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WORKER



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

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AN IDEAL STUDENT

Carl B. Garner

Someone has said that if you put the world's best teacher in a room with the world's worst students, very little learning would take place. I don't know if that is true, but I do know that a willing and capable pupil is necessary to the process of learning. For years we have known that you cannot stop a determine student from learning. The necessity of a capable teacher is not denied, but there is also the need for a capable, motivated pupil.

The Necessity of "Good Soil"

Jesus told a parable about a sower who went out to plant seed. Both sower and seed were good, but some of the soil into which the seed was sown was poor soil. The result: neither harvest nor learning could take place. Read Luke 8:4-15. Jesus taught that there must be good "seed" and good "soil," good teaching and a good pupil. Subtract either one and learning will be greatly diminished.

The same is true in a classroom. A professor once told a room full of graduate students: "Teaching does not take place until learning takes place." If his statement is true— and to a great degree I believe it is—both student and teacher must come together for the best learning situation. Who is the ideal student? What qualities does the ideal pupil possess?

Ignorance and Recognition of It

One first has to recognize his lack of knowledge, his need to learn. If he/she does not, learning is very unlikely. Henry David Thoreau said: "It is only when we forget all our learning that we begin to know." As a

boy I was told, "If you think your bucket's already full, you won't be trying to fill it up." An ideal student is one who is aware of—and willing to admit—how much he/she needs to learn. That is the first step to learning.

Desire, Willingness to Learn

Ancient learners had none of the "essentials" of learning available today, but they had the desire to learn. The great accomplishments of the Greek culture were achieved long before computers and projectors were introduced. We think of Lincoln studying before an open fire. A determined student can learn from

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"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

ABSTAINING FROM ALL OTHERS...

Cody Westbrook

The American infatuation with sex continues to grow at breathtaking levels. One recent study asked people throughout the world about the number of sexual partners they have had in their lifetime. Americans who were surveyed responded that 2 partners is not enough—it is too sexually conservative, while 15 is the point at which one should be considered to be “too promiscuous,” and 7 is the magic number¹. Another study showed that 67% of Americans view sex outside of marriage to be morally acceptable. Compare that to a similar study by the same group in 2013 in which only 29% said it was morally acceptable.²

As you may imagine, this lax attitude toward sex affects marriages and families in the United States as well. Who can forget the outcry in 2015 when hackers leaked 30 million names of people who had used the “married dating” website Ashley Madison? CBS News recently published an article stating 93% of Americans view infidelity as morally wrong, yet the same article notes that Ashley Madison membership is steadily growing at a rate of 20,000 new members per day³. A September 2016 survey concluded that 41% of marriages have one or both spouses who admit to either physical or emotional infidelity. Additionally, 57% of men and 54% of women admit to committing infidelity in any relationship, past or present, and an astonishing 74% of men surveyed said they would have an affair if they knew they could do it without being caught.⁴

¹ “What’s Your Number?” www.onlinedoctor.superdrug.com/whats-your-number.

² “Americans’ moral stance towards sex between unmarried persons in 2016,” www.statista.com/statistics/225947/americans-moral-stance-towards-intercourse-between-unmarried-partners/

³ “Infidelity: Why the oldest taboo continues to be broken,” www.cbsnews.com/news/infidelity-why-the-oldest-taboo-continues-to-be-broken/

⁴ “Infidelity Statistics,” www.statisticbrain.com/infidelity-statistics/

These numbers represent only a small sampling of studies proving that many people view sex and marriage in a way that is completely ungodly. The Bible teaches that marriage is a divinely sanctioned institution (Gen. 2:18-25), and within that bond exists an intimacy that is unauthorized to exist in any other sphere (Heb. 13:4). In marriage we commit to give ourselves completely to our spouse sexually and emotionally. We vow to be faithful to them and abstain from all others. Too often, that sacred vow is forgotten.

What can be done to turn the tide and restore faithfulness to marriage? What can we do to remember the vow that we make to abstain from all others? Consider the following four suggestions.

1. **Pluck out your Eye.** Jesus spoke of lust in Matthew 5:28 when He said, “... whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” Many consider simply “looking at the flesh” to be okay as long as action is never initiated. A married man once said to me, “It’s okay if I look at the menu, as long as I don’t order anything.” Such an attitude is ungodly and untrue. Adultery begins in the heart (Matt. 15:18-20), and to allow one’s lusts to go unchecked is sinful and will result in action. That is why Matthew 5:28 is followed by verses 29-30 in which Jesus instructs us to pluck out our eye and cut off our hand. Certainly Jesus did not mean that we are to literally mutilate our bodies, rather He intends for us to identify avenues of temptation and sin in our lives and eliminate them. Consider how many affairs begin with pornography addiction and casual relationships begun in social media forums. Many would do well to close their social media accounts and put filters and other accountability safeguards on their computers and smart phones in order to help prevent sin from happening.
2. **Fulfill your duty.** First Corinthians 7:3-5 says, “Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the

husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting a prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency.” God created us with a desire for sexual intimacy, and when fulfilled in the marriage bed, it is a godly thing (Heb. 13:4). Some affairs begin because a spouse is neglected physically and emotionally. Satan is aware of such and he utilizes it as a weapon to tempt men and women to have their desires fulfilled elsewhere. Husbands and wives should be mindful of their intimate duty to one another in order to prevent Satan from gaining inroads into their marriage.

3. **Commit to commitment.** Our society scoffs at the idea of commitment. On average, people change jobs more often, choose to rent instead of buy a house, and elect for cohabitation instead of marriage, all because of a desire **not** to commit. Yet, when we enter into the marriage bond we make the greatest commitment of our lives, second only to the one we make as a servant of God. In marriage we pledge our unwavering commitment to God and to the one we love. We commit to honoring God’s intention for marriage, which is one man and one woman for life (Matt. 19:3-9). We commit to being sexually and emotionally faithful to our spouse (Heb. 13:4). We commit to fulfilling our divinely sanctioned roles as husband and wife (Eph. 5:22-33). We commit to meeting our spouse’s needs until death parts us. Infidelity is the result of one who forgets his commitment. Preventing it requires us to remember the promise we made and staying faithful to it.
4. **Do not be selfish.** True love “seeketh not her own” (1 Cor. 13:5). Literally, it does not insist on having its own needs and desires met. Rather, it is self-emptying and does whatever possible to serve and meet the needs of the one it loves.

Infidelity, however, is completely the opposite. Breaking the commitment of the marriage bond is completely self-serving. It is the ungodly gratification of selfish lusts that are allowed to spiral out of control. Consider the ripple effect of pain and devastation caused by one act of infidelity. It is a sin against God, spouse, and family; it brings reproach upon the church of our Lord; it harms the influence one has for the cause of Christ; it destroys marital trust and often results in divorce thus creating a situation of emotional and spiritual heartbreak for everyone involved, and especially children who are innocently caught in the middle. The painful effects of unfaithfulness are seemingly endless. How could one engage in the selfish act of infidelity if truly focused on selflessly loving his or her spouse and family?

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**THE CHARACTER OF GOD IN
THE OLD TESTAMENT**
Clay Bond

Eternal, good, gracious, loving, merciful, wise, holy, immutable, just, righteous, sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent are just a few of the attributes of God. When we speak of God’s attributes we are talking about those characteristics that help us understand who God truly is. It is noteworthy that those biblical characters who were greatly used by God had a burning desire to know

Him. David said,

One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple (Ps. 27:4).

For David, knowing God was a priority and it should be the same for us. In the book of Daniel we learn that those who know God “shall be strong, and do exploits” (great things) (Dan. 11:32). Let me mention just a few attributes that can help us come to know God better.

The Wisdom of God

While Job was enduring grievous afflictions that made no sense to him at all, he was willing to admit that with God “is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding” (Job 12:13). When wisdom is applied to God it describes His mental excellence in its greatest sense. Wisdom, which is an awareness and understanding of facts, is more comprehensive and far reaching than knowledge. Wisdom is the ability to adapt to those facts to bring about a desired end or purpose. The creation of this universe was an expression of God’s wisdom (Psa. 104:24). God sending His Son to be the remedy for sin is an expression of His wisdom (1 Cor. 1:23-24; 1 Tim. 1:15; Col. 2:3). God’s plan of redemption is yet another expression of His divine wisdom. Paul wrote that God “abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence” in carrying out His eternal plan to save us (Eph. 1:8). He knows all the facts and he knows how to use them, not just to attain results, but to attain perfect results. God’s wisdom has provided us a world in which to live, a redeeming Savior, and a spiritual body in which we can grow.

The Goodness of God.

Behind the vastness of this universe stands a God who cares about what He has made. God is not indifferent or absent but rather He is fully invested for the good of the universe because He is good. Even the ungrateful and the wicked benefit from the goodness of God and should be lead to repentance by it (Ps. 33:5, 145:9; Matt. 6:45; Rom. 2:4). While God is good to the unsaved His goodness is even greater toward those who fear Him. David said,

Oh how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! (Psa. 31:19).

God promises His people, “no good thing will he

withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Psa. 84:11). His goodness can be seen in many ways: eternal life (Rom. 6:23), immediate access to His throne through Jesus Christ (Heb. 4:16), answering our prayers (1 Pet. 3:12), giving us His word which provides everything we need pertaining to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3), and even His discipline is evidence of His goodness (Heb. 12:6-15). Many have a tendency to take God’s goodness for granted, but those who know Him personally praise Him and thank Him for His goodness (Ps. 100:4-5). If you are saved, give thanks to the Lord for he is good! If you are lost heed the exhortation of the Psalmist, “O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him” (Ps. 34:8).

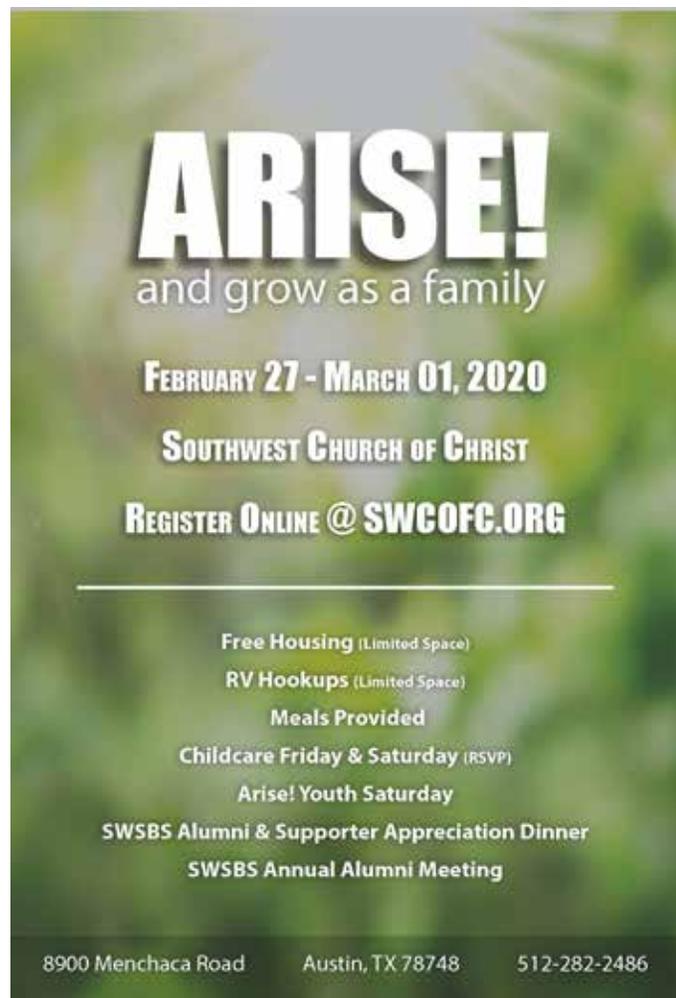
The Grace of God

In Exodus 34:1-10 Moses ascended to Mt. Sinai to present himself before the Lord. The Lord spoke to Moses about Himself saying, “The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.” The Hebrew word “gracious” comes from a root word which means “to bend or stoop.” When God declared Himself to be gracious, He was explaining to Moses exactly what He is like and defining the very essence of His being. God is willing to reach down with affection to people who can never deserve it! He is willing to do good things freely and unconditionally. Because God is gracious He is willing to forgive guilty people of their sins and deliver them from the punishment they deserve when they are totally unworthy of such kindness. The New Testament proclaims the same truth declaring God to be “the God of all grace” (1 Pet. 5:10). When we acquaint ourselves with the God of all grace we will learn that God provides grace for salvation (2 Cor. 8:9; Titus 2:11), sanctification (Acts 20:32), service (1 Cor. 15:8-10), suffering (2 Cor. 12:9-10), and that God’s grace is available for our every need. It is a blessed thing for mankind to behold the “manifold” or “many colored” grace of God (1 Peter 4:10). Someone once said, for every shade of human need God has a matching shade of divine grace. If we are blue with despondency, yellow with fear, encountering the blackness of pain, the redness of anger or the greenness of envy, God’s many-colored grace is sufficient to help us in our time of need (Heb. 4:16).

These are just a few of our magnificent God’s attributes. Let me encourage you to get to know God’s character by continuing to study His word, diligently looking for those unique characteristics of God that

can help you better know Him and better serve Him. May it be your life's ambition to know God!

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“PROVE ALL THINGS; HOLD FAST THAT WHICH IS GOOD”

1 Thessalonians 5:21

Don Walker

The title of this article is a direct quote of the apostle Paul as it is found in the KJV. As is the case with every passage we study we do well to consider the passage in context. The two verses prior to this one set the context in the area of the miraculous gifts and specifically the giving of God's revelation. Paul wrote, “*Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesying*” (1 Thess. 5:19, 20). It is essential

that we consider this context first as we examine the passage before us.

When we consider the church in the first century, their teaching was no different than ours, if we are teaching from the Bible and the Bible only. The major difference was not in **what** was revealed, but rather the largest difference was in **how** it was revealed. God's message in the first century was given miraculously as men exercised the use of the gifts they received by the laying on of the apostles' hands. Today, we have the completed product of their work in written form—in the 66 books that make up the two testaments which comprise the Bible.

However, just as it is true today, there were those who went out making claims to be proclaiming the message of God, yet they were not. Therefore, brethren were commanded

believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world (1 John 4:1).

The message must be examined, tried and tested and it must be consistent with the whole of what was taught by the inspired men of the first century. Today we have the same responsibility to receive “*the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so*” (Acts 17:11). Thus we see Paul's admonition to “*prove all things.*” Paul wrote,

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ. (Phil. 1:9, 10)

Notice that both knowledge of God's will and personal discernment were essential to determine the fitness of a teaching for our approval. This was true in the first century where we see the miraculous employed to give God's Revelation. It is also true today.

Once a doctrine had been taught and tested, the recipient was responsible, depending on the result of the “trying.” There was the responsibility to either reject or accept what had been proclaimed or taught. In the later portion of 1 Thessalonians 5:21, Paul tells us that our approval must be very specific. In his words

we see that we must *“Hold fast that which is good.”* Not only must there be acceptance of that which is good, but we must also bring it in close to ourselves. Paul wrote to the Philippians, we must “approve” those things that have been proven excellent. It must become a part of our lives and our beings.

Things are no different today as far as our responsibility is concerned. Teaching must be received with a ready mind, but it must also be put to the test by searching the Scriptures to see if these things are so. Upon proper validation, there must be an approving of the message in what we teach and what we live. If the message proves to be contrary to the doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ, then we are to reject it and put it far from us.

When all is said and done, the teaching is clear. We must put our approval on that which proves to be the Word of God and we must reject that which does not pass the test. May we strive for the nobility of the Bereans (Acts 17:11) as we study our Bibles more and more.

CW

WHAT IS YOUR LIFE?

Steve Lloyd

This article attempts to answer the question “What would we know about our origin and the purpose for our lives without the Old Testament?” That is a great question! In this article, we will explore life’s “big questions” as they relate to the Old Testament.

First of all, let’s take a look at what is meant by “big questions.” Most writers agree that the “big questions” include the following: Who am I? Why am I here? What went wrong? What is the solution? How a person answers these questions will identify their worldview—their view of the world. The atheist, for example, will come up with radically different answers to these questions than the Christian. What does the Old Testament say about the “big questions” that we would not know otherwise?

I have argued elsewhere that the Bible can be read as a Story. That Story can be broken down into 6 Acts: Act 1 is the Story of Creation; Act 2 is the Story of

the Fall; Act 3 is the Story of Israel; Act 4 is the Story of Jesus; Act 5 is the Story of the Church; Act 6 is the Return of the King. The Old Testament contains the first 3 Acts.

Imagine jumping into the middle of one of Shakespeare’s plays and trying to make sense out of it. This is what it would be like to read the New Testament without the Old. You would only have the last 3 Acts to make sense out of the whole. We are fortunate that the New Testament has much to say about the “big questions,” but it is the “sum” of God’s word that constitutes the truth (Ps. 119:160). Our understanding of the truth concerning the “big questions” would be poorer without the Old Testament.

The New Testament often makes reference to a name or an event in the past, but you must go to the Old Testament for the details. This is known as an allusion. Allusions can be thought of as literary shorthand. The book of Jude contains a number of allusions. For example, Jude alludes to “the way of Cain,” “Balaam’s error,” and “Korah’s rebellion” (v 11). If you did not have access to the Old Testament, you would not fully comprehend what Jude was communicating to his reader. This little letter is filled to the brim with other allusions, and the same case could be made: if you did not have access to the Old Testament, the full meaning of the letter would be lost on the reader. Allusion as a literary device is handy, but it assumes something of the reader. It is handy if your reader knows the story or person you merely reference, but if the reader is unfamiliar, the message is likely to be lost. (E.D. Hirsch addressed this with reference to culture in his book, *Cultural Literacy*.)

One of the big questions is, “Who am I?” Paul, a disciple of Jesus, in a conversation with the disciples of Socrates, quotes their poets: “In him we live and move and have our being,” and “For we are indeed his offspring.” Paul then explains,

Being then God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man (Acts 17:28-29).

One of the many problems Paul addressed in Corinth related to appropriate headdress for men and women. He writes, “For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God...” (1 Corinthians 11:7). The whole text (11:1-16) is a

knotty one to unravel, but man being made in the image and glory of God is not knotty. It affirms the same thing Paul said to the Athenians in Acts 17.

So, the New Testament answers the question, “Who am I?” We are made in the image and glory of God, but the details of our making and the One in whose image we are made are discovered in the Old Testament, in Act 1.

These texts are, in a sense, like the allusions in Jude. To know the whole story, you must go to the Old Testament. New Testament references to the Old Testament are, as one author put it, “echoes” broadcasted first in the Old Testament, and referenced in the New.

The New Testament answers most, if not all, of the “big questions.” Why am I here? ...to glorify God (Eph. 1:3-14). What is the problem? ...sin (Rom. 3:23). What is the solution? ...the gospel (Rom. 1:16, 17). But, in my opinion, we sacrifice too much if we think we can do without the Old Testament.

The Old Testament tells us the Story of our origin. The New Testament refers to the “beginning,” time and time again, but it is to the Old Testament we must go for the details on which the New Testament often depends.

The Old Testament tells us the Story of the Fall (Gen. 3). The New Testament refers to it (John 8:44), interprets it (Rev. 12:9), and amplifies it (Rom. 5:12), but it is to the Old Testament we must go for the original Story—for the details.

The Old Testament chronicles the huge Story of Israel. The New Testament refers to it time and time again, but it is to the Old Testament we must go for the details.

If we were to eliminate the Old Testament from our Bibles, we would eliminate many of the essential details the New Testament depends on to communicate its message. This does not even take into consideration the exquisitely beautiful literary works of art contained therein.

CW

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anyone under most any circumstance, but he/she will always need a “shovel,” one that will be used to help

“dig” out the needed information. A motivated pupil will learn, but without that motivation, the finest of teachers cannot succeed.

The Conviction to Test All Information, Then Act Upon It

Most working receptacles need a filter to assure the security of the unit. Just fail to change the filters on your air-conditioner and see what happens. So it is with learning. A pupil who receives information indiscriminately will eventually receive false information. If proper convictions are absent the student is vulnerable to the most dangerous ploys of unethical (not to mention unbiblical) practices.

Even then, there is left a very significant part of this whole procedure. An ideal student will, when finding accurate information, act upon that information lest it be wasted or lost. If that which is learned is worth achieving, it is valuable enough to continue to learn as much as is your capacity to learn. When a person ceases to learn, he diminishes his value to himself, his family and his community.

Share Knowledge with Others

We would consider a person to be selfish who has that which can be of benefit to others, yet withholds it. Even more so when that knowledge is crucial to the souls of others who desire to have the “hope of eternal life” (Titus 1:2, 3:7). The scriptures tell us, “He who wins souls is wise” (Prov. 11:30), and that “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). A good student cannot be selfish with what he has learned from God’s wonderful Word. Knowing it demands that we share it.

Therefore, the ideal student will:

- realize their need to learn.
- possess a strong motive to learn.
- be wise enough to put to the test what has been learned, then act upon it accordingly.
- be willing to share that information with others who desire and need it.

We need more students of God’s Word—students who love the souls of lost men and women, and who will gain the information needed and then impart it to the lost. Are you one of them?

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