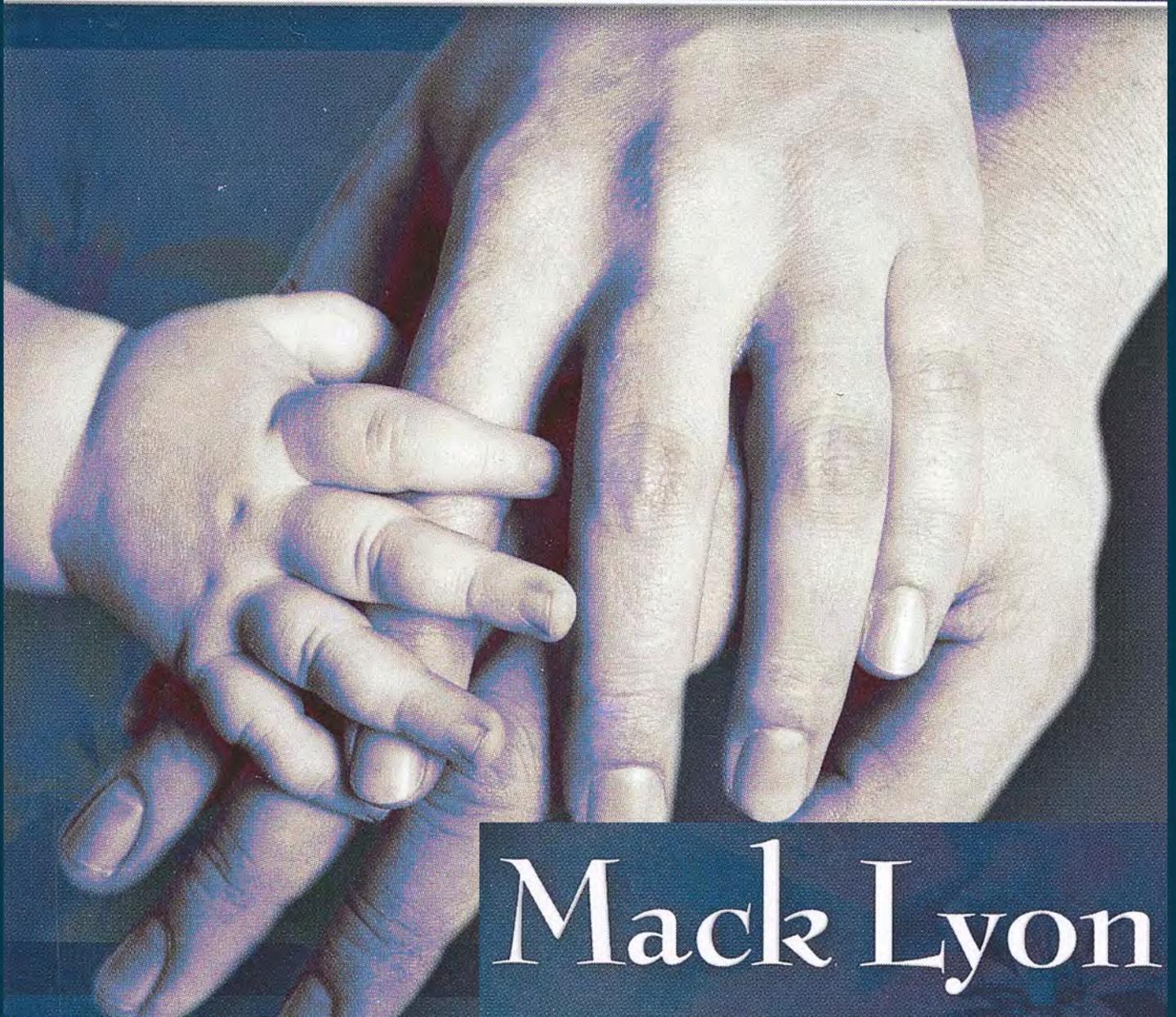


The Christian Family



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SEARCH PROGRAMS

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Topics subject to change without notice

JAN 4 – THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

President Ronald Reagan said, “The family has always been the cornerstone of American society.” But something has happened along the way. There has been a breakdown in the transmission of the foundational values of family. How has it happened? And as goes the family so goes the nation.

JAN 11 – MALE LEADERSHIP IN A CHRISTIAN FAMILY

The father is the head of the Biblical family. The Christian father loves his wife just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. The responsibilities of spiritual leadership fall on the father’s shoulders. What are those responsibilities, and how does the father of the household exercise that leadership?

JAN 18 – WOMAN’S ROLE IN THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

What does the Christian wife and mother have to contribute to the spiritual life and welfare of her family? The role of women has changed one-hundred-eighty degrees in my lifetime. The worldly wise woman now marches to a different drum beat than that of the Christian wife and mother. What is mother’s role in the Biblical family?

JAN 25 – THE ROLE OF CHILDREN IN THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

In the New Testament children are taught to “obey your parents in the Lord for this is right.” Does that mean parents are always right? Does it mean that children are to obey their parents even when they are wrong in their expectations? What does God say?

"THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY"

Today for our Bible reading we are looking at the second chapter of the book of Genesis. Now that is the very beginning of things, and the story of the beginning of things; and we are going to begin reading with the verse 20 and read through verse 24. "So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him. And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." That is the story of the beginning of family. Now let's go to God in prayer. Holy Father, thou who art the creator of heaven and earth and everything in them, we are so thankful to You for this record of the beginning of the most precious relationship that we have in this world-- that of our family. Help us in our study to enhance our appreciation for it. In the lovely name of Jesus, we pray You. Amen!

Whose idea was "family" anyway? Why do you suppose family is such an absolute essential to the completeness of any society? Anywhere on earth we travel, in the least advanced and the most advanced societies in the world-- in atheistic as well as deeply religious societies, people are living together in families. I know; I've been there and seen it and I have been impressed with it. Whose idea was the family? In my readings and studies in world history, as far back as we can go, people have lived together in families. Tell me, if you can, whose idea was the family that it should be so universally practiced in the world? My friend, it was God's idea; I mean the one and only God who "In the beginning" created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1; chapter 2, verses 21-24). And to that union-- the first union, the first family-- there was born Abel and Seth and other children.

President Ronald Reagan once said, "The family has always been the cornerstone of American society." Not to be correcting you, Mr. President, but the family is the cornerstone of any stable surviving society. Yes, you're right, though, it was families that had the dream of a new world, who hazarded their lives in a treacherous journey from the old countries to these American shores to see those dreams become realities. It was families that cleared away the timber and built cabins, and tilled the soil. It was families that built communities and towns that grew into cities. It was families that established churches and schools and universities. It was families that invested in and built companies, many of which still bear their names today. It was families that raised up hospitals and health-care plans, that wrote laws, and that created our Constitution and our Bill of Rights.

President Reagan went on to say, "Our families nurture, and preserve and pass on to each succeeding generation the values we share and cherish, values that are the foundation of our freedoms. In the family, we learn our first lessons of God and man, he said, love and discipline, rights and responsibilities, human dignity and human frailty. Our families give us daily examples of those lessons being put into practice, in raising and instructing our children, in providing personal and compassionate care for the elderly, in maintaining the spiritual strength of the religious commitment among our people."

However, the traditional American family-- the biblical American family-- is in serious trouble. Something has happened in the last hundred years or so. It's obvious, isn't it, that there has been a breakdown in the transmission of those foundational values from one generation to the next? It's too

bad, too, because now America is on the slippery slope of moral decline that leads only to the abyss of social decay and national disaster.

What happened? Well, this is not just preacher talk. From virtually every segment of our society-- from educators, sociologists, law enforcement, even politicians and others are heard lamentations over the breakdown of the American family. We like the idea of family, but somehow as the generations have come and gone, we've been unable to reproduce those spiritual family structures and qualities that we appreciate so much, and memories of them which we greatly cherish.

It's being said that our present culture is hostile to family. That's no mistake, friend, not at all. You know, of course you know, our entertainment-- I mean our movies, our TV and radio programming, the novels we read-- even much of our advertising, promote and glorify illicit sex-- pre-marital and extra-marital "relationships" (they are called that)-- and other lifestyles that are destructive to family welfare. Out-of-wedlock pregnancies and births are encouraged as normal-- if not "smart," they're normal. Some of the daytime talk shows have praised the personal joys of some of the most deviant kinds of human behavior, some of the wildest anti-family propaganda the mind can possibly conceive. The news media have all but "sainted" some of the music and movie stars and sports heroes whose lives and influence have been as degenerate and depraved as anti-family as humanity can get. Twice-- probably more than twice-- but I can recall two of the most popularized entertainment figures in America, among the women and girls, had babies out of wedlock and were celebrated for it. The radical feminist movements have proudly and militantly attacked the "traditional," what I call the Biblical family-- as no longer appropriate to the modern age, too male-dominated, too conformity oriented. An extremely small minority, in a somewhat successful attempt in many quarters to renounce our religious heritage and from a secular society, has chosen other family forms. The feminist movement, for example, have proudly (well, more than one of them) they all have proudly and militantly attacked the Biblical family as no long appropriate to the modern age, too male-dominated and too conformity oriented, so they say.

Well, while all of that is true, and I have no fear of a successful challenge of any of it, even with that kind of social order, really now, doesn't the responsibility for the failure of the American family lie greatly within the family itself? Especially the Christian family? I'm not talking now about the family as an institution as God ordained it. I'm talking about our human failure-- our inability or our lack of willingness maybe it is-- to sustain a family on God's teachings.

Usually when we study about developing a strong family, we're told a number of things to do, like (1) communicate, (2) express appreciation for family members, spend valuable time together, and develop a common interest, and do things together. Well, the list varies in length and in order and in wording, but they are all about the same. They're good, don't misunderstand me now, but let's advance beyond them in this study. What do you say?

When God had completed His work of creation; when He had made man in His own image, and put him here in the midst of it all, He observed that "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make a helper comparable to him." That is Genesis 2:18 in the New King James Version. The following verses tell how He joined her to him in the first marriage, saying, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh;" and thereby He created the first family. Too much can't be said about His purpose in it: (1) for the happiness of its members, family members, (2) for the birth and rearing of children, (3) for the prevention of sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 7 and 2). But too little-- if anything-- is being said nowadays about the design of the Biblical family to meet the spiritual needs of man. Thus, many marriages are entered upon with

greater emphasis on the sexual needs than on the spiritual needs. Meeting the sexual needs, pleasure, gratification-- gratification of the flesh alone is not sufficiently a strong enough bond to hold a family together. The spiritual family-- the truly Christian family is the nearest thing to the heavenly relationship that we can experience here while still living in the flesh. Here is where children are born. Here is where they first experience such virtues as love, and joy, and peace, and longsuffering, and gentleness (or kindness), and goodness, and faithfulness, and meekness and self control. You Bible students quickly recognize those as the Scriptures define in Galatians 5:22 as the fruit of the Spirit. There are others mentioned in other passages such as 1 Peter chapter 5, verses 1 to 11.

The essence of the Christ-like life is said to be in Jesus' beatitudes recorded for us in Matthew chapter 5, verses 3 to 12: Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Family also blesses us with the first sense of belonging, with which also come our first realizations of responsibility. Belonging means we care and share alike. No member of the family has the right to make unreasonable and selfish demands on all the others. Every one has responsibilities to the others. Unfortunately some people never learned those things. Either they had no family, or they were never taught them, so they are having to suffer for it-- well, perhaps in some prison somewhere.

Family is where we receive our first lessons in truthfulness and honesty, with which we also experience the rewards of integrity. Here we learn about trust and loyalty. The Christian family is the school in which these characteristics are first taught, learned and experienced. From birth children need, not only to hear them taught, but to see them exemplified-- and to exemplify them themselves. Too many church members look to the church to develop the fruit of the Spirit in their lives or in the lives of their children. They expect the church to conduct classes, and seminars, and retreats and special programs in which these things are taught. Church leadership has a responsibility alright, don't misunderstand me, to provide its people with substantive teaching that builds strong faith and that enables them to sustain a spiritual family. But it is up to the family to do it.

To build a spiritual life, a meaningful relationship with God, that must be a matter of priority with the family. The family who loves and reverences God and Christ will find doing God's will a matter of preference and pleasure. The dinner table conversation of the spiritual-- the Christian-- family won't be dominated by talk about the Super Bowl or the NFL or the NBA or the NHL; it will be about Jesus and the joys of living for Him. It won't be punctuated with obscenities and profanities, but be praise for God and thanks to God for His grace and His goodness. The stereo won't be bonging out vulgarities and novelties of gangster rap and hip-hop music, but psalms and hymns and spiritual songs. The magazines around the house won't be *Playboy* or other girlie magazines, but spiritual food for the soul. The TV programs and the novels won't be promotions of deviant and destructive lifestyles, but wholesome and educational. The TV may even be turned off at times. These choices and others won't be dictated by government or by "clergy;" they be free choices of family members whose personal relationships with God mean more to them than the personal liberty to gratify their fleshly appetites. Their duty to God means more to them than their freedom to lust and covet. Being spiritual-- walking with God, as it was said of Enoch in Genesis chapter 5, verse 22, means rising against a strong down-draft of worldliness. But it's done and the rewards are great and well-worth the struggle.

It's altogether possible that the failure of the American family to pass on to succeeding generations these important values is because its offspring saw the inconsistencies between the profession of faith and the practice of faith. Oh, I hope you are a Christian, my friend, and that you are enjoying the rich and coveted blessings of a spiritual family life. But if you're not, I strongly encourage you to make this day the day that you turn to the Lord, that you are baptized into Jesus Christ, and you begin to walk with God. What do you say that we just pray about it together? Holy Father, we pray that more of our homes will become Christian homes, and to do that we pray that more people-- husbands and wives, mothers and fathers and children-- will turn to You in repentance and will confess Jesus and will be baptized into Him. In pray Your blessings upon them to this end and bless them in their new lives as Christians that they may be faithful in all things. In Jesus' name, Amen!

God-- I mean the only true and living God who created the heavens and the earth and everything in them-- the God who created the family-- says, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. The ungodly are not so, but are like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish." That is the first Psalm.

Strong families are the result of strong faith in God and in His Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Such faith isn't developed by flashy, showy, hyped-up church programs, which very often are no more than a band-aid treatment of a serious inner disorder. Strong faith on which people can build a Christian family in this very unchristian world grows out of just plain, persistent Bible study and Bible preaching. "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). There is no short-cut to it, my friend. The Lord's way is still the best way, proven by time and trial. The Bible says, "Commit your way to the Lord, trust in Him, and He shall bring it to pass" (Psalm 37 and 5).

"MALE LEADERSHIP IN A CHRISTIAN FAMILY"

Our reading today is from the book of Ephesians, chapter 5. We will begin at verse 22. "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is the head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church." We read through verse 29. Now let's go to God in prayer. Holy God, our Father who is in heaven, we thank You, Father, that we can be Your offspring by regeneration, and that we can enjoy the fellowship with You and that we can enjoy the blessings that You have to offer us in all of Your planning for us and the provisions You make for us in the family. We pray Your blessings on our study today so that we may glean something that will help us to improve on the quality of life that we have in our family relationships. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen!

The first book of the Bible is called Genesis, which means beginnings. In it we read of the beginning of time, the beginning or origin of the material universe, and the beginning of life-- all kinds of life, including human life. It is in Genesis that we read about the first worship and the first sin. In Genesis we have the first promise of a Savior. Genesis also reveals the origin of the "family." Yes, my friend, "family" dates all the way back to the beginning of things. No, it isn't the invention of a prehistoric generation of cave men for the purpose of brutal treatment of women, or a tradition of some ancient ruthless chauvinistic king somewhere back in the annals of time, or a ritual of a male-dominated medieval church; but it originated in the mind of a loving and caring God, the Creator in the very beginning. It's been good for all of us, male and female alike. It is universal. I mean, in every nation in all of history, people have married and lived together in families. It has survived these thousands of years and continues to be the cornerstone of any society.

The first family had two sons, Cain and Abel. Through jealousy Cain killed his brother-- premeditated murder it was. Then a bit later, Adam and Eve were blessed with another son. They named him Seth. From these two sons of Adam seem to have developed two distinct family groups. Cain had a son, Lamech, who like his father also was a murderer, and that extended family seems to have been an ungodly, very unspiritual family. But Genesis 4:26 says, "And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enoch (or Enos or Enosh as the versions have it differently). Then men began to call on the name of the Lord." It was they, after the birth of Enoch, who began to call upon the name of the Lord. And it's worthy of notice that Enoch, the only person of whom the Scripture says, "He walked with God; and he was not, for God took him"-- meaning he who so walked with God that he never died; God just took him (Genesis 5:24). He was a direct descendant of Seth. Clearly then, the family's relationship with God is dependent upon the father's leadership.

Later it is said in chapter six and verse 11: "Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and the daughters were born to them, that the sons of God [probably a reference to the godly male children of Seth's family] saw the daughters of men, [probably meaning the ungodly female offspring of Cain's family] that they were beautiful; and they took them wives of all which they chose," meaning, they married those women for their physical attraction or their "sex

appeal," not for their spiritual beauty or their character. Well, the story goes on in verse four to say that "There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, they bore children to them. Those were mighty men who were of old, men of renown."

Now, these giants, these men of renown, were wicked men who became their "great men," their celebrities, their heroes. Did you ever hear of anything like that before in all your life? I have. Consequently the society was on its way to moral and spiritual degeneration, which led to the flood and the destruction of all flesh. Now that's an old, old story. It dates a way back to the early days of Genesis, but in it is seen the necessity of the male leadership in maintaining a godly family, and prevented the collapse of any society.

Abraham is the father of the Hebrew nation. God called him away from his kinsmen, away from his homeland to make him so. He's portrayed in all the Bible as the person of great faith. The Scripture says that he was chosen to be the father of the nation of people through whom God would send His Son into the world. In Genesis 18:19 God said, "For I have known him, in order that he might command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and to do justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."

The Scripture text says that, "And you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and the admonition of the Lord." That's the New King James Version. The old King James Version says, "And, ye fathers provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." The American Standard Version says, "And you fathers provoke not your children to wrath, but nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord." The New American Standard says, "Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger; but bring them up in the discipline and the instruction of the Lord." By comparing all of these versions, it is easily seen then that in the exercise of his parental responsibilities, the father of the family is required of God (1) not to provoke or to anger his children; but to teach them, and admonish them; and to discipline, and nurture them, or correct them; bring them up, and encourage them in the way of the Lord. Don't provoke your children to anger. But, bring them up. Nurture them in the training and the admonition of the Lord-- in the nurture and admonition of the Lord-- in the chastening and the admonition of the Lord. Now, well, that is the way the Lord instructs the fathers.

Well, there's no substitute for teaching the word of God to the children. And there is no substitute for father as the leader in that project-- not mother's boyfriend-- not mother's live-in. Yes, of course the church leadership is told to "feed the church of God, which He has purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28), and that feeding is not a "fellowship meal" in the basement after Sunday night worship. The divine charge is to feed or to teach all the church God's word, but they, the leadership, cannot take Dad's place with the children. They only supplement the efforts of the fathers in the congregation; and father, you cannot delegate or leave the Bible teaching of your children to a Sunday morning teacher or a paid youth minister. Yes, you should see that your children are in Bible class and worship and involved in the youth and the teaching and training program at church, but that's no substitute for Dad's leadership in Bible reading and Bible study.

Well, as they approached the Promised Land, Moses, knowing that he could not enter with the children of Israel, restated the law for them in the book of Deuteronomy. That is what Deuteronomy says, and that's what it is. And to the fathers in Israel, he had a strong message. He said, "These words which I command you shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and

when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on your doorposts of your house and on your gates." That is Deuteronomy chapter 6, verses 6 through 9.

The fathers of the Israelite families were charged to store up the word of God in their hearts. They were to be diligent and unflagging in the teaching of the word of God to their children, and when they were with them in their houses, and when they walked with them, and when they went to bed at night and when they got up in the morning. It was essential to the preservation of Israel in the land of promise, the land that God had promised them. And it's written as an example for us now (1 Corinthians 10:6) that they failed at that and they failed miserably. It is written in Judges chapter 2, verse 10 that "When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the Lord nor the work which He had done for Israel." When I began to preach almost seventy years ago the old preachers were telling us it takes only one generation for the church to go into apostasy. Now we know it, don't we? And we're being reminded of it every day. Furthermore, that is what happened to Israel.

Fathers, you may be your children's best friend. You may fish or hunt or play ball or spend valuable time with them in other ways. You may attend all their school activities. You may be supportive in every way, but neglect the teaching and the training of your children in the way of the Lord, and fail them in the greatest way of all. How can father be convincing to his children that he's putting the kingdom of heaven and God's righteousness first in their lives, when he never sits down to read and study the Bible with them-- and they have never once heard him pray? How many youth in the youth group in the church you attend have never heard their fathers pray? I wouldn't know about that; I'm just asking the question.

Then there was the mention about training and admonishing and teaching and nurturing and correcting our children. Oh, how children and youth need some correction along the way and-- sometimes yes, they even need to be disciplined. One morning at our staff-devotional (we have one here every day) one of our staff members mentioned that "tomorrow's my daughter's birthday; she'll be thirteen." The immediate response was: "Tomorrow you'll be parent of a teenager!" Another staff-member said his fifteen-year old will be having her sixteenth birthday-- and I believe he said the same day-- tomorrow. Well, you know what that means don't you? She is going to want to drive, the automobile! But that's alright. Of course it is. It means, though, that she must study and know the driving rules and the laws, doesn't it? She must be trustworthy and disciplined enough to drive a vehicle. Well, we love our children; therefore, we have no trouble at all teaching them and disciplining them in other things-- in these and other things. We teach the little ones not to touch the hot fire-place or the hot light bulbs. In the same way, we need to teach them and admonish them and train them about threats to their spiritual and their moral welfare. Before I go any further-- I have no doubts about the two staff members I mentioned and their children. I'm not talking about them today, and especially to them. One of them is behind that camera over there and the other is in there in the engineering room in this operation; well, either of them or both of them could put me off the air I suppose by the push of a button. Anyway, fathers, please don't send your children out into this violent society in which we are living today without preparing them for the battle that certainly awaits them. Let's pray. Father in heaven, we know of Your tender care to us as our spiritual father, and the Father of our spirits. And we pray that we can have the same interest with our children and that somewhere some father has been blessed by this message today. In Jesus' name, Amen!

Well, there has been a change in the male role in the family, hasn't there? There is no doubt about it. Part of it's been the diligent work of the militant extremists, but part of it has been that the male have abdicated the role of spiritual leadership in the family. They have been too busy making money-- making a living-- driving for success. No time for all that stuff about the children. Not interested in all of that! And like the people of Noah's day before the flood, the society has so decayed, disaster knocks at the door. Another universal flood? No, God promised that that would never happen, but there is a day of judgment.

Your children deserve a Christian father and your wife deserves a Christian husband. You deserve a Christian wife and Christian sons and daughters. So, you must lead the way. Start today. I'm sure you believe in Jesus Christ, or you wouldn't have stayed with me this long. But the Bible says, "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:26). You may be asking: "Well, what more must I do? Well, I've been taught for years that there isn't anything a person can do to be saved," someone says. Well, I'll cite you James 2:26 again: "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead." Then, I'll tell you what was told the three thousand people who heard the apostle Peter preach and were cut to the heart by his message. Peter, inspired of God said, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." You can read all about that in your Bible, friend, in Acts chapter 2, verse 38. Read the whole chapter though. I hope you will obey the Lord today. If you are like the lady in California a few weeks ago, we would like to be the help to you that we were to her. She wanted to become a Christian, but she didn't know where to find someone to baptize her. She asked for our help; and we suggested a church in her city; and she went there and took a friend; and they were both baptized into Christ. Let us know if we can help you that way-- or in any way.

"WOMAN'S ROLE IN THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY"

Our reading today is taken from the apostle Paul's second letter to Timothy, the very first chapter and verse 3. "I thank God, whom I serve with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did, as without ceasing I remember you in my prayers night and day, greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy, when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also." Now let us go to God in prayer. Our Father in heaven, we are so thankful to You for grandmothers and mothers such as these two women that are mentioned here. And we are thankful for men like Timothy who profited by the things that they were taught by these good ladies. And we pray Your blessings on our study of this subject today. In Jesus' name, Amen!

You have probably heard the story of the expectant mother who asked her minister when she should begin the spiritual training of her child. To which he replied with something like, "With his grandmother." Well, that seems to have been the case with Timothy of whom we read in the New Testament awhile ago. And it holds true with all of us; the most formative influence in our lives is that of family, with a strong emphasis on our mothers and our grandmothers. So in the second letter the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, Paul made reference to Timothy's sincere faith, which existed first in his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice.

Timothy had been reared, as I was-- perhaps you were too-- in a religiously divided family. His mother was a Jewess and his father was a Greek. According to Paul in 2 Timothy 3:15, from a child his mother and grandmother had taught him the Scriptures, which the apostle Paul says "are able to make you wise to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." So when Paul came to their city on his first missionary tour preaching the gospel (Acts chapter 14, verse 6), they were all converted to Christ. With this good Bible background, by the time Paul returned on his second missionary tour (Acts chapter 16, verse 1) Timothy had a good name or a good report in Lystra. When Paul was ready to continue on his journey, he took Timothy with him as a co-worker. What a blessing it was for Timothy to get to work with this great man of God, the apostle Paul!

However, right now, I'd have you see the powerful influence of these godly women-- the one on her son, and the other on her grandson! Don't you know that they were proud of Timothy! Oh my! They were so very abundantly rewarded for all the time and the care they had put into the spiritual teaching and training that they had given to Timothy! We don't know anymore about them than we have already said, but we know enough about Timothy and his life for Christ to know of their unfeigned faith. You see, to the Jewish women, a child was a blessed gift of God.

The Bible is just chuck full of stories like that. There was Jochebed. Well, you may be saying, "Jochebed? Who was Jochebed? Never heard of her." No! You probably never would have heard of her either, except that she was the mother of Moses. In a time when all of the male children of the Hebrews, were by law, edict of the king, required to be killed at birth, Jochebed saw her baby was an unusual one and she hid him where he would be found by the king's daughter. Jochebed not only saved his life, but by the providence of God, she was chosen to be the woman to bring him up in the teachings and the values of the Hebrews. Read about her in Exodus chapter 2. Her son with proper rearing by his mother is esteemed by the Jewish people till this day as the greatest leader they ever had.

Then there's the story of Hannah in 1 Samuel chapter 1, who being unable to bear children, prayed for a son, whom she promised to devote to the service of God. She was given Samuel who lived

and served God in a very turbulent period of Hebrew history-- the period of transition from the judges to the kings. Hannah probably influenced the course of world history as much as any other person in ancient times. Feminists would scoff at it, but it's still true and always has been that "the hand that rocks the cradle, rules the world." It isn't the corporate executive or politician or career woman, but the one who devotes her life to molding the lives of her children the Lord's way. Women, the birth and rearing of children is the highest and noblest work to which you can commit yourself.

The changing attitude toward the female role in the family that says these religiously based child-rearing concepts are dangerously outmoded and irrelevant is truly lamentable. It's a downward course for womanhood in particular and in society in general. Awhile back I was viewing a television debate on whether women have achieved equality with men in the workplace. And it was brought out with regret and even with scorn I must say that while fifty-two percent of the population is female, women have achieved only about half that-- something like twenty-four percent, if my memory serves me correctly, on the job positions. That percentage may have changed, too. But it was never considered in that debate that a large segment of the female population may not even want to be in the "job market." They want to be mothers and devote their lives to rearing their children to live the Lord's way.

I had a secretary some eight or ten years ago (well, I don't remember just how long, but about that time) and as the time for the birth of her baby drew near, she left us to be a "stay-at-home-mom." We didn't want to lose her. She was an excellent secretary, and she loved this ministry. But she made the right choice. I see them in church now. That little fellow (well, he's not so "little" any more, he's growing and he) has a sister now. They sometimes sit across the aisle from Lois and me. Those children are oh so blessed by having a mother with her attitude. But, don't count that woman as demeaned, discriminated against by a male-dominated church that prevents her and others like her from equal opportunity in the job market. She isn't interested in a secretarial position or even an executive position. She knows she is in the highest position of womanhood right now. She's a "mother" of two children. And there are millions of others just like her. They don't need your pity. They are not ignorant or backward or dominated. They are not of an inferior mentality or anything like that; they are sane and sensible and doing what they want to do more than anything else in the world. They're making a spiritual contribution to their families-- and to the society.

The Bible says-- oh, I read awhile back that the preacher should never say, "The Bible says." That's dogmatism! Pardon my dogmatism, then, but the Bible says in Titus chapter 2, verses 1 to 5, "But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine; that the older men be sober, reverent, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience; the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things-- that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed."

Compare-- perhaps "contrast" would be a better word. Contrast that to the way women today are educated and you have discovered the major factor in the breakdown of the family and the collapse of morality in the American society. The older women, well, that doesn't mean octogenarians essentially, but mothers of teenaged youth and young married daughters are neglecting the education of their daughters in those noble qualities. The daycare people don't and they won't and they can't train the tots in those activities and those qualities. And churches are not teaching today those things anymore. And when they do, they don't address the "sound doctrine" mentioned there in Titus. They come up with some standard, sometimes some, well, what I call bandaid strips that cover up the visible

“rash” that’s only a symptom of the real problem. The Bible class teacher wouldn’t dare touch “sound doctrine.” The youth minister would be considered “out of place” to say the least, if he were to say anything about these matters that we are talking about today. And even if all these did teach those fundamentals, it is still mother’s role to teach them in the training of their own children. No one can take her place to do what only she can do effectively.

Some of the fondest memories I have of my dear mother are of her in my early childhood years. I remember so well her going about the house cooking on her wood-burning cook stove, and cleaning, laundering, ironing and all the work that women do-- singing as she worked. We were poor, furthermore we lived before the days of sophisticated stereos and CDs and the like. And my mother’s singing was our music. I can tell you even now some of the songs she sang. No, it wasn’t “You Ain’t Nothin’ But A Hound Dog” or any thing like that, the trashy songs that youth are hearing nowadays. It was “The great Physician now is near, The sympathizing Jesus; He speaks the drooping heart to cheer, O hear the voice of Jesus.” Another was, “I’m pressing on the upward way, New heights I’m gaining every day; Still praying as I’m onward bound, Lord plant my feet on higher ground. Lord, life me up and let me stand, By faith, on heaven’s table land, A higher plane than I have found; Lord, plant my feet on higher ground.”

But I think her favorite was Fannie J. Crosby’s “Jesus Keep Me Near the Cross.” And in the afternoons before she put us down for our naps, she would stop her work, sit down in her rocking chair and read us a Bible story. And it was a Bible story too; no it was not an animal or bird story. I think I still have one of those Bible story books. Well, that made an indelible impression on me. And I’m so indebted to my godly mother! My memories of her are without price! And I’m convinced that your children will be just as indelibly impressed with you-- Christian mother. There’s just no substitute for those values, and only mothers can teach their children effectively. Let’s pray. Holy Father, thank You, thank You, thank You for the godly mothers in the world that are bringing up their children and teaching them in the admonition of the Lord. And we are thankful, Lord, for them and their children, and for the homes in which they reside. In the name of Jesus, we pray. Amen!

This very unspiritual world, in which we’re trying to build and maintain spiritual families, is not just neutral to the values we cherish; it’s hostile to them. Our society is dominated by two philosophies: materialism and hedonism. Materialism says everything is matter and there is no God. Ordinary materialism, striving for material things, is perhaps a stronger hostility to spiritual living than the outright rejection of God. Hedonism is just another name for the ancient Greek philosophy that says pleasure is the chief aim of life. Those are the influences that we’re up against, friend.

If we consider them to be only neutral-- not hostile, we are likely to be overcome by them. You may have noticed that in your garden, you have to water and nurture and feed your vegetables or your flowers, as the case may be, and you have to keep at it or they’ll die. If you don’t just stay at it everyday, the weeds and the grass will take over and kill your plants. The weeds and grass are not neutral; they’re aggressive and will take over without your help. Well, the same is true with the spiritual or the Christian family in an unspiritual world. You have to work at it. You can’t enjoy a spiritual family in this society without planting it and working it and watering it and tilling it until it is finished. Pray; say something to God everyday. Read the Bible and let God say something to you everyday.

My friend, your children deserve a Christian mother, and I hope that if you are not a Christian, you’ll become one today. You do believe that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God, don’t you? And you surely believe He died on the cross to redeem you from the ways of the world. Surely, then

you want, with His help, to get your life turned around and live your life His way, don't you? That's what Jesus calls "repentance." You need to read Matthew chapter 21, verses 28-29. In it you will find the definition of repentance is turning and doing the will of the Father. In total surrender, you'll have no trouble with being baptized because Jesus commanded it. Read also Mark chapter 16, verses 15 and 16.

"THE ROLE OF CHILDREN IN THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY"

"How shall the young secure their hearts, -And guard their lives from sin? Thy word the choicest rules imparts-To keep the conscience clean." That is the first stanza of a hymn written by Isaac Watts in 1719. Those words give inspiration to our message even today. What do you say you gather your youth around the TV to hear a Bible message for and about them.

Well, we have noted earlier in this series about "The Christian Family" that God said one purpose He had for the marriage of a man and a woman and for their living together as a "family" was the birth and the rearing of children. We also quoted Dr. Albert Solnit of the Child Study Center at Yale University as having said, "People cherish the family and they cherish it because of their own experience even when their experience has been less than perfect." Well, we would believe him because of our own experience, wouldn't we? How many of us have-- perhaps in only the last few days-- been in a group of associates, when someone injected into the conversation something like, "When I was a kid, my mother often said.... or did;" or, "My dad"-- or-- "My parents always..." or perhaps they "never" did thus and so. Such memories of family life are dear to all adults, even if at times they were extremely disagreeable and unpleasant.

We are reading today from the book of Proverbs chapter 1, verses 7 through 9. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of your father, and do not forsake the law of your mother; for they will be a graceful ornament on your head, and chains about your neck." Now let's go to God in prayer. Our Father in heaven, we are so thankful to You that we have a God who listens and grants our petitions in keeping with His will and His way for us that is the best way that we have ever found to live on this earth. We are thankful, Father, for Your divine, providential care and all that You do for us. Help us to search out Your ways and teach them to Your children. Bless this program to that end today. We pray You in Jesus' name, Amen!

We hear so much about an increase in serious juvenile crime, teenage pregnancies and juvenile drinking and drug abuse and sexually transmitted diseases and all that-- as well as broken homes, latch-key children, abusive parents, absentee fathers and dysfunctional families that we might get the idea that, well, that's the way it is most of the time and in the majority of families. Ah, maybe that isn't the way it is. Did I hear someone say, "One thing's certain-- behavior of children and our teenaged youth is certainly worse than when I was that age?" Probably so; I might have been heard saying that sometime myself. Yes, things are very different now than when I was growing up. It seems in virtually every morning and every evening news radio and television news report; there is something about some teenaged delinquency or crime, or something of that nature. But, one big, big difference between my youthful years and today is in communication. Radio and television and internet and cell-phones, and; well, they were all unknown to us. Oh yes, we had a radio. None of our neighbors had one yet. They finally did get some; but we got our first radio when I was about fifteen years old, and my dad said then "they'll never perfect it." So they wouldn't be always on the market you know, if that had been true. So, we didn't have access to news of an unmarried eleven-year-old girl giving birth to a baby in a London, England hospital-- or about two sixteen-year old boys robbing a Seven-Eleven store in Seattle or Boston or San Francisco.

In the opening sentence of what we know to be the sixth chapter of the biblical book called Ephesians, the Holy Spirit speaks to the children. "Children," He says, "obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right." Oh! Then, there is such a thing as "right," isn't there? Hey! That's good news in

itself! And the opposite of “right” is “wrong,” isn’t it? And the Holy Spirit seems to have no fear of destroying the self-esteem of the youth by discussing this idea of “right” and “wrong” with them, does He? He doesn’t argue the point of right and wrong. He just offers no proofs for it at all; He just says simply “obey your parents in the Lord” because it’s the right thing to do. Why is it right for children to obey their parents?

Well, first of all, a child’s obedience to his parents is part of what the Holy Spirit calls “natural law,” written by God on the human heart. It just comes naturally (Romans chapter 2, verses 14-15). To be disobedient to one’s parents has generally been unacceptable behavior even in uncivilized societies. It was taught by pagan moralists among the Greeks and the Romans and even Confucius, too. It is part of what in medieval times came to be known as “natural justice.” It was universally held that a child’s disobedience to his parents was the kind of behavior that would be detestable even in an unbelieving society such as the Roman Empire (chapter 1, verse 30).

Second, “obey your parents” is God’s law. It was taught in the Jewish Scriptures in the Old Testament that “If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and who, when they have chastened him, will not heed them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him and bring him out to the elders of his city, to the gate of his city. And they shall say to the elders of his city, This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious; he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton and a drunkard. Then all the men of his city shall stone him to death with stones; so you shall put away the evil from among you, and all Israel shall hear and fear” (Deuteronomy chapter 21, verses 18 through 21).

It isn’t surprising then, that when the apostle Paul was describing the “perilous times” that lay ahead for the ungodly world or in the ungodly world, he said it would be a time when people would be “disobedient to parents” (2 Timothy 3 and 2). That is youth’s contribution to perilous living conditions, not only in the social order, but right at home-- within families. It’s worthy of mention, too, that when God says, “Children, obey your parents,” He isn’t writing to or about infants and toddlers, but to young people, youth old enough to choose whether they will do it or not.

Young people, the third lesson you ought to obey your parents, the third reason you ought to obey your parents in the Lord is because it’s your own advantage. It’s your contribution to the kind of family you would like. It’s your part of that “quietude, peace, harmony, affection, happiness of a well-ordered family. Trust is an essential to good family relations, and there is no better way for youth to earn the trust of parents than to be obedient children. People who are trusted have proved themselves to be trustworthy.

I was reading an advice column in the newspaper awhile back in which a sixteen-year-old girl wrote about having trouble with her parents. She said, “The major issue is freedom. They think I have too much; I don’t think I have enough.” Well, she didn’t seem to understand that the key to more freedom is obedience. When youth are obedient, parents are at ease with giving them more freedom.

The obedience required in Ephesians 6 and 1 is qualified, though. It is qualified by the prepositional phrase, “in the Lord.” “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.” Remember now that the letter was written to the church-- to the Christians at Ephesus. So we’re talking about Christian parents and Christian children. Therefore, “Children obey your parents in the Lord” simply means that children are to strictly obey their parents unless, of course, such obedience requires disobedience to God. Occasionally we hear in the news or read it in the newspaper that certain parents have been forcing their daughters into prostitution, or their sons into a life of dishonesty and deceit, peddling drugs or gambling or something else. But, those parents wouldn’t be

Christian parents, would they now? No! Christian youth are not commanded to obey their parents to do evil-- ever.

Well, that brings us to another thought: "Honor your father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise." Doubtlessly, this is a reference to the fifth commandment of the Decalogue or the Ten Commandments, written by the finger of God on two tables of stone at Mt. Sinai recorded in Exodus chapter 20 and Deuteronomy chapter 5. If you don't know the Ten Commandments, you will do yourself a favor to memorize them and have your children do the same. (1) You shall have no other gods before Me. (2) You shall not make for yourself a graven image. (3) You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God in vain. (4) Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. (5) Honor your father and mother. (6) You shall not murder. (7) You shall not commit adultery. (8) You shall not steal. (9) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. And (10) You shall not covet.

Well, they were written on two tables of stone. It's sometimes said that the first four have to do with a person's relationship with God and were written separately on one of the stones, and the other six govern our interpersonal relationships and they were written on the other stone. But the Jews believe that the fifth commandment, "Honor your father and mother," was so very strong a principle influencing a person's relationship with God so much that it was written on the first stone, too. They held that no person could be right with God who is not right with his fellowman. And I'm inclined to agree with that. We know that's the Christian principle, so it would surely be true in parent-child relations, wouldn't it? Does that mean when there are disagreements, parents are always right, and even if the parents are wrong, the children are to simply acquiesce? No, no, not at all, friend. But it does mean that even if they are in error, children are to show their parents honor and respect. Like most teenagers, I had some very strong disagreements and even some confrontations with my father. One of our bitterest and longest disputes was over my commitment of my life to God to "preach the word of God." He was vehemently opposed to it and he just didn't resist it; he fought it bitterly. But I never ceased to love him and respect him, and I revere his memory to this hour. I'm often asked if we ever made peace between us. Oh, yes, we did; yes we did.

But the verse says, "Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth." Well, that probably means that it was the first commandment in the Decalogue in which a promise was specifically attached. It didn't include any promises of the blessings derived from worshiping and serving God as the first four of the commandments had with them.

Well, what was the promise then? It was not necessarily the promise of longevity for those who kept it, but "that it may be well with you [personally] and you may live long on the earth, meaning then that it would be a national prosperity, and continued national possession of the land.

For the Christian it has the possibility of at least three applications: (1) personal health and length of days, (2) national or social well-being by observing the highest principles of human behavior. (Any society will collapse that gives sanction to wide-spread disobedience of all kinds), and (3) that it may be well with you-- the beauty and the sublimity of quietude, peace, harmony, affection and happiness of a well-ordered family are now yours.

Now I would like to take another quick look at the passage in 2 Timothy chapter 1, verse 5 that talks about Timothy's sincere faith which dwelt first in his grandmother Lois and in his mother Eunice. Chapter 3, verses 14 and 15 also say, "You must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have

known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

Young people, if your parents and your grandparents are Christians and have taught you the faith from childhood, count yourself blessed. I can think of three responses you can make to the religious teaching of your parents and grandparents. First, you can say, “I’m not interested in the faith of my fathers; I’m searching for my own personal faith.” And that may sound smart and arrogant to the arrogant and the proud who are destined for a fall, but it really isn’t all that smart. In the very first place in his book, *Basic Christianity*, John R. W. Stott says on this very thing, “An appreciable number of people throughout the world are still brought up in Christian homes in which the truth of Christ and Christianity is assured. But when their critical faculties develop and they begin to think for themselves, they find it easier to discard the religion of their childhood than to make the effort to investigate its credentials.” You think about that!

Well my friend, I’m convinced that a rejection of the faith of our foreparents without honest investigation constitute dishonor to Christian parents. Let us pray. Our Father in heaven, we are so thankful for Your revealed will and for parents that lead us in the right way, lead their children in the right way. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen!

Of course! To be a part of and to enjoy a truly Christian family, every member that is old enough must be a member, or must be a Christian-- and live like it. Oh, I hope you are, my friend. If you’re not, would you become so today? Turn over a new leaf now. I’m saying repent of your old lifestyle that is contributing nothing to a Christian environment; unashamedly confess your faith in Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God; and render obedience to Him in baptism for the remission of your sinful past; then go on your way rejoicing. And that’s what the Secretary of the Treasury of Ethiopia did as is recorded in Acts chapter 8, verses 26 through 40.

Oh, there is much more to be said, but I can’t end this without looking at Ecclesiastes 12 and 1. It says, “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth.” What a great message to the youth of any culture. Young people, don’t try to live life without God. It’s a mistake. Don’t just blindly follow the crowd. Don’t just dance to the world’s music. “Commit your way to the Lord, and wait patiently wait for Him” (Psalm 37, verse 5).