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The Secret of the Strength

- by Peter Hoover

CHAPTER 23

In Spite of Terrible Mistakes

Nearly everyone at the Sankt Pelagius school of the Chorherrenstift in Bischofszell in the Thurgau liked Ludwig. He was a quiet, well-mannered student. Like many Swiss boys of his age who came from wealthy homes, he studied Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. His teachers saw in him the makings of genius, and by the time he was seventeen, he matriculated in the philosophical faculty of the University of Basel.

In his studies of the classical works, including the New Testament, Ludwig became steadily more fascinated with the life of Christ. By the time he was twenty, he had decided to become a priest, and they ordained him in the beautiful city of Konstanz, down by the lake where the bishop lived.

While serving as chaplain at Wädenswil, south of Zürich, Ludwig found his longing to know Christ leading him closer to events taking place in that city. In 1523, an article of his against the use of images in worship fell into the hands of Huldrych Zwingli who published it. With this, Ludwig Haetzer, the young priest from the Thurgau, became a Reformation personality.

The leaders of the Swiss Reformation respected Ludwig's command of languages and his talent for writing. In 1524, they gave him his first commission, the translation of a Latin book for the evangelization of Jews. Ludwig did an excellent job.

Before he was altogether done, the Reformed leaders began to involve him in a much greater work, the translation of the Scriptures into German.

As a translator of the Old Testament, Ludwig traveled to Augsburg, Bavaria, to work with scholars there. They had him work on the Psalms. It was an exciting job. Ludwig bypassed the Latin Vulgate and worked directly from handwritten Hebrew manuscripts. He met all the important people of Augsburg and accepted an invitation to stay with a couple, Georg and Anna Regel, on their country estate, the Lichtenberg, not far from the city.

Georg and Anna accepted Ludwig and loved him as their son. Anna, especially, who spent many hours with him while he worked on his papers in the house, developed a close relationship with him. But the Regels had unusual friends. It wasn't long until Ludwig discovered that Anabaptists visited the Lichtenberg. Then, one night, the armed guard of the Duke of Bavaria came galloping in. They surrounded the house and arrested Georg and Anna

for questioning while Ludwig escaped and found his way back to Zürich.

During the fall and winter of 1524, Ludwig worked with teams of translators, many of them highly educated men much older than he, in Swabia and Bavaria. Then they sent him to work on the book of Isaiah in Basel. It was in Basel that his polite, thoughtful ways led him into trouble. A girl who cleaned the house where he stayed fell hopelessly in love with him. At first, Ludwig tried not to pay her special attention. But little by little, he felt stirrings in his own heart, and when she asked him to come to her room one night, he went.

It was so easy. No one found out about it, and no one suspected anything. But Ludwig felt terrible. He felt sinful and contaminated - a translator of the Scriptures, an earnest Christian, one regarded highly by everyone, and now a fornicator. He could not stand it and asked for leave to go to Strasbourg.

Little by little as he grieved for his sin, Ludwig felt the peace of God returning. In Strasbourg, he met Hans Denck, and they became close friends with much in common. Their education and interests were alike, but Hans Denck was an Anabaptist. When the news came of Felix Manz's drowning in Switzerland, the Protestant authorities expelled Hans Denck from Strasbourg, and Ludwig decided to follow him.

The Amish Voice

They traveled through Bergzabern and the Kurpfalz to Worms on the Rhein and worked on translating the minor prophets. When the evangelical preacher, Jakob Kautz, tacked his theses to the door of the church and called for a public debate, Hans and Ludwig took part. But the authorities expelled them from the city, and Ludwig returned to Strasbourg.

To his surprise, the Reformed leaders in Strasbourg had found out what took place that night in Basel. The girl had confessed, and when they questioned him, Ludwig could not deny it. Then, out of a job and out of favor with nearly everyone (including the Anabaptist congregation at Strasbourg), he followed Hans Denck to Augsburg and Nürnberg in Bavaria.

Ludwig studied and wrote. He kept in touch with Georg and Anna Regel at the Lichtenberg, which he considered his home. Two years later, at Regensburg in Bavaria, he baptized several people, and the Anabaptist movement took root in that city. Back in the Thurgau in Switzerland, he married a young woman who had worked for the Regels and who had since joined the Anabaptists.

More and more, as Ludwig studied the life of Christ, he turned against his university education. After publishing a book against the foolishness of much learning, and while working on a translation of the Apocrypha, the Protestant authorities caught up with him at Konstanz on November 28, 1528. They charged him with disturbing the peace and with living in adultery with Anna Regel.

Ludwig did not deny it, and her name was discovered as an acrostic in one of his hymns. But he spent his time in prison profitably. He prayed and wrote songs. Convinced at last of the Lord's mercy, even in this time of humiliation and distress, he wrote eight hymns. The brothers in Moravia used most of them in their hymn collections, and the Swiss Anabaptists included his poetic version of I Corinthians 13 in the Ausbund. It ends with the words:

Love will never come to nothing.
Everything has an end but love.
Love alone shall stand.

Love clothes us for the wedding feast because God is love and love is God. He helps us out of all distress, and who shall take us far from Him? Knowledge swells, but love builds up. Everything done without love comes to ruin. Oh love! Oh love! Lead us with your hand and bind us together. False love is that which deceives us. Amen.¹

On February 4, 1529, they led Ludwig Haetzer to the town square of Konstanz. He walked calmly to his death. In clear words, he spoke to the crowds who had gathered, warning them to repent and turn to God. The people felt sorry for him. He was young and good-looking. Of his extraordinary intelligence, they had no doubt. But they could do nothing more than watch through tears as he knelt, willingly, for the executioner's sword.

A Counterattack

The Anabaptists, like Samson, were a threat to the enemies of God. Their movement was a spiritual attack on those enemies and, like Samson, they suffered the effects of a massive, spiritual counterattack.

The Anabaptists didn't fall into just a few errors in passing, just a few misjudgments quickly corrected. Like Samson, they committed all-involving, history-changing blunders that all but wiped them from the face of the earth.

Ludwig Haetzer², who translated the prophets into German, yielded to temptation. Hans Pfistermeyer, ³who gave his testimony before the Protestant court, recanted when they put him

¹ Ausbund, 57:6-7

² Quoted in chapter eight of this book.

³ Hans, who had been an outstanding leader among the Anabaptists of Switzerland, is quoted in chapter nine of this book. After he recanted, he became a tool of the Reformers to bring those who had been his fellow Anabaptist prisoners back to the state church. He was not as successful in this as the once widely used Anabaptist messenger and author, Peter Tasch, of Hesse, who recanted in 1536. Peter convinced hundreds to come back to the state church before he died in immoral disgrace.

under pressure. So did Jakob Kautz⁴, the man who tacked the theses onto the church door at Worms. But even beyond the effects of these personal failures were the effects of the terrible mistakes the Anabaptists made together.

Mistaken Teachings

Apart from the Scriptures, the Anabaptists had no literature in the beginning. Neither did they have established teachings. But as the movement grew and their literature and teachings took form, mistakes became apparent in both.

The Dutch and North German Anabaptists did not believe that Jesus got his flesh and blood from Mary, or that He had an ordinary human body. They believed that Mary was only a recipient of the Holy Spirit's work within her and that His body, as a result, was totally celestial. They (especially Menno Simons) defended this view at length, using unscientific "facts" to prove themselves right. This mistaken teaching, and the emphasis placed upon it, discredited them with the state churches and kept sincere seekers from joining them.

Other Anabaptists strongly believed in keeping the Sabbath,⁵ or else in not keeping any day special at all. Some believed in paying military taxes, while others, notably the brothers in Moravia, strongly opposed it. But in few areas did the Anabaptists differ more from their descendants than in their teaching on divorce and remarriage.⁶

It was not uncommon for Anabaptists to lose their married companions when they decided to follow Christ. Unbelieving husbands disowned their wives, and unbelieving wives deserted Anabaptist men. After discussing what to do about it, Menno Simons, Dirk Philips, Leenaerdt Bouwens, Gillis of Aachen,

⁴ Quoted in chapter seven.

⁵ Notably Oswald Glait, prominent and widely respected Anabaptist messenger in Moravia and Silesia. Glait published a tract on keeping the Sabbath. A song in his memory, *Ein anderes Lied van Bruder Oswald den man zu Wien heimlich ertränkt hat um der göttlichen Wahrheit willen*, is preserved in the *Lieder der Hutterischen Brüder*.

⁶ Sixteenth-century polemics against the Anabaptists mention their teaching on divorce and remarriage as another example of their "heresy."

and three other Anabaptist leaders decided in 1554:

If an unbeliever wishes to separate for reasons of the faith, then the believer shall conduct himself honestly. He shall not marry again as long as the unbeliever remains unmarried. But if the unbeliever marries or commits adultery, then the believing mate may also marry, subject to the advice of the elders of the congregation....

If a believer and an unbeliever are in the marriage bond together and the unbeliever commits adultery, then the marriage tie is broken. If the unbeliever says it was an accident and desires to mend his ways, then we permit his believing wife to return to him and admonish him, if conscience allows it and in light of the circumstances of the case. But if the man is a bold and headstrong adulterer, then the innocent party is free. She shall, however, consult with the congregation and remarry according to their decisions in the matter.⁷

In other writings, Menno Simons reinforced this teaching:

Divorce is not allowed in the Scriptures, except for adultery. Therefore, we shall not, to all eternity, consent to it for other reasons....We acknowledge no other marriage than that which Christ and the apostles taught in the New Testament: that of one man with one woman (Matt. 19:4). A married man and woman may not be divorced except in case of adultery (Matt. 5:32), for the two are one flesh⁸.

The Swiss Anabaptists, in a booklet on marriage, stressed the fact that the union of believers with Christ is more precious than the union between husbands and wives. They taught the permanence of marriage, and that it shall not be broken except in case of adultery. But then, with the counsel of the congregation, they did allow the “innocent party” to marry again.

⁷ *Beshuyt tot Wismar*, 1554

⁸ *Grontlijke onderwijs oft bericht, van de excommunicatie...* 1558

The Anabaptist leader, Rauff Bisch of the Kurpfalz, said at the Frankenthal disputation in 1571:

We believe that nothing may terminate a marriage except adultery. But if the unbeliever wants to divorce because of the faith, we would let him go, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7. We believe that the cause for divorce should never be found in the believer.⁹

The Anabaptists of Hesse, in central Germany, stated in 1578:

We believe and confess that a man and woman who have by divine foreordination, destiny, and joining in marriage become one flesh may not be divorced because of excommunication, belief or unbelief, anger, quarreling, hardness of heart, but only in the case of adultery¹⁰.

The Anabaptists in Moravia included the following among their five articles of faith in 1547:

If the unbelieving one departs, let him depart....A brother or sister is not under bondage in such a case.¹¹

Most Anabaptists emphasized the fact that “nothing can break the marriage bond except adultery.” But the presence of divorced and remarried couples among them caused personal hardship and earned them much criticism. On at least one occasion, a brother who had remarried, Klaus Frey of Ansbach in southern Germany, was executed for bigamy.

After the sixteenth century, the Anabaptists’ descendants gradually changed their position. By the end of the 1800s (and the rise of Fundamentalism in America), the Mennonites, the Amish, and the Hutterites all took a firm stand against a second marriage or living with another partner after a divorce.

⁹ From *Protocoll, Das ist Alle handlung des gesprechs zu Franckenthal inn der Churfürstlichen Pfaltz, mit denen so man Widertäufer nennet*, first published at Heidelberg in 1571.

¹⁰ From *Das Bekenntnis der Schweizer Bruder in Hessen*, 1578.

¹¹ *Fünff Artikel...* 1547

A Mistaken Emphasis

Even though Christ was not an ascetic as were some of the first Christian religious orders, a trend toward asceticism developed early in the Anabaptist movement. It was the trend that eventually came to pattern the lives of their Old Colony, Amish, and Old Order Mennonite descendants. Is’s nett zu scheh? (Isn’t it too nice?) was a question I heard innumerable times during my growing-up years in southern Ontario. Anything from dress material to living room stoves to lawn chairs and painted barn siding could be condemned by the brotherhood simply because it was “too nice.”

To associate what is nice with what is evil happened easily in the sixteenth century. Comfortable houses, nice clothes, and orderly, easy lives belonged to the “world,” and only dungeons, flight, torture, grief, and anxiety remained for the true followers of Christ. The Anabaptists, living in such an other-worldly atmosphere of persecution, had no time for humor or recreation. At first from necessity, but soon from a brotherhood emphasis on strict asceticism, they ruled out many normal comforts of life. In Switzerland, the Anabaptists even condemned congregational singing as a frivolous concession to the senses.¹²

Most early Anabaptist leaders had studied in the universities of central Europe. But they rejected their education and, with it, their knowledge of the fine arts, philosophy, and culture. At the same time, they made sure that their children had no access to them.

The Anabaptists literally became pilgrims and strangers. Following Christ, nothing earthly mattered anymore. Driven out of the cities, their children grew up far removed from central European society. They slept on straw on the earthen floors of mountain homes. They

¹² Conrad Grebel, in his letter to Thomas Müntzer, gave the following reasons why it is wrong to sing in a worship service: There is no example for it in the New Testament. It does not edify. Paul forbids it (Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16). We are forbidden to practice what the New Testament does not command. Christ requires preaching, not singing. Human beings may not add to the words of Christ. Singing is not ordained by God and must be rooted out by his Word.

spoke the coarse dialect of the peasants and dressed in homemade clothes. Within a few generations, this austerity narrowed them, especially those of Switzerland and the moors of Friesland, Groningen, and around the Baltic Sea, into such closed-minded, rural, ethnic groups that it became hard for new converts to know or join them.¹³

Free to read and understand the Scriptures for themselves, the Anabaptists began at once to study the prophecies of Daniel and the book of Revelation. Many of them concluded that the coming of Christ, the defeat of the wicked, and the peaceful reign of a thousand years was soon to begin. Nowhere did this belief gain firmer ground than in southern Germany under the teaching of men like Hans Hut and Melchior Hofman.

About the same age as Conrad Grebel, Melchior Hofman spent his boyhood in the German city of Schwäbisch-Hall. He liked to read. For hours, he would sit and read the mysterious books of Johann Tauler, Meister Eckhart, and Heinrich Suso, his favorite authors. But his father apprenticed him to a furrier in a city coat maker's shop.

Before Melchior turned twenty, his employer sent him north to buy furs. Once he knew the trade well, he traveled to East Prussia, Scandinavia, and Livland (modern Estonia) to look for them.

In the 1520s, Livland was an unhappy, strife-torn place. Between the Baltic Sea and the great forests of Russia, it was a Slavic country "Christianized" by the Roman Catholic order of the Brothers of the Sword. The bishops of the conquering church and the knights who protected them struggled for control of the rich grain lands of Livland, while the common people worked for them from dawn to dusk with little pay. Melchior Hofman soon saw the injustice, felt the tension, and began to point men to the teachings of Christ to find a better way.

¹³ With this it must be said that between 1675 and 1720 nearly twenty five percent of the names in police records regarding Anabaptist arrests in the Canton of Bern, Switzerland, were new family names, suggesting that they were still winning a substantial number of converts to the church.

At first, Melchior thought Martin Luther could help. But when his studies of prophecy and his call for righteous living led him into conflict with Luther's followers, he saw that he had to take his own way. The authorities in Livland deported him, and in 1525, he moved to Stockholm, Sweden.

In Sweden (a good place to find and work with furs), Melchior published his first book, a study of Daniel, chapter 12. It upset the city authorities, and he left for Kiel in Danish Holstein. By now a regular speaker in Protestant churches, he often spoke on the last days and the prophetic symbolism of the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant. Little by little, he developed a three-dispensational theory of end-time events. He taught that the first end-time period was the age of the early church. The second period was that of the power of the popes (the various beasts of Revelation). The last period was to be the one of Enoch and Elijah, the two witnesses, in which evil would be overcome, and Christ would return to reign on the earth for a thousand years.

As in Sweden, Melchior's teachings made trouble in Danish Holstein, and in June 1529, he, his wife, and baby arrived as refugees in the Protestant city of Strasbourg.

In Strasbourg, Melchior joined the Anabaptists and found enthused listeners to his prophetic explanations. One couple in particular, Leonhard and Ursula Jost, gave him their loyal support. Both of them claimed the gift of prophecy and spoke about the visions they had seen. Melchior published their prophecies in two books, and after many in northern Germany and the Netherlands had read them, he traveled to those regions himself to visit interested contacts.

Everywhere he went, Melchior found open ears for his good news of the coming kingdom of Christ. In the East Friesian city of Emden, he baptized over three hundred people in a few weeks' time. Then, traveling back to

Strasbourg through the valley of the Rhein, he welcomed more and more converts into the Lord's *Bundesgemeinde* (fellowship of the covenant). The year following, he visited Amsterdam, baptizing fifty people, and Leeuwarden in Friesland, where Obbe Philips joined the brotherhood. Filled with prophetic zeal, Melchior Hofman became the Lord's instrument to transplant the Anabaptist movement from central Europe to the lands along the North Sea.

As the Anabaptist movement grew in the Netherlands and northern Germany, the prophetic teaching of Melchior Hoffman came to incorporate a longstanding social problem. For many years, the common people of the region had lived on vast estates of the landed gentry. Year after year, the lords of these estates saw their wealth increase, but the common people who worked for them got poorer as their numbers multiplied. To them, the hope of Christ's prompt return, the overthrow of the rich, and the establishment of justice and equality in a kingdom of peace seemed like promises too good to be true. But, as Melchior pointed out, they stood in the Scriptures, and all it would take was faith and a willingness to act upon these promises for them to become reality. First dozens, then hundreds and thousands of people, their eyes bright with the hope of imminent relief and glory, joined the new Anabaptist movement in the Low Countries.

Nowhere did the message of Melchior Hofman find a better hearing than in the old city of Münster in Westfalen on the lowland plains along the Rhein. The people around Münster spoke Plattdeutsch. For years, they had watched heavily laden barges bring trade goods into the city. Then, on long muddy roads between clumps of dark forest and scattered farmsteads across the plain, merchants left with horses and mule trains to carry their goods into the uplands of Germany.

Münster was a trading city under the Hanseatic League's charter. Its weavers' guild and even its industrious monasteries were some of the wealthiest in northern Germany. But in spite of the city's

wealth, many of its residents were poor. When the poor people of Münster heard of the peasants' revolt in the south and of the Anabaptists' message of a coming kingdom of peace, they responded with their whole hearts. They began to seek for the truth, and Berndt Knipperdolling, a cloth merchant who lived near the Sankt Lamberti church, became their leader and spokesman.

In 1531, a new priest came to Münster. He was Berndt Rothmann, a young man educated in the School of the Brethren of the Common Life at Warendorf in Westfalen.¹⁴ He spoke well and, with Berndt Knipperdolling, defended the cause of the people.

Berndt Rothmann's teaching awakened within the people a great desire to know the real Christ. Soon after coming to Münster, he published a resume of the teachings of the Gospel¹⁵, and by 1532, the people threw the images out of the Sankt Lamberti Church and declared it an evangelical meeting place. Then two Anabaptist messengers, Bartholomeus Boeckbinder and Willem de Cuyper, converts of Melchior Hofman, arrived. On January 5, 1534, they began to baptize the believers of Münster.

Things went fast. A young Anabaptist from the Netherlands, Jan van Leyden, came to assist Berndt Rothmann and Berndt Knipperdolling in the leadership of the new congregation. Within a short time, he married Berndt Knipperdolling's daughter. Then, believing that Christ was soon to come (Melchior Hofman had predicted he would arrive already in 1533), Jan led the new believers in taking over the city hall on February 23. They made Berndt Knipperdolling mayor, and four days later, they passed a law that all adults who refused

baptism upon confession of faith had to leave the city.

In line with Melchior Hofman's prophecies, the Anabaptists began to speak of Münster as the New Jerusalem. Hundreds and soon thousands of newly baptized believers began to come on foot, by boat, and on horseback from all over the Low Countries. They came to live in what they believed was the city of Christ. In the city, they surrendered all private property and returned to living in a community of goods. Berndt Rothmann published a book on the restoration of the apostolic church. But the Roman Catholic and Protestant authorities of northern Germany did not leave the "New Jerusalem" in peace.

The bishop of Westfalen, Franz von Waldeck, called for arms and early in 1534, laid siege to Münster. The Anabaptists, under Jan van Leyden (who on August 31, 1534, declared himself the king of the New Jerusalem), took up arms. Berndt Rothmann published another tract in which he explained that the children of Jacob needed to help God punish the children of Esau. Then they went out to attack the bishop and on several occasions drove him and his soldiers back.

Within the besieged city, the twelve apostles who served on King Jan van Leyden's council and the prophets who received visions and interpretations kept informing the people of what was about to happen. A young woman, Hille Feicken, received the revelation that she was to go out into the camp of the enemy and slay the bishop, like Judith killed Holofernes. But her brave attempt ended in disaster. They caught her and promptly put her to death. Other prophecies also failed, and the messengers sent out to the Anabaptist brotherhoods of the Netherlands fell one by one into the enemies' hands and were killed.

By the end of 1534, things looked dark, and the people's hearts began to waver. King Jan van Leyden had turned, like the kings of the Old Testament, to

having more than one wife, and others followed him. Berndt Rothmann himself took nine wives. But supplies were running low, and sickness, hunger, and treachery were taking their toll. On January 25, 1535, the bishop's army broke into the city, and the last terrible battle began. Blood ran through the streets. Berndt Rothmann escaped, but they caught Berndt Knipperdolling, Jan van Leyden, and others. Put in iron cages for display, they got carried around the country for several months until the bishop's men tortured them to death and let the ravens eat their bodies hung from the tower of the Sankt Lamberti Church.¹⁶

Melchior Hofman learned about the tragedy at Münster while sitting in the tower prison at Strasbourg. An old prophet in Friesland had told him that he would be in jail for six months, after which he would escape to lead the Anabaptist movement into victory over the whole world. But five years had passed, and his imprisonment was getting worse. His legs were swelling, and he felt sick. They let his food down to him through the ceiling, and all pleas for paper and ink fell on deaf ears. For some time, he wrote his ongoing prophetic revelations onto the flyleaves of the books he had with him. Then he tore his bed sheet into strips and wrote on cloth until he ran out of that, too. But his prophecies failed. His singing and shouting in prison got weaker as his health declined. Those who had once shared his vision scattered and fell away.

Melchior Hofman died in his cell at Strasbourg ten years after the fall of Münster, in 1543, a broken man.

But it took more than personal mistakes, mistaken teachings, a mistaken emphasis, and mistaken prophesies to break the Anabaptist movement. It took ...

*...to be continued in the
September issue of
The Amish Voice*

¹⁴ The Brethren of the Common Life lived in religious communities throughout northern Europe. Founded in the 1370's by Gerrit Groote they developed a reputation for honesty and spirituality. They held all their things in common like the early Christians. The deeply spiritual writings of Gerrit Groote and Thomas a Kempis (who lived in a community of the Brethren at Zwolle in the Netherlands) still speak to those who seek Christ.

¹⁵ This resume has come down to us as the confession of faith of the South German Anabaptists, edited and enlarged by Pilgram Marpeck and Lepold Schamschlager in 1531.

¹⁶ The "Anabaptist cages" still hang as a warning to rebels, from the church tower today.

Raising boys to become real men requires a lot of time and hard work. It doesn't happen by accident! It requires the father to step up to the plate and lead by example. Fathers must be intentional about it.

Fathers, we only have eighteen years! After that, we have to let go of our boys and pray that, by God's grace, they become real, hardworking, devoted men.

Just think... your hard work will impact generations to come. It's worth your time. It's worth your effort. Those who go at it flippantly will, at some point, pay a hefty price. But those who are truly intentional about it will reap endless rewards.



Teach Them to Know and Love God

Start by helping your boys build a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Pray with them. Read the Bible together. Let them see that your walk with the Lord is real and daily.

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

Model What a Godly Man Looks Like

Boys learn more by watching than by listening. Show them what it looks like to be a man of honesty, humility, faithfulness, and love. Let them see how you treat your wife, how you handle problems, and how you serve others.

Teach Responsibility and Hard Work

Give them jobs around the house. Let them work with their hands. Help them see that hard work, even when it's not fun, builds character.

"If any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

Discipline in Love

Boys need correction, but they also need love. Don't just punish bad behavior; teach them why something is wrong.

Teach Courage and Boldness

The world wants to make boys weak and confused. But God made them to be

strong. Teach them to stand for truth, even when it's hard. Encourage them to be leaders, not followers.

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

Talk Openly About Life

Have open conversations about real-life things. Talk to them about purity, respect, money, girls, anger, fears, and God's purpose. Don't let the world be louder than you are in their lives.

P.S. I recently heard an older man tell a young one, "Stop looking for a girlfriend. Look for a wife."

Call Out Their Identity

Let them know often: "You are a child of God. You are loved. You were made for more." When they know who they are in Christ, they'll be better prepared to become men who live for His glory.

This world needs men - real, hardworking, devoted, faithful men.

- God needs real men.
- Families need real men.
- Churches need real men.
- Communities need real men.
- Our world desperately needs real men.

Thank you to all the fathers who go the extra mile for their sons. You are gems!

The author invites you
to text or call with
questions or comments!
(419) 651-6813



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The Secret of the Strength
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The Amish Voice
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*Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord:
and the fruit of the womb is his reward.*

Psalms 127:3

Many times, when a girl is nine, ten, eleven, twelve... she comes home from school giddy and full of what we all know as “girl drama.” She’s laughing, talking fast, telling you who likes who, what someone said, who looked at who... And to us, it can sound so silly.

So, what do many mothers do? They brush it off.

“That’s silly.”

“Don’t get caught up in that.”

What we don’t realize is what is actually happening. She is bringing it to you to sort through it. She is asking—without saying it directly, “Is this right? Is this normal? Is this something that would help me or hurt me?”

When she feels dismissed, she doesn’t stop processing... she stops bringing it to you. That is the moment we have to be careful not to lose.

Because what must happen here is this: you must listen far more than you speak.

She is working things out by talking them through. And while she’s talking, she is also watching you. There’s a certain look she gives. Waiting. Watching your face. Measuring your response. That’s your moment.

Not to shut it down—but to guide it.

I remember conversations like: “Catherine likes Billy, and Billy just keeps

looking at...” And instead of dismissing it, I would ask something like, “Do you think boys are actually attracted to a girl who throws herself at them, or to a girl who is strong enough to stand back and just be her own person?”

You can almost see it click. They start to think, “Oh... that’s not actually a good way to relate to boys.”

That’s how you shape thinking—not by lecturing, but by asking. Because when they talk about “that girl,” they are often really placing themselves in that situation and quietly asking for your perspective. So, you gently guide.

- “I don’t think that was very wise.”
- “Do you think she considered how that might affect him?”
- “What happens when something like that falls apart?”

You’re not just correcting behavior—you’re building discernment.

There are so many small moments like this, where you can help shape what is appropriate, what is wise, and what reflects something deeper than just feelings. And I’ll be honest—it can become tedious.

You can get tired of the constant talking, the repeating themes, the same kinds of stories over and over.

Never ridicule.

Never silence.

Because if you do, she will still form her views—just without you. And if you stay present in it, something beautiful happens.

There will come a time—there always does—when the situation is no longer silly, when the decision is weighty.

And she will come to you... or to her father... and ask: “What do you think about this?”

And in that moment, you will realize—all those small, seemingly insignificant conversations...were building toward this one.

I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth”
3 John 1:4.



Did You Know?

The basilisk lizard can run across the surface of the water for about 15’ before sinking! God designed this lizard’s long toes with skin flaps that create tiny air pockets against the water’s surface as they run.

This lizard has been nicknamed “the Jesus Christ lizard” because of its temporary ability to “walk on water” like Jesus did as recorded in the Bible!



Part one of this three part series took a look at the Bible and the Triune God. Part two looked at man's spirit, body and soul.

Eternity May be a Long Time to be Wrong, but it's also a Long Time to be Right!

At any given time or place, you can receive eternal salvation. Pray: Dear LORD God, I know I am a sinner condemned to hell. I am sorry I have sinned against You. I believe Jesus, God the Son, died on the cross and rose again for me. Please forgive me of my sin, come into my heart, and help me live a life pleasing unto You. I accept You as my personal Lord and Saviour. Thank You for writing my name in the Book of Life. In the name of Jesus, I pray, Amen.

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." (Galatians 2:20, 21)

Please continue to read to learn more about what it means to be born-again!

Ye Must Be Born Again, The Second Birth

The express purpose of God's Word is for all mankind to know who God is and how to spend eternity with Him. In John chapter three, Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, had a conversation concerning this matter with Nicodemus, a religious man, and ruler of the Jews. Jesus told him exactly what it takes to go to Heaven; *"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3). Nicodemus, who did not understand the

spiritual truth of being born again, asked the simple question; *"...How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born"* (John 3:4)?

Due to the spiritual nature of the discussion, Nicodemus could not comprehend what Jesus was saying. The Bible explains why he could not grasp the spiritual truth of Jesus' answer; *"But the natural man (the unbeliever) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"* (1 Corinthians 2:14). The spiritual part of a man must be made alive (born-again) to understand these truths.

After Nicodemus asked the question, Jesus then explained to him the two births that must be present in his life to go to Heaven:

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." (John 3:5-7)

The first birth is to be **born of water**. A pediatric neuroscientist at Allegheny University stated that each individual has different percentages of their body made up of water. While a child is in the mother's womb, they develop in a sack of water; although the amniotic fluid is



not solely water, water is part of the components. When the water breaks, the baby is born—the **first birth**. The second birth gives life to your spirit securing an eternal home in Heaven.

Sin caused the death of our spirit; *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned:"* (Romans 5:12). Remember John 4:24 tells us that *"God is a Spirit..."*; to know and worship God must be done spiritually. How can a dead spirit communicate with the living spiritual God—it can't! But when you repent and believe the gospel (the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus), your spirit will come alive (**the second birth**). Your living spirit restores your communication with God and reserves your home in Heaven. The Apostle Paul declared, *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth..."* (Romans 1:16).

The Bible is clear that every person alive is a sinner; *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"* (Romans 3:23). Short is short, whether by a millimeter or million miles! The Bible also clearly states the penalty for sin; *"For the wages of sin is death..."* (Romans 6:23). Therefore, someone must pay the price for your sin. You have two options; accept the payment for your sin offered to you by Jesus or pay for them yourself in eternal flames; *"...but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Romans 6:23).

The Ultimate Sacrifice

Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, loves the human race so much that He came to the earth in the form of a man to die for the sins of everyone; *"Who, being in the*

form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:6-8).

God stepped out of eternity in the form of a man and suffered the penalty of our sin. He did this so every person that believes in Him can step into eternity in His likeness, God in the flesh; “*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*” (1 John 3:2). Jesus was willing to die and go to hell for you rather than spend eternity in heaven without you.

The born-again Christian has no bragging rights to their salvation; it is not by their good works; it is because of the goodness of God! He did the work and the born-again Christians get the reward! Give Him the Glory! This truth is the difference between all other religions and born-again Christians.

“For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;” (Titus 3:3-6)

The Spiritual Birth

The plan God has put in place for eternal salvation is to be born-again. The Apostle Paul made this statement to the be-

lievers in Ephesus; “*And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;*” (Ephesians 2:1). The word “quicken” has the meaning of being made alive. Paul spoke to these believers to help them understand what occurred when they repented and believed the gospel. He made it personal; “and you.” The moment you ask Jesus to be your Saviour, your spirit comes back to life—the second birth!

The Apostle Paul clearly describes the spiritual birth:

“There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” (1 Corinthians 15:41-49) (Underlines added)

Instant Spiritual Life—Born again!

“Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:14, 15). The Apostle Paul tells us in the

book of Romans that our belief will cause a desire to be righteous; “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation*” (Romans 10:9, 10). The very moment a person repents (turns to God from unbelief), a new spiritual creature is born; “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*” (2 Corinthians 5:17). This transformation is accomplished by “*...repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Acts 20:21).

“Repentance is a discovery of the evil of sin, a mourning that we have committed it, a resolution to forsake it. It is, in fact, a change of mind of a very deep and practical character, which makes the man love what once he hated, and hate what once he loved.”

The Breath of God Brings Life

“And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7). After God’s hands formed man out of the dust of the ground, His breath is what gave Adam life. God did not create breath; He gave us His! When a sinner invites Jesus to be their Saviour, the Holy Spirit will come into their life. Because the Holy Spirit is invisible, like the wind, He cannot be seen. Although it is easy to see the evidence of the wind, you cannot see the wind itself. When you study the root meaning of the name Holy Spirit, it has the expressed meaning of “the breath of God, which brings forth life...”.

When the sinner asks Christ to come into their life to be their Saviour, the Holy Spirit breathes life into their dead spirit.

Just like the breath of God gave life to Adam's soul, His breath makes the spirit alive. Now they have the second birth, which makes it possible to communicate with God, *"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:"* (Romans 8:16). Like rustling leaves in a breeze, the changed life of the sinner is evidence of their spiritual birth.

God's eternal plan for man's salvation is a gift from Him. Therefore, it is essential first to believe the gospel: the virgin birth of Jesus (God in the flesh), His sinless life on the earth, His death on the cross, and most importantly, His resurrection. The Scripture also says, *"For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation..."* (2 Corinthians 7:10). If you are willing to repent, which results in a turning from sin, and you realize that only Jesus can help you accomplish this, then call on Him today to be your Saviour, *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Romans 10:13). To call on God is talking to Him in prayer, asking Him to forgive you of your sin and welcome Him into your heart to help you live a life pleasing to Him. The prayer below is a model prayer—you fill in the blanks as you talk directly to Him.

Pray:

Dear LORD God, I know I am a sinner condemned to hell. I am sorry I have sinned against You. I believe Jesus, God the Son, died on the cross and rose again for me. Please forgive me of my sin, come into my heart, and help me to live a life pleasing unto You. I accept You as my personal Lord and Saviour. Thank You for writing my name in the Book of Life. In the name of Jesus, I pray, Amen.

Rest Assured

The Spirit of God living inside you does not want you to wonder whether you are truly heaven-bound. He wants us to know that we have been eternally forgiven and have a place reserved for us in heaven. He gives us this confidence in His Word:

"If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son. He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." (1 John 5:9-13) (underline added)

If your good works could save you, you could be lost again by your evil deeds. But if you are born again by the grace of God, your salvation will be eternally secure by God's mercy. *"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;"* (Titus 3:5).

The moment a person is born physically, they have no record of a past; when that same person is born again, the spiritual birth, the history of their sinful past is completely gone in the eyes of God. Below are some Scriptures that will cause you to rejoice:

"Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and



in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." (Hebrews 10:15-17)

"As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." (Psalm 103:12)

"He will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities; and thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." (Micah 7:19)

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." (Isaiah 43:25)

"Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." (James 5:20)

"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;" (Acts 3:19)

If you have asked the LORD to be your Saviour today, please contact us. We rejoice in your decision and would be happy to help guide you in your new walk with God. Welcome to the family of God! God bless you!

"Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." (1 Peter 1:23)

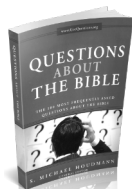
**Born Once, Die Twice:
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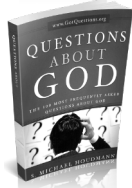
S. Michael Houdmann, General Editor, has a BA in Biblical Studies from Calvary Bible College and an MA in Christian Theology from Calvary Theological Seminary.



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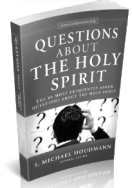
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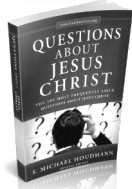
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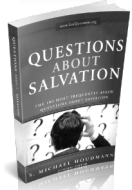
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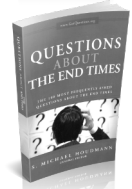
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Joy!

- by Sylvia Miller

Did you know you can be happy... and still not have joy?

Happiness and joy are not the same thing.

Happiness comes and goes. It rises when life feels good and fades when things fall apart. The Bible even warns us not to root our hearts in things that don't last.

"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have..." (Hebrews 13:5).

Material things shift. Circumstances change. If your happiness is built on what can be taken away, it will always feel unstable.

But joy? Joy is different.

Joy is a heart posture rooted in Christ. It doesn't depend on the situation — it depends on the Savior.

John 15:11 says:

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full."

Did you catch that? Remain in you.

Joy remains when everything else doesn't.

You can be joyful in hardship. Joyful in loss. Joyful when life feels like it's unraveling. Even when everything failed around him, the prophet declared in Habakkuk 3:17-18:

"Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation."

That's the difference.

Happiness says, "I feel good because things are good."

Joy says, "I trust God even when things aren't."

And real joy — the kind that comes from Christ — is something the world cannot take from you.

THE JOY OF
THE LORD IS MY
Strength
NEHEMIAH 8:10

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July

101 Bible Questions

(Part 3 of 11)

The truth about forgiveness. By Andrew Farley.

101 Bible Questions

(Part 4 of 11)

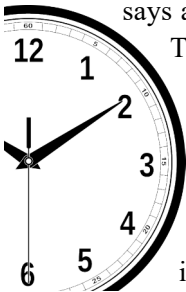
The truth about judgment. By Andrew Farley.

Life Lessons: Recalibrating Your Walk with God

Do you sense that something is off in your spiritual walk with Jesus? You are doing all the right things and working hard, but you don't feel the same connection? In this program, Chip Ingram shares what he does when that uneasy feeling disturbs his soul. Learn how to stop, reflect, and recalibrate your relationship with God and why that begins with reprioritizing your personal time with Him.

Hope Talks: Managing Your Time Wisely

Haley and Dustin discuss what the Bible says about time management.



They explore roadblocks to effective time management and how we manage our time can reveal deeper emotional and spiritual issues.

August

101 Bible Questions

(Part 5 of 11)

The truth about freedom. By Andrew Farley.

101 Bible Questions

(Part 6 of 11)

The truth about identity. By Andrew Farley.

Seeing Yourself Through God's Eyes

Based on June Hunt's 31-day interactive devotional, Haley and Dustin, from Hope Talks, discuss the concept of seeing yourself through God's eyes. This is a life-changing concept and spiritual discipline that can help you embrace your identity in Christ, correct underlying negative thoughts, and grow in your walk with the Lord.

Being Under Grace Vs Being Under the Law

To be "under the Law" is to depend on our own effort to be right with God, which always falls short. To be "under Grace" is to rest in what Christ has already done for us on the cross.

September

101 Bible Questions

(Part 7 of 11)

The truth about temptation and warfare. By Andrew Farley.

101 Bible Questions

(Part 8 of 11)

The truth about a relationship with God. By Andrew Farley.

Stress, Burnout and Finding Rest

In this episode, Haley and Dustin, from Hope Talks, sit down with Dr. Eric Scalise, President of Hope for the Heart, to talk about one of the most pressing issues in our fast-paced culture: stress and burnout.

Four Sources of Condemnation

(part 1 of 2)

Duane Sheriff teaches that the law's main purpose is to reveal sin and our need for a Savior, not to make us righteous. Citing Romans 8:1-2, he shares how he once lived under guilt until learning that God does not condemn those in Christ. Condemnation distances us from God and conviction lovingly draws us back. The old covenant brought death and condemnation, but the new covenant in Christ brings the Spirit, righteousness, and freedom to live in peace through faith.

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I am making my way back through Romans again, and when I got to this verse, I thought of how many people today are rejecting God because He is so misrepresented:

“For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you...” (Romans 2:24).

In this chapter, Paul isn’t speaking to pagans. He is speaking to the people who believed they represented God. People who had the law and knowledge. To those who thought they were doing the Lord’s work.

And yet, the result of their message and their lives was that God’s name was being dishonored among unbelievers because they were presenting a version of God that wasn’t true.

They claimed to speak for Him, but what they reflected was hypocrisy, burden,

and condemnation. Those watching in the world didn’t say, “Wow, I want to know that God.” They said, “If that’s what God is like, I want nothing to do with Him.”

That’s what happens when the message becomes Jesus plus your performance, Jesus plus your consistency, and Jesus plus your obedience to stay right with God. It sets an impossible standard and then presents God as angry when people don’t live up to it.

Mixture distorts the gospel. It turns the good news into pressure. It makes God look harsh instead of kind. It makes Him seem impossible to please and demanding, rather than gracious, and distant instead of near.

A lot of people don’t actually want to reject God; they reject the version of Him they’ve been shown.

God is not the One placing heavy burdens on people. Jesus said His yoke is easy and His burden is light. God is not standing over people demanding perfection. He provided perfection through Christ.

The true gospel doesn’t drive people away. It draws them. It is relief to burdened and weary souls. It reveals the unconditional love of God through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

The gospel reveals a God who forgives completely, who justifies the ungodly, who gives righteousness as a gift, and who secures us by His finished work, not our effort. It’s an invitation into true freedom.

God is truly kind, and the gospel is actually good news. May we represent Him well to a world desperately in need of His love.

What Does it Mean to Give a Sacrifice of Praise?

[gotquestions.org/
sacrifice-of-praise.html](http://gotquestions.org/sacrifice-of-praise.html)

Hebrews 13:15 says, *“By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.”* The terms sacrifice and praise might seem to be opposites. We think of sacrifice as offering something at great cost to ourselves. Praise, on the other hand, sounds joyful as it bubbles from a grateful heart. However, in the spiritual realm, sacrifice and praise are intertwined.

Praise does not always cost us something. We praise our dogs for fetching the ball and people for a job well done. Praise is often our response to some action that directly benefits us, and we feel generous because we extend it. We often find it easy to praise God from the same motivation. When He has blessed us, helped us, and protected us, we feel generous toward Him. We can sing, worship, and talk about how good He is because we can see it. That kind of praise, although worthwhile, does not cost us anything. It is not a sacrifice.

Then there are those times when God did not come through the way we thought He would. The medical test comes back positive. The spouse wants a divorce. A child is wayward. The mortgage company calls in the loan. God seems very far away, and praise is the last thing to bubble up from our hearts. We can’t see His goodness, and circumstances scream that He has forgotten us.

To praise God in those times requires personal sacrifice. It takes an act of the will to lay our all on the altar before a God we don’t understand. When we bring a “sacrifice of praise,” we choose to believe that, even though life is not going as we think it should, God is still good and can be trusted (Psalm 135:2; Nahum 1:7). When we choose to praise God in spite of the storms, He is honored, and our faith grows deeper (Malachi 3:13-17; Job 13:15).

The command in Hebrews 13:15 says that this sacrifice is to be offered “con-

tinually.” Our praise of God is not to be based on our opinion of His job performance. Praise cannot be treated as a “reward” we give God for His obvious blessings. Isaiah 29:13 says, *“...Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me...”* Real praise continues regardless of circumstances. It flows continually from a worshiping heart in good times and bad (Acts 16:23-25).

The “sacrifice of praise” comes from a humble heart that has been purified by fire. It rises from a spirit that has chosen to honor God in spite of the pain that life is causing. Psalm 51:16-17 expresses this idea when it says,

“For thou desirest not sacrifice; else would I give it: thou delightest not in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”

Salvation

Salvation is by grace through faith, not by works.

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9)

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5).

Biblical Worldliness

Scripture condemns worldliness. Biblically, it is a heart issue, not an issue of tools.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2:15–16)

In the Bible, “the world” does not usually mean the earth or the people living on it. The “world” is the fallen system of values, desires, and thinking that operate apart from God and is opposed to His rule.

1 John 2:16 defines the world as:

1. Lust of the flesh
2. Lust of the eyes
3. Pride of life

The Bible does not mean:

- The physical earth (God called it good in Genesis 1)
- People (God loves the world – John 3:16)
- Tools, technology, or progress

Therefore, the world is:

- A mindset without God
- Living for self instead of Christ

- Measuring life by pleasure, power, status, or comfort
- Thinking that is shaped more by culture than by Scripture

The world is not **where** you live — it is **who** you live for.

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2).

Biblical worldliness is being conformed to the world’s thinking. The word conformed means:

- To be pressed into a mold
- To take the shape of something else
- To adopt an external pattern

Paul is saying to not let the world squeeze you into its way of thinking, valuing, and deciding. This is not about tools, clothing, or technology. It is about **thinking** and **allegiance**.

In Romans 12:2, “the world” means:

- The God-excluding mindset of the age
- Human wisdom without God
- Living for self, comfort, power, or approval

In short, the world is a **mindset**, not an object.

Transformed means:

- Changed from the inside out
- A new way of thinking that leads to a new way of living

This is not behavior modification. It is **heart and mind renewal**.

New Creature in Christ

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The mind is renewed by:

- God’s Word shaping your thinking
- Submission to Christ’s authority

- Replacing cultural thinking with biblical truth

This leads to proving “...*what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God*” (Romans 12:2).

Romans 12:1 explains why Romans 12:2 works:

“...present your bodies a living sacrifice...”

This means:

- Daily surrender
- Willing obedience
- No divided loyalty

You cannot resist conformity to the world without surrender to Christ.

“...know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4).

Biblical worldliness is friendship with the world system. It is:

- Loving sin
- Living for self
- Pride, greed, immorality
- Replacing God with comfort, pleasure, or status

Technology is never mentioned. A phone can be used for:

- Sin
- Pride
- Distraction

OR:

- Ministry
- Work
- Family connection

The Bible never condemns tools. It condemns sinful hearts.

Traditionalism

Scripture warns against traditionalism. Traditionalism becomes unbiblical when traditions are treated as moral law.

“...Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? ...but in vain they do worship me, teaching for doc-

trines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:3, 9).

“...Touch not; taste not; handle not... after the commandments and doctrines of men...” (Colossians 2:20-23).

The issue is not order or simplicity. The issue is binding the conscience where God did not.



The Key Biblical Principle

Tools are morally neutral — hearts are not.

“All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient...” (1 Corinthians 10:23).

Paul is addressing believers in Corinth, a culture filled with:

- Idolatry
- Moral confusion
- Social pressure

The question was not, “What is sinful?” It was, “How should a Christian live wisely among unbelievers?”

“All things are lawful for me” means:

- Not everything is sinful
- Believers are not under ceremonial or man-made laws
- Christian liberty is real

Paul is not saying “anything goes.” He is saying that everything outside of sin is not forbidden.

“But all things are not expedient” means:

- Helpful
- Profitable
- Wise
- Beneficial in the long run

A thing can be:

- Lawful
- Permissible
- And still unwise in a given situation

Liberty must be guided by wisdom.

“But all things edify not” means:

- To build up
- To strengthen others spiritually

Paul adds a second test: Does this build up others, or only serve me? Christian liberty is governed by love, not self-interest.

Liberty is not about rights; it is about responsibility. There is a Scriptural balance.

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another” (Galatians 5:13).

“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Romans 14:19).

A phone, vehicle, or tool may be:

- Lawful
- Not sinful

But wisdom asks:

- Is it helpful here?
- Is it being used with self-control?
- Does it help or hinder my testimony?
- Am I willing to limit liberty for love?

This protects against both:

- Legalism (man-made rules)
- License (self-centered freedom)

“For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving” (1 Timothy 4:4).

Again, It’s a heart issue

- A cell phone is not sinful.
- A car is not sinful.
- Electricity is not sinful.

Sin comes from how the heart uses things, not the things themselves. Holiness comes from obedience to Christ, not separation from tools.

Jesus rebuked outward cleanliness without inward change.

“And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also?” (Luke 11:39-40)

God looks on the heart.

“...for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7).

“...Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind” (Romans 14:5).

Scripture is clear on the shunning issue.

“...Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant?...” (Romans 14:1-4).

“Let us not therefore judge one another any more...” (Romans 14:13).

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free...” (Galatians 5:1).

Your life must preach louder than your words.

- Be humble, not defensive
- Be consistent, not reactionary
- Be holy, not careless
- Be loving, even when rejected

“Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles...” (1 Peter 2:12).

“If it be possible... live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18).

If technology makes me proud, harsh, worldly, or careless, my argument collapses. If I am more present, more loving, more gospel-centered, then my life answers the charge.

Worldliness is loving sin and living for self.

- A phone or a car doesn’t make someone worldly.
- Christ changes the heart, and the heart directs how tools are used.
- I love you, and I’m not leaving Christ I’m following Him.”

As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. (Colossians 2:6-8).

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When the Storm Won't Let Up

- by Joe Keim

Are you going through a very hard time right now?

Does it feel like the waves are crashing over your ship, and you are far out at sea? It is dark, and you cannot see where you are going. It feels like this storm has been going on for a long time, and it just will not let up.

You have prayed.

You have asked God to deliver you. But nothing seems to change.

Your friends have accused you, doubted you, and even mocked you.

God seems far away.

No one understands, not even you.

You may have even begun to wonder if God is still there for you. Maybe you have questioned whether God has left, and it feels like everything in life is working against you.

You question: Lord, is there a reason for all of this? Tell me Lord, if there is.

Yes, child, there is a reason. Just keep walking. Keep trusting. Stay faithful. One day it will all make sense.

In the Bible, God did something like this in the life of Joseph. Joseph's brothers became angry with him because of a dream he had. Their anger led them to sell him into slavery. Joseph was taken far from home, falsely accused of some-

thing he did not do, and thrown into prison. He stayed there for years, forgotten and alone.

Then suddenly, the door opened. Joseph went from prison to being second in command over all of Egypt.

Years later, when Joseph finally revealed himself to his brothers, he said these powerful words:

"Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life" (Genesis 45:5).

And again he said:

"And God sent me before you... So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God..." (Genesis 45:7-8).

Through a long and painful process, God was moving His people. He used famine to bring Jacob and his sons out of the land of Canaan and into Egypt. God was moving Israel from one place to another. To make that happen, many hard and confusing things had to take place over many years.

I am fully convinced that God sometimes works this same way in our lives.

He allows deep struggles, strong opposition, sleepless nights, crying out to God, and heavy challenges. Sometimes the road is so hard that we even question

whether God is there at all. But just like with Joseph, his brothers, and his father, God was there every step of the way.

In the end, God always accomplishes His purposes.

And even when we cannot see it, even when it hurts deeply, even when it seems that we have been in survival mode for a long time, God is moving.

Don't miss the little confirmations from God along the way. They are there. You just have to recognize them. Write them down. Read them daily. Hold on to them.

May God reveal your hidden door today. When He does, you'll know, and so will the whole world around you.



"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Pr 3:5-6).

The author invites you to text or call with questions or comments! (419) 651-6813