaning faith *toward* Jesus Christ, or that which rests entirely upon His work. The apostle’s meaning is clear: at one time our trust rested in our own works of law, but now all our trust has come to be utterly removed from all such works, and rests only in Christ Jesus. All saving merit is in Him. The sinner is only viewed as righteous before God on the basis of what Christ is, and on what He has done. Do you have faith *in* the Son of God? “Jesus, and Jesus only, is the object on which your anxious eyes must rest for peace with God and a change of heart. ‘It is Christ that died’ (Romans 8:34), and the Spirit’s office is to direct you to Him who said on Calvary, ‘It is finished’” (William Reid). The hymn writer Robert Critchley puts it succinctly:

*My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' Name.
On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand.*

THE SATISFYING OUTCOME OF FAITH

The “obedience of faith” results in justification. Being justified by faith “we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Faith itself has no merit, of course. All the merit dwells in that One in whom the sinner places his trust: Jesus Christ. C.H. Spurgeon wrote: “Faith saves us because it makes us cling to Christ Jesus, and He is one with God, and thus brings us into connection with God.” Faith is not a meritorious work. No-one is saved on account of his faith, but through his faith. Faith is the means by which the Holy Spirit applies the benefits of Christ’s death to the individual soul. Trusting in Christ brings peace with God. Do you possess this saving faith?

*Jesus, Thy blood and righteousness
My beauty are, my glorious dress;
Midst flaming worlds in these arrayed,
With joy shall I lift up my head.*

— Nicolaus von Zinzendorf