"So, you never heard about getting ready for marriage before you were engaged. You suppose that you will wait until you are ready to get serious about marriage before you will make any preparations. Not!

If you are engaged and marriage is around the corner, it's too late to think about preparing for it."

Get READY, SET, MARRIED?
by Rev. Gritters
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January 29, 1993

The President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C.

Mr. President,

This past month you were installed as the 42nd president of the United States of America. You have been given the privilege from God to preside over the most powerful nation on the earth, an honorable and accountable position.

During the past week I heard that you refer to yourself as a Christian. In all humility, Mr. President, I ask you what you mean by Christian? Do you mean a nice man who is friendly to others or do you mean a follower of Christ? A Christian receives this name by others because they see that this man or woman follows Christ. A Christian imitates the life of Christ. A Christian studies what Christ says and reveals in His Word, the Bible. A Christian has a life of dedication to the One who came to this earth and died for all His people. A Christian lives a life of thankfulness to Christ for saving His people from all their sins.

In the first several days of your term, Mr. President, you have endorsed the murder of innocent young lives while they are yet in the womb. This was done by your direct speech in favor of abortion, the right of a mother to choose, and by signing legislation making abortion in some cases even easier to obtain than was possible in the past.

God tells us directly in the Bible, Mr. President, that the taking of an innocent life is wrong. Human life starts at conception. Conception in the womb is not a scientific fact but a miracle. God tells Jeremiah in Jer. 1:5a “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee” and also tells Isaiah, in Isaiah 49:1 “The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name.” God causes conception and it is then that He refers to that person by name.

It is with deep humility that I show you that abortion is in direct disregard of God’s Word. I beg you to hear God’s command to repent in Acts 3:19 “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.”.

A servant of the United States,

Peter D. Faber

* Have you sent your letter yet??? Remember we have a responsibility to witness to those in authority as well as others. We shall be judged in the end for what we did say as well as things we should have said and did not. Mail your letter today!!

** This letter was mailed on personal stationary and not in the name of any organization.
Our family is currently reading through the Old Testament for family devotions. Many chapters in the Old Testament, such as Genesis 5, Genesis 46, Numbers 26, 1 Corinthians 1 to 9, simply contain lots and lots of names. These chapters often seem repetitious and insignificant. Many of the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament seem that way too. Are these chapters important? Is it okay to skip over them?

One thing we must always remember when we read the Bible is that the whole of the Bible is the Word of God. The Bible is not the word of man, but God's Word by which He speaks to us. Our God speaks to us in it, through it, and by means of every word of it.

We also need to remember that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, as 1 Timothy 3:16 tells us. This means, therefore, that every part of the Holy Scripture has been included by the Holy Spirit for a reason. It is our responsibility and duty, as believers in Christ, to search the Scripture and to find out what it means, and thereby to find out what God is saying to us.

This is also true of passages that can seem irrelevant or insignificant, such as the genealogies and the ceremonial laws. The Scripture is ONE, it is a whole, and these seemingly insignificant passages are an essential part of that whole. If these chapters of the Bible are ignored or taken away the Scripture would no longer be complete.

It is very true that these passages of the Bible are repetitious and can seem insignificant. This is especially true when we read them for family devotions, for not only do they seem not to teach us anything, but they are also very difficult to read and to listen to. I can clearly remember my Father, who was born in the Netherlands, struggling through these chapters, often attempting to pronounce names three or four times. Yet he never made this difficulty a reason for not reading these chapters.

As I said earlier, we must remember that these parts of Scripture are included for a purpose, so we must study to find out what these passages show us. Maybe a few ideas could help here.

The genealogies show us a number of things. First of all we notice God's covenant, for we see that He saves His people in their families. The most important part of that covenant is the coming of Christ, and it is through these genealogies that we see the family of Christ, the Son of David, all the way back to Adam.

The Bible is also a history book, and those chapters that are full of names are an essential part of the history which we learn from the Bible. The Bible is really THE history book, for it tells of the history of the church and of God's people on this earth. As a part of this history we are able to determine when things happened in time, and how old the world is today.

The ceremonial laws are also important. They all point to Christ, and they show us the freedom that we have as part of the New Testament church.

So do I think it is wrong to skip over those passages that contain all names? No. But I do think it is a good practice to still read them (maybe every second time), so that we can keep in mind the importance of all of Scripture. We must read and study the Bible in its entirety.

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for seeking the places of honor at a feast, telling them to instead seek out the lowest place. We may condemn the childish self-seeking of the Pharisees, but how about our own attitude? Do we maneuver for first place in line, or for the best seats at public meetings? Do we frequently assert ourselves at the expense of others, or do we consider their interests as well as our own?

Unfaithful Servants?

by Brian Kuiper

As a young person, I am surprised that very few of our young people ever need the services of a chiropractor. It surprises me that none of us have chronic neck problems. Of course, you know what I am talking about! As young people living in the world today, we constantly have to make decisions. These decisions affect the way that we live our lives. We make decisions about what kinds of music we listen to, where we go with friends, and how to act on dates. Quite often we make mistakes and bad judgments when making these decisions. Most of the time, we know that we are making a bad judgment. However, before acting out our decisions, we usually look over our shoulders to see if anyone is watching. We make sure that we cover our tracks. Young people, why are we always looking over our shoulders?! We think that no one is watching. But, Christ is watching. He sees us sin. He sees where we go and what we do. He sees us look over our shoulders. And, young people, Christ is coming. What will we be doing when He arrives? Will we be honoring Him as we must? Will we be doing something that Christ would do if He were in our place? Would we live any differently if Christ were one of the “group”?

Look with me at the following familiar scenarios:

Two Christian young people are on a date. They end their night by going to a secluded area and “parking”. As sometimes happens, things get out of control. The lusts of the flesh take over, and these lusts are usually fulfilled. What a “wonderful” ending to their date.

A young person, bored by the monotony of a car ride, turns on the radio. He soon tunes in a hard rock station and cranks it up. Soon he is feeling better and is “soothed” by the music.

A group of young people get together for an evening of fellowship. They meet at the local theater. Watching a movie together should be very good communion of the saints. After hours of sex, violence, and swearing, they exit. What a good experience!

Young people, we have all lived one or more of these experiences. But, before doing them, we usually have looked over our shoulders to make sure that the way is clear. Far worse, some of us have stopped doing the shoulder check because we are so comfortable in our sins. If we do feel uncomfortable, it is because we know we are doing wrong. Then why do we do it? If you knew that a gun was loaded, would you point it at yourself and pull the trigger?

However, this is not the whole point that I am trying to make. The point is also that Christ is coming. He has said:

Mark 13:32 “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father.”

Revelation 22:12a “And, behold, I come quickly.”

Matthew 24:44-44 “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.”

Christ is coming soon. At that time everything that is of the flesh will be lost. We see all around us the signs of the end. The things which must precede the return are happening each day. However, as Scripture tells us, no one knows exactly when Christ will return except for the Father. The instruction that Christ left for us is to watch and wait.

Watch. This word requires action. Like the disciples, we are to watch for the return of our Savior. Christ asked the disciples how they could watch if they were sleeping. Young people, we must ask ourselves how we can watch if we are engaged daily in sins which we consciously decide to commit. If Christ were to return and find two of His young elect in the back seat of a car, could they say to Him that they were watching? Can we watch for Christ while seeing sex and the blasphemy of God’s name played on a screen? Can we watch for Christ while rapping and jamming on our stereos? Each of you can answer these questions for yourselves.

This watching, on the contrary, must be one of eager anticipation. It must be the watching of faithful servants. We must be praying for the return, studying God’s word, and doing His work. This can be fun! Get excited about young people’s societies and activities.
Commune with other of God’s young people. Strengthen and build each other up. Make conscious decisions to do what Christ would do or have you to do in a situation. Then, we will be blessed when Christ returns and finds us doing as He instructed us to do. Matthew 24:46 says, “Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.”

Young people, what will you be doing when your Savior returns on the clouds of heaven to take you to Himself? Will He find you looking over your shoulder? Watch and wait therefore that He may say unto you, “Well done thou good and faithful servant...enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” (Matthew 25:21)

Witnessing In Athens

by John Huizenga

Jerry is beginning his third year of college. He grew up in the church, learned his catechism well, and did pretty good in high school. Despite his non-chalant appearance, he is often troubled by the many new situations he is now faced with in the University. The University atmosphere is altogether different from the church/home atmosphere that he was raised in. It is not always the social atmosphere that is foreign, many of the students are very friendly. It is in the class room where Jerry feels the strongest alienation. Those professors who are intent on destroying the church find that distorting the Bible to make it look foolish is a very effective way to make students flee from the Bible. “The Bible is a myth. The Apostle Paul got his ideas from Aristotle. Don’t accept anything as true. Believe in yourself.” These brazen attacks which some professors confidently make against the Bible, Church, and home fill Jerry with anger and confusion. “But unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?” (Psalm 50:16) Jerry wanted to stand up to defend his faith but he was afraid and ashamed.

The words of the professors were bad enough but the smiles and nods of agreement that came from students sitting around Jerry made him sick. He could not believe how rapidly the professor convinced these students that before true knowledge can be found, they ought to purge their minds of the “religious superstition” taught by their parents. “How,” Jerry thought, “can a witness of faith be heard in a place where human knowledge reigns?” Students who sur-

vive the lecture are again taunted by other students who leave messages on the study corrals saying that God is only a fabrication to escape reality.

A college campus like this is clearly enemy territory for the believer. It is a place where “The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted” (Psalm 12:8). Jerry feels very alone but is thankful that the enemy is at least clearly defined and not disguised. He also knew that God was with him and he must not try to disguise himself or hide from the enemy.

A new semester is here and Jerry anxiously heads to his new classes. He can hardly wait to find out what they will be like, but the conflict he anticipates with the final exam for Latin somewhat spoils his excitement. According to the time-table, the Latin exam has been scheduled for Sunday at 1:30. The rules state that if you have a religious conflict with the exam schedule you have until the second week of class to talk with your instructor about it. This situation occurred last semester with speech class and the instructor was a bit annoyed about setting up another time for his exam. He could not figure out why Jerry was the only one out of the whole class who had a problem with taking the exam on Sunday. “Well,” Jerry thought, “things could be worse. At least the school makes it possible for me to take the exam at a different time. I just hope the Latin instructor doesn’t fuss too much.”

Jerry sat down in the class room and soon the instructor came in. He was a young guy, probably a classics major, and full of energy. He was dressed like an average student: T-shirt, bleached pants with holes, and hiking boots. Despite his appearance he was a surprisingly good teacher, determined to make Latin scholars out of all his students. He even sug-
gested that anyone who was planning to sluff off to just leave the class. Throughout the course of the lecture, Jerry noticed that he had a big tattoo on his arm and wondered what it said. He was not looking forward to telling this guy about his conflict with the exam but before long the class was over. Jerry took his time and waited for most of the students to leave before confronting the instructor. When he walked up to him he could see that the tattoo said “DIE FAST”. “Oh boy,” Jerry thought. “Is that the answer he will give to me?” But now it was too late to change his mind about telling the instructor.

“Hi Jerry, how can I help you?”

“Well ah, I just wanted to tell you that I won’t be able to take the final exam at the time scheduled.”

“The final exam? What’s the problem?”

“Well it is for religious reasons.”

“Oh ... Ok, I guess I can arrange something. Remind me again before the exams.”

Ok, thanks.”

Jerry hurried out of the room wondering what the instructor thought of him. At least he had not given in to the school system that was trying to blot out the church, but he wished he would have been a little more bold. “Sunday is the Lord’s Day and I cannot take the exam on a day devoted to the Almighty God” he imagined himself saying. That would have been much better. Jerry thought that his timid testimony only made it look like the church was giving its last flicker of light before dying so he prayed that God would strengthen him in his witnessing.

The next day a guy from Latin class caught up with Jerry in the hall after class and said “I don’t like it either that exams are scheduled for Sunday. I was surprised to hear you tell the instructor that you could not take it on Sunday. I did not feel like making a ruckus but after you talked with him, I also asked him if I could be excused from taking the exam.” That made Jerry feel much better. His prayer had been answered and his feeble actions did not go unnoticed. No longer did he feel ashamed and helpless among the wickedness surround him. God would strengthen him.

Now Jerry began looking for opportunities to wit-ness instead of trying to avoid situations that would reveal his faith. His philosophy group was working on a group assignment and the work under investigation was not very clear. Jerry said that the passage would probably be more clear if they could read the original Latin. “Clearer?”, a girl in the group said. “My parents used to tell me about the good old days when Mass was done in Latin. They always thought it was so much more sacred and meaningful but I could not see how a language that no one understood could be meaningful.” Well that was not what Jerry had in mind. She went on to say that the church was nothing but a bunch of hypocrites. After she came to college and had taken a “philosophy of religion” course, she quit going to church. Jerry really did not know what to say. He agreed that Latin services did not make much sense and that there certainly was a lot of hypocrisy in the nominal church. But he went on to point out that Jesus himself warned the church about hypocrisy and corruption. Corruption is to be expected. He also told her that the true church with its foundation on the Word is not found in buildings and denominations but instead is the unity of believers in Christ. She seemed to be interested and surprised at what Jerry was saying. “No one in the church I used to go to would have stood up for his beliefs like that” she thought. The other two group members had stopped their discussion and were listening to Jerry but they did not say anything.

Gradually Jerry began to realize how blessed he was to belong to the church he did. “Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit” (1 John 4:13). He began to see how dark and gloomy the lives of the students on campus were. He prayed to God for strength and zeal to become a powerful witness.

May God work in the hearts of the young people of our churches and fill us with zeal. Let us also strengthen one another in the Word that we might work as faithful servants. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)
Baghdad

by Jennifer Hanko

Baghdad, the capital and largest city of Iraq, is a modern city about fifty miles south of the ancient city of Babylon. Baghdad is often considered to be a continuation of Babylon.

Babylon was one of the greatest cities of the ancient world. It was founded on the Euphrates River by Nimrod “the mighty hunter,” who gave it the name of Babel. It later became the capital of Babylon and the Babylonian Empire. One of its most famous kings was Hammurabi. About 1750 B.C., he wrote down on stone a code of laws, which are similar in many ways to the laws of Moses.

The city formed a large square through which the Euphrates River ran, cutting it in half. Both the inner and outer city were surrounded by brick walls, decorated with blue glazed bricks and pictures of mythical beasts. Eight bronze gates led to the inner city, which contained fifty temples and impressive palaces. The “hanging gardens” of Babylon were one of the wonders of the ancient world.

Babylon played an important part in the history of Judah. It was used by God to punish His people for turning away from Him. After the death of Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, his wicked son, became king of Judah. He had reigned only three months when the servants of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came against Jerusalem and besieged it. During the eighth year of his reign, Jehoiachin went out to Nebuchadnezzar and surrendered as he had been advised. Nebuchadnezzar carried away all of the rich and mighty men of Jerusalem, leaving only the poorest of the people. He also carried away all the treasures of the temple and of the king’s palace, and made Zedekiah the ruler of Judah. During the ninth year of his reign, Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. Therefore, Nebuchadnezzar came and besieged Jerusalem for two years. Because of the famine, the king attempted to flee but was overtaken by the armies of the Chaldees. After putting out his eyes, they carried him to Babylon along with all those who remained in Jerusalem.

God was, however, watching over His people; and, after seventy years of captivity, He brought them back to their own land.

In 539 B.C., the Persians, under Cyrus, took the city. Herodotus, the Greek historian, believes they accomplished this by diverting the Euphrates River. By marching along the dried-up river bed, they were able to enter and capture the city easily. From that time on, Babylon declined. Today, nothing remains of the ancient city, but scattered mounds for archaeologists to work on.

Baghdad was a small village in A.D. 752, when Abu Jafur al-Mansur established the headquarters of the Arab Empire nearby, and Baghdad was made a part of the empire. By 800, Baghdad had more than a million people and was a world center of education. After the 800’s, however, the empire gradually lost power and wealth.

In 1258, the Mongols from central Asia ended the Arab Empire and nearly destroyed Baghdad. The Mongols had control of the city until 1638, when it became part of the Ottoman Empire. By the 1700’s, only about 15,000 people remained due to wars, fires, and floods.

During World War I, British troops captured what is now Iraq from the Ottoman Turks and helped to establish a petroleum industry in the area. In 1932, Iraq became an independent nation with Baghdad as its capital.

In 1991, Baghdad became the center of conflict when Iraq, under the leadership of Saddam Hussein, invaded Kuwait. The United Nations stepped in and demanded that Hussein withdraw from Kuwait. When Hussein refused, action was taken and on January 17, American President Bush declared war on Iraq. American troops and equipment were immediately flown into Iraq and air raids were begun. Because of the superior quality of allied equipment, Hussein was easily overcome. After only six weeks, President Bush officially declared the end of the war on February 27, 1991. Kuwait had been liberated.

Television evangelists were predicting that this Gulf War was a sign that Christ was coming very shortly. Although the Bible tells us that wars are indeed signs of the end times, it also tells us that Christ will come when we least expect Him.

The history of Babylon and Baghdad clearly shows God’s providence and His care of His people. God punished His people by taking them into captivity. Yet, he allowed them to return so that Christ could be born in Judah, and we would have salvation in Him.
Watching Daily At My Gates

by Skip Hunter

Psalm 74:12-23
For us in the Northern hemisphere March 1 can mark a turning point in the seasons. Even though we know that there is plenty of time for winter storms to strike, spring is near. As children of God we can gain instruction in that. Even though wickedness abounds around us and we fear that Christ will never return, we know that God is King of all. Christ will come and take us to that New Jerusalem; that place of eternal spring. Sing or read Psalter 402 especially stanzas 1 and 5.

Mark 6:1-6
Young people, how do you receive those who encourage or admonish you in things of Jehovah? Are we like the people of Jesus’ hometown who, because of their unbelief, would not make it possible for mighty works to be done. If someone encourages us using the word of God, are we grateful for their concern over our spiritual life? If someone admonishes us for our sins, are we thankful that someone cares that we do not fall prey to Satan? Be glad God has given us fellow saints who help to bear the burdens of others. Above all do not despise them. Sing or read Psalter 370.

Joshua 1:1-9
Are the words of Joshua 1 only for leaders? Impossible! The Bible is written for all the elect of all ages. It is true these were the words of God to Joshua as he began his work as Israel’s leader, but look again at verses 7-9. Are not these verses very applicable to us? Shouldn’t we be strong and courageous to observe and do God’s law? Shouldn’t the law not depart out of our mouths so that we meditate in it day and night? Don’t we have the promise that God will be with us wherever we go? Sing or read Psalter 40:1-4-6.

Ephesians 5:15-21
How is the singing coming? Are you delighting in the Psalter numbers at the end of the meditations? Or is singing something we do grudgingly; not remembering that it is an expression of gratitude to our heavenly Father for all He has given us? In Ephesians 5 the context is given in verse 1 where it tells us to be followers of God as children. Then the chapter gives us application of that concept. Verses 19 and 20 relate to our singing. Should we love it? Yes! Will we do it in heaven? Yes! Are you happy about it? Sing or read Psalter 409.

Daniel 6:1-11
Are we as regular in prayer as Daniel was? Now I don’t mean mechanically regular; I mean do we bring our needs and cares to God in prayer regularly. Daniel was trapped because he would go to His God in prayer often. Look at the last three words of verse 10. I believe Daniel was regular and not mechanical in prayer otherwise he would have found no help from God. Do we address our heavenly Father in all situations? Or do we just look to Him in times of trouble? We must pray without ceasing for all things. Sing or read Psalter 11.

Romans 8:24-20
Do we always confess the words of verse 28? Young people, do you believe that all things work for your good? What is good? Good must pertain to our salvation. All things in our lives are used by God to further our salvation in Christ. Can we confess this in the hospital? Do we confess this at the grave site? Is this our hope in times of turmoil in our lives? All things work for our good. Praise the Lord. Sing or read Psalter 408 especially stanza 3.
II Chronicles 36:14-21  Israel of the Old Testament was given many ceremonial laws concerning the Sabbath. One of these was every seven years the land was to lie fallow. This was to signify the rest of the Sabbath day that God instituted during creation. Israel in their greed disobeyed, bringing on them the wrath of God. We read in verse 21 that the land had to enjoy its Sabbath. What about us? Do we in our greed for more things of this world including recreation refuse to give the Sabbath its due? We will lose the favor of Jehovah if this is our attitude to the Lord's day. Sing or read Psalter 320.

II Corinthians 6:14-18  Yesterday we spent part of the day in fellowship with fellow saints. What about today and the rest of the week? True we must be in the world, and that means many times we must rub elbows with unbelievers. But do we place ourselves in situations where we become unequally yoked with them? Do we confess that we are the temple of the living God? Sing or read Psalter 248 especially stanzas 1-4.

Psalm 119:9-16  Almost every verse of Psalm 119 has a word which is a synonym for the Law of God. There are many verses of application for our lives. But that is the law of God or the ten commandments. Through the proper use of God's commandments, we can walk according to His will. The first four commandments deal with our love for God; the last six deal with our love for the neighbor. By diligently following God's law, we can assure ourselves of His favor. Sing or read Psalter 42.

Matthew 4:1-10  Young people, do you worship Jehovah God alone? Do we have other interests that intrude on our worship of God? Remember worship is not reserved for Sundays alone. We must worship every minute of our lives. Do we trust in God for all things for both body and soul? If we do, then we keep the first commandment. If we do, the devil will go away from us. Sing or read Psalter 391 especially stanza 3.

Jeremiah 10:1-10  How do we worship Jehovah? Do we make images of Him in our minds? Do we pick out attributes of God that we are comfortable with and ignore those we would rather not deal with? You know what I mean. It's easy to say that God is love but not God is judge. Our worship must confess that God is true, living, and sovereign over all. Our worship must be from the hearts and not from the lips. Israel was reprimanded many times for lip-service; what about us? Sing or read Psalter 308 especially stanzas 1-3.

Matthew 5:33-37  How do we speak about God? Is our speech full of profanity - even mild profanity? Do we speak of spiritual things lightly - even using them in jokes? None of us like our names used in stories that promote evil about us. Do we do that to God? Are we guilty of taking God's name in vain? We must reverence that name. We must treat it like we treat our most treasured earthly possession. He has given His name to us so that we can worship Him. Let us use it with fear and reverence. Sing or read Psalter 164.

Isaiah 58:1-3;13-14  It will be Sunday tomorrow. Are we preparing today? Were our plans of today such that tomorrow we can set aside all our cares of the world and concentrate on the worship of Jehovah? Is the whole house ready to worship God? Do our friends know what to expect of us on the Sabbath? God has given to us six days in which we can carry out the business of caring for our needs. He has reserved one day so that He can be worshiped by His creatures. There are many practical aspects to this commandment; but I think they can be summed up in the thought "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Sing or read Psalter 348 especially stanzas 1-3.

Romans 13:1-7  Young people, do think that you are old enough that the fifth commandment no longer applies to you? Are father and mother old-fashioned and do not have to be listened to? If you are living away from home, do you have any responsibility to this commandment? Of course you do, and of course I do. This commandment speaks about all authority - all those whom it has pleased God to place over us. We never escape the demands of the fifth commandment, and this is a good thing. This commandment has a promise. Our days will be long in heaven. Is this our joy? Sing or read Psalter 84.
James 1:17-25

"Thou shalt not kill" This seems easy enough to keep, doesn't it. Have you read the words of Lord's Day 40 lately? We realize that shedding blood is only one way to break this commandment. Do we realize that when our anger comes forth against one another we have transgressed this commandment? We must see that we use our tongues quite often and kill the brother. Notice verses 20-22. We must love the brother in all things and at all times. Then and only then can we keep this commandment. Sing or read Psalter 386 especially stanzas 1 and 4.

I Corinthians 6:15-20

The negative aspects of the seventh commandment bring God's wrath in this life. Unholy marriages are full of strife. Impure actions bring disease and other consequences. How do we look at this commandment positively? We must realize that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. In order not to quench the Holy Spirit, we must keep our bodies pure. This includes actions, words, and dress. According to verse 20 we keep the seventh commandment when we glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits. Sing or read Psalter 143 especially stanzas 1 and 2.

Nehemiah 5:1-13

Israel had returned from captivity, and soon some in the nation stole from their brethren. They stole by taking advantage of the brother and not caring for their needs. Stealing we know is wrong though at times we participate in it. But this commandment also is not kept when we do not promote the advantage of the neighbor. When we take advantage of our friends, we steal from them and from God's honor and glory. The last part of the Heidelberg Catechism speaks of helping the poor as a way of keeping this commandment. Is that so hard? Sing or read Psalter 26 especially stanzas 1 and 5.

Proverbs 11:11-14

We are full of conversation. All of us speak to others and about others often. How do we do that? Are we talebearers? Do we love the neighbor as ourselves in our conversations? Much damage has been done in the church when this commandment is broken. Teachers bemoan the fact that students don't love the brother or sister and use their tongues to show this hatred. Our speech can bring glory to God or Satan. Which is it? Sing or read Psalter 394 especially stanzas 1 and 2.

Romans 7:14-25

Coveting is an inward sin. Coveting means we are not happy with God in the lives He has chosen for us. After we are guilty of coveting someone else's place in the world, we try to take it from them. We must constantly remind ourselves to be content and happy with our life. This is not easy; but it is the tenth commandment. When we walk in the tenth commandment, it will be easier to keep the others. Sing or read Psalter 81 especially stanzas 1, 3, and 4.

Jonah 2

Young people, are your life's plans working out the way you want them to? Are you happy the way things are going? Jonah had a plan. He was going to preach to God's people. It was an admirable plan except for one thing. It was not God's plan. God took extreme measures with Jonah. God will take extreme measures with us if we do not look to Him to order our lives. We must listen to Him and then He will bless us. Sing or read Psalter 101 especially stanzas 1 and 4.

Ephesians 2:4-10

Grace! What a beautiful word. We use it to describe many actions in this world. But the word has much more meaning than earthly actions. It is the word which gives us hope in this life. Without it we are nothing. For it is by grace we are saved. Grace is God's unmerited favor towards His people whereby by our deserving punishment was poured out on Christ and we receive the promise of eternal life. Thanks be to God for this wonderful word! Sing or read Psalm 112 especially stanzas 3 and 4.

Ruth 2:8-14

Do our actions show that God blesses us? Can those around us see the work of God in our lives? Boaz could see that in Ruth. He said of Ruth that she trusted in God and dwelt beneath His wings. What about us? Does our everyday life show that we trust God or do we try to hide our faith and act like the reprobate? The difference is obvious. What do men see in us? Sing or read Psalter 92 especially stanzas 3 and 8.
**Colossians 1:12-20** Is it necessary for the church to have a day set aside for Thanksgiving? I hope not. Paul commands the church at Colosse to give thanks to the Father. Then he gives reasons for the expression of thankfulness. The primary reason is the salvation wrought for us by Christ through the cross. Must we wait for November to thank God for that? I hope not. If we don’t wait, then we will remember to thank God for all the gifts he has given us. Sing or read Psalter 405 especially stanzas 6 and 7.

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**I Samuel 3:1-10** Have you uttered the words today, “Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth?” In Samuel’s time God often came to His people directly. Since Christ has sent His Spirit upon us, we no longer have such direct contact with the Lord. But we must ask for God to speak to us. And speak He does. The Bible is full of the Word of the Lord for us. Are we searching the Scriptures to find it? Are we listening to His word? Sing or read 323 stanzas 1 and 2.

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**I Thessalonians 5:1-11** Do you listen to God as He speaks to the church through the news of the world’s happenings? When there is a devastating storm, do we hear God’s voice? When war breaks out, does the red horse leap into our mind’s eye? What about disease and famine? Paul said to the Thessalonians that they must watch the times and the seasons. This is also the word of the Holy Spirit to us. Watch, pray, and listen to God’s Word in the world around you. Then comfort each other with the knowledge that Christ comes quickly. Sing or read Psalter 28 especially stanzas 4 and 5.

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**I Kings 21:1-7** Naboth received death for his refusal to sell his vineyard to Ahab. The king would have made him a rich man for his small plot of land. He said no, and by the instrumentality of wicked Jezebel he lost not only his vineyard but also his life. But Naboth did not die for a vineyard. He died because he confessed his faith in the inheritance given to him by Jehovah. What about us? Do we sell the inheritance of the Reformed truth? God forbid it happen to us even if death threatens. Sing or read Psalter 80 especially stanzas 1, 5, and 9.

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**II Thessalonians 1:3-12** Yesterday we spoke of death coming to the child of God because of his confession of faith. Does that trouble us? It shouldn’t if we believe the word of God we just read. Evil will be punished; good will triumph. Why? Not only for our sake but more importantly that the name of God be glorified in us. Sing or read Psalter 88 especially stanzas 1 and 2.

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**Ezra 8:21-23** When Ezra returned to the promised land, he knew there would be dangers in the way. Yet he was not ashamed to ask God to help him bring the people to Canaan. Is this our confession, young people? Are you ashamed to ask help from God? In your study of history you have learned of many services governments provide for their citizens. Are these your hope for your future life? Ezra realized that his help was in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth. Do we? Sing or read Psalter 75 especially stanzas 1, 2, and 6.

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**I Timothy 3:1-13** Young people, do you want to be in consistory? This may seem to be a strange question especially considering the age of some of you. Yet, your lives, young men, should show forth the qualities of elders and deacons. There is a word to you, young women, as possible mates of office bearers. It is God’s will that his church be ruled by godly men. Each generation must provide men who fit the qualifications of these verses. Do you desire it? Even if it is not God’s will for you any time in your life, you must be ready to serve. Sing or read Psalter 367 especially stanza 1.

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**Esther 2:5-10** Sometimes we wonder about God’s purpose in including the book of Esther in the canon of Scripture. We look at unbelieving Mordecai and Esther and wonder what God’s message is for us in this book. It is not hard to see the message. We see God’s providence for His church. The heathen raged in the form of Haman, but yet God delivered His church. That is the message for us. God is near to us even though Satan desires to destroy us. Make that your thought as you read Esther and you will have no trouble. Sing or read Psalter 99 especially stanzas 1, 2, and 5.

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**II Timothy 3:14-17** Are we happy about God-fearing homes, diligent catechism instruction and preaching, and covenant schools? Paul reminds Timothy of his upbringing under the hands of Mother Eunice and Grandmother Lois. It was an upbringing full of spiritual things. The basis of that upbringing was the inspired, infallible Scriptures. That is the basis of the covenant home, true church, and covenant schools. Are you happy for them? Then give God the praise from whom all blessings flow. Sing or read Psalter 89 especially stanza 1 and 4.
Get Ready, Set, Married?

by Rev. Barrett Gritters

Get ready. set, what?

Does marriage seem so far away that you don’t even think about preparing for it? You would like to be married some time (even though you wouldn’t tell anyone else)? You hope that it is God’s will that you marry? You want to marry the right way? Keep reading!

So, you never heard about getting ready for marriage before you were engaged. You suppose that you will wait until you are ready to get serious about marriage before you will make any preparations. Not!

If you are engaged and marriage is around the corner, it’s too late to think about preparing for it.

When a couple comes to me and asks me to marry them, I always ask them to meet with me four or five times to talk about marriage. Sometimes I shudder at what I hear and see. I fear that there is not much hope for a good relationship. I may even say, “You better not get married.” Let’s see what helps young people get ready and set for marriage.

SOME THINGS YOU HAVE NO CONTROL OVER

For all of you who will marry, your whole life is a school for married life. Your stance going into marriage is the one you learned from your parents. Consciously or unconsciously, your behavior will probably be like your parents’. You will learn from the poor behavior of your parents and vow never to behave in that way (if so, pray the Lord forgives your parents). Your learning about marriage from your parents will also be unconscious and passive; you will simply adopt it as your own from their example (if so, be thankful for their good example). You have a steep hill to climb if it wasn’t.

What are some of these influences that prepare you for marriage which you have little control over?

Positives

• Parents who love each other, and aren’t afraid to show that love to each other when you’re around.
• Parents who speak to each other often. They are true friends.
  • Father and mother who confess their faults to you and pray for your forgiveness when they sin.
  • A father who respects your mother.
  • A father who loves your mother, and gives good, strong, loving leadership to her and to the children.
  • A mother who behaves as a Sarah, cheerfully submitting to your father.
  • A mother who loves to be home and shows it.
  • Parents who are home together often spending time with you talking and having fun.
  • Parents who spend time around the Scripture after meals, discussing it, learning from it, singing it in the Psalms.

We saw a sign about Christmas a few weeks ago that said, “The best gift that a father can give his children is to love their mother.” Be thankful for parents who deal so with each other. Marriages take work. Pray for your parents.

Negatives

Of course, the negative influences are the opposites of what’s above. Also these:

• Parents who teach you that possessions are everything, who speak of getting things more often than of getting wisdom.
• Parents who teach you by their example that it’s unnecessary to be wise stewards of money. (By their actions they teach, “We have plenty of money; we’re assuming you will always have plenty too. So live it up, and learn no control or stewardship.”)
• Parents who teach you that entertainment is the goal of the weekend, that the whole of spiritual life is showing up at church twice on Sunday, that “remembering the Sabbath” is telling the kids, “Learn your catechism,” and then crawling into bed for the rest of the afternoon.
• Parents who fight over little things, and let the children see their impatience, selfishness, pride, and refusal to give up their rights for the sake of the other.
• Parents who never attend society, or who participate in the life of the church only when it’s for fun.

These things are important here because all of them have everything to do with how your marriage is going to go.
SOME THINGS THAT YOU CAN DO

There are a good many things that you have some control over. I would like to present five exercises to help you prepare for marriage. I also realize that all these are gifts from God and that, apart from His Holy Spirit and grace, are impossible. (Pray and work!)

Learn to love others.
Husband and wife will be happy if they love each other. When there is true love in practice, their marriage will be sound. A man treats his wife well when he loves her. The wife will submit to her husband when she loves him. And both will submit in obedience to God in other areas, because true love for each other flows out of their love for God!

True love is giving yourself to another person. Far from being only giddy feelings that magically appear or disappear, love is a spiritual bond that comes to expression in actions. God's love for us gave His Son to die. A man's love for his wife brings him to give time and energy to her. A wife's love for her husband makes her give herself as a true "helper," suited for him.

Test yourself about true love with a few questions:
- Is your "love" forgiving?
- Is your "love" willing to give up what you want, for the sake of others?
- Is your "love" able to love someone who is "unlovely"?
- Is your "love" able calmly and graciously to tell your friends their faults, and work through that?

Love is a spiritual grace. Pray for it!

Learn to submit to others.
Marriage means submission, by both the husband and the wife. If there is anything that is contrary to our natures, it is to submit. Just think of Eve and the fall, Rebekah and the plot to steal the blessing (Gen. 27), Rachel and her idols (Gen. 30,31)... But don't forget the man's place.

Recently at a young adults outing, the girls righty complained that the guys all talked about "submit, submit, submit." Well, if that's all the guys talk about, they probably won't make very good husbands. They need to learn to be a loving husband who will make it a joy for a wife to submit to. The guys better read and learn Ephesians 5:21 before they preach to the girls, "Submit."

On the other hand, it won't happen that a young girl who hopes to marry will submit for the first time when she marries, when she has never submitted when she was young. This must come with a life-time of practice. I would warn young men that girls who show no submission to teachers at school and rebel against their parents at home, are giving pretty good indications that they're not going to submit to your love in marriage either. Don't forget the timely warn-

ings of Solomon in Proverbs 21:9, 19; 27:15, etc.
Pray for the grace of submission.

Be attractive.
The way to land a fish is to use the right bait. The way a young person is usually led to his or her God-ordained spouse is by being lured by the other's attractiveness.

There is physical attractiveness. Solomon "sings" of this beautifully. You might not look for a neck "like the tower of David builded for an armoury, whereon there hang a thousand bucklers," (Song of Solomon 4:4)! But don't forget that Solomon was praising the physical beauty of his beloved. Physical attractiveness is not something to be slighted. God has made us as human beings to see and appreciate physical beauty in others.

But the lure for a good mate is not mainly physical, but spiritual. I Peter 3 calls women to let their cosmetics be inward: meekness, a quiet spirit, a godly walk. Outward attractiveness of hairstyles, jewelry, clothing mean little compared to those. The same must be true for the young men. Let them try to cultivate the spiritual graces.

Any good fisherman will tell you that if you want to catch carp, you use carp bait; bullhead, use bullhead bait; trout, you use trout bait. How many young people will fail to see what's on their line until after it's too late to throw it back?

Remain a virgin.
Although there could be a lot said here, I don't need to say very much about this, except that both the young women and the young men know that this applies to them, and that violation of this important biblical rule means untold misery both before and after marriage.

Don't let happen to you what has happened to too many young people. After they have blown it, their "flesh and body are consumed," they mourn at the last and say, "How have I hated instruction... And have not obeyed the voice of my teachers, nor inclined my ear to them that instructed me! I was almost in all evil..." (Proverbs 5:11-14).

There is no such thing as "safe-sex."

Learn what friendship is.
This really is the heart of it all. Marriage is friendship.

At bottom, our relationship with God is friendship. This is the essence of the covenant. The Bible also describes the relationship between God and the church as a marriage. If our marriages need to reflect the relationship between God and His church, they need to reflect that friendship first of all.

How do you learn about friendship?
- First, by cultivating your friendship with your God. Speak with Him; tell Him your secrets; listen to
His secrets to you in His Word. Learn to enjoy time with Him. Learn the pleasures of His company. Learn to “open up” to Him.

- Second, cultivate friendships with others. Make good friends with others of the same sex, but also with others of the opposite sex, without thinking that it needs to be “serious.” Learn to open up to them, tell them your secrets, your needs, your troubles, your happiness. Learn to listen to them, care for them, love them. . . .

Marriages made of two who have learned about friendship before ever “leaving father and mother” will be (by God’s blessing) marriages that are not only strong, but a great joy for both husband and wife!

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Marriage is no little thing. It’s for life! You are preparing for marriage right now. Are you getting ready?

Questions to consider:

- In your dating, does your date always take, or give?
- In marriage, does the husband submit to the wife? In what way? See Ephesians 5:21.
- What do you do if your parents are not setting a good model for your marriage?
- Spend time talking about dating. Ask how your friend feels about . . . ? Don’t assume just because they are of your faith, that they have the same opinions on important issues of marriage and family that you do.

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KNOWING WHOM I HAVE BELIEVED

The Benefits of Studying Church History

by Steve Kuiper

The importance of remembering God’s works in history is a recurring theme of Scripture. In the introduction to the Law in Exodus 20:2 God reminds His people of His works in their history, “I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage”. The Psalms also urge God’s people to “Remember his marvelous works that he hath done; . . . He sent Moses . . . He brought them forth also with silver and gold . . . And gave them the lands of the heathen. . . .” (Psalm 105:5, 26, 37, 44). Also Hebrews 11 and 12 remind us of God’s works through the faith of the Old Testament saints, who surround us as “so great a cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1). Throughout the Bible God teaches us to remember the mighty works which He has done.

We learn of God’s works, first of all and primarily, in the Bible. That is why reading and studying the Bible should always have a central place in our lives. The often break-neck pace of this world must never hinder us from pausing to learn of God’s works through Bible study.

We also learn of God’s works in Church history. While the Bible is God’s divinely inspired record of His work, subsequent history also records God’s activity. We believe that God still “worketh all things after the council of his own will” (Ephesians 1:11). We confess that He continues to “rule and govern all creation according to his holy will, so that nothing happens in this world without his appointment” (Belgic Confession - Art. 13). God continues to watch over His people, preserve them, and confound their enemies.

A greater knowledge of Church history is a valuable asset for any Christian. Too often, however, it is left only to those with a natural inclination for things
historical. That’s unfortunate. An increased understanding of Church history benefits all of us in many ways.

First, we see how God’s plan transcends all kingdoms, nations, and denominations. God draws His people in every age and from every tribe and tongue. The nations of this world wage war against each other, one empire rises, another falls and God uses them all to further His purpose. As creatures of this earth we easily lose sight of this transcendent power of God. We are tempted to place our hope in earthly powers rather than the almighty God who uses them to fulfill His own will. The better we understand history as the outworking of God’s council the more we are in awe of the overwhelming breadth and scope of God’s plan.

Second, we gain a better understanding of the Church’s continual development in her understanding of the Truth. We see that Christianity is not something to be rediscovered anew by every generation but an inheritance passed down through the ages. Each generation has built upon the understanding of those preceding, giving due credit to the work of the Holy Spirit in ages past. Much like the generations of workers on a great cathedral, they did not start from scratch but built upon what had been accomplished before. This makes us more wary of theological innovation. It strengthens us against being “carried about with every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14).

Third, we gain a fuller understanding and deeper appreciation for our creeds and confessions. We realize that they were not conceived in some ivory tower of scholasticism but were formed on the firing line of dispute over the very heart of the Gospel. They were of crucial importance in defending and promoting the Truth against various errors and corruptions. The early creeds concerning the Trinity, for instance, were not simply rationalistic attempts to define God but were fervent defenses of Christ’s divinity and God’s unity against the claims of Arius, Marcion, and others. Similarly, the confessions of the Reformation set forth a valiant defense of the Gospel against Roman Catholic corruptions as well as the errors of the Ana Baptists. When we study the history surrounding the formation of our creeds and confessions we gain valuable insights into the critical issues at stake in the doctrine and dogma of the Church.

Fourth, we realize that we stand with a long line of spiritual fathers with whom we share our faith and convictions. We see that throughout the Church’s history men have had to defend the sovereignty of God against those who would make man the author of his own salvation. Without the study of Church history we might imagine that we are the first generation to oppose the idea of a common grace of God for all men. We might assume that we stand alone in our rejection of the idea of a free offer of the Gospel. When we study Church history we see that these ideas have their roots in errors which the Church has rejected many times, beginning with Augustine’s rejection of semi-Pelagianism some 1400 years ago. There is some encouragement in the realization that we stand in agreement with men like Augustine and the Reformers, and that these men also faced ridicule for their beliefs.

There is, of course, also a danger that we put our Church fathers on too high a pedestal. We may never raise agreement with John Calvin, Abraham Kuyper, or Herman Hoeksema to be the highest court of appeal. Despite their contributions we must remember that they were sinful men and prone to error. The Bible is always our final authority. We must study the writings of our fathers as the Bereans of old studied Paul’s words, “they . . . searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). Also, we must always remember that just as God sent Moses (Psalm 104:6) God also raised up these men to do His work. To God only belongs the glory.

Fifth, we gain insight into the continuing development of error. We witness how seemingly insignificant innovations have lead to massive departures from the Truth. We see that when people see Christianity as just a lifestyle, and not a doctrine, they inevitably grow in ignorance. When the importance of right doctrine is de-emphasized; soon also a holy life is considered unimportant. We realize that new theological “discoveries” are often old, old heresies newly robed in orthodox sounding terminology. Further, we realize that the Church is always under attack; we must ever be on our guard.

Finally, we grow in our appreciation for God’s continuing preservation of His people. The Church’s commitment to the Truth is continually tested, both from outside and from within. Only through God’s gracious care has the Church persevered through the persecutions of Nero, the darkness of the Middle Ages, the rationalism of the Enlightenment, and the materialism of our present age.

We have considered some of the benefits of studying Church history but in conclusion we should stress its purpose. Learning more about Church history for mere knowledge’s sake is vanity. Seeking to impress friends or family is similarly vain. Learning more about God’s works in history should not make us proud but profoundly humble. We are but earthly creatures and God is the Creator and Sustainer of us all. When the Bible instructs us to remember the great works which God has done for His people, its stated purpose is that we keep His statutes (Exodus 20), worship Him in thankfulness (Psalm 105), and laying aside all sin, run the race which He has set before us (Hebrews 12:2). Obedience, praise, and a life of thankful service: this should also be our reaction upon delving into the mighty works of God in the annals of Church history.
Am I My Brother's Keeper
Another Look At
The 8th Commandment

by Bernie Kamps

We have to picture the modern day Pharisee in Jerusalem dressed in flowing robes, walking down the dusty streets, coming up upon us, raising his head, looking down his nose at us and saying, "Have you stolen today?" Of course our reply would be, "Oh no, rabbi. I have not taken any man's property. I have not taken anything that is not mine." Then compare that to us today. We have not shoplifted, we have not even stolen hours at work where we have been paid for non-productive things. Contrast that with the letter of the law versus the spirit of the law to not only not steal your neighbor's possessions, but rather to even help him obtain possessions, to help all those and not hinder.

The 8th Commandment takes on a whole other connotation when you consider it from a very positive viewpoint, not just "thou shalt not steal", but thou shalt promote thy brother's welfare financially. Thou shalt love your neighbor for God's sake and seek his welfare and be a good steward of all your own possessions. This commandment, "thou shalt not steal", at first look does not always seem to apply to us. We are prone to say, "I do not shoplift or prowl around under the cover of darkness taking that which does not belong to me. This will be an easy commandment to follow", we would say. But on closer look we will see a more encompassing rule for our living. The basic principle of the 8th Commandment is contentment with the earthly possessions the Lord has given, and the exercising of proper stewardship. The commandment now suddenly seems very difficult. It seems every dollar you make this week has to be handled wisely. You cannot even waste a few bucks! It also means you must try to help all your Christian friends and God's poor. We quote Reverend Herman Hoeksema from The Triple Knowledge, "But remember: whatever form the sin of stealing may assume, the thief in principle is always the one who refuses to manage his earthly possessions as a steward before the face of God. And even as a Christian steward acquires everything and manages everything with regard to his earthly possessions in the name, and before the face of God, and according to His precepts, so he also expects his reward from God alone."

Contentment is a tremendous gift of God to His children. The godless struggle with envy all their days. You are blessed with the harmony of desires, needs and the supplying of earthly things such as your meals, work, your good health, etc.

At the same time the Holy Spirit soothes our hearts and truly blesses us with peace of mind on all the extra things we do not need so we do not sinfully covet. The world is typified in a man like Donald Trump. He wanted it all desperately, had it all, and still lusted for more, and now he loses it all. "For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors." (Psalm 73: vs. 3, 18, 19)

Young people, count your blessings, they are abundant. Contentment therefore is not a destination to arrive at but a lifelong journey for the elect, always struggling with unhappiness that the old nature presents and what the new man places in proper perspective.

Be on guard against positive mental attitude teachings that include that you can be all that you can be if you work hard enough. This philosophy includes writing goals and placing in the prominent spot and saying them aloud every day, morning and night, visualizing what you want, laboring toward these goals with all your being, usually material goals. Goals are good and necessary, but an improper emphasis on self and not service is what is wrong. Humanism and New Age ideas which emphasize self are filling today's church. You probably have met these people in the workplace. God is blessing them because they live according to the Golden Rule and are so good to fellow man. They are earnest in their feelings that God blesses them because they are living
so properly and the Devil is the root of anything bad in their life, anything that detours their drive.

What a pity, the worldly chase the elusive gift of contentment, the latest fashions, the designer series everything, the face lifts, divorcing the wife of twenty years, mother of their children, for a younger wife, the health clubs full of spandex and lycra, all for what?!

The contentment of the child of God is truly heaven sent. The Great Shepherd leading us in rich and pleasant pastures, steering us away from the fast paced and selfish dangers of a self-indulgent society. Praise your God and thank the Bishop of your soul for caring for your every need, knowing what is best for you and your neighbor. Remember that our natures are such that we become tense with envy toward our fellow Christian's successes, good fortune and fruit on their labors. We must recognize this sinful inclination and earnestly strive to charitably congratulate the Lord's blessing upon their labor. May we promote each other's welfare for truly we are our brother's keeper.

**BOOK REVIEW**


**J. G.** Machen was the main figure in the foundation of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. This denomination was born in 1936, after Machen was cast out of the Presbyterian Church in the United States. **He was cast out because he opposed the liberals who were turning what used to be a true church of Jesus Christ into an apostate church.**

At the time that Machen wrote this book, many people were attacking true Christianity because they thought it was absurd and not true to science. How in the world could somebody still believe in a literal creation? Who ever heard of a virgin having a baby? And certainly anyone who believed that the miraculous events recorded in the Bible really happened is just plain nuts. This is what worldly men were telling the church. The liberals in the church decided that the worldly scientists were right; science obviously rules out miracles, a virgin birth, and a literal creation. So the liberals rewrote Christian doctrine so that it did justice to the findings of science. But they wanted to keep it Christian - they wanted to keep an idea of Christ, God, and salvation. **The thesis of Machen's book is that in trying to reconcile Christianity and science, the liberals destroyed Christianity.** In his own words, "despite the liberal use of traditional phraseology modern liberalism not only is a different religion from Christianity but belongs in a totally different class of religions" (page 7)

Machen adequately supports his contention by showing that Christianity and liberalism have entirely different views of:

1) God. Liberalism teaches that God is the spiritual Father of all men, and liberalism denies God's transcendence and thus His work of Creation. It also denies the Trinity.

2) man. Liberalism presents man as **not sinful.** So he needs no salvation.

3) the Bible. Liberalism does not view the Bible as God's inspired revelation, nor does it think that the Bible is the authority for our belief and life. "Christianity is founded on the Bible. ... Liberalism on the other hand is founded upon the shifting emotions of sinful men" (page 79)

4) Christ. For Christians, Christ is the object of our faith; we believe in Him. Liberalism views Jesus as a good example of a man who had faith. Jesus is Christ because He was the first Christian, the liberals would say. Liberalism knows of no Christ whom God anointed to save sinners.

5) salvation. For Christians, salvation is an act of God through Christ's death. Liberalism teaches that salvation is man's action, and has nothing to do with Christ's death. They offer different views of what salvation really is, including the idea that salvation is just a better life here on earth.

6) the Church. Liberalism teaches that the church is an institution which must reform society, making this world a better place in which to live. All men are brothers, and so the goal of the church is to include every human.

**THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO REMEMBER IS THIS: THE LIBERALS USE THE SAME WORDS AS THE CHRISTIANS.** They do speak of God, the Trinity, Christ, and salvation. They do speak of an atonement. They speak of faith. They would say that the Bible has authority, **BUT THEY REDEFINE THE**
MEANING OF THESE CHRISTIAN WORDS. Atone-ment is not Christ’s death to satisfy God’s wrath for sinful men. Faith is not “knowledge and confidence” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q&A 21) but it is following Christ’s example by living a moral life.

If you talk with one who believes in liberalism, you may think that you and he have much in common. You may be impressed by his Christian vocabulary, and by his “faith in Jesus.” The reason you ought to read Christianity and Liberalism is so that you will have a better understanding of what he means by these words. Chances are he will not understand the differences between his view and your view. He will say what he has heard his whole life from the theologians and preachers of liberalism. What he may not know is that he has been taught and believes the lie. Certainly he will not think he is a liberal, but he is anyway. Read this book to understand how that is so.

Liberalism is rampant in the church world today. But who are the liberals? In the Reformed tradition, he is a liberal who does not believe the teachings of the Synod of Dordt: TULIP. In the Presbyterian tradition, he is a liberal who does not subscribe to the teachings of the Westminster Assembly. Any person who denies that God loves some men and hates others; any person who says that Christ died for all men; any person who ascribes any work of man to salvation; any person who does not view every part of the Bible as inspired by God and authoritative; he is a liberal.

Then who are Christians? They are those who hold to the Canons of Dordt and the Westminster Confession. Many will say that my definition of Christianity is too narrow: “Many people who live good Christian lives don’t believe everything in the Confessions.” But we believe that these confessions are faithful expressions of Scripture’s teaching. He who disagrees with them, therefore, disagrees with Scripture as to the basics of what we must believe in order to be saved. How can someone who disagrees with Scripture on what we must believe in order to be saved be a Christian? He cannot, because being a Christian is first of all not living a good life, but believing that Christ died to save sinners! Our life follows from and is based on our faith.

The major weakness of Machen’s book is that he is too lenient to certain people who fit into the category of liberalism. On page 51, he excludes Arminians from the camp of the liberals. On page 52, he excludes Roman Catholics from the camp of liberals. Yet the Arminians have a different view of God and man than do Reformed Christians; that was the very reason for the Synod and Canons of Dordt! And the Church of Rome has an entirely different view of the church and of salvation than do the Reformed; that was the very reason for the Reformation of 1517! Machen fails here.

Our young (and not so young) people would do well to read this book. Liberalism is alive and well, even in many churches which are considered conservative. Furthermore, we in the PRC must be on our guard against liberalism. If we ever accept liberalism’s teachings, we are doomed.

Finally, note again the title of the book: Christianity and Liberalism. The two are opposed. You cannot be a liberal and a Christian.

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WRITING CONTEST

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Spiders

by Bethany Slopsema

Spiders are small animals that spin silk webs. They use their webs as nets to catch and eat insects. They can even catch insects that are bigger than themselves, such as a grasshopper. Many people are afraid of spiders, and kill any they find, but there are only six spiders in North America that can harm people. Spiders coat their legs with an oily substance from their mouth, so that they can pass over the sticky web without getting caught themselves. Before a female spider lays her eggs, she spins a soft cocoon. A spider lays her eggs in the cocoon. She lays about five hundred eggs at a time.

We are very lucky that God gave us spiders. A spider’s place is to keep the population of insects down, so if you see a spider, think about why God created it.

In Proverbs 30:28, it says, “The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings’ palaces.”
The 1993 Protestant Reformed Young People's Convention will be held AUGUST 2-6, 1993

Theme: SPIRITUAL YOUTH IN A CARNAL WORLD

**What:** Young Adults Spring Retreat
**When:** Monday, March 29 - Wednesday, March 31
**Where:** Covenant Heights Conference Center
Estes Park, Colorado
**Who:** Seniors in High School and Older
**Topic:** What is it to be Reformed?
**Speakers:** Rev. Ron Cammenga
What is it to be Reformed in Faith?

Rev. Charles Terpstra
What is it to be Reformed in Life?

**Cost:** $60.00, Includes 2 nights lodging and meals
**Contact:** Rev. Cammenga 1-303-667-1347