

CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

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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 (ps. 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 led 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

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WHAT SALVATION DEMANDS OF ME

Cody Westbrook

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (by grace are ye saved) (Eph. 2:4-5).

The salvation that we enjoy as God's people is truly a great blessing. In 1 Peter 1:3-12 the apostle explained why our salvation is so great. In the next section of his book he tells us that the great salvation has great demands. God is great in His grace towards us, but He also requires something of us.

First, salvation demands **godly living** (1 Pet. 1:13-16). What better way to express appreciation to our Heavenly Father than by living holy lives? Quoting from Leviticus 11:44, Peter said

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, be ye holy; for I am holy (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

To be holy is to be set apart; it has to do with sanctification and consecration. Christians have been called by the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14) to come out of the world (2 Cor. 6:17) and be the peculiar people of God, to "show forth the praises of Him that called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light" (1 Pet. 2:12). What a great and lofty calling! Holy living is the responsibility of every Christian and should be approached with all diligence. Peter said that we must "gird up the loins of our mind and be sober" (1 Pet. 1:13). Whatever may distract us from pursuing holiness should be removed from our lives. As Jesus said, "If your right eye offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee" (Matt. 5:29). Because salvation is so great, holy living should be our top priority.

Second, salvation demands **godly fear** (1 Pet. 1:17). The kind of fear that Peter has in mind is not terror but rather awe and reverence. God is our heavenly Father and therefore we reverence and respect Him. It is the

fear of the Lord that brings wisdom (Ps. 111:10). "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge" (Pro. 1:7). We must have a strong desire to please God in everything. Peter instructs us to do so while keeping in mind that God is the righteous judge (Acts 17:31). We will all give an account of our lives to God (Rom. 14:12). Thus we should be ever mindful of both the goodness and severity of God (Rom. 11:22). He cares for us as a good Father should, but He will also judge us and do so righteously.

Third, salvation demands **godly appreciation** (1 Pet. 1:18-21). In this section Peter reminds us of the high cost of our redemption. God taught Israel in the long ago that sin carries a stiff penalty. Leviticus 17:11 says,

For the life of the flesh is in the blood and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh atonement.

The Hebrews writer said, "without the shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). Blood was required for our salvation but not just any blood, that blood of Christ (Eph. 1:7). So, because we were redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Pet. 1:19), we should be filled with thanksgiving—appreciation that expresses itself in action, namely, godly living and godly fear. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:14-15,

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.

Salvation is free but not cheap. It required the sacrifice of our Savior and it requires sacrifice on our part (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). Are you willing to meet the demands?

CW

THE IMPORTANCE OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Ronnie Scherffius

In the New Testament, we read of a man known as the “Son of Encouragement” (Acts 4:36). Have you ever seriously examined the word encouragement? Webster’s Dictionary defines encouragement as “the act of encouraging” or “that which serves to support, promote, or increase confidence.” The word encourage comes to us from an Old French word meaning “to hearten.” But look closely at encouragement. What is at the “heart” of the word that means “to hearten”? Courage!

The word courage refers to the “quality of mind which enables one to meet danger and trouble.” But what is at the core of courage? Heart! Our English word courage is also from the Old French meaning heart. Thus, after a close examination we learn that in its fullest sense the word encouragement means “to give confidence to,” or “to enable the heart.”

How often have you been downhearted? How many times in life have you faced a situation where you lacked confidence? Do you remember occasions when you began to wonder if you would ever find that light at the end of the tunnel? At those crucial times in life, how greatly did you appreciate the support of family and friends! How important has the encouragement from others been to your life? Why is encouragement so important?

Encouragement is important because it is wanted. No one wants to face the difficulties and challenges in life alone. Everyone wants help! From the beginning, God purposed that man should not be alone, but determined that man should have help in this life: “And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Gen. 2:18). While this passage is specific to a husband and wife, the principle stands that God wants man to have help in facing the day-to-day challenges everyone faces.

In addition to day-to-day challenges, there are also extreme circumstances where encouragement is wanted. Preparing to face the king, Daniel sought encouragement through prayer from his friends:

Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions: That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of

Babylon (Dan. 2:17-18).

The words of Paul reveal how he longed for the encouragement in his darkest hour: “At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me” (2 Tim. 4:16). Helpless and alone, Paul longed for the presence of a supporter, the words of a comforter, the help of encouragement. Encouragement is important because it is wanted.

Encouragement is important because it is needed. There are times in life that encouragement is more than “a want.” There are things in this life that we want to have. A child may want a puppy or a pony. A man may want a new truck. A woman may want something for her house. None of these are needs. Life will continue without any difficulties if none of these wants are satisfied. But all men need food, water, and air. If any one of these is absent, life will cease. There are times when the spiritual life of our brethren may be dependent upon our encouragement. This is not a sign of a weak faith but overwhelming circumstances. How often have we seen good and faithful brothers and sisters fall away after being overwhelmed by sickness, family crisis, or the death of a loved one? Have we ever looked back over such situations to realize that we did not enable their heart to endure; we were not a needed encouragement!

At the close of Acts fifteen, we read of that “Son of Encouragement,” Barnabas, who took a young man who stood rejected and cast aside. He encouraged him. How differently would Mark’s life have been without that heartening support! Jesus called upon Peter to be a source of strength and encouragement to his brethren in what would become the most overwhelming days of their lives (Lk. 22:32). Encouragement is important because in the most difficult of times it is needed.

Encouragement is important because it is commanded. The saints at Thessalonica endured many challenges to their faith (1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 2:14). Though Paul longed to be present to comfort and encourage them, situations and circumstances hindered him (1 Thess. 2:18). Therefore, Paul admonished the saints to encourage one another:

Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do... Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men (1 Thess. 5:11, 14).

Jesus will forever be known as Barnabas because he was an encourager. We all know a Barnabas. We all know that one person who always encourages; who always seems to find the silver lining in the dark cloud; who finds the positive in the negative; who helps others find good in a bad situation;

who enables our hearts. We love and appreciate that person. The truth is, because encouragement is so important — because it is wanted, needed, and commanded, we should all strive to be a Barnabas.

CW



FORGETTABLE BUT FAITHFUL

Trent Kennedy

The first three chapters of Luke set the stage for the ministry of Jesus which flowers and flourishes beginning in Luke 4. When we read these chapters, we are introduced to great, unforgettable Bible characters like Zacharias and Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary, and the angel Gabriel. However, when Jesus was still just few days old, his parents carried him from Bethlehem to Jerusalem for his dedication as their firstborn son (Luke 2:36-38; Exo. 13:2, 12-15; Lev. 5:11, 12:8), they passed a seemingly insignificant person, Anna (Luke 3:36-38). Yet, this brief encounter with Anna is cemented in divine history for all time. Anna, who would have been forgettable in every way became unforgettable because of her faith in God.

She was insignificant. Anna was a Jew which would have put her low in Greco-Roman society, but that was not the problem in Jerusalem. There, the issue was her gender. As a woman, she had limited societal and legal rights. This was often the case in ancient societies (and we see it in modern societies too) and was certainly true in the Roman province of Judea. Regarding the temple where she spent most of her

time (Luke 3:37), Anna would not have been able to have the same access to the temple complex as the Jewish males who could go into the “Court of the Israelites” (according to the historical accounts of Josephus).

Anna was also a widow, and she had been for most of her life. Widows held very few rights in the first century world and were often neglected even by their Jewish family members (cf. Matt. 23:14, Acts 6:1; 1 Tim. 5:16; Jas. 1:27; Isa. 1:23; Jer. 7:6; Zech. 7:10; Mal. 3:5). Additionally, Anna was old, of great age. While the Jewish people often revered the older generation, many in our culture today would frown on Anna because of her advanced age. She was an outsider in Judea and Jerusalem. Most of the Jews were from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. More specifically, most of them were from Judah (cf. Ezra 1:5). We are familiar with the name Judea and Jew because those who were living in Israel since the times of the decree in Cyrus (536 BC) were mostly from the tribe of Judah. Anna, however, was from the tribe of Asher. Most of her kinspeople would have been carried into Assyrian captivity in 722 BC. Her tribe was certainly not “lost,” but many of the people of Asher had been killed, carried away, or lost their Israelite identity.

She was faithful. Anna takes a place among the true heroes of faith like Miriam and Deborah when Luke identifies her as a prophetess (Luke 2:36; Exo. 15:20; Judges 4:4). Anna spoke the word of God. While she might have been unable to access every corner of the temple where the men taught, she could still teach with the boundaries of the Old Testament Scriptures. She told people about Jesus (Luke 2:38). Her lips were ready to teach willing ears. She also kept good company. Jerusalem was not a perfect place full of perfect people. The people often did not do right and the religious leaders of the day were not to be followed (cf. Matt. 23:3). However, the Jewish people held the temple, the place of community and congregational worship, the place where God had set his name and made his figurative dwelling place on earth, in the highest regard (cf. Luke 18:10, 21:38; Acts 3:1-8). So, we might conclude that the people brought their best to the temple (cf. Luke 21:2). This is where Anna spent her time and kept her company, among God’s people (cf. Luke 3:38). Anna was prayerful. Though Luke only gives a few short verses about Anna, he notes by inspiration that she fasted and prayed night and day. She did not neglect the privilege and right of prayer. Her life and words were marked by thanksgiving (Luke 3:38), and she accessed God through prayer continually (cf. 1 Thess. 5:17-18). Further, she added the spiritual discipline of fasting to her prayer life. This would have afforded her more time and attention to the spiritual matters of life. Another noteworthy characteristic

is that she was looking for the Messiah. Anna, like some of our sisters today, may have had a better understanding of the Old Testament Scriptures than the religious leaders. Anna and those around her sought for redemption which would begin in Jerusalem. This is consistent with a myriad of prophecies (Isa. 2:1-4, Micah 4:1-8; Zech. 13:1, et al) that all too often had been distilled and even exchanged for a physical deliverer no better than the days when the judges judged Israel. God had promised more and Anna was looking for that Redeemer who would bring a greater redemption, salvation from sin (Rom.3:24-26).

It does not matter what makes us insignificant in the eyes of the world today. Having a blue-collar job, living in a small home, being of great age, coming from somewhere else, going to the wrong school, or any host of things can cause us to be dismissible to the world around us. But, with our faith, we are unforgettable to God. Anna from Asher, old and alone, serves as an example to us today that we need to hear and speak the word of God, having lips always ready to communicate its truth and glory; we need to keep company with God's people and enjoy the sweet social and spiritual fellowship that our faith demands; we should be diligent in our prayer life, not neglecting it for anything; and we should strive to see Jesus for who he really is. The redemption came to Israel and to the world (Luke 2:32), and now we wait with the faithful for Jesus to return when he will rescue the saved, condemn the lost, and leave this old, lonely, forgettable world behind.

CW

ANYTHING YOUR HEART DESIRES

John Haffner

In 1940 the animated feature film Pinocchio premiered. Based on Carlo Collodi's story of a wooden puppet who became a real boy, Walt Disney's classic endures for many reasons. With humor and heart, the film shows the virtues of being brave, truthful, and unselfish. With the help of his conscience, Jiminy Cricket, Pinocchio learns right from wrong and that his actions have real consequences. The movie is perhaps best loved for the song, "When You Wish Upon a Star." The combination of Leigh Harline's music and Ned Washington's lyrics won the 1940 Academy Award for Best Original Song. The song's opening verse says, "When you wish upon a star, makes no difference who

you are, anything your heart desires will come to you." And while Christians should not place their trust in wishing stars, the idea that the desires of your heart will become yours is a scriptural one.

The psalmist David declared,

Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass (Ps. 37:4-5).

Each one of us should take the time to examine our own heart's desires. What sort of things do you want to have in life? What sort of person do you want to be? Are your desires tied to material things or are they more spiritual in nature? And what are you doing to achieve those goals?

Those who are faithful to God receive their heart's desires. When we seek to please our Heavenly Father, we align our hearts and our will to His teaching. We grow to love all that is good and to hate evil (Ps. 97:10; 119:104; Pro 8:13; Matt. 22:37-38). One who loves his Creator finds association with God and service to Him and among His people to be an absolute joy! Therefore, the desires of our heart precisely match His desires for us. Christians walk with the Lord in the light, being in perfect agreement (Amos 3:3; 1 John 1:7). Abiding in Him, we are continually equipped and trained for greater spiritual service (John 15:2; Eph 6:10; 2 Tim 3:16-17). Those who delight in God desire to have true fellowship with Him and perform honorable service in His Kingdom. God enables us to do just that through Christ's sacrifice and His doctrine.

In a sense, those who are wicked also get their heart's desires. If you are set on seeking carnal pursuits, then God will allow you to experience how disappointing those things truly are (Ps. 81:11-12; Rom 1:24-25). Jesus said,

when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward (Matt 6:2).

Glory from men is certainly a weak reward in comparison to praise from God. Recognition, fame, and the opinions of mankind are ultimately worthless (Luke 16:15; Gal. 1:10). Likewise earthly wealth becomes a great disappointment to man's soul in the end (Luke 12:13-21). May we learn to wish for greater things. Let us set our heart's desire on spiritual success!

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ASSUMPTION CONSUMPTION

Neal Pollard

The definition is stark and candid: “A thing that is accepted as true or certain to happen, without proof.” We live in an age where making assumptions is rampant and relentless. In current society, we make assumptions about one another based on political affiliation, skin color, and even masks. Charity and the benefit of the doubt are disappearing from too many circles, and that should have us all concerned. But, instead of panicking and giving up, Christians should see this as an opportunity to reach hearts for Jesus.

Immediately after writing about how powerful the command to love one another is (cf. Matt. 22:40; Rom. 13:8), Paul warns, “But if you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another” (Gal. 5:15). The current, so-called “cancel culture,” public humiliation,

online shaming, boycotting, etc., is presumptuous and worldly. While the nuances of what we are seeing these days may be unique to us, the mindset and behavior are ancient and basic. If you keep reading Paul’s words, you can identify the culprit. A failure to walk by the Spirit leads us to carry out the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16). How can we know which characterize us? It is palpably simple. Notice.

Check Your Deeds

Paul lists out 15 specific deeds of the flesh plus an encompassing “things like these”– which keeps the practitioners from inheriting the kingdom of God. Nestled among sexual immorality and drunkenness are “enmities” (*hostility and hatred*), “strife” (*to express differences of opinion with antagonism or hostility*), “outbursts of anger” (*intense, passionate “boiling over” of displeasure; rage*), “disputes” (*a feeling of hostility or being against*), “dissensions” (*party strife within a community*), “factions” (*division based upon different opinions or loyalties*) (Gal. 5:20). If God chose to drop the apostle Paul into our country right now for a week, surely he would preach this text to us! He’s describing the current crises and even many Christians’ response to it and one another. These are very nearly half of the deeds of the flesh specifically mentioned. Read your newsfeed, look at the articles being forwarded, watch cable or online news, and the like. More personally, I need to ask if I am exhibiting these deeds of the flesh in my words and actions.

The antithesis of such deeds and the fruit which counteracts and conquers them. “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faith-fulness, gentleness, self-control” (22-23). Insert each of these qualities into your deeds and see if those fleshly deeds can survive. It has become routine and expected to see the incivility and hostility of the deeds of the flesh. The fruit of the Spirit will overcome them! But we must discipline ourselves to exhibit them, even in the face of those employing those worldly ways.

Crucify Your Flesh

Sounds painful doesn’t it? It doesn’t sound like something that comes easily or naturally. But, if Jesus owns you, these “passions and desires” must be put to death (24). Kill them! Harness the hostility and defeat those desires. We cannot give ourselves the old “that’s just the way I am” pass. We are not our own. We belong to Him. Nail it to the cross of self-denial!

Chart Your Course

Paul says, “If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit” (25). “Walk” means “to be in line with a person or thing considered as standard for one’s conduct.” It means living in conformity with a set standard. We don’t have to guess what that is, and understand that it will look very

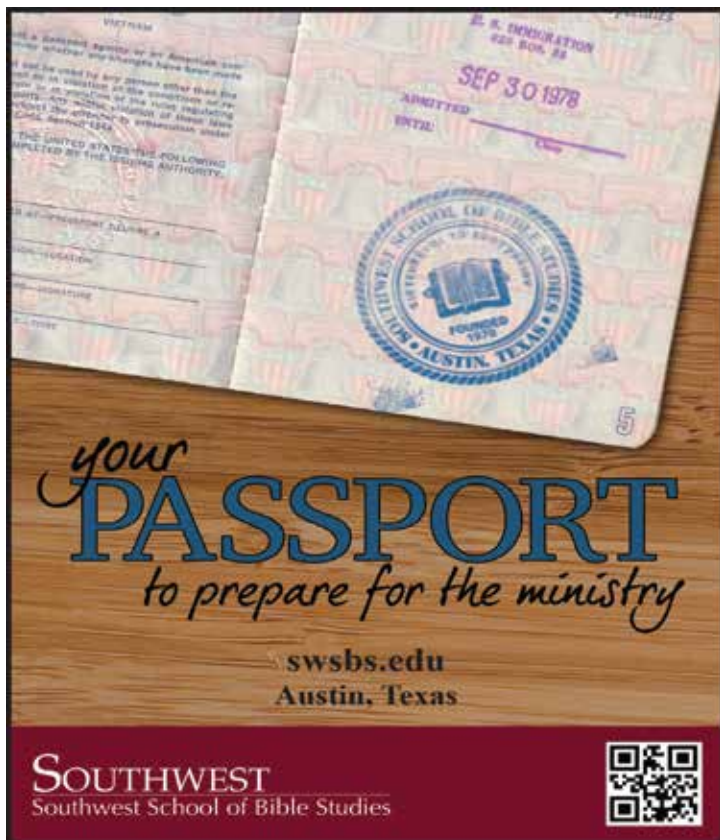
different from the world's standard. We cannot stoop to their level or conform to their rule (Rom. 12:1-2).

Consider Your Brethren

To end this discussion, Paul tells us how not to treat others—"boastful, challenging one another, envying one another" (26), then how to treat others (6:1-2). We gently restore one another and bear one another's burdens. We are protective and constructive. We care about souls, and that takes precedence over winning arguments and having our incisive one-liners quoted. We see souls like Jesus sees them!

It's discouraging to see our society losing the ability to reason and discuss respectfully. It is destructive to see our brethren giving in to such devilish tactics. May we be aware that we are not serving and honoring our Master if our means to accomplish our ends cause us to use fleshly ways. Paul says it best: "But each one must examine his own work" (Gal. 6:4). God help me to do so humbly and honestly!

CW



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thee before the sons of men!" (Ps. 31:19)

God promises His people, "no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Ps. 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 (1Pet. 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 Pt. 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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“To Know Jesus and...make Him known”

From the Director's desk



Steven Lloyd
Director SWSBS

August 9, 2021 marks our first day back to school. We will conduct two days of orientation and Wednesday we will commence with our regular classroom instruction.

The word “flux” characterizes school life. One of the unexpected changes we are making has to do with our full-time instructors, Logan Summers. Logan is getting married in October and has taken on a new role with the Graber Rd. congregation. He will work alongside Andy Baker and the elders of that good work beginning the first of August.

At this time, we have not chosen another full-time faculty member to replace brother Summers. Rather, we decided to call on a few brothers in the area. Mel Hutzler, a 1997 graduate of the school is joining us to teach Exodus and Ezra/Nehemiah/Esther. Mel has worked with the Northern Oaks congregation in San Antonio for the past 15 years.

Ronnie Scherffius already comes in every other quarter to teach. He has graciously consented to help us out by teaching Job. As of the writing of this report, we are solidifying our arrangement with another instructor to teach Logic.

Ten students are moving up to the second-year class and eleven students are coming in as first-year students. We look forward to the 2021 school year.