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“Let No One Despise Your Youth” Six Elements of Earning Respect



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connections are fascinating.

Cutting God Out of Our Lives

If you can't kill the message, kill the messenger. Too many times throughout history, people angered by the words of God's representatives have actually resorted to such extreme measures.

Jeremiah once found himself under such a threat, simply because he was carrying God's warning to the citizens of Judah. He convicted them of their sins and prophesied destruction if they continued their evil ways. This did not sit well with many, and calls for his death rang out!

Not everyone, though, was of that mind. Some high-level leaders heeded and trembled upon hearing God's words, understanding His warning was in hope "that everyone may turn from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity" (Jeremiah 36:3). They were deeply troubled and wanted the king to hear this vital message. They knew him well enough, though, that they advised Jeremiah to go into hiding in case it didn't go well.

Taking a knife to God's Word

Indeed, it did not go well. King Jehoiakim took great offense to Jeremiah's words. The king, who apparently had a flair for the dramatic, responded with an arrogant spectacle described in Jeremiah 36:23: "And it happened, when Jehudi had read three or four columns, that the king cut it with the scribe's knife and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the scroll was consumed."

Perhaps Jehoiakim thought his histrionics would humor and impress his courtiers, but it only revealed his personal contempt for God and influenced others likewise. Although cooler heads implored him not to be so presumptuous, "Yet they were not afraid, nor did they tear their garments, the king nor any of his servants who heard all these words."

The king and his court would have done well to remember Solomon's proverb, "There are many plans in a man's heart, nevertheless the LORD's counsel—that will stand" (Proverbs 19:21).

Jehoiakim evidently felt accountable to no one, not even God, and defiantly ignored the potential consequences. But the Lord's counsel stood. Judah soon suffered a shattering defeat by the Babylonians, and Jehoiakim died in ignominy.

Wielding our scissors today

Reading "The Danger of Cut-and-Paste Christianity" (in this issue) about Thomas Jefferson taking a razor to the Gospels was eerily reminiscent of Jehoiakim. And scarily similar to our world today!

We're not doing it as overtly or dramatically as Jefferson or Jehoiakim, literally taking scissors to verses we don't like. But are we systematically cutting God's Word out of our lives, pushing Him more and more to the edges of our consciousness?

Our scissors are those of apathy, disbelief, the pursuit of pleasure and self-satisfaction. (The attitude Revelation 3:17 describes as feeling rich and having "need of nothing" can apply to people, churches, nations or entire societies.) Snip. Snip. Snip.

Who will learn the lessons?

God once said through Hosea, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Was His knowledge nowhere to be found? Not at all. As He explained, the lack was "because you have *rejected* knowledge"! This is why He also noted, "The more they increased, the more they sinned against Me."

God is not mocked. Other end-time prophecies show that Hosea's words so long ago will come true again: "Because you have forgotten the law of your God . . . I will change their glory into shame" (Hosea 4:6-7).

It really doesn't matter how it's done. Cutting God out of our lives puts us in the same danger Jehoiakim and Judah faced.

We hope you, dear reader, will learn this critically important lesson and, like the wise ones in that day, stand with those who listened to God and kept Him in their lives!



Clyde Kilough

Clyde Kilough
Editor

“Let No One Despise Your Youth”

Six Elements of Earning Respect

Do you ever feel dismissed or looked down upon just because you're young? This story of a young man and his mentor can help you earn respect.





Tim had a problem.

How much it bothered him or affected his ability to do his job, we don't know exactly, but it was enough to gain his supervisor's attention.

Tim's problem wasn't unlike that of many young adults. Simply because of being young, he was not being afforded the respect he deserved by his older colleagues, coworkers or—even more challenging—those he had to supervise.

If you are a teen or young adult, have you ever experienced the feeling that others don't respect you as much, don't listen as seriously to your opinion, or may be a bit patronizing toward your input—just because you're young?

They may be polite and intend no offense, but their behavior still feels condescending. It's especially frustrating if you know your contributions could be valuable—if only you had their respect.

It seems that's where Tim had found himself.

A mentor's words of wisdom

But Tim also had a mentor, a wise older man who had taken him under his wing. He had come to respect and trust Tim, to the point of giving him some very important responsibilities that involved overseeing and guiding a lot of people.

Perhaps that was part of Tim's problem—living in the shadow of his mentor. It's natural and easy in such cases for people to negatively compare the younger new guy to the older, well-known, beloved father figure.

Regardless of what had created obstacles to Tim's success, his mentor knew what Tim needed to do, and the wisdom he shared with him—nearly 2,000 years ago—still stands today as sage advice for any young person.

"Tim," you may have guessed by now, is a more casual, familiar term. He is known to readers of the Bible as Timothy, and his mentor, of course, was the apostle Paul. They had a deep bond, akin to a father-son relationship.

Timothy was well aware that Paul spoke from experience—that he had come by his wisdom through many of his own challenges of having to earn people's trust. So, when Timothy received his mentor's letter, offering counsel on a number of issues, he undoubtedly sensed the advice would be deeper and more astute than what most people would offer. And so it was.

Are you a young person wanting to earn respect? Consider, then, the six steps to success Paul laid out for Timothy.

"Let no one despise your youth"

Paul's statement might have caught Timothy off guard: "Let no one despise your youth," or, as it could be read, "look down on your youthfulness."

It would be easy to react skeptically and say, “That sounds good, but how do you stop someone from doing that?”

Some people seem to think being strongly self-assertive is the answer—establishing social rank and projecting a tough, “no one disrespects me” attitude. Yet, ironically, many others deem that approach as immature in itself.

So how can you stop someone from dismissing you if you want to be respected and thought of as mature?

The answer, Paul said, lies in developing a few core qualities that shift the focus away from one’s age, making it all about character instead. Although not directly stated, Paul’s point was that respect is legitimately earned not by your years but by what you are.

If you’re a young person, applying yourself to developing these six qualities will put you on the fast track to winning the respect of others.

The power of example

Paul’s advice is, thankfully, preserved for us today in 1 Timothy 4:12. “Let no one despise your youth,” he wrote, “but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”

He did not elaborate on or define these qualities—presumably he expected Timothy to ponder that himself. Given the importance of character, it’s a mark of maturity in itself when any young person devotes study and thought to these deeper things of life.

The following are a few observations that may serve to stimulate your thinking along those lines.

First, Paul told Timothy to be an example. And an example to the believers in particular, he noted, since that was the group for which Timothy had responsibility. But being an example will impact everyone who comes within your sphere of influence, because most people (even unbelievers) highly esteem these character traits.

Examples can be set in one short instance or over a long stretch of time. But eventually, the most important opinion anybody will ever draw about you will be the one based on your example. You can’t hide your example, and you can’t fake it. Our example lays out what we are really made of—what we are inside—for everyone to see.

Why do you think Paul encouraged Timothy to be conscious of his example? It seems he wanted Timothy to know that character development wasn’t just for his own personal benefit, but that he had a responsibility to show others how they could and should live as well. Timothy’s life was to be a model for others.

By telling him to be example-conscious, Paul was emphasizing to Timothy that when you express love, for instance, others can see it and think, “Ah, that is what love (in its many forms—fairness, kindness, mercy, compassion, etc.) looks like in action.”

Examples are powerful—often far more powerful than words! We all are influenced by others’ examples, good and bad. So Paul’s instruction about the things Timothy could do was prefaced by telling him to take on the responsibility of showing the right way to others.

Six facets of building respect

Now, let’s briefly consider the six qualities Paul drew attention to.

“**In word**”—the way we express ourselves. It’s doubtful anyone reading this doesn’t already understand that a crude or critical vocabulary debases others and demeans one’s own reputation as a Christian.

In terms of maturity, not being able to express one’s emotions without resorting to vulgarity reflects an infantile level of emotional intelligence. Conversely, having good words, kind words, uplifting words, spoken from a genuinely caring heart, shows that you are thinking of others, which is a sign of a mature mind.

Even the simple act of stopping to have a word with the elderly or little children, or taking time to write good words to others through social media, notes or cards, tells people you care. And in a world where many seem to care less and less about their fellow man, people will automatically respect someone who has the maturity to rise above that and show care for others with words.

“**In conduct**”—the way we behave. Good words have to be backed up by good conduct. We’ve all seen people who put on a smiling face and talk nicely when certain others are around, but as soon as they’re

gone, the mask comes off and their conduct changes for the worse.

There's a word for that—*hypocrisy*. And most people despise hypocrites.

Good character is demonstrated by conduct. It gives evidence to the words we speak and proclaim to live by. Paul's advice here is simple, but deeply important. Today we might say, "Practice what you preach!"

"In love"—the care and concern that goes out to others. We're living in a world in which Jesus said we would see love—common care for others—growing cold because of increasing sinfulness (Matthew 24:12).

But practicing the way of love defined in 1 Corinthians 13 not only keeps us from becoming emotionally and spiritually calloused, but helps others profoundly. As Paul said, that type of love never fails, because it is God's way. A young person who is mature enough to follow God's way of loving others will experience something surprising—reciprocity. People love and respect in return those who are loving.

"In spirit"—zeal, wholeheartedness. Some versions of the Bible do not include this word, but it is nevertheless a great quality. It has to do with one's passion and how it is directed. For example, how should one pursue these other five traits? Grudgingly or eagerly? Casually or seriously? Half-heartedly or without reserve? It's not so common to see a young person passionately pursuing what he or she believes, but when people do, their respect for him or her increases.

"In faith"—loyalty. The original Greek word here refers more to being faithful. Can a teen or young adult look at the way life works and realize that over time everyone experiences good times and bad, trials and blessings alike? Of course. Can he or she also determine to be steadfastly faithful and loyal to God through everything life brings? Of course.

Others will see that too. When we see people slogging through a very difficult time in life, yet never wavering in their faith and faithfulness toward God, such examples are exceedingly encouraging and can help us strengthen our own relationship with God. We respect that.

"In purity"—not spiritually contaminated. Sin contaminates people. It alters our thinking and

messes up our lives and others' lives too. Such impurity takes many forms, ranging from anger to adultery, jealousy to injustice, stealing to slander, and many other sins. No one's character is pure 24-karat gold, but mature people highly esteem young people they see striving to purify their lives and to "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul" (1 Peter 2:11).

Maturity—putting away childish things

We could add many other qualities or aspects of godly character, but chances are they would fall under one of these six categories Paul listed. They are not hard to understand, but as core facets of character development, they are worth deeply exploring, not only for how they work in our lives, but for how they are truly the building blocks of respect.

Maybe Timothy had read in Paul's letter to the Corinthians another perspective on maturing. "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child," Paul had explained. He added, "but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (1 Corinthians 13:11).

Paul didn't say, "When I turned 18 (or 21, or 30), I became a man." No, he knew that he had attained maturity when he put away childish things. And he knew that's what earns respect.

Sad to say, some people never put away childish things, no matter how old they become! Glad to say, though, that when people rise to such maturity in their youth, they set a powerful example for others—young and old alike.

Likewise, no doubt Timothy heeded Paul's advice—don't worry about what people think, just do the right things. If you set the right example, people will change their view of you. That advice is timeless, standing just as true today.

Youth is an age, but maturity is a way of thinking and behaving. You can do nothing about what age you are, but you can do everything about the way you think and act.

In that, you will find the power—and the godly path to character—that will change the mind of anyone who would be inclined to look down on your youthfulness.

—Clyde Kilough



3 Lessons in Courage From the Apostles

The Bible is filled with stories of courage and faith. What lessons can we learn from the apostles to help us grow in the courage we need today?

Many of the best-known stories of courage are found in the Old Testament of the Bible.

Joshua followed God's admonition to "be strong and of good courage" as he led the Israelites into the land they were promised (Joshua 1:6, 7, 9).

David, as a youth, overcame Goliath (1 Samuel 17). As young men, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego refused to bow down to King Nebuchadnezzar's idol (Daniel 3). And when still a young woman, Esther risked her life to save her people (Esther 4:16).

Hebrews 11 documents the stories of many of these faithful people.

These stories of faithful people in the Old Testament remain as timeless examples for us today (2 Timothy 3:16). But are there similar Christian stories of courage in the New Testament?

The simple answer is yes! There are also accounts of people in the New Testament displaying great courage under the most difficult circumstances.

One of the most extensively documented and insightful stories of courage in this section of Scripture is that of the apostles—the men personally selected by Jesus for training during His earthly ministry.

The apostles' initial lack of courage

During the 3½ years the apostles spent with Jesus, their courage was somewhat of a mixed bag.

They had the courage to leave their careers and follow Jesus in order to become "fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). And Peter had the courage and faith to walk on water toward Jesus—at least for a short while (Matthew 14:25-31)!

As tensions between the religious leaders and Jesus intensified just prior to our Savior's crucifixion, Peter vehemently said, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!" And the other disciples made similar statements (Matthew 26:35).

It sounded good. They all wanted to be courageous. The only problem was, when Jesus was taken into custody, they weren't courageous.

Peter tried to stop the proceedings by pulling out his sword and taking a swing at the high priest's servant, cutting off his ear (Matthew 26:51). But when Jesus told Peter to put his sword away so He could be arrested in order to fulfill Scripture, "all the disciples forsook Him and fled" (verse 56). Some later did follow to see what would happen to Him (John 18:15-16; Matthew 27:55-56).

Not knowing what to do under these circumstances, the apostles allowed their fears to prevail.

The apostles were strengthened by the Holy Spirit

After Christ's death and resurrection, He told His disciples to go to Jerusalem and remain there until they were "endued [clothed, English Standard Version] with power from on high" (Luke 24:49).

Just a few days later, when Jesus' followers assembled in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost, they received this promised gift—the Holy Spirit of God, which is a spirit of power (Acts 2:4; 2 Timothy 1:7).

The Holy Spirit came with physical evidence: a sound like a "rushing mighty wind" and "divided tongues, as of fire" that rested on each of them (Acts 2:2-3). Furthermore, they miraculously spoke in other languages (verse 4).

From this time forward, the power of God continued to be demonstrated as "many wonders and signs were done through the apostles" (verse 43).

Peter and John arrested

One of the miracles that the apostles were now empowered to perform was the healing of people who were sick or infirm.

Shortly after that momentous Day of Pentecost, Peter and John went to the temple. As they entered, Peter healed a man who had been lame from birth (Acts 3:1-10).

Instead of rejoicing and praising God that such an amazing miracle had occurred, the religious authorities became angry that Peter was publicly giving credit to Jesus for this supernatural event. They became so angry that they arrested Peter and John and "put them in custody until the next day" (Acts 4:3).

The courage of these apostles to face the same religious authorities who had just recently orchestrated Jesus' death was now going to be tested.

This time they had God's Spirit in them to help them face the vitriolic efforts of the Jewish leaders to put an end to their ministry.

Courage to face the Jewish religious authorities

The next day, when Peter and John were brought before an assembly of the most distinguished Jewish

authorities, they were asked, “By what power or by what name have you done this?” (verse 7).

Instead of being intimidated, “Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the “stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.” Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved’” (verses 8-12).

The text doesn’t explain what John said or did, but we are told that the Jewish authorities marveled at “the boldness of Peter and John” (verse 13).

Realizing that they couldn’t deny that a miracle had occurred, the Jewish authorities decided to “severely threaten them” and command them “not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus” (verses 17-18).

Peter and John’s courageous response was: “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (verses 19-20).

3 keys for building and maintaining spiritual courage

After their encounter with the religious authorities, Peter and John were let go. What they did next further bolstered their courage to continue their ministry.

Acts 4:23-31 documents three key activities of the apostles that can likewise give us spiritual courage.

1. They met with fellow believers.

After Peter and John were released, “they went to their own companions and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them” (verse 23).

Sharing what had occurred with the other apostles—people who shared the same commitment to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God—was surely encouraging to Peter and John.

It must have been uplifting to the other disciples as well to hear how the miraculous power of the Holy

Spirit healed the lame man and how God had guided the events so the Jewish leaders were stymied in their efforts to stop the blossoming ministry of the apostles.

Fellowship with brethren was an important foundation of early Christianity, and spending time with those who share our faith remains a powerful means of nurturing spiritual courage today (Acts 2:42; Philippians 1:5).

2. They prayed for courage.

After hearing Peter and John’s report, the apostles prayed to God (Acts 4:24). In their prayer they recalled that David had prophesied that rulers would gather together “against the LORD and against His Christ” (Psalm 2:2) and noted that this had indeed occurred (Acts 4:27-28).

They then prayed, “Now, Lord, look on their threats, and grant to Your servants that with all *boldness* they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus” (verses 29-30, emphasis added throughout).

In addition to asking for courage to boldly speak God’s word, they also asked that they might continue to do miracles in Jesus’ name.

3. They focused on the future.

It is important for us to notice another component of their prayer: they asked for help to fulfill the commission Jesus had given them to preach the gospel to all nations (Matthew 28:19-20). They were not trying to get out of their commitment; they were focused on the future!

Perhaps this teaching of Jesus was etched deeply into their minds: “No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62).

After their prayer, we read that “the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with *boldness*” (Acts 4:31).

These three key activities bolstered the apostles’ spiritual courage, and they remain powerful lessons for us today.

—David Treybig

— How Long, O Lord? —



God's faithful have often waited—for healing, relief and deliverance—while asking, "How long?" What can we learn while waiting for God?

Have you waited a long time for an answer to your prayers? Have you asked God, perhaps in tears, “How long?” as you’ve waited for healing or for a spouse or for a better job?

You aren’t alone.

“How long, O Lord?” is a plea for help repeated throughout Scripture. Wherever these words appear, they are expressed with great emotion, and they have resonated with the faithful through the centuries.

Asking God, “How long?”

One such passage, referring to the destruction of Jerusalem, declares that the enemy has “laid Jerusalem in heaps” (Psalm 79:1) before asking, “How long, LORD? Will You be angry forever? Will Your jealousy burn like fire?” (verse 5).

This was a national issue, but the Bible is peppered with similar statements that are very personal. Feeling as though God had unfairly persecuted him, Job asked, “What is man, that . . . You should visit him every morning, and test him every moment? How long? Will You not look away from me, and let me alone till I swallow my saliva?” (Job 7:17-19).

It’s easy to feel the way Job did. Absorbed in our own fear and pain, we think that God has not noticed our suffering or that it doesn’t matter to Him.

That isn’t true! David wrote: “The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all” (Psalm 34:17-19; see our online article “[God Hears Our Prayers](#)”).

God does hear, but He does not always act when we think He should. While we cry out to God, asking Him how long before He steps in to heal us or to deliver us or to grant us some sort of help or relief, we may miss the fact that sometimes God also waits, asking, “How long?”

When has God asked, “How long?”

Very early in the history of the nation of Israel, God asked, “How long?” The tribes had barely left Egypt when their behavior prompted this question. It happened shortly after God blessed Israel with manna.

He supplied this miraculous “bread from heaven”

(Exodus 16:4) every day, but He provided a double portion on the sixth day so His people could rest on the Sabbath (verse 5).

Some of the people, in defiance of God’s clear instructions, attempted to collect manna on the Sabbath. God then asked, “How long do you refuse to keep My commandments and My laws?” (verse 28).

This is not an isolated case of God’s asking, “How long?” The question also came up when:

- Samuel, a judge and prophet of Israel, mourned for King Saul (1 Samuel 15:35) after God had rejected him as king. God asked Samuel, “How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel?” (1 Samuel 16:1).

Even God’s prophets were inspired to ask this question:

- God’s prophet Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal and asked the people of the northern Kingdom of Israel, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him” (1 Kings 18:21).
- God’s prophet Jeremiah wrote: “O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved. How long shall your evil thoughts lodge within you?” (Jeremiah 4:14).

Scripture makes it plain that God has also waited for His people to repent.

Why does God wait?

One major reason God waits is because He is merciful. This concept is vital for us to grasp as we grapple with our own personal suffering or with the suffering of so many other people. Accidents and time and chance cause suffering. But even more, sin causes suffering. That doesn’t necessarily mean that the person suffering has sinned and caused his or her own suffering. We can and do suffer because of others’ sins.

From the time of Adam and Eve, humans have lived in a world cut off from God. It is a world living under a curse we brought upon ourselves (Genesis 3:16-19). If God were to punish every sin immediately, we would all die, because we are all guilty of sin (Romans 3:10-12, 23).

But God is merciful, and as the apostle Peter wrote, “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not

willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

In His mercy, God—the master of perfect timing—gives all of us time: time to come to our senses, time to learn that we are sinners, time to realize that we need Him, and time to come to repentance.

Most of us, however, are like a pair of brothers who were among the original 12 disciples. James and John, the sons of Zebedee, earned the nickname “Sons of Thunder” from Jesus (Mark 3:17).

Jesus may well have given them this title because of their attitude after a Samaritan village turned them away because Jesus was headed for Jerusalem (Luke 9:52-53). James and John asked Jesus whether they should “command fire to come down from heaven” (verse 54) to destroy those Samaritans. Jesus rebuked His two disciples, explaining that He “did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them” (verse 56).

Most of us have a hard time showing mercy to anyone who has hurt us, but being merciful is God’s nature. We simply do not think the same way that God does.

The prophet Isaiah pointed out this disparity between our desire for immediate justice and God’s willingness to give all of us time to repent:

“Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts’” (Isaiah 55:7-9).

All of God’s thoughts are higher than ours, but this passage is specifically highlighting God’s desire for mercy. This passage is telling us that we do not desire mercy as much as God does. As we grow in the [fruit of the Spirit of longsuffering](#), we should also grow in [mercy](#).

It’s not always just about growing in mercy

What about situations that don’t call for forgiveness? What about when we ask for healing or a mate or financial relief?

The truth is, we don’t always understand why we wait. It might be so we can build faith, or it might be so someone else can build faith. On the other hand,

it might have nothing to do with growing in faith or mercy, but the trial might fit into God’s plans in some way we can’t yet comprehend.

The disciples, who, like so many people, saw all trials as punishment for sin, asked Jesus why a man they encountered was blind: “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” (John 9:2).

Jesus surprised them with His answer: “Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him” (verse 3). God was not punishing him for sin. This man’s blindness was being used to reveal the power of God.

What this means for you and me

We know from personal experience, as well as from Scripture, that the Christian walk is not without suffering. In fact, Peter wrote that “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:21).

But along with the suffering, God also offers comfort and help. Study more about this in our articles [“Father of Mercies and God of All Comfort”](#) and [“21 Encouraging Bible Verses About Comfort.”](#) In the end, God has great blessings in store for those who patiently wait for Him: “Blessed are all those who wait for Him” (Isaiah 30:18; see our online article [“Joint Heirs With Christ”](#)).

Whatever the reasons for not yet receiving an answer, we need to prepare ourselves spiritually. This preparation begins when we accept the idea that we are not in control. God is, and that fact should actually give us confidence.

Once we trust God, who always has our best interests at heart, then we can step back from our own pain long enough to try to see the world as God does. We can pray for understanding and faith. And then we can more readily wait, patiently enduring what comes our way.

None of this means that waiting will be easy or that it will be painless. On the contrary, we may still ask, “How long, O Lord?” But when we do, it won’t be out of desperation. It will be with understanding and faith.

On top of that, as we strive to align our will with God’s will, we can know that God won’t need to ask us, “How long?”

To delve deeper into this subject, see our online article [“Why Am I Suffering?”](#)

—Bill Palmer

What Does the Bible Say About Quiet Quitting?

Quiet quitting has drawn attention to genuine issues facing today's workforce. But should you "quiet quit"? What is the biblical perspective on quiet quitting?

In 1999 a comedy film was released that centered on a character who absolutely despises his office job. Throughout the film, he progressively embraces not caring and openly flaunts doing the bare minimum at work.

At one point, when asked about his job performance, the character says: "My only real motivation is not to be hassled, that and the fear of losing my job. But you know . . . that will only make someone work just hard enough not to get fired" (*Office Space*).

What this film poked fun at 24 years ago—a dissatisfied employee putting in minimal effort—now has a popular name: quiet quitting.

What exactly is quiet quitting?

Quiet quitting has come to describe employees who

express their job dissatisfaction by putting only minimum effort into it, sometimes just enough to avoid being fired. It has also been described as coasting on the job.

In other words, quiet quitters mentally disengage from their jobs. Instead of putting in their maximum effort, they do only the tasks they are explicitly paid to do in their job description. Nothing more, nothing less.

Some behaviors commonly cited as indications of quiet quitting include:

- Only putting in the required 40 hours and not a second more.
- Refusing to respond to emails outside of work hours.
- Being openly cynical toward their employer.
- Refusing to go "the extra mile" beyond the normal duties.
- Refusing to work with and interact with coworkers.

Some have creatively described this approach as “acting your wage”—in other words, doing only the amount of work you feel your pay is worth and nothing more.

The hashtag #quietquitting has become popular on the Internet, where workers explain how and why they’ve quit without actually quitting.

Why are employees quiet quitting?

A Gallup poll [conducted](#) in 2022 found that at least 50 percent of American workers practice some form of quiet quitting and 18 percent are “actively disengaged.”

But to understand this problem, we should consider some of the factors behind it:

- **Insufficient pay and inflation.** Many feel frustrated that their salary has not risen at a pace equal to inflation. Inflation has led them to feel they’re doing the same amount of work (or more) for less money.
- **Feeling disrespected.** Many employees say they feel disrespected by employers who continually ask more and more of them, but refuse to compensate them for extra duties or to respect their personal time.
- **Discouragement.** Many workers, especially young adults, feel that they’ve been cheated out of the things middle-class workers in previous generations enjoyed, such as owning property and being able to afford a comfortable lifestyle and retire at a reasonable age.
- **Burnout.** Many feel their job requirements have encroached too far into their personal lives. Because they feel their work-life balance is being compromised, they are pushing back.

These issues shouldn’t be casually dismissed. Employers should use this trend as a wake-up call and reconsider how much they are demanding of their employees and how they are compensating them.

However, employees should also understand that it’s not as simple as employers waving a magic wand and demanding less and paying more. Businesses are also facing daunting economic realities that, in many cases, make solutions difficult or impossible.

Perhaps, the first step is for both sides, in an attitude of mutual respect, to come to a better understanding of the challenges each is dealing with. Sadly, this approach is rarely practiced in our world today.

What is the biblical perspective on work-life balance?

According to its proponents, quiet quitting is merely a way to defend their work-life balance by denying demands for anything more than the proverbial nine-to-five.

The Bible does teach that balance is important in all areas of life—especially in our professional and personal lives.

In fact, God embedded this principle into the 10 Commandments. [The Fourth Commandment](#) requires us to *rest* on the seventh day of each week. “Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work” (Exodus 20:9-10).

The Sabbath’s primary purpose is to provide us a day to draw closer to God. But its secondary purpose is to provide a day of physical rest from our daily labor. Many studies have confirmed that a weekly day of rest is a key to good health.

Christians should be uncompromising in their refusal to work on the Sabbath. When the sun sets on Friday evening, normal work should cease for 24 hours. No work emails. No work stress. (To learn more, read [“How to Keep the Sabbath Holy.”](#))

Furthermore, the other six days of the week should include leisure and rest time too. The Bible shows the value of adequate sleep every night (Psalm 4:8; Proverbs 3:24; Ecclesiastes 5:10). It also teaches that work should be balanced with time for education, hobbies and recreation (Ecclesiastes 2:24; 3:4; 8:15; Proverbs 9:9; 17:22).

Jesus understood and practiced these principles by getting away from the hustle and bustle of His ministry (Matthew 14:23; Luke 5:16).

Workaholicism and a lifestyle of constant anxiety are neither healthy nor biblical. The Bible encourages us to “be anxious for nothing” (Philippians 4:6) and presents overbusyness in a negative light (Daniel 12:4; Luke 10:41).

What does the Bible say about our approach to work?

The real problem with quiet quitting is the attitude behind it. Descriptions of the phenomenon usually include words and phrases like *disengaged*, *no longer*

going “*the extra mile*,” decreased initiative and sometimes isolation.

Even though the Bible doesn’t advocate workaholism, it does teach that having a strong work ethic is important both physically and spiritually.

The book of Proverbs uses the word *diligent* to describe the correct approach to work (Proverbs 10:4; 13:4; 21:5; 27:23). Merriam-Webster.com defines diligent as “characterized by steady, earnest, and energetic effort.” This word encapsulates the biblical approach to work:

- **Steady:** We should *consistently* give our best effort and focus on our work.
- **Earnest:** We should take our work *seriously* and value it highly.
- **Energetic:** We should put our full *energy* and effort into our work when we’re on the job.

In other words, we apply the wisdom of Ecclesiastes 9:10: “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might.” Don’t just coast and do the bare minimum—put your all into your work during work time.

Yes, many are understandably demoralized by the realities of our age, such as inflation and increasing workloads. We know that many are discouraged because they feel trapped in jobs that provide just enough security to pay the bills, but not enough to really get ahead in life. And we absolutely know there are employers who expect more for less.

But here’s the key point: If we take the Bible seriously, then we have to be serious about applying its guidance despite our circumstances. The Bible instructs us to work with diligence by putting our best effort, energy and focus into our work. This will undoubtedly result in physical benefits and new opportunities opening up to us, but it isn’t just a physical principle.

It is primarily a spiritual issue.

Ultimately, the Bible instructs us to approach our work as if God were our employer (Ephesians 6:5-7; Colossians 3:22-23). Christians must always strive to show respect and honor when interacting with their supervisor (1 Timothy 6:1). This approach can change our perspective on the physical circumstances we find ourselves in and help us maintain a proper attitude.

It’s also an issue of example. By always working hard and maintaining an attitude of respect, our example will shine as a light and help us stand out in a positive way (Matthew 5:16).

Ultimately, Christians are striving for a far higher calling, growing in godly character and preparing to serve in God’s Kingdom. Learn more in our free booklet [*The World to Come: What It Will Be Like*](#).

Four alternatives to quiet quitting

If you are struggling with your job, here are four better ways to handle a discouraging work situation:

1. Be open and honest. If you feel your job isn’t allowing a healthy work-life balance, consider having an open and respectful conversation with your supervisor about the issue. If you feel your boss would be open to this conversation, you can respectfully communicate your boundaries, while also being reasonable in case of emergencies. This approach is better than bottling up frustration and passive-aggressively revealing it through your job performance.

2. Don’t reject the “extra mile.” Interestingly, the “go the extra mile” principle comes from Jesus Christ (Matthew 5:40-42). He taught that if someone in authority compels you to do something, do even more. Going above and beyond is just another way of applying Ecclesiastes 9:10. Don’t reject the principle, but also be careful about letting others abuse it. Find the balance.

3. Try to find meaning in your work. It’s understandable that you might struggle if you don’t find meaning in your work. With some jobs, it may take looking deeper to see how your job benefits not only your employer, but also your community and society.

4. If the situation seems hopeless, move on. If your good faith efforts to set boundaries and to find meaning in your work seem ineffective, then the best option may be to search for new employment. There is no biblical principle that compels us to stay in a job that is causing bitterness or burnout.

Employees today can face genuine challenges, but quiet quitting is not the solution.

—Erik Jones

What Is Man?

Which of the world's scholars can answer this age-old question? The meaning of human life eludes the brightest minds but comes to those who believe the Bible.

The 20th century saw the detonation of a knowledge bomb, and the explosion has been felt ever since.

But for all the information that became available, what source gives a satisfying answer to the question, What is man? What is humanity's potential and purpose?

There are certainly ideas out there, and no shortage of them, for that matter. But honestly ask yourself, Do any of these ideas

even begin to quench my thirst for the knowledge of *who I am* and *what I am*?

Understanding man requires we first understand God

The account of creation in Genesis is familiar to many of us, but hidden in this beloved record of history is the first of many hints that there is more to man than what meets the eye.

Interestingly, one clue is found in the fourth word of the Bible, “God,” which appears over 30 times in the first chapter of Genesis alone. It’s translated from the Hebrew *Elohim*, a word with a plural ending. The concept of God being a plurality is clearly found with the creation of man. “Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, according to *Our* likeness,” not “Let *Me* make man in *My* image” (Genesis 1:26, emphasis added throughout).

In fact, when we connect this scripture to the apostle John’s opening words in his Gospel, we learn that the “Us” in Genesis refers to two distinct personalities—whom John calls “the Word” and “God” (John 1:1). They were coexistent—both present at creation, both *God*.

John clarifies Their identities a few verses into his account: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father” (verse 14). In other words, the Word became *the Son*—Jesus Christ—and the other personality was *the Father*.

In their titles—Son and Father—we learn something important about God.

God, it turns out, is a *family*.

Why God created humanity

Understanding God as a family—the divine family—is at the heart of the gospel message and the answer to the question, What is man?

The pages of the Bible tell us that God the Father’s unalterable will is to *expand* the divine family through human beings.

Man is the way God makes His plan possible, as we will see.

His work can be summarized by this powerful statement from the book of Hebrews: “For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Hebrews 2:10).

Man’s identity is intimately tied to God’s purpose for creating us. But how will this process be accomplished?

God did not finish man’s creation

A number of scriptures show that human beings are God’s children, given that they are like Him because they were made in His “image” and are therefore His “offspring” (Genesis 1:26; Acts 17:28).

But while the similarities between man and God abound, so do the differences. Chief among those differences is the fact that we are made of flesh and blood. Man is mortal, and does not have immortal life in him. God, on the other hand, is *Spirit* (John 4:24), immortal and eternal.

It’s not that mankind was the product of some kind of failed experiment. God knew what He was doing when He took the dust of the ground to create man as an image of Himself.

It was an act that the apostle Paul came to realize had profound implications: “The spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual” (1 Corinthians 15:46).

That is to say, man is only the first stage in a two-part process of creation. God’s intention has always been that man eventually transcend the human family and become part of the God family—go from having a physical nature to having a spiritual one.

Far from being an end point, the creation described in Genesis is just the beginning of an ongoing operation. It is an operation that, when completed, will see mankind become fully like His Creator instead of only partially like Him (1 John 3:2).

Job actually hints at this mind-boggling truth. “If a man dies, shall he live again?” Job asked God (Job 14:14). “All the days of my hard service I will wait, till my *change* comes. You shall call, and I will answer You; You shall desire the work of Your hands” (verse 15).

The Creator is still creating. The “work of [His] hands” refers to those He is preparing to welcome into His divine family. The “change” that they, and Job, are awaiting is the *transformation* of the “natural body”—the physical one—into a “spiritual body” in a resurrection to eternal life (1 Corinthians 15:44).

Few grasp this grand and breathtaking reality—God is going to build His family by changing man from physical to spiritual.

The only One at this point to have personally seen the end of this process is Jesus Christ, who is called “the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29). He was the pioneer, the trailblazer. Through His death and resurrection, He modeled the way that mankind will one day enter into the divine family.

How will God complete man’s creation?

Man is incomplete, awaiting a change. But the change from physical to spiritual, from temporary to eternal, must first be preceded by another kind of change.

God’s family is a close-knit group. An essential requirement for entering the God family is oneness with Him—being in unity with God. Notice what Jesus prayed to the Father concerning His followers: “That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us” (John 17:21).

In other words, Jesus wants His followers to have the same mind, the same worldview, the same approach to life. He wants us to have the same *character* that He and the Father have. God will not grant someone the change in the resurrection, unless he or she first undergoes a change of character (Romans 12:2; Colossians 3:1-10). This is the second part of man’s creation.

However, when it comes to character, unconverted man is like a smeared canvas with dark strokes and errant lines. Man’s character is wicked, 180 degrees different from his Creator’s (Jeremiah 17:9).

If God were to leave mankind alone in the arena of character building, failure would be a foregone conclusion. So, God initiates the second stage of man’s creation by granting His Spirit to him.

Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit

The apostle Peter proclaimed this second stage of man’s creation on the momentous Feast of Pentecost. To those who were “cut to the heart” by recognizing their sins and lack of godly character, he said:

“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

This gift is the essential missing piece that allows us to become like God.

Becoming “a new creation”

The Holy Spirit is God’s *power*, the guiding force that

helps an individual develop God’s very mind and character (1 Corinthians 2:13-16). When an individual receives the Spirit, he or she becomes “a new creation” in Christ—a unique project that God commits to finishing (2 Corinthians 5:17; Philippians 1:6).

The receipt of the Holy Spirit guarantees the resurrection—the change from physical to spiritual—so long as the one in whom God’s character is being developed continually yields to Him (Ephesians 1:13-18; Colossians 1:21-23).

For more information on whether salvation is guaranteed, see our online article “Once Saved, Are You Always Saved?”

Yield to the Master Potter

Notice what Isaiah said: “But now, O LORD, You are our Father; we are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand” (Isaiah 64:8). Notice as well: “Shall the clay say to him who forms it, ‘What are you making?’ or shall your handiwork say, ‘He has no hands?’” (Isaiah 45:9).

In other words, man will fail this stage of his creation if he resists the transformation God is facilitating through His Spirit. God is the sculptor, fashioning and molding our character until it resembles His own, as we desire and submit.

We are not born with the kind of character needed to be in God’s family. Character is not predetermined. Character involves our *choosing*, our willingness to be led by God’s Spirit in the face of pressure or temptation.

Only after this second stage of testing, refining and finishing will God allow someone to become a part of His family.

An answer only few realize

What is man? The answer is elusive to many because they do not consult the Creator’s book of answers—the Bible. The satisfying answer to the age-old question is that humanity is part of God’s ongoing creation to bring more children into His family.

It’s not something God has chosen to do by fiat, but through a cooperative process that involves humans that are being led by the power of His Spirit.

The hopeful and inspiring vision of the end of that creation is what we Christians today should cling to as we wait for our *change*.

—Kendrick Diaz



What King Charles' Coronation Teaches Us About God's Promises

The May 6 coronation of King Charles will showcase much pageantry, marked by ancient customs and symbols. The biblical connections are fascinating.

Sept. 8, 2022, was a day mourned around the globe. As crowds gathered around Buckingham Palace, the Union Jack was lowered to half-staff and a double rainbow emerged across the London sky.

Queen Elizabeth II, the longest-reigning monarch in British history, had just died at Balmoral Castle, her summer residence in the Scottish highlands.

Queen Elizabeth II's funeral

Leaders from nearly every major country attended her funeral. Among the world leaders and royalty to attend were Emperor Naruhito of Japan, French President Emmanuel Macron and U.S. President Joe Biden.

Absent were President Xi Jinping of China, who reportedly declined to attend, and Vladimir Putin, who was *not* invited.

Symbols of the monarchy

In Westminster Abbey, on top of Elizabeth's coffin, sat some of the most important symbols of the British monarchy: the crown, the orb and the scepter.

In addition to the royal accoutrements, her son Charles left a personal note among the flowers on her coffin. It read: "In loving and devoted memory, Charles R." "R" is an abbreviation for Rex, which in Latin means king.

Although Charles technically became king of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland the moment his mother died, his coronation ceremony is scheduled for Saturday, May 6, 2023.

King Charles' coronation

News outlets have reported that Charles' coronation will differ in several ways from his mother's coronation nearly 70 years ago. One of the more fascinating ways is that, while it will still be a "Christian" ceremony,

there's discussion that Charles will make portions of it inclusive of other faiths. Additional reported changes include a shorter, streamlined service and no presentation of gold to the monarch.

Still, while Charles may be axing several elements of the past, everyone expects the coronation to be filled with tradition. In fact, an official statement from Buckingham Palace read, "The Coronation will reflect the monarch's role today and look towards the future, while being rooted in longstanding traditions and pageantry."

Ancient ceremonies

English coronation records have been preserved for more than a thousand years, and it is well established that multiple aspects of the coronation have remained largely unchanged for centuries.

Even more fascinating is how many of those traditions—such as the covenant, the anointing, the blowing of trumpets and the benediction "God save the King"—are found in the Bible (1 Samuel 16:13; 2 Chronicles 23).

This does not mean that everything in the coronation ceremony is biblically based. There are multiple aspects that stand in direct contrast to Scripture. Following her coronation on June 2, 1953, Queen Elizabeth expressed it well when she said, "The ceremonies you have seen today are ancient, and some of their origins are veiled in the mists of the past. But their spirit and their meaning shine through the ages."

Why monarchies in the modern world?

Many have wondered why some monarchies have lasted into our modern world, especially in Europe, where secularism has largely replaced ancient institutions and traditions. How is it that societal reforms driven by secular humanism have not yet extinguished the idea of a divinely ordained birthright?

As anti-monarchist Graham Smith expressed it, "The coronation is a celebration of hereditary power and privilege, it has no place in a modern society."

Though there have been calls to abolish the monarchy for years, they have never gained enough support to be a serious threat to the institution. A September 2022 YouGov poll found 67 percent of Britons felt the monarchy should continue.

While multiple factors help explain the survival of the British royal family, the promises of God

recorded in Scripture shed important light on this modern conundrum.

Kings from Abraham

In Genesis 17:6 God gave Abraham an amazing promise: "I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you."

Today, some 30 monarchs around the world are linked to sovereign states. Eight of those monarchs come from the Arab-speaking world, which, not coincidentally, frequently identifies its people as descendants of Abraham's son Ishmael. The line of Abrahamic kings, however, does not stop there.

Many years after God promised Abraham royal descendants, He expanded this royal promise to Abraham's great-grandson Judah and then to Judah's descendant David (Genesis 17:16, 20; 49:8-10; 1 Chronicles 5:2).

God's promise to David is captured in Psalm 89:3-4, 35-37:

"I have sworn to My servant David: your seed I will establish forever, and build up your throne to all generations . . .

"I will not lie to David: his seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me; it shall be established forever like the moon, even like the faithful witness in the sky."

God's promise to David was declared to shine through the ages—lasting not only during the time of ancient Israel, but throughout all generations!

Though we don't have all the details of how David's royal line was preserved after the fall of Judah in the sixth century B.C., the Bible does provide us clues. When put together with ancient history and other intriguing legends, those clues tell a fascinating story of how God miraculously preserved David's line by transplanting it to the British Isles.

You can learn more about this story on pages 46-53 of our booklet *The United States, Britain and the Commonwealth in Prophecy*.

The framework of God's promises

The Commonwealth of Nations spans the globe and is one on which the sun literally never sets. The kings and queens of the historic empire that preceded it occupied a throne for which there is no modern rival.

Understanding how and why the United Kingdom and many of its former colonies maintain a monarchy requires relying on God's promises, which can help us unveil the mists of the past.

With God's promises providing a clear framework, many of the puzzle pieces fall perfectly into place—the coronation traditions, the heraldic imagery, the Commonwealth of Nations. All of these supply important clues supporting the connection between the British royal family and the royal line of the biblical King David.

The heraldic image of a lion

Take, for example, the heraldic image of a lion. The lion symbol is so commonly used among European royalty, it is often mistaken as the universal symbol for kings. But this is not necessarily the case.

In fact, the majority of monarchs in the world today do not use a lion in their royal emblems. Of the 17 monarchs outside Europe, only three incorporate the symbol of the lion. Two of those are in Africa—not surprisingly, as lions are indigenous to the continent. And the other is in Cambodia.

Even more curious is the fact that lions have never been native to northern Europe, where the symbol is most frequently found. So where did this symbol originate, and why is it used most frequently among northern European royalty?

Studying the genealogies of European royals who use the emblem of the lion reveals that they are all related—they are a family. (Five of the active monarchies in Europe—the United Kingdom, Denmark, Norway, Spain and Sweden—are ruled over by direct descendants of Queen Victoria.)

Thus, the lion does not simply offer a ubiquitous emblem of royalty; it actually represents a royal family based primarily in and around northern Europe and today including kings and queens from England, Sweden, Norway, Spain, Luxembourg, Denmark and the Netherlands.

The Scriptures connect the lion emblem to the tribe of Judah and King David (Genesis 49:9-10; Revelation 5:5).

Following such breadcrumbs, with God's promises lighting the way, we can see that the royal family of David is alive today and still reigns over multiple European nations, including the United Kingdom.

Other interesting clues

It's interesting to note that the word *Britain* (from the Latin *Britannia*) bears a curious phonetic resemblance to the Hebrew word for covenant, *berith*. This small phonetic clue provides further support for the connection between Britain and the covenant God made with Abraham and his offspring (Genesis 17:6-7; 49:8-10; Numbers 2:2; Revelation 5:5).

As another clue, Genesis 49 describes how the tribe of Judah would reign over the other tribes of Israel, and not just Judah's descendants. Thus, while many European monarchs descended from Judah and David, this does not mean the people they reign over share their Judaic ancestry.

"Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise . . . Your father's children shall bow down before you. Judah is a lion's whelp . . . He bows down, he lies down as a lion; and as a lion, who shall rouse him? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh [the Messiah] comes" (verses 8-10).

The name *Judah* literally means praise (Genesis 29:35), and 1 Chronicles 5:2 also paints this picture: "Yet Judah prevailed over his brothers, and from him came a ruler, although the birthright was Joseph's."

A reminder of God's faithfulness

The coronation of King Charles is not merely the story of a royal family that lives on an island off the coast of Europe. Nor, for that matter, is it simply the story of a line of kings that goes back to the years after Britain was freed from Roman domination. Rather, it illustrates how God's promises can be relied upon even more than the rising of the sun or the orbit of the moon.

Against the odds of Europe's march into modernity, David's divinely ordained royal family has endured the test of time. Though nations rise and fall, and monarchs live and die, the British coronation is a reminder of how God's promises continue to shine through the ages.

For biblical, historical and prophetic background, see our booklet *The United States, Britain and the Commonwealth in Prophecy*.

—Kris Kobernat



Q: I was told that speaking in tongues is your heavenly language, and I have done it a few times, but I don't do it often. I just want to confirm that in your article you said it wasn't from God? Can you please explain why? I don't want to do anything that is not pleasing to God. I'm a new believer, and I want to make sure I'm not heading down a path of confusion on what's from God and what is not.

A: The topic of speaking in tongues has confused many over the years. We know from Acts 2 that when the Holy Spirit was given on the Day of Pentecost in A.D. 31, those who received the Spirit first spoke in tongues (Acts 2:1-4). But as we read further into this chapter, we see that tongues refers to speaking or hearing in foreign languages. Every member of the audience heard them speak in his or her own native language (verses 8-11). This was a miracle to draw attention to this special event.

Contrary to what many believe today, Scripture does not describe the ability to speak in tongues as the proof that a Christian has the Holy Spirit. Notice this excerpt from the conclusion of our article [“What Is Speaking in Tongues?”](#):

“The gift of ‘speaking in tongues’ (languages) is not the criterion that proves whether one has the Holy Spirit. There are other spiritual gifts, such as the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge (1 Corinthians 12:8), that come through God’s Holy Spirit. Also, the fruit—the result of having God’s Spirit—is that one will display love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control in his or her life (Galatians 5:22-23).”

While many people today believe that they must be able to “speak in tongues” to prove that they have the Holy Spirit, that simply is not true according to the Bible. God’s Holy Spirit is made evident by the fruit

shown in a Christian’s life. (See our article [“How Do You Know You Have the Holy Spirit?”](#))

Did you know that Paul gave instructions and a warning about speaking in tongues? He warned that when we speak in a foreign language (tongues), unless there is someone who can interpret or translate, we should keep silent (1 Corinthians 14:27-28). It doesn’t make sense that someone would just blurt out unintelligible noises during a church service. That would be chaotic, and God is not the author of confusion (verse 33).

It is God’s plan for us to repent, be baptized, receive His Spirit and then be transformed in mind to become more and more like Him. By praying for, yielding to and stirring up the Spirit, we will see the spiritual growth that assures us God’s Spirit is working in us. For a helpful step-by-step look at this process, download and read our free booklet [Change Your Life](#).

If you are interested, we recommend you read the following related articles for continued study:

- [“The Miracle in the Mind.”](#)
- [“What Is the Holy Spirit?”](#)
- [“The Spirit of Truth.”](#)
- [“What Is Baptism?”](#)

Q: What is the Church of God’s stance on the Book of Jasher? I have some Torah observer friends who want me to read it.

A: The “Book of Jasher” is mentioned twice in the Bible, in Joshua 10:13 and 2 Samuel 1:18. It seems it could have been a collection of songs about Israel’s wars, but it was not chosen to be preserved as part of the Bible. Scholars believe the Book of Jasher, like other sources mentioned in the Bible, has been lost over the millennia, and “no part of it has survived” (*NKJV Study Bible* note on Joshua 10:13).

There are various books today that have the name Book of Jasher, but scholars say none of these are the actual ancient book referred to in the Bible.

For more about what books have been preserved to be included in the Bible, see our articles [“The Uniqueness of the Bible”](#) and [“Apocrypha: Is It Part of the Bible?”](#)

The Danger of Cut-and-Paste Christianity

The Bible is God's guidebook for life—but it's not always a comfortable guidebook. How should we handle the moments when our instincts and the Bible clash?

Thomas Jefferson, America's third president, had some issues with the New Testament.

Jesus Christ was, in his view, the greatest moral teacher the world had ever known. Writing to John Adams, he referred to Jesus' teachings as "the most sublime and benevolent code of morals which has ever been offered to man." He saw those teachings as a collection of diamonds—precious and priceless.

His issues were with everything else.

Cut-and-paste Bible

If Jesus' moral teachings were diamonds, the remainder of the New Testament was, in Jefferson's mind, a dunghill. Jefferson was convinced that Jesus had never intended to present Himself as a promised Messiah or the Son of God—that He had never even performed a miracle—and that these were all fictional details added by those who were trying to make "legitimate the corruptions which they had incorporated" into the story.

He believed the true bits and pieces of the Gospel accounts were "as easily distinguishable as diamonds in a dunghill" because they weren't fanciful details added by those who were "expressing unintelligibly for others what they had not understood themselves."

And so, toward the end of his life, Jefferson sat down to do literally what so many have done and

continue to do figuratively. With a razor and some glue, he began cutting out passages from the Gospels, rearranging and editing the four accounts until he had something he agreed with.

The result was an 84-page volume Jefferson titled *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*—a work more commonly known today as *The Jefferson Bible*. It tells the story of a very wise Jewish teacher who lived in the first century, who taught His followers how to live good and ethical lives, and who was ultimately executed by the Roman government.

After Jefferson was done cutting and pasting, there was no trace left of Jesus the resurrected Son of God or Jesus the sin-forgiving Savior or even Jesus the miracle worker. Those versions of Jesus conflicted with Jefferson's worldview—and so verse by verse, he cut them out.

All that remained was the Jesus he wanted to read about: a wise man who shared some good morals with the world.

When our views clash with the Bible

What do you do with the parts of the Bible that challenge your worldview?

Because they're there. If you haven't already come across passages that leave you feeling uncertain or uncomfortable, rest assured—you will.



Here is a book that claims to be the inspired Word of God—that confronts its readers with their own flawed human nature—that demands radical changes in how we live and how we think. There’s nothing comfortable about looking into “the perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25) and watching it illuminate our own failures and inadequacies.

But there’s more to it than that.

The Bible is also a book that doesn’t always mesh with our own views about how things should work. There will be stories in the Bible where the words God says and the actions God takes are not the words you think He should say or the actions you think He should take.

These are moments of intense discomfort—moments when our human reasoning says that God should have handled something differently. That something important ought to be worded differently—or not be there at all—or replaced with another approach entirely.

What do we do then?

The danger of cutting and pasting

The fact is, all of us have Jefferson’s razor and glue at our disposal. Whenever we come across parts of the Bible we don’t understand, don’t like or don’t want to grapple with, we can start mentally cutting and

pasting God’s Word until we arrive at a final product that makes sense to us. We replace what the book actually says with the version we’ve created in our minds.

That’s the easy way out. It’s *easy* to make the Bible say what we want it to say—to edit and sanitize, cut and paste, until we have something we’re happy with. We can even incorporate bits and pieces from other religions and philosophies if we like.

Many do.

The trouble is, *it doesn’t work*. You can’t shove a belief in karma into the framework of the Bible. You can’t fit modern concepts of near universal acceptance and tolerance into the Bible. Yin and yang, the law of attraction, forgiveness as a license to sin, a God who doesn’t involve Himself in human affairs, a God who leaves “good” up to our own interpretation—ideas like these don’t mesh with the Bible. They’re incompatible—unless you’re ready to do a lot of cutting and pasting.

We have to choose how we look at the Bible

The Bible challenges us to do something more difficult:

To acknowledge the discomfort. Not to bury it or run away from it, but to sit with it and ponder it.

Accepting that our instincts would lead us in a different direction, we must then ask ourselves whether we really trust God—whether we really believe that the Bible is His Word, and whether He really is the omnipotent, infinitely wise Being He claims to be.

That's the core of the issue.

Either the Bible is the inspired Word of the Creator of the universe—or it isn't.

Either God knows better than we do—or He doesn't.

Either we believe Him—or we don't.

If we believe God—if we believe He knows better than we do—if we believe the Bible is His Word—then the Jefferson approach is out of the question.

How can we possibly afford to slice up and shuffle around the words of a Being so infinitely superior to us—even if we don't always understand them? How can we possibly dare to staple in an appendix of conflicting philosophies and alternate worldviews?

If we don't believe any of that, then, well—have at it. Cut it up. Rearrange it. We can add in whatever we want, remove whatever we dislike. But we can't expect the resulting patchwork to tell us anything meaningful about the reason for our existence, about what's truly right and wrong.

At best, forcing together our own Frankensteined jigsaw puzzle of beliefs can only give us a personal code of ethics we find appealing. It can't tell us anything about how things are supposed to be, or how they ought to be—or how *we* ought to be.

The logical flaw in picking and choosing

That's what the Bible asks of us.

All or nothing. No half-measures. Either we trust it completely, or not at all.

The second we begin to decide that God can be wrong, that His reasoning can miss the mark or need updating, we also decide that God has nothing useful to tell us about the way the world works. How can He? If we can outthink God, there's hardly any need for Him, is there?

C.S. Lewis famously offered a version of that argument more focused on the divinity of Jesus Christ:

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing

we must not say. A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg—or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon; or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to" (*Mere Christianity*, p. 52).

Jefferson tried to sidestep that point with all his cutting and pasting, but even the "sublime and benevolent" code of morals that remained was a matter of opinion. He had removed everything from the Gospels that he didn't personally believe—why shouldn't someone else do the same?

What would be left if everyone took his or her turn with the razor? Who can really say what belongs and what doesn't?

Sitting with the discomfort

Life would be so much easier if the Bible only said the things we want it to say—but it would also be a rather empty affair. Writing your own rules makes you the most significant, most important person in your life—and it's also an affirmation that no higher power has anything meaningful to offer you, in this life or the next, because you know better.

As Christians in progress, our job is to do the opposite. It's to sit with the discomfort, trusting God when our own reasoning conflicts with His, and accepting that His thoughts are higher than our thoughts; His ways higher than our ways (Isaiah 55:9).

If the Bible is the Word of God, we can't pick and choose the parts of it we'd like to believe.

It's all or nothing.

Study further in our booklet *Is the Bible True?*

— Jeremy Lallier

Suggestions welcome

If you'd like to suggest a topic for a future edition of "Christianity in Progress," you can do so anonymously at lifehopeandtruth.com/ideas. We look forward to hearing from you!

Wonders of GOD'S Creation

A Firm Foundation (in the Sand)

A foolish man builds his house on the sand—but a wise garden eel builds his house in the sand.

Garden eels are born from eggs left to float freely near the water's surface, but once they're big enough, they swim down to the sandy seafloor and dig out a narrow little burrow to call their home.

Probably forever.

Once garden eels have excavated a burrow using their stiff tail and single long dorsal fin to remove the sand, they almost never leave it. They keep their tail anchored in it at all times, raising themselves upward to eat the zooplankton brought to them by ocean currents, but fully retreating into the burrow when threatened. They stay in their burrows even when mating. They intertwine their exposed body with that of a neighbor in the next burrow

over, but leave their tail in their own burrow.

Because a colony of garden eels can number in the hundreds (or even thousands), it's easy to mistake these little *Anguilliformes* for a bed of seagrass.

In one of Christ's parables, a foolish man's house collapses when the wind and rain shift the sandy foundation beneath it (Matthew 7:24-27). Garden eels could not quickly retreat into a collapsed burrow, so God gave them a clever way to avoid a similar fate—they secrete a slimy mucus that functions like cement, reinforcing the burrow walls to prevent them from collapsing.

Pictured: spotted garden eel (*Heteroconger hassi*)

Photo by James Capo

Text by Jeremy Lallier and James Capo

Walk as He
Walked

Jesus the Teacher: How Did Jesus Teach?

Jesus Christ was history's greatest teacher. As a teacher, He mastered and used a wide variety of teaching methods. What were Jesus' teaching methods?

Shortly after Jesus cleansed the temple, He had a fascinating encounter with a Pharisee named Nicodemus.

Nicodemus was one of a few religious leaders who were receptive to Christ's teaching. It's recorded that he came to Jesus by night and said, "*Rabbi*, we know that You are a *teacher* come from God" (John 3:2, emphasis added throughout).

Nicodemus called Jesus "Rabbi" and "teacher."

Rabbi was a title given to highly respected and distinguished Jewish teachers. It didn't simply mean teacher, but literally *my great one*. It described a Jewish teacher who was highly esteemed and credible. Jesus was called Rabbi a dozen times in the four Gospels.

The second word that Nicodemus used was a more general word for a teacher—*didaskalos* in the Greek text.

Jesus was unequivocally the greatest teacher who ever lived.

One of the most impressive elements of Jesus the Teacher was His incredibly diverse array of teaching

styles and strategies. He always employed the most effective method for any particular person, group or situation.

Let's examine four of His teaching methods.


Teaching method 1: Jesus masterfully captured attention and interest.

To teach you have to capture your students' attention. If a teacher doesn't grab their attention quickly, meaningful learning is less likely to occur. Sometimes educators refer to an attention-grabbing device as a *hook*.

Jesus was a master at this.

Consider His conversation with Nicodemus. After Nicodemus' greeting, Jesus made a startling statement: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). Nicodemus had some understanding of the Kingdom, but never connected it to this concept.

Naturally, Jesus' statement led Nicodemus to ask a series of legitimate questions. That was by design!



“Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

Jesus specifically structured His statement to cause Nicodemus to *think* and then ask questions. Jesus used His answers to teach concepts about the Kingdom of God that Nicodemus needed to learn.

Like most Jews, Nicodemus saw the Kingdom as something strictly physical—a Jewish kingdom over the Holy Land. But Jesus used this teaching opportunity to expand his understanding, showing that the Kingdom is much more than a physical nation, and actually includes a change from flesh to spirit and being born into a new family. (To learn more about this conversation, read [“What Does It Mean to Be Born Again?”](#))

Another example of Jesus using this teaching technique is found in two stunning statements He made in Luke 14. First, He said that to be a true disciple, one had to “hate his father and mother, wife and children . . . yes, and his own life also” (Luke 14:26). He then followed that up by saying: “Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” (verse 27).

The people listening may have thought: *“Is He saying I have to hate my own family? And, on top of that, I need to volunteer to be crucified?”*

Of course, Jesus was using two shocking hooks to emphasize the absolute commitment required to follow Him. He was talking about [priorities and self-sacrifice](#), not literally hating one’s family or volunteering to be crucified.

His shocking statements were intended to capture the attention of His listeners and get them to think.

Teaching method 2: Jesus taught through perfectly constructed questions.

Teaching through questions is one of the oldest

teaching methods. It’s often called the Socratic method, though it predates the Greek philosopher Socrates.

Questions can be a powerful teaching strategy to stimulate deeper thinking. They can also spark follow-up questions that give the teacher an opportunity to drill even deeper. Questions help engage a student’s mind and force him or her to be an active learner.

The four Gospels show that Jesus asked a lot of questions. This wasn’t because He lacked answers, of course! He used questions as a teaching tool. He strategically designed His questions to nudge people to think more deeply, come to the right answer themselves, or to frame the more direct answer He’d give later.

Consider some of the famous questions He asked:

- “Why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?” (Matthew 7:3).
- “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am? . . . But who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:13, 15).
- “Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor, how will you season it?” (Mark 9:50).
- “But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).
- “What is written in the law? What is your reading of it?” (Luke 10:26).
- “So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” (verse 36).
- “If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the law of Moses should not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made a man completely well on the Sabbath?” (John 7:23).

Questions are good! Bible students should always be asking questions and diligently studying God’s Word to find the answers.

Teaching method 3: Jesus masterfully used illustrations to drive His lessons home.

Good teachers understand the power of illustration, especially for visual learners. Sometimes the most effective way to teach a concept is not just by verbalizing it, but by demonstrating it visually. This can be done through a picture, a physical demonstration, a well-constructed analogy or a prop.

Jesus often made very effective use of illustrations.

One amazing example is found in Matthew 18. The disciples had just asked Him, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” (verse 1). Instead of simply answering the question, He “called a little child to Him [and] set him in the midst of them” (verse 2). Jesus may have allowed the disciples to observe the child’s behavior for a few moments.

Then He used that example to frame His point: “Unless you are converted and become *as little children*, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me” (verses 3-5).

Jesus could have answered the original question simply by saying, “Be converted and humble.” But instead, He masterfully used the child to visually illustrate His point.

In another instance, Jesus used words for different-sized rocks to make a point (Matthew 16:17-18). When He called Simon a *petros* (a fragment, a stone), is it possible He picked up a small stone to illustrate Peter’s relative smallness? Then perhaps He could have directed their attention to a nearby mountain or boulder when He likened Himself to the *petra* (a mass of rock).

Peter was like a pebble compared to Him, the massive, immovable foundation upon which His Church would be built.

Teaching method 4: Jesus delivered compelling and dynamic direct instruction.

The previous examples featured teaching strategies Jesus used for individuals or small groups. But He also used the more traditional lecture approach, or direct

instruction, when teaching larger groups or in a more formal setting.

His direct instruction sessions included the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), the instruction He gave the apostles before sending them out (Matthew 10), His parables to the multitudes (Matthew 13), His discourse on prophecy at the Mount of Olives (Matthew 24-25), and His final words to the disciples before His arrest (John 14-16).

What truly made His teaching sessions unique was *how* He taught. After Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount, “the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matthew 7:28-29).

Jesus didn’t teach in a dry, overly academic manner. Nor did He base His teachings on the varying opinions of long-dead scholars and rabbis. He taught authoritatively, confidently and clearly. His teaching was both profound and practical.

Jesus firmly grounded His teachings on the authority of the Hebrew Scriptures. By some counts, the Gospels record Him quoting the Old Testament 78 times. However, His own words also carried absolute authority since He was the Word of God in the flesh (John 1:1, 14) and He had a message to give from the Father (John 14:10).

Keep learning from the Master Teacher

Any teacher would be wise to closely study Jesus’ diverse array of teaching methods. But one doesn’t have to be an educator to benefit from His teaching. The primary reason we should study His teaching is to learn what He taught.

This highlights the importance of education in true Christianity. Unlike many modern forms of religion, often centered on emotion or ritual, God’s way is centered on learning and understanding. True Christians must learn and grow in their understanding of the Bible and put those teachings into practice in their daily lives.

Jesus said that someone who builds his or her life on His teachings is like “a wise man who built his house on the rock” (Matthew 7:24).

So, build your life on the rock of the Master Teacher and . . .

Walk as He walked.

—Erik Jones

The Perils of a Poor Foundation

A visit to a famous Italian bell tower reminded me of a vital lesson about Christianity. One of the oldest and most recognizable bell towers in the world was founded on a major mistake. Everything seemed normal when work began on the first floor in 1173. But by the time construction got to the third floor in 1178, the tower had begun to lean noticeably.

You've guessed it—this was the genesis of the Leaning Tower of Pisa.

Construction of this Italian campanile (freestanding bell tower) was completed in three stages over 199 years. But the design flaw was present before the first white marble stones were laid: it was built on only a 9-foot-deep foundation, set in unstable subsoil.

Compensating for a poor foundation

After completion of the third floor, construction was interrupted for almost 100 years due to wars between Pisa and her neighbors. When construction continued, rather than start over with a solid foundation, builders added more floors, but with one side built higher than the other on each floor to compensate for the tilt. This means the 186-foot-tall tower, finally completed in 1372, is actually curved.

It continued to lean more over time, leading to efforts to correct the vertical deviation enough to

prevent it from toppling. But, since the striking flaw is what draws tourists, the authorities have actually wanted to maintain the lean.

In the 1990s, hundreds of tons of lead counterweights were placed on one side of the base, and then around 1,300 cubic feet of earth was removed from under one side of the foundation. This reduced the tilt by 17 inches. Engineers now believe it will be stable for several hundred more years.

A spiritual foundation

The tower is a strangely beautiful sight, its bright white marble recently cleaned to a bright sheen. I've had the pleasure of contemplating it several times. Each time, I have reflected on the importance of foundations, a topic the Bible raises several times in a spiritual sense.

Paul explained, "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11). How exactly is Jesus Christ the one foundation for Christians?

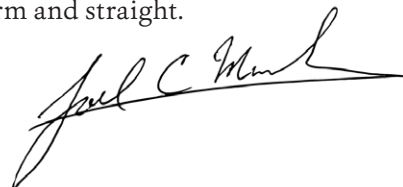
In the spiritual sense, our foundation is composed of the moral principles on which we base our lives, and those come from Jesus.

As He told His disciples, "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

"But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall" (Matthew 7:24-27).

Jesus teaches and exemplifies the way Christians are to live.

We can't try to compensate for, yet still maintain, a bad spiritual foundation. We must instead start fresh, on the firmest of foundations—on the rock of the teachings and example of Jesus. This is how we can avoid becoming leaning Christians, and instead stand firm and straight.



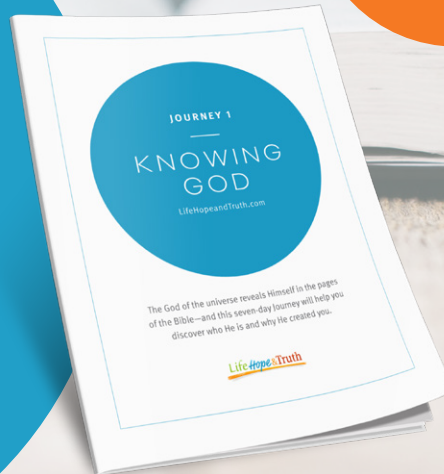
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