

BOOK 1

LISTENING GOD FOR LIKE CHARACTER

MAN OF THE WORD MANUAL • FALL 2023

LISTENING FOR GOD-LIKE CHARACTER

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FALL 2023 OVERVIEW

THEME

The Man of the Word theme this fall is the characteristics of the godly man in Titus 2:2, 6-10. This booklet is a ten-week study designed to challenge us as men to listen for, to be aware of, to grow in these God-like qualities as a foundation for our spiritual lives, regardless of age.

The duties of our relations are...*the greatest part and the best evidence of true Christianity*. The apostle exhorts Titus...earnestly to urge upon [the older and younger men] the performance of their relative duties, according to the capacities and stations wherein they respect each other.—*Ezekiel Hopkins (1634-1690)*¹

TITUS 2:2, 6-10

NASB

1 But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine.

2 **Older men** are to be temperate, dignified, sensible, sound in faith, in love, in perseverance...

6 Likewise urge the **young men** to be sensible; 7 in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified, 8 sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.

9 Urge **bondslaves** to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, 10 not pilfering, but showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.

KJV

2 That the **aged men** be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience...

6 **Young men** likewise exhort to be sober minded. 7 In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, 8 Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.

9 Exhort **servants** to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; 10 Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

MOW MANUAL

In this manual, each week's resources consist of the following.

- SCRIPTURE MEDITATION – the characteristic of the godly man from Titus 2:2, 6-10
- TESTIMONIES – actual real-life experiences from men of MCBC related to the week's godly characteristic from Titus 2
- PRAYER PARTNER IDEAS to encourage and grow our prayer life.
- FAMILY WORSHIP SUGGESTIONS
- FAMILY WORSHIP QUESTIONS (grouped at the end of the manual) to revitalize your family worship, with simple questions designed for fathers to ask their children, linked to the M'Cheyne Reading Plan

Notice that there is no separate book to read during this cycle. Instead, we invite you to invest that time in your family worship, prayer partner, and the church's Five-Year Reading Plan. The reading plan is included in this manual as an appendix.

Don't let these materials become daunting. Let whatever you do be a delight. If you can't keep up every component, choose the ones that you can use consistently and stick with them.

GOALS

- To understand, think on, and apply the Lord's teaching in Titus 2 as a foundation for meaningful spiritual growth
- To discover a more effective prayer life through experiencing revitalized prayer with a MOW prayer partner
- To begin to transform family worship to see a positive difference in how our children respond

METHODS

- Saturday Meetings: prayer, fellowship, instruction
- The Wilds Outing
- Prayer Partners during this cycle
- Family Worship emphasis
- Use of this MOW manual

DURATION

10 weeks: September 2 – November 11

EVENTS

Saturday Morning Meetings (7-9 AM):

September 2
October 7
November 11

The Wilds Outing for men and boys:

Friday evening September 29
Saturday all day September 30

PRAYER PARTNERS

Prayer Partners during these ten MOW weeks are essential to receive the desired spiritual benefits. If you need to find a prayer partner, contact Jesse Keck, jaekeck@gmail.com, this week and he will match you with another.

My Prayer Partner (*name, phone number, email*):

Prayed together (*dates*): _____

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Beginning Fall 2023 and continuing through Spring 2025, our Man of the Word meetings and manuals will feature topics that, we pray, will nurture you in the many roles you play as a Christian man. You may be a single man trying to discover your life's purpose. You could be a father of young children and struggling a bit with carrying on consistent family devotions. Or you're a father with older children who seemingly always want to question your authority over them. Maybe you are years beyond all that and are wondering, "What now?"

With the diversity of roles among us, settling on a single theme for our meetings and manuals that has the broadest favorable impact on the men of Mount Calvary is impossible. Nevertheless, through a good bit of prayer and consultation with our elders, we propose to begin our fall cycle with a review of the Holy Spirit's words to the church in Titus 2. We will deemphasize verses three to five, which apply directly to women and have been the subject for a women's class at Mount Calvary for a few years now. We will focus attention on "the things which are fitting for sound doctrine"—in particular, the characteristics of mature Christian men listed in verses 2 and 6-10. This first manual in our two-year span contains personal testimonies and examples from our men about these characteristics. These will certainly be a blessing to you.

Thinking of the many expectations and demands being placed on the men of Mount Calvary, I'm reminded of Roger Bradley's words to us in the Spring 2022 manual. Concerning spiritual leadership for men, he wrote, "God calls for biblical male leadership for our families and churches. As the Scriptures describe it, no one would dare suggest that it is easy, but it is required. Even so, we can be assured that God's assignment also always comes with His empowerment." Well said! Men, never be discouraged as you try to submit your will to God's and live out the role(s) He has given you as a Christian man. None of us will be perfect at it—actually, only a few will be even adequate at it. Remember, it is Christ who loves you, and nothing can separate you from that love. He is our advocate with the Father, our Great High Priest who sympathizes with our infirmities. He saved us, not based on our own works, but by His mercy and grace. He calls you to your appointments in life for a reason, and "causes all things to work together for good to those who love God" (Rom 8:28).

—*Ken Still*

OVERLOOKED, NON-NEGOTIABLE MANLY VIRTUES

Within my lifetime publishers have issued scores of books approaching from one angle or another the subject of Christian manhood. But I am not aware of any work whose focal point is the directives for men given in the four verses of Titus 2:2, 6-8.

Perhaps there is such a title. But if not, the absence is surprising in light of the fact that this passage has no parallel in all of the Bible. It is the one place in which men are addressed under the categories of “older” and “young,” and then directed toward the character traits especially desirable and distinctive to each. In this respect, it is unique in all of Scripture.

This one fact alone ought to trigger our curiosity. Once we’ve really looked at the passage, it will ever after command and hold our attention. What virtues does it specify ought to be conspicuous in the life of any older Christian man? For what commendable qualities ought any younger Christian brother to be well known?

If you’re an older man, test yourself. Do you know these particular virtues which God expects of you? Titus 2:2 lists six. Can you name two of them? One of them?

Younger men, with how many of the five commendable characteristics for a man of your age are you familiar? Do you know at least the first one? Do you understand it well enough to realize why it’s given preeminence?

I’m not putting us on the spot in order to belittle, but in order to expose our having overlooked what we need to be magnifying.

This is not to say, of course, that these verses describe manly character comprehensively. They do not, for instance, include all of the aspects of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23) or all of the weapons of our spiritual warfare (Eph 6:14-18). But Paul’s conclusion to the contents of this chapter makes it clear that these particular traits are, similarly to the Spirit’s fruit, absolute non-negotiables for Christian men. This is so much the case that ministers like Titus are charged to elevate and underscore them by every verbal means: “These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you” (2:15).

We dare not, then, disregard these verses or their repeated magnification in this cycle of Man of the Word. Aspire expectantly to the conspicuous transformation of your own character after their image.

—*Pastor Minnick*

PRAYER PARTNERS DURING THIS MOW CYCLE

Prayer Partners are standard practice at MCBC each Wednesday evening—they make our Wednesday prayer services vital, comprehensive, and relevant for the health of our body. But Prayer Partners during each MOW cycle are an even more vital aspect to the MOW ministry, as we pray with the same person regularly and consistently over the ten week cycle.

During this fall cycle of MOW, we want to renew and revitalize our prayer partner ministry by encouraging everyone to participate, and to make every effort to pray weekly with your MOW partner. You will find that your own prayer life is enriched, that you will be a real encouragement to your partner, and that God will answer, often in special ways.

We offer the following best practices for prayer partners. Please try these and incorporate what is useful into your regular prayer habits.

- Have a first meeting with your partner over breakfast or lunch to catch up and/or get to know each other better
- Younger men seek out older men in order to benefit from mentoring
- Pray on Wednesday evening together about once a month during the MOW cycle (and only about once in order to maintain involvement with others)
- Near the end of the cycle, pray on Wednesday evening or separately in person to cap off the partner experience
- When the weather permits, meet at one of your homes or a park for prayer—the outdoors often stimulates deeper prayer
- Try “conversational prayer”: rather than each praying for half your time at one go, instead each prays for one item, and the other responds on that item (as appropriate) and/or then mentions another, going back and forth in shorter few-sentence prayers.

We are always needing, and therefore we need to be always praying. The world is always alluring, and therefore we need to be always praying. Satan is always tempting, and therefore we need to be always praying. We are always sinning, and therefore we need to be always praying. We are in dangers always, and therefore we need to be praying always. —*Thomas Brooks (1608-1680)*²

FAMILY WORSHIP DURING THIS MOW CYCLE

Family worship is one of the most important ministries a man can have with his family. It is truly one of the main “means of grace” that God uses to minister His Word to a family. But the experience of family worship can become dry and lifeless! If this happens, children can become resistant and develop negative impressions of God and His Word.

MCBC encourages everyone to read through the Bible each year and offers M’Cheyne’s Daily Bible Reading (MDBR) plan (available in the bookstore) as appropriate. You perhaps are using a different reading plan or already are having good success in family worship. Great! But if you desire to be more effective or to have more meaningful questions for your family, in this cycle of MOW we offer some *questions for your use each day*. You also may be using MDBR but are a bit behind. We suggest jumping to the current schedule during this cycle and using the MOW questions *found at the end of this manual*.

One key to success in family worship is to fit the ages of your children. Younger children need a relatively short time of 30 minutes or less, with simple lessons. Teens are ready for more thought-provoking discussions. Another key to success is creativity. Rather than gathering only in your family room, try taking a walk, going to a park, or finding object lessons that you can visit. For example, when the reading includes “storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation...” (1Ti 6:19), you could visit a foundation at a construction site and discuss what each can observe: straight edges, strong substructure, order, and good materials. Also, remember that your purpose is to engage their hearts. You are not pounding truth into their minds, but engaging their hearts to believe the Scriptures as true and to desire to follow them. With younger children, you might want to use only one question, reading it to them beforehand so that they can be listening for it.

Finally, when your time is limited, you may want to devote your own quiet time to reading the chapter you will be sharing with the family. Look for verses that may be helpful for their particular needs. Plan to use open-ended questions that can engage them in discussion. With consistency and patience, you will begin to have more satisfying and useful worship times with your family. ☞

ABOUT MAN OF THE WORD

The leadership of Mount Calvary Baptist Church created Man of the Word in obedience to the command of 2 Timothy 2:2: “The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

We are grateful to Pastors Mark Minnick and Jerid Jones, and elder Chris Baker, for their encouragement and leadership, and for their vision for the men of Mount Calvary Baptist Church. We would also like to express our gratitude to the men who have shared their personal examples for our growth and encouragement.

WHAT IS MOW?

The purpose of the Man of the Word ministry is to unite the men of MCBC in supplementing the ministry of the church and developing their spiritual lives.

MOW started in 1993 for both adults and young men. MOW’s main activity is a 10 to 12 week training program twice a year, which includes prayer, fellowship, and discipleship from the Word. In addition, there are special service projects and outings.

MOW MEETINGS

Currently, there are six MOW meetings each year consisting of

- Spring monthly meetings: February, March, and April
- Fall monthly meetings: September, October, and November

In addition, there is an overnight fall outing to which all men and boys are invited: in odd years at the Wilds, in even years at a member’s home or nearby campground.

The current format of the monthly meetings is

- 7:00 AM Prayer: the men gather in the auditorium in small groups
- 8:00 AM Breakfast, prepared by men volunteers
- 8:30 AM Meeting: singing, announcements, committee reports, and encouragement/training
- 9:00 AM Conclusion

MOW GOVERNANCE

MOW is designed to be self-governing among the men of MCBC, with pastoral and elder oversight. It operates under the Constitution of MCBC and its elders, who set down its rules and policies. Currently, Pastor Jerid Jones is the coordinating pastor and Chris Baker the coordinating elder. The MOW Constitution governs its functions (available for download from the church website).

The six MOW officers are elected for a two-year term by simple majority of the members present at a meeting in the spring of odd years. The officers’ duties are

- President: organize meetings, oversee all aspects of ministry
- Vice-President: assist the president as needed
- Secretary/Treasurer: receive and distribute funds
- Food coordinator: organize volunteers to set up, prepare, serve, and clean at monthly breakfasts and outings
- Projects coordinator: coordinate volunteers and service projects in the church and community
- Manual coordinator: plan and prepare the training/discipleship material for each fall and spring cycle.

The officers’ two-year term begins after the last MOW meeting in the spring of odd years. Thus, the officer team actively governs a fall and spring cycle for each of two twelve-month periods. An Advisory Committee nominates officer candidates with the consent of the officers of MOW, to be approved by the Elder Board of MCBC. The Advisory Committee consists of the MCBC pastors and the president and vice-president of MOW. An offering is taken at each meeting to defray

the cost of food. In addition, the church contributes quarterly to the MOW ministry to fund its special projects and a major outing.

PRAYER PARTNERS

Prayer Partners are an important part of MOW. Each fall and spring cycle, every participant is encouraged to find another man to pray with regularly during that cycle. This can consist of some Wednesday evenings and informal times weekly—by video call, in person, or by phone.

OFFICERS

The following are the current Man of the Word officers for the two-year term from summer 2023 through spring 2025. We hope you will get to know them and become even more involved in the MOW service projects and discipleship. Please keep their service this term in your prayers.

President Ken Still *kstill@bellsouth.net* The Lord saved Ken in 1971. After high school he traveled four years with a revival ministry before entering Bob Jones University. He and Arlene were married in 1982 and have three children and five grandchildren. After a career in Georgia, Florida, and North Carolina in public accounting, health care finance, and treasury management, in 2013 Ken became Chief Financial Officer at BJU and BJU Press. However, the primary thing that brought the family back to Greenville was to attend Mount Calvary. He recently completed one term as deacon and one term as Secretary/Treasurer for MOW. The prayer breakfasts organized through MOW have been a major part of Ken's spiritual growth in learning how to pray.

Vice President Jesse Keck *jaeheck@gmail.com* Jesse was saved at the age of 5 and grew up attending Mount Calvary with his family. After college, he married Elisabeth and they now have four children. He joined the maintenance staff here at church part-time in 1997 and works with his family business doing appliance repair. Jesse and his wife have worked with the teen group since 2000. He has served as a deacon and project coordinator for Man of the Word.

Secr./Treasurer Steven Frederick *stevenfred99@gmail.com* Steven grew up going to Mount Calvary and came to know the Lord at an early age after a Sunday evening service. Since then, the Lord has graciously led in his life, giving him wonderful opportunities to see His hand at work. He graduated from Bob Jones University in 2021 with a degree in accounting and currently serves the Lord in that occupation. He is so thankful for his beloved wife, Anna, and their son, Birch. He has benefited so much from the many ministries of this church over the years and is privileged to be a part of the Man of the Word ministry.

Food coordinator Mike Oliver *gmikeoliver@gmail.com* The Lord saved Mike at the age of 10 in a local country church. Mike's mother read the Scriptures and prayed with him regularly. He attended college before joining the US Army and was deployed to South Korea. Mike lived in Charlotte, NC, after serving in the military and attended a community college at night. When a BJU ensemble visited Mike's church, he learned about Bob Jones University and also met his wife, Kathy Wallace, a nursing student studying in Charlotte. The Lord has blessed Mike and Kathy with three sons and a daughter. Mike and Kathy have benefited from the pulpit ministry of MCBC since 1979 and were married there in 1980.

Project coordinator Nathan Dion *ndion042@gmail.com* Growing up at Mount Calvary, the Lord saved Nathan at the age of 12. He graduated BJU in 2011, majoring in Youth Ministries. He and Holly also were married in 2011, and the Lord has blessed with 5 children, ages 3 to 11. Nathan has served many years as a youth leader, over 20 years serving in Friday Night Teen Club, Neighborhood Bible School, Cola Wars, building maintenance staff, and helping with site work when the new building was constructed. He owns and operates Procure Handyman, and loves serving alongside his family in various ministries, building things, doing sports and anything outdoors, and hosting gatherings at their home.

Manual coordinator Steven Frakes *countlessmercies@gmail.com* Steven met his wife Linda in high school in Texas, worked in computer sales and marketing, home schooled their three children, and made a profession of faith when age 29. But in the '90s while working in training in Europe, the Lord convicted him of superficial Christianity. He and Linda attended The Evangelical Institute in Greenville, and then served 24 years at the Chapel Library literature ministry in Florida. In 2021 they moved to Greenville to attend MCBC and have a "prophets chamber" for traveling missionaries.

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION

Titus 2:2a Temperate: “sober” (KJV), “sober-minded” (ESV).

Gill: vigilant and watchful over themselves, their conduct, and conversation.

John Gill was an English Baptist pastor and theologian, 1697-1771, who preceded Charles Spurgeon by 100 years as pastor of what became The Metropolitan Tabernacle. The brief expository comment for each characteristic is from his *Exposition of the New Testament* (1748).

“Every one that names the name of the Lord” (2Ti 2:19) a) is under an obligation thereby to “depart from iniquity,” b) is engaged to labour after a “sound mind” (1:7), c) to be “modest, sober,” and “temperate in all things” (Titus 1:8; 2:2, 4, 6; 1Co 9:25), d) learning to “use this world as if we used it not”, d) minding “that which is comely” and “attending upon the Lord without distraction” (1Co 7:31, 35). Yea, we should “let our moderation be known unto all men” as “those that are Christ’s, who have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Phi 4:5; Gal 5:24). —Richard Adams (1626-1698)³

“TEMPERATE”

By Bruce Arnold

Older men are charged in Titus 2:2 to be “temperate” or sober-minded. Hiebert in his *Expositor’s Bible Commentary* describes this term as “clear-headed, manifesting self-possession under all circumstances.”

One of the most spiritually influential older men in my life and in our family was my father-in-law, James Hancock, who exhibited “temperance.” He consistently and intentionally encouraged our four sons in their pursuit and loyalty to the Word of God. As they matured in their understanding of the Scriptures, he urged them to take opportunities to share it, but to be careful and temperate in their handling of it.

The children and grandchildren in our family never had any doubt that their granddaddy loved them. But even more importantly they were convinced that his greatest desire for them was they would walk circumspectly in the truth of the Scriptures—the Scriptures that he loved so passionately. The most often discussed topics of conversation during our visits were biblical issues or Bible passages that he was studying. He would often spark their interest in a topic and then draw them into the discussion. He would always commend them as they made good observations, while gently identifying error. His godly temperance prevented him from over-correcting their simple conclusions and his responses never seemed condescending. Instead, His love for the Scriptures was infectious. It was apparent that his greatest desire for them was that they would love the Bible as he did—with all their hearts.

Visiting Granddaddy’s farm in South Georgia was a highlight. But in addition to the farm experience there was the occasional opportunity to worship in the small church where he pastored. If our visit included a Sunday, our family would often minister musically to the small congregation. As our sons moved into their teenage and young adult years, their granddaddy often would discuss with them the passage that he was planning to preach the following Sunday. In addition, he would talk with them about the passages that they were studying or memorizing. He was overjoyed if he learned that God had given them the opportunity to share God’s Word with an individual or in a church ministry.

At some point in their teen years, my father-in-law began to offer our sons the opportunity to participate in his church services. Initially it was by reading the Scriptures. As they grew in their ability and confidence to share the Word, he encouraged one or two of them to share a short message with his tiny congregation. The congregation was always gracious and offered their encouragement. And of course, we can still recall Granddaddy’s hearty “amens” as he sat on the front pew and cheered them on. Needless to say, as the boys grew in their abilities to “preach at Granddaddy’s church,” they were motivated to give a significant amount of time preparing for their short sermons.

Even though my father-in-law’s intentional discipleship of our sons was seminal in our family’s interest in Christian ministry, it was his temperance and patient spirit that God most greatly used in our sons’ lives. It began when they were young and continued until the Lord took him home at age 95.

One vital goal for all Christian families is that their children find ease in reading and explaining God’s Word to others. What steps can parents take to encourage their children’s faith? Could we contribute to their love for God’s Word by

giving more time to discussing it patiently while highly commending their smallest efforts to express what they have grasped?

We all long to see our children someday lead their families (and possibly their churches) in scriptural exhortation. Could we intentionally give our children opportunities in family worship to read Scripture, lead or minister a song, or give a devotional for the family? Could we give them time to share with us what they are preparing and then follow up their ministry to the family with commendations? Could we put aside our own temporary pleasures and engage our family in ministry participation—a neighborhood Bible club or a rest-home ministry? Could we encourage our children to serve with us in our church ministries—children’s church, NBS, or neighborhood visitation?

It may be that our own commitment to a spirit of temperance (Titus 2:2) could be used by God to grant our children and grandchildren the opportunity to experience the blessing of ministering the Word for a lifetime—in their families and/or in full-time Christian service. ✨

PRAYER PARTNERS THIS WEEK

This week discuss the character quality of “temperate” (NASB) with your prayer partner. This first week, try to set a time for weekly prayer together in person, video, or phone. Also discuss some difficulties in prayer, how to overcome them, and the article on “temperate.”

[Here] is something we have all learned from experience: there is nothing, in a sense, which is so difficult as just to pray. There are many difficulties [in it]...These things tend to happen because prayer is the supreme activity of the human soul. It is the highest point we ever reach in this life: communion with God. As we engage in prayer, all the forces of hell are playing upon us, and they are doing their utmost to spoil our efforts...Don’t be discouraged by the fact that you have found prayer difficult!

—D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981)⁴

FAMILY WORSHIP THIS WEEK

Make a new start in family worship this week by using the MOW questions with M’Cheyne’s Daily Reading Plan for 1 and 2 Samuel. The reading for each day is listed at the end of this manual, together with simple questions you can ask your family for each chapter. Some questions are aimed at younger children and others are designed for discussion with teens.

WEEK 2

SEPTEMBER 10-16

DIGNIFIED

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION

Titus 2:2b Dignified: “grave” (KJV).

Gill: [serious] in behaviour, speech, and dress; as opposed to levity of conversation, frothy language, and airy dress.

Gravity [dignified, NASB] is procured by well-regulated morals. Nothing is more shameful than for an old man to indulge in youthful wantonness, and by his countenance to strengthen the impudence of the young. In the life of old men let there be displayed “a becoming gravity” that shall constrain the young to modesty. —John Calvin (1509-1564)⁵

“DIGNIFIED”

By Mark Batory

Human culture tends to be governed by the frivolity of its entertainments and comforts. It often seeks to elevate and emulate things that are base and of no eternal value. Christians are not exempt from the potential dominance of those same crippling pursuits and priorities in life. In Titus chapter two, the Apostle Paul paints a picture of what a true man of God looks like. One of the words Paul uses in verses two and seven to describe this man is “dignified.” The word indicates seriousness in manner or motive of behavior that represents something bigger and of greater importance than themselves. Paul tells Titus that a godly man’s life ought to demonstrate how to live and serve with a life that backs-up and reflects the Person, Word, and work of his wonderful, exalted Savior, Jesus Christ.

For almost fifty years, Dr. Gerry Johnson and his wife, Meriam, served as missionaries in Japan and later in South Korea. Brother Johnson was a thin man of small stature, mostly quiet; yet he exhibited great energy and action coupled with occasional humor. I often described his fervent preaching style as “wiry and fiery.” The Lord used this brother and his wife to plant a church and establish a Bible seminary in South Korea through which hundreds studied to serve Christ in the Orient. Once their age and physical health hindered their ability to remain on the field, they returned to the United States, where they continued developing gospel literature and Bible courses to send into prisons.

One day Brother Johnson asked Dr. Alan Patterson and me to visit him and his wife at their home here in Greenville. From the moment we came through the front door, it was clear that we were entering a dwelling place devoted to a life of undoubted piety, simplicity, seriousness, and earnestness in their priority of getting the message of Christ to the lost. Every wall was a plain dull white, and most were lined with shelves containing literature and Bible courses. Every table seemed to be covered with incoming stacks of courses needing to be read, graded, and individually responded to with counsel and answers to questions. It was very clear that the Johnsons’ lives and home were not given to entertainment, comfort, or style but to their committed ministry for Christ.

At the end of our visit, Brother Johnson made me promise that when he went home to heaven I would do my best to keep this literature ministry alive. I, of course, responded affirmatively, not knowing that was to be my last conversation with him before the Lord took him home a few weeks later.

By God’s grace and provision, this ministry now continues as a part of Faith Ministries, overseen by Brother Keith Ekberg. It has now grown, and thousands are receiving gospel literature along with others who are studying Bible courses. The dignified elevation of the gospel lived by the Johnsons has left a tremendous legacy that continues today in the lives of thousands of incarcerated men and women around the world.

The intention of the Apostle Paul’s words to Titus is for all who read this letter. It is not enough for us who profess Christ to speak sound doctrine, we must by our priorities and pattern of every good work show forth the dignity (seriousness and honor) of what we profess.

In a unique way, Gerry and Meriam were Christ-honoring examples in how their lives reflected their devotion to the dignity of their calling. When the world looks at us, does it see our exalted Lord, His dignity, reflected in all that we do and say? Few of us will have equal ministry opportunities as the Johnsons. But though our homes and occupations vary, we all ought to possess the same manner and motive of behavior that with humble dignity, reflects something bigger and of greater importance than ourselves—the Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel. ↪

PRAYER PARTNERS THIS WEEK

This week discuss with your prayer partner the characteristic of “dignified” (NASB). Also discuss how the Holy Spirit helps us in prayer (see Romans 8:26-27), and the above article on “dignified.” Encourage each other about your family worship, and discuss whether you are using the MOW questions and if they are helpful.

As long as we measure our power for praying aright and perseveringly by what we feel, or by what we think we can accomplish, we shall be discouraged when we hear of how much we ought to pray. But when we quietly believe that, in the midst of our conscious weakness, the Holy Spirit as a Spirit of supplication is dwelling within us for the very purpose of enabling us to pray in such a manner and measure as God would have us, our hearts will be filled with hope.—*Andrew Murray (1828-1917)*⁶

FAMILY WORSHIP THIS WEEK

Try to have a regular set time and routine every evening for family worship. Many Puritans would read a chapter at the table after dinner (and after breakfast and lunch too). Going to the family room may be a good choice in this culture where a comfortable chair is the norm!

See the MOW questions at the end of the manual for 2 Samuel chapters 4 through 12. In these chapters, Ishbosheth is murdered and David executes justice on the assassins. David is anointed king over Israel and Jerusalem becomes the capitol. He brings the Ark to Jerusalem, resulting in Uzzah’s death. Our God gloriously and graciously gives the Davidic Covenant. David exemplifies reigning after God’s own heart, but then he commits adultery and belatedly repents.

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION

Titus 2:2c Sensible: “temperate” (KJV), “self-controlled” (ESV).

Gill: [moderate] “in eating and drinking...[also used] as “discreet” and “sober” in Titus 2:5 and 1 Timothy 3:2 (KJV) [“self-controlled” and “vigilant” (ESV)]...[Also, sober-minded,] chaste, modest, moderate, wise, and prudent in all things.

The duties of the aged and superior in gifts and graces, unto the younger and inferior, are to adorn their old age and show forth the power of their grace in a holy and exemplary conversation [so that all in their circle are encouraged to godliness].

—Thomas Vincent (1634-1678)⁷

“SENSIBLE”

By Paul Baker

You might think personal finance has little to do with godliness. However, God is very concerned about how we use our money, resources, and talents. Having been raised by parents who had both lived during the Great Depression of the 1930s, I was taught sensible financial principles by observing how we lived as a family:

- Work hard
- Don't borrow
- Purchase “needs” not “wants”
- Saving is better than spending

My dad worked in the textile industry and periodically ran a small “cut & sew” business on the side. I had three brothers and we all worked in the sewing business (unskilled jobs for me!), along with my mother. We always had food on the table and clothes to wear. We attended the local Baptist church. Life was simple and we were happy. I was saved at 11 years old, made good grades in school, and decided I didn't want a career in textiles.

I attended the state university after high school and graduated with a business/accounting degree. As a young college graduate receiving a steady paycheck for the first time, one of the first money issues I faced was: What is the basis for a tithe—net pay or gross pay? I didn't really check any resources to find out the majority opinion (there was not an internet or Google). I just decided that gross pay was what the Lord had blessed me with and I would tithe from that total. The Lord blessed that decision and I continued to tithe from gross wages, even as I slowly received raises and promotions.

Four years after college graduation, I met, by God's grace, my wife-to-be and we were married two and one-half years later. We were both employed and, again, we made a financial decision that the Lord blessed: we decided to live from my wages and save hers. Four years later, the Lord blessed us with a son and my wife became a stay-at-home mom—the career that the Lord had ordained for her before the beginning of time.

We continued to tithe as a couple and the Lord continued to bless us. I made it a practice to make certain the first check that we wrote after each pay period was our offering to the Lord.

To many people, personal finances are just that: personal. How each person manages their finances is their own business. They think as long as the bills are getting paid and they're providing adequate food, clothing, and shelter for the family, they are doing a good job. Cash flow may get tight sometimes, but you can usually manage it by trimming some non-essential expenses. If you have to cut back on the church offering sometimes, surely God understands; and you can make it back up to Him when you have some extra cash.

In many ways, that line of thinking is totally of the world. It is not worldly in that it considers contributing to the LORD; yet unsurprisingly, it still falls short of a godly view of finances.

Isaiah 55:8-9 says: “For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, declares 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.”

As a financial professional, I was trained in many aspects of cash management and budgeting. Rarely was there any mention of the priority to place on our giving to the LORD. In the Bible, that is not the case. Since God's thoughts are not my thoughts, the best way to know God's thoughts is through His Word. Some important financial Scriptures:

Proverbs 3:9 – “Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce.”

Matthew 6:19-21 – “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth.”

1 Timothy 6:10 – “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils.”

2 Corinthians 9:7 – “For God loves a cheerful giver.”

In addition, my wife and I were blessed to be introduced to Christian financial teachers: first Larry Burkett and then Jim Sammons. Their teaching was straight-forward, practical, and most importantly, biblical. Their resources are still available via the internet today.

I'm not advocating that you follow my life experiences as your road map. What I am recommending is that you be “sensible,” especially in finances, by seeking the LORD's will for you through His Word. His Word is faithful and true. It is without error; it is the way to Life. ☞

PRAYER PARTNERS THIS WEEK

This week ask your prayer partner about praying for missions more regularly. Do you lift up our missionaries on Wednesday evening even when they are not mentioned? Discuss prevailing prayer: do you have a sense that you are truly connecting with God Almighty? Also discuss the preceding article on “sensible” and the wise use of finances.

Through the mercy of the Father, the merit of the mediating Son, and the might of the inspiring Spirit, prayer is possible...[If we understand to whom, and through whom, and by whom we pray, our praying will become prevailing. —G. Campbell Morgan (1863-1945)]⁸

FAMILY WORSHIP THIS WEEK

Be sure and tailor your questions to the ages of your children. Young ones will benefit from just one very simple question, which you can read to them beforehand so they can be listening for it. Teens are ready for good discussion questions. See the MOW family worship questions at end of this manual for suggestions.

In M'Cheyne's readings in 2 Samuel 13-19, David receives the Lord's chastening in constant bloodshed among his children: Absalom murders Amnon and flees. Joab schemes for Absalom's return, who then overthrows the government to claim to be king. David flees, is cursed by Shemei; Hushai overturns Ahithophel's counsel. David defeats the rebellion and is restored to the throne.

WEEK 4

SEPTEMBER 24-30

SOUND IN FAITH

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION

Titus 2:2d Sound in faith.

Gill: [All Christians] should be sound in their minds in the doctrine of faith, lest they should lead others into error. Their faith in Christ should appear to be right and genuine.

Note: “Sound in faith” includes a solid understanding of Christ's substitutionary atonement at the cross. It can also include practical faith in our daily walk with Christ.

By soundness in faith we call upon God. It is fundamental to all exercises of godliness. —John Calvin (1509-1564)⁹

“SOUND IN FAITH”

By Doug Becker

Since the admonition to be “sound in faith” is contained within a list of Christian virtues, I take it to be a command to cultivate a healthy, personal faith rather than a command to be sound in the faith (which is commanded in the previous verse). I would like to share a personal experience. Even though this occurred over 35 years ago, the lesson has remained with me ever since.

After completing my MA at BJU and marrying Carolyn, we both became very active in ministry at Mt. Calvary. Thanks to Pastor Tipton, I also began working in an engineering office. During that time, I pursued several full-time ministry options, but encountered as many closed doors. One day we received a prayer letter from a classmate of my wife who was then serving as a single missionary. The letter informed us that a missionary pastor in Scotland was very much in need of a furlough replacement.

Immediately upon hearing of that need, my thought was, “I think I could do that.” As I began to make inquiry about this opportunity, things were markedly different. Instead of closed doors, door after door opened—green lights instead of red lights; encouragements rather than discouragements. My wife, my parents, Pastor Boyd, and GFA all encouraged me to move forward with pursuing this.

The largest obstacle seemed to be the immediacy of the need. As I recall it was either February or March when I first read that prayer letter. The missionary pastor needed to leave in mid-June. Here is what would need to happen in that short timespan:

- Acceptance by GFA (this was prior to the advent of short-term mission assignments, so I needed to go through the entire approval process)
- Raising of financial support for an entire year of ministry
- Ordination at MCBC—strongly urged (i.e., required [*smile*]) by Pastor Boyd
- Receipt of a temporary visa from the UK
- Resignation of my job

One morning, early in the decision-making process, I was having strong doubts about the feasibility and the wisdom of stepping out by faith to do this. Weighing heavily upon my mind was the information shared in the prayer letter: this missionary had lost every person in his small work during his previous furlough! And also on my mind was the list of BIG hurdles we would need to surmount—in a very short time.

One morning, I “happened” to be reading the tenth chapter of Hebrews. I still remember the conviction that came in verse 38: “But my righteous one shall live by faith; and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” Shrink back—that would be the opposite of living by faith. No, I will not shrink back! I will press forward! I will believe God is calling me to do this. And the rest is now part of my personal history.

So brothers, I encourage you to continue on in your journey of faith. Don’t shrink back from doing anything the Lord makes clear to you that He wants you to do. He is faithful to help you surmount every obstacle in the path. If He is calling you, you can be sure He will provide. Ask Tyler Trometer or Andrew Minnick; I think they will concur. ☞

PRAYER PARTNERS THIS WEEK

This week discuss with your prayer partner how open and honest you can be with the Lord Jesus in prayer, and the connection this has to answered prayer. And be sure and discuss the article on “sound in faith.”

To pray is nothing more involved than...giving Jesus access to our needs, and permitting Him to exercise His own power in dealing with them...And that requires no strength. It is only a question of our wills. Will we give Jesus access to our needs?

—Ole Hallesby (1879-1961)¹⁰

FAMILY WORSHIP THIS WEEK

Family worship is vital: “It is not enough that we pray as private individuals in our closets; we are required to honor God in our families as well...The whole household should be gathered together to bow before the Lord to confess their sins, to give thanks for God’s mercies, to seek His help and blessing. Nothing must be allowed to interfere with this duty: all other domestic arrangements are to bend to it...Under no circumstances should family worship be omitted,” unless providentially hindered by the hand of God.—A. W. Pink (1886-1952)¹¹

M’Cheyne’s readings are in 2 Samuel 20 through 1 Kings 2. Sheba’s revolt fails, Joab murders Amasa, and there is more war with the Philistines. David’s heart of praise is evident in his thanksgiving for deliverance. He speaks his last words, numbers the people, repents after chastening, and appoints Solomon as his successor.

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION

Titus 2:2e [Sound] in love.

Gill: “sound in [agape] love to God, to Christ, and to His people. [Such] love should be real and sincere, and be taken off from the things of the world, of time and sense.”

Agape love is a decision to set its affection unconditionally on its object, without consideration of merit.

[This] love extends to all the [person-to-person] commandments of the second table [of the Ten Commandments].

—John Calvin (1509-1564)¹²

“SOUND IN LOVE”

By Paul Steffensmeier

In Titus 2:2, Paul instructed Titus to be sound “in love.” The ultimate display of agape love is our Lord Himself: while we were enemies of God, Christ humbled Himself and died for our sins—an act of unconditional love that was totally unmerited by us.

An example of agape love that I experienced first-hand was that of a dear lady in our church. We were new in this church and didn’t know the people very well. One of the older men was in a hospital seriously ill due to kidney failure. When my wife and I visited him, suddenly a figure from the other side of the room jumped to her feet. The man’s wife had requested a cot be placed in the room so that she could stay with him 24/7. She had a larger build; the cot was very uncomfortable for her. I doubt she was able to get good sleep on it—but she had that self-sacrificing love for her husband to be there for him.

Another example involves two people showing agape love to the same person who needed help. My wife, Karen, and I were friends with a widow named Marie for 20 plus years. This lady was in her late 70s and was starting to have some confusion and memory loss. The church she was involved in didn’t seem that caring, so my wife took it upon herself to help her. Although we lived about 20 minutes from her, Karen would bring her food and raw milk about every week, and spent hours finding someone to remove her snow during the winter. If Karen hadn’t done that, the widow would not have eaten very well and have had to do her own snow removal (at risk to her health). This was especially important in 2020 when Marie was restricted to staying home due to Covid.

About a year before this, a man named Tom had lost his wife. As she suffered from increasing dementia, he cared for her at home for five years, and during her last year visited her in the nursing home every day—even though she did not always know him.

A year after her passing, Tom had seen Marie at a restaurant. We learned that he had known her years earlier: they had worked in the same Christian ministry. Tom became fully aware of Marie’s declining mental condition as they became reacquainted. Even though he had lost his first wife in the pain of a similar situation, he wanted to marry Marie and take care of her throughout her declining mental ability. What an incredible display of agape love toward her! They were married in August of 2020 when he was 82 and she was 80.

In early 2020, my wife Karen was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer. Outwardly, she appeared to function at about 80% for most of that year, but she was not well. As she walked through her own cancer journey, she continued to bring food and milk to Marie the entire time. She even stepped up her acts of love in that she spent hours helping Marie sort through her belongings, pack, and dispose of the things she did not need in preparation for her marriage to Tom. Karen also helped her walk through various decisions she needed to make. Karen displayed many acts of selfless agape love during this time as her own body declined, culminating in her passing a few months later.

These examples remind us that agape love esteems others’ interests above its own. It serves others even when not convenient or easy. It is not a feeling, but a decided commitment.

Gentlemen, “Oh, that we as men would be sound in agape love.” ☞

PRAYER PARTNERS THIS WEEK

This week discuss with your prayer partner why God often does not seem to answer our prayers right away. Continue to encourage each other regarding regular family worship and praying for missions. And discuss the “sound in love” article above.

[We are not] sufficient of ourselves; our sufficiency is of God. Therefore there is a necessity of daily [communion] with God...and of waiting at His gate—as a beggar who has neither a bit of bread nor a penny to buy any [waits] at the rich man’s door for supply. Our spiritual strength is like Israel’s manna: rained down. We are kept by a divine power and allowed but from hand to mouth, that we might continually depend on and resort to the Lord Jesus for our allowance.—*George Swinnock (1627-1673)*¹³

FAMILY WORSHIP THIS WEEK

Some of the best family worship times are with object lessons. These can be simple “props” you can hold in your hand, or a visit to an appropriate site nearby. Make a simple analogy between your object and a spiritual truth, such as a bowling ball being about the same weight as Goliath’s spearhead, or a mud puddle as an example of Jeremiah’s miry pit, or a garden cart/wheelbarrow illustrating Uzzah’s attempting to steady the cart the Ark was on—a simple act that violated God’s purity with just but tragic results. Or visit a maternity ward to see the newborns for the story of the two women and their babies in chapter 3.

M’Cheyne’s readings are in 1 Kings 3-10; see the MOW questions at the end of this manual. Solomon requests wisdom of the Lord; his ruling regarding the two women demonstrates it. He reigns over a vast kingdom and prepares for, then builds the Temple and its vessels. At the dedication of the Temple, the Lord manifests His glory and Solomon prays for the nation. God repeats the Davidic Covenant. Then the Queen of Sheba visits Solomon and is amazed.

WEEK 6

OCTOBER 8-14

SOUND IN PERSEVERANCE

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION

Titus 2:2f [Sound] in perseverance: “patience” (KJV), “steadfastness” (ESV). Gill: Patience should have its perfect work (Jam 1:4); not only to bear the infirmities of body...but whatsoever sufferings they may be called unto for the sake of Christ and His gospel...and to run out the race that is set before them (Heb 12:1).

Faith, love, and patience are three main Christian graces, and soundness in these is much of gospel perfection...Enduring patience [i.e., perseverance, steadfastness]...must be looked after; to bear evils becomingly, and contentedly to want the good till we are fit for it and it for us, being followers of those who through faith and perseverance inherit the promises (Heb 6:12).

—*Matthew Henry (1662-1714)*¹⁴

“SOUND IN PERSEVERANCE”

By Alan Patterson

The word used here (Titus 2:2f) literally means “under-remain,” and thus suggests persevering, remaining steadfast in circumstances demanding patient endurance. In various ways throughout his life, missionary Robert Moffat (1795-1883) illustrated this steadfastness in the face of challenges.

Steadfast in keeping promises. Moffat’s parents were godly Scottish Presbyterians concerned for the spiritual welfare of their children. When Moffat was sixteen, he had already learned some gardening skills, and he was leaving home to take a responsible position using those skills. As he was getting ready to depart, his mother spoke to him, pressing him to promise to read a chapter in the Bible each day, both morning and evening. Though not yet converted, he could say: “I mingled, when opportunities offered, with the gay and godless in what were considered innocent amusements, where I soon became a favorite. But I never forgot my promise to my mother.”^a

^a John S. Moffat, *The Lives of Robert and Mary Moffat*, 12th ed. (London: T. Fisher Unwin, n.d.), 8.

Steadfast in pursuing missions despite lack of training and initial rejection. Perhaps as part of keeping his promise, Moffat was privately reading Romans in the evenings. Whatever the case, through his reading of Romans he was saved. Soon thereafter he saw a placard announcing a missionary meeting. Having now a heart already stirred to serve the Lord, the placard moved him further to write: “My thoughts became entirely occupied with the inquiry how I could serve the missionary cause.”^b He thought, however, that no mission society would accept him since he had no formal higher education. What to do? He had served briefly as a very young sailor, so he even thought of becoming a sailor again, landing on a foreign shore where he might “teach poor heathen to know the Saviour.”^c But that was impractical.

He then decided to go see the missionary speaker advertised on the placard. This missionary liked Robert and urged him to apply to the London Missionary Society (LMS). Their response was rejection—they had many applicants and were “obliged to select those who possess the most promising acquirements.” Though Moffat knew the LMS did not consider him one with highly “promising acquirements,” he steadfastly kept his focus and was eventually accepted as a godly man with mechanical skills.

Steadfast in waiting for marriage. At the age of 18, Moffat moved from Scotland to England to take a position as an apprentice gardener, working for a Mr. Smith and receiving some basic theological training. Before long he had also made the acquaintance of Mr. Smith’s daughter, Mary. That relationship quickly blossomed as she too, though courted by many, shared with Moffat “a passionate concern for the missionary cause, particularly in Africa.”^d They asked her parents for permission to marry, but the answer was an absolute No. Steadfast in their love for each other but also submissive to her parents, they continued with their lives. Moffat went off to Africa under the LMS and Mary waited by faith. Her parents hoped the interest would cool and another suitor for Mary would come along. But Moffat had said, and he meant it, “if he could not have her, he would have no other.”^e His heart remained steadfast while he served the Lord zealously in Africa. Finally—after over two years and after Mary’s father read letters from Moffat detailing his daily life and ministry while reiterating his love for Mary—her father relented, and she became his “beloved partner.”

Steadfast in ministry when the work was seemingly fruitless. In South Africa, the Moffats journeyed hours north of Cape Town and began their ministry. After nearly eight years of preaching the gospel, they still had seen no saving response. Would there be any fruit? Should they give up and move on? No, they kept their hand to the plow—and the Lord honored their steadfastness. Almost overnight the indifference changed to conviction and the conversion of many. That church, begun in the 1800s, still functions today.

Steadfastness is a necessary Christian virtue, but also one that eventually produces rich fruit. What challenges are we facing right now? Let’s meet them with steadfastness, and no doubt we will be blessed by the character development and other good results that follow. ☞

PRAYER PARTNERS THIS WEEK

This week discuss with your prayer partner how much you pray and how hard it is to find time to pray. And discuss how the MOW questions for family worship may be helping you enjoy it more, and the article on “sound in perseverance.”

It is my deepest regret that I pray so little. I should count the days...by the times I have been enabled to pray in faith, and to take hold upon God...see that prayerlessness is one of my great sins of omission. I am too short, ask too little, ask with too much want of forethought [and with] too little meditation upon Scripture. —Andrew Bonar (1810-1892)¹⁵

FAMILY WORSHIP THIS WEEK

Not every family worship time needs to be the same. It is good to have a change of pace occasionally to keep it interesting. Try taking a walk, gathering under a tree, or preceding the time with a picnic.

M’Cheyne’s readings are in 1 Kings 11-17. Foreign wives turn away Solomon’s heart. God stirs up adversaries; Jeroboam is appointed to inherit ten tribes. They revolt against Rehoboam; and God punishes both him and Jeroboam. There are conflicts between Judah and Israel, wherein God judges the wicked rulers. But then Ahab becomes king of the Northern Kingdom. Elijah enters the scene and predicts no rain.

^b Ibid., 13.

^c Ibid.

^d Mora Dickson, *Beloved Partner* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1974), 18.

^e Ibid., 20.

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION

Titus 2:7a An example of good deeds: “a pattern of good works” (KJV), “a model of good works” (ESV).

Gill: It is not enough...to deliver out sound doctrine and to exhort...to the things which become the gospel, but [we] should through the whole of [our behavior] be a pattern of every good work.

Elder men are bound,

- 1) To be wiser than the younger, as having had longer time for acquiring knowledge, and so to be their instructors.
- 2) Especially, to deliver down to the younger the sacred Scriptures which they have received, and the memorials of God’s works done for His church in former days, which were committed to them by their fathers.
- 3) And to go before the younger in the example of a holy and heavenly life. (Job 32:4; 8:8; Heb 5:14; Titus 2:2-3; 1Jo 2:13-14; Jdg 6:13; Psa 44:1; 78:3,5; Deu 1:21; Exo 12:26; Deu 11:19; Jos 4:6, 21-22; Joel 1:3). —Richard Baxter (1615-1691)¹⁶

“AN EXAMPLE OF GOOD DEEDS”

By Robert Ring

We know that we are Psalm 1 men living in a Psalm 2 world. Psalm 1:3 states of the blessed man that “in whatever he does, he prospers.” Are we prospering in doing good deeds? Can you think of a good deed that someone has done for you? Have you had the opportunity to do a good deed for someone recently?

Scripture makes it clear that our good deeds are not done to merit salvation (Titus 2:11-14). Rather, our good deeds are to be done so we “will not be unfruitful” (Titus 3:14).

Paul tells Titus “to be an example of good deeds” in words and actions (Titus 2:7a). That command was no doubt a tough assignment for Titus. We in the 21st century live in evil times, but the Cretans were known to be “always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons” (Titus 1:12). Yet in that culture Paul’s instruction was to do good deeds. These good deeds can be done for members of the family of God or for unbelievers.

Our family was blessed with an exceedingly exceptional good deed by a person who has a history of doing special projects for pastors, missionaries, and other Christian workers. This doer of good deeds had completed several other projects prior to doing the one for my parents. These good deeds were of a material nature that enabled my parents to better enjoy their retirement years with many amazing upgrades to their home.

To be able to accommodate family dinners that were held on the first Sunday of every month, this 1960s house needed a wall between the living room and kitchen removed. Then the kitchen was gutted and there were new cabinets, new countertops, new appliances, and new hardwood floors (matched with the existing dining room floor). There was a new tiled shower in the renovated master bathroom. More was done, and all of it at no cost to my parents! I asked my mom what did the individual who provided all this want in return? Mom said that we were just to be generous to others.

Good deeds impact people’s lives and make indelible memories. I remember to this day people who visited me in the hospital, sent a card, or brought a meal when in 2019 I had a triple bypass surgery to remedy two 100% coronary artery blockages and one 70% blockage. So, whether it is considered a great deed or a small deed, let’s continue to prosper as we “learn to engage in good deeds” (Titus 3:14) for the glory of God and the blessing of all His people.

The Greek word translated “deeds” is *ergon*. It is a profitable exercise to look up some of the verses where *ergon* is used.

1. Our deeds should bring God glory (Mat 5:16).
2. Our deeds should not be done just so we get noticed (Mat 23:5).
3. Our deeds can be what we’re known for (Acts 9:36).
4. God will provide the resources (2Co 9:8).

In light of this, “let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds” (Heb 10:24). ☞

PRAYER PARTNERS THIS WEEK

This week discuss with your prayer partner how the world saturates our lives and infiltrates our prayer time—and how you can stop it from doing so. And discuss “good deeds” from the preceding article.

[For some,] the world is first in the morning in their thoughts, and last at night, and almost all the day...The world devours almost all the time that God and their souls should have. It will not give them leave to pray, read, meditate, or discourse of holy things. Even when they seem to be praying, or hearing the Word of God, the world is in their thoughts.

—Richard Baxter (1615-1691)¹⁷

FAMILY WORSHIP THIS WEEK

M'Cheyne's readings are in 1 Kings 18 through 2 Kings 2; see the MOW questions at the end of this manual. You can vary the contents of your family worship to add interest, but the core should always include prayers of thanksgiving, reading the Word, and praying for one another. Singing great hymns of the faith and Scripture memory are important as well. When dad memorizes with the family, the children will believe it is important.

In this week's readings, Elijah squares off against the prophets of Baal, is nourished by God in the wilderness, and anoints Elisha his successor. Then God miraculously delivers Israel from Syria in one of the most spectacular victories in the Old Testament. Jezebel kills Naboth to get his vineyard, Ahab is killed in battle with Syria, and Jehoshaphat reigns in Judah. Elijah easily deals with three captains of fifty by God's miracles, and Elisha takes Elijah's place.

WEEK 8

OCTOBER 22-28

PURITY IN DOCTRINE

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION

Titus 2:7b Purity in doctrine: “in doctrine showing uncorruptness” (KJV), “in teaching show integrity” (ESV).

Gill: [A. For preaching and teaching:] doctrine...should be delivered pure and incorrupt, free from error and heresy, and every mixture and invention of man's...and be the sincere milk of the word that is given forth, and that with all integrity and uprightness of soul.

[B. For all:] The sense is...to let the conversation [i.e., behavior, conduct] be pure and uncorrupt, free from the pollutions of the world, and from any governing vice...in all our dealings.

1. Consider the duties of younger men to the aged, for the aged are just as fathers and mothers to them (in scripture-language, 1Ti 5:1): a) They ought to submit to them, so as to follow their wise advice, and not to stand upon points with them, but be ready to yield to them where lawfully it may be done (1Pe 5:5). b) They ought to honor them and [behave] respectfully toward them. The Ancient of Days commands us to honor old age (Lev 19:32).

2. The aged ought: a) To be ready to profit the younger sort by their good advice, to tutor them as Eli did young Samuel (1Sa 3:9). b) To give them the example of a virtuous and holy life, taking place every day (Titus 2:2).—Thomas Boston (1676-1732)¹⁸

“PURITY IN DOCTRINE”

By Nathan Arnold

When it comes to terms like “doctrine” and “theology,” it is useful to note the perceptions many Christians have beyond those words' actual meaning.

While few would argue that “doctrine” or “theology” are unimportant, their practical response might reveal otherwise. In fact, when asked to “endure” the rigors of deeper spiritual truths, many believers might describe an innate feeling of duty, a precursor to what they consider “the good stuff.” They might argue that doctrine or theology are necessary disciplines for pastors or professors because “that's their job,” but it's their responsibility to “put the cookies on the lower shelf” for church members, avoiding the really “boring stuff” for the laymen in the pew.

But not only is such a perspective clearly unbiblical in light of Scripture's commands to “take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine” (1Ti 4:16, KJV), apostolic teaching warns against those who “will not endure sound doctrine” (2Ti 4:3). There are two considerations.

First, purity of doctrine is important for its direct and practical application of biblical theology to our daily lives on every level. In short, those doctrinal principles are far more than just a “foundation” for other more practical truths—they are in fact the very nature of the practical truth itself, leading to real world effects in every aspect of our lives.

For example, when it comes to *parenting*, my wife and I have experienced the effect sound doctrine can have. When dealing with direct disobedience by our five-year-old son, we realized our wrong tendency to frame our reproof from an “establishing who’s boss in this house” perspective. Instead, we have endeavored to highlight the true problem involved: the fact that disobedience to parents is a direct affront to the commands of a holy God who, in His infinite wisdom, established the family and parental leadership. That “theological awareness” in parenting led to highlighting two principles to children above all others.

1) We all have a serious sin problem, which we cannot fix ourselves.

2) There is only one Person who can fix the sin problem in our hearts. Such purity of doctrine serves to highlight the core tenets involved as far more than just side issues—they are instead theological truths that God can effectively use to illuminate a young heart unto salvation through the Spirit’s enlightening power.

When it comes to *evangelism*, practical application of pure doctrine elevates our witness to a properly aligned biblical approach. In ministries without an emphasis on pure doctrine, I have personally observed a wrong “arm of the flesh” approach: willing to adopt whatever means necessary to manipulate another’s emotions. In contrast, I have also observed evangelistic outreach in ministries with a correct doctrinal emphasis, one of the primary differences being a humble recognition of the need for the Spirit’s enlightening work through the faithful preaching of God’s Word, and a spirit of reverence in worship (which might even make a lost person feel “out of place” in a gathering of believers). In those doctrinal ministries, purity is maintained even when it makes no sense to a world driven by method and image—demonstrating that true faithfulness to God’s Word and purity of doctrine are powerful unto salvation. The “weakness of God is stronger than men” and His Word pierces “as far as the division of soul and of spirit” (1Co 1:25; Heb 4:12).

In the light of sound doctrine, Christian lifestyle choices become more than a “why not?” justification of whatever conduct or practice someone prefers for themselves. Instead, those choices are guided by prayerfully considered and balanced application of scriptural principles: an earnest heart desire to maintain scriptural holiness exercised through the lens of love and graciousness for fellow believers, even when they disagree.

Secondly, purity of doctrine is important not only for its practical application to our daily lives, but also for its broader view of God’s revelation as it relates throughout all Scripture, the “whole counsels of God” (Acts 20:27, KJV).

This connection of all God’s truth as revealed in His Word, maintains a purity of doctrine as believers avoid the selective consideration of isolated truths outside their context. It strengthens the believer’s comprehension of God’s nature as he sees not only the upward strands in the fabric of Scripture, but also the cross strands that weave between them and provide the completeness of understanding the Holy Spirit intends.

As we consider these truths, may “purity of doctrine” become for us more than just a term. May it become a refreshing river that flows from God’s revelation, “the washing of water with the Word” in our lives (Eph 5:26). ☞

PRAYER PARTNERS THIS WEEK

This week discuss with your prayer partner how you might better prepare for prayer, so that prayer becomes less wandering and more purposeful. Do you both keep prayer lists, and if so, how do you use them? Discuss also the MOW article on “purity in doctrine.”

It is well to approach the seat of the King of kings as much as possible with premeditation and preparation, knowing what we are about, where we are standing, and what it is that we desire to obtain...God forbid that our prayer should be a mere leaping out of one’s bed and kneeling down, and saying anything that comes to hand. On the contrary, may we wait upon the Lord with holy fear and sacred awe.

—Charles Spurgeon (1834-1892)¹⁹

FAMILY WORSHIP THIS WEEK

M’Cheyne’s readings are from 2 Kings 3-9; see the MOW questions at the end of this manual. Because the Lord mightily uses family worship, our enemy raises many obstacles against it. Discuss some of these with your spouse and family this week, and how to overcome them. If you hit some roadblocks, ask your prayer partner or other trusted men for assistance. Asking help is a sign of strength!

In this week's readings, God miraculously defeats the Moabite rebellion and Elisha performs God's miracles for oil in the jars. These chapters include the Shunammite woman's son, the fellow prophets, Naaman and his leprosy, the floating axe head (an opportunity for an object lesson!), and chariots of fire. God delivers Samaria from famine by causing the Syrian army to flee. Elisha intervenes for the Shunammite woman. Jehu is anointed king in Israel and executes God's judgment on the house of Ahab.

[In Titus 2,] Paul points out the remedy for driving away fables [and idle thought, and drifting in the Christian life], namely, that Titus should devote himself to edification. He gives the appellation of *sound doctrine* to that which may instruct men to godliness, for all trifles vanish away when that which is solid is taught. When he enjoins him to speak those things which agree with "sound doctrine," it is as if he had said that [all men] must be continually employed in [their personal spiritual growth]; for to mention these things once or twice would not be enough... "Sound" doctrine... means wholesome, that which actually feeds [the] soul... Paul makes sound doctrine to consist of... that by which the life is framed to the fear of God and inoffensive conduct... Under the person of Titus, indeed, he instructs the whole church... Nothing is better fitted to restrain the wandering curiosity of men than to know in what duties they ought to be employed. —John Calvin (1509-1564)²⁰

WEEK 9

OCTOBER 29 – NOVEMBER 4

SOUND IN SPEECH

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION

Titus 2:8 Sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us.

"Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you" (KJV); "Sound speech that cannot be condemned" (ESV).

Gill: No rotten speech or corrupt communication should proceed out of the mouth; nothing but what is pure, sound, graceful, and edifying; no filthiness nor foolish talking and jesting, which are not convenient and are rightly condemned.

Religion is a serious thing, and accordingly leaves an impression upon the heart, and makes them serious that profess it... Surely all Christians should be of a modest and good behaviour. A garish levity will not become them that live in constant communion with a great God. This communion cannot but make the heart more [full of awe] and serious, as in Titus 2.

—Thomas Manton (1620-1677)²¹

"SOUND IN SPEECH"

By Jerry Broere

When I lived in Iowa a number of years ago, I was working on a project with my pastor. I don't recall all of the details, but several things stick in my mind. I was pounding a nail with a hammer. All of a sudden, the full force of the errant hammer struck my finger. "Owww!" I was writhing in pain. My pastor quickly realized what had happened and commented along this line, "Jerry, your response shows that your heart is controlled by the Spirit. An unsaved person probably would have used some salty words."

He was right. The words coming from our mouths, especially in an unguarded moment, reveal what's in our hearts. Mouths that are Spirit-controlled are a testament of how the Lord changes a person that desires to yield to Him.

Colossians 4:6 tells us, "Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person." Rather than using "salty" words in our speech, this verse admonishes us to *season* our speech with salt. Our words of grace should reflect the believer's reality of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

There's another situation that comes to my mind as we consider the importance of our words. A number of years ago, I attended a men's retreat. The speaker was highly regarded and we were blessed as we heard his first message on Friday evening. The next morning, we were all primed for the session to begin. It was to start at the top of the hour. Everyone

had gathered in the meeting area, but our pastor was delayed for some reason. Several minutes after the scheduled start time, the speaker decided to just move ahead and begin his message.

About ten minutes later, the pastor walked into the room. The speaker abruptly stopped, looked at him and said, “Well, it’s about time you showed up!” (The pastor confided later that he thought the session was to start at half past the hour.) After that comment, the entire mood of the session changed. Whether the speaker recognized what he had done, it’s not clear. But it was clear that those words inflicted injury.

Do you ever wish you could take back something that you’ve said? Words have power and they also have consequences. Philippians 4:8 shows us our Lord’s command as to what thoughts should guide our mouths. “Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things.”

Our good speech springs from a good heart. Luke 6:45 makes it clear that, “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.” Whatever we treasure in our heart is what will come out in our speech.

Each day we have multiple opportunities to use our words for God’s glory—or to use them to advance the cause of our adversary. When our hearts are right, we can give words of encouragement to those who are hurting, show grace when we are wronged, or speak words that edify a struggling brother. When we have dealt with the issues of our heart and are controlled by the Spirit, our words will be fitly spoken, “like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Pro 25:11). ❧

PRAYER PARTNERS THIS WEEK

Discuss with your prayer partner this week if you are general or specific in your prayer requests, and the importance of becoming more specific. Are you keeping prayer lists now, and rotating among its sections each day? Be sure and mention highlights from the MOW article on “sound in speech.”

Intercession should be definite and detailed. Vagueness is lifelessness...It is considerable practical help if we make our intercession systematic, especially if the Lord gives us many to pray for. If every day has its written list of special names to be remembered, we shall be less likely to forget or drop them. —Frances R. Havergal (1836-1879)²²

FAMILY WORSHIP THIS WEEK

M’Cheyne’s readings are from 2 Kings 10-17; see the MOW questions at the end of this manual. How is your family worship progressing these last nine weeks? After this one, there is only one week left in this MOW cycle, so evaluate (ask your wife) what could be improved and try to implement some changes now.

In this week’s readings, Jehu destroys the prophets of Baal, Athaliah usurps Judah’s throne and almost destroys the Messianic line, and Jehoash renovates the Temple. Wicked kings rule in Israel, Elisha dies, and good kings mostly reign in Judah. Yet Ahaz seeks help from Assyria and desecrates the Temple. Assyria captures and deports Israel.

WEEK 10

NOVEMBER 5-11

SUBJECT TO MASTERS

SCRIPTURE MEDITATION

Titus 2:9 Subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative...showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.

“Obedient unto their own masters...pleas[ing] them well in all things; not answering again” (KJV);

“Submissive to their own masters in everything” (ESV).

Gill: All their lawful commands ought to be obeyed...not only to obey and serve them, and do what they order, but to seek and endeavour to do it in such a way as may be grateful, acceptable, and well pleasing to them—whereby an interest in their affection, esteem, and commendation may be gained.

Every truth in the gospel, savingly known, will have influence into the actions of all relations, to make men holy in them and conscientious in performing them...The same apostle calls the gospel “sound” doctrine (Titus 2:1), because it tends wholly to

soundness and integrity, and to make the whole man such in all and every part of him, and to keep everyone in their duties: as aged men (:2)...young men (:6), [bond]servants (:9)...The gospel of grace teaches men all these duties. And because this is the professed [goal] and scope a) of all the doctrine of Christianity, and b) of [Christians] themselves...therefore if men profess the truths of it in any kind—thereby differencing themselves from other men—and yet prove faulty in their lives, presently the Word is blamed by others.

—Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680)²³

“SUBJECT TO THEIR OWN MASTERS”

By Phil Sterr

“Father, why didn’t you teach me how to work?”

That was the question Atsen put to his father on his first phone call back to India. Being raised in the caste system that didn’t require him to do manual labor, working with his hands was new to him. And now attending a Bible school in America, he was required to put in a few hours a week towards his tuition. Being a true believer, with a consciousness of doing everything unto the Lord, he relished his newfound opportunity for getting his hands dirty. Atsen learned firsthand as an adult the biblical principle that work has intrinsic value. “In all labor there is profit”; “The soul of the diligent is made fat” (Pro 14:23; 13:4).

When Paul wrote Titus to speak to the Cretan slaves, the godly nature of work may have fallen on hard times. The Cretans in general were known to be “liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons” (Titus 1:12). Believers, sadly, can be products of their upbringing. As Atsen was raised with a cultural obstruction toward work, so the Cretans had issues of their own to overcome. Slavery was common in their day, and possibly most of the church were in that bondage. So we all need to be reminded of the Holy Spirit’s purpose: Paul was writing to set them free. Not from the physical constraints of the system, but from the emotional and spiritual chains when a heart is not yielded completely in every area of life to the will of God. Paul knew all about bond service. He introduced himself in this letter as a bondservant. Don’t you think the bondservants of Crete (Titus 2:9) would have noticed that? I wonder if Titus pointed that out to them: “I have a letter here for slaves, written by another slave.” Paul did not descend to their bondage, but sought to lift them to his bondage, that is, a different bondage to a different Master (Rom 6:22).

My wife and I often remind each other that the definition of life is: *How do we respond?* Are we following God and what He has said? He basically has addressed every issue in life and told us what to do, or at least how to think about the situation. Are we as bondservants of Jesus Christ continuously yielding to what He has said? Or are we following our own heart, our natural sinful heart, and giving in to what it says? That fleshly bond service basically is summed up in “the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life” (1Jo 2:16). But Paul has an answer for these Cretan brethren. There is another Master who tells me what to do, where to go and not to go, even how to think, and who I am. And that Master controls everything, even my earthly circumstances. His mastery is so great it supersedes any other mastery. Paul put it like this: “But when the kindness of God our Savior and His love for mankind appeared”—then everything changed (Titus 3:4)!

For the sake of this Master, I will be the best employee my boss has ever seen. I wouldn't think of stealing anything from him: not money, or his time, or his reputation. I will not argue or contradict him. Why not? For a raise, maybe a promotion? No, but that I may adorn the doctrine of God. That I might show the gospel to be the best thing in the world in *every* respect.

Heavenly Father, thank You for teaching us how to work! ☞

PRAYER PARTNERS THIS WEEK

Discuss with your prayer partner how easy it is to feel “deadness” when trying to pray. And try to pray this week with real expectancy—God desires to glorify His name through answered prayer (Mat 7:7-8). Discuss how your work is going, the preceding article, and how well you are able to be consistently obedient to your employer’s requests.

When things are dying and fainting in the soul, we are to strengthen ourselves...[and] chide the heart for its deadness in [prayer]...And after you have done this, then look up, and expect this grace from God in and through Christ Jesus, [for He] said, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

—Thomas Manton (1620-1677)²⁴

FAMILY WORSHIP THIS WEEK

M'Cheyne's readings are from 2 Kings 18-24; see the MOW questions at the end of this manual. May the Lord give you strength to finish this cycle well in your family worship. If you have used the MOW questions or used some object lessons, if you have been more consistent or introduced some changes—ask your family for feedback. Do they see these as noticeable improvements? If so, how can you prepare for continuity?

In the readings this week, Hezekiah restores true worship in Judah, is threatened by Assyria, and prays a model prayer for deliverance. God mercifully heals him from a fatal illness, but he then shows the Temple treasures to Babylonian emissaries. Manasseh's and Amon's wicked reigns follow. Josiah's officers discover the book of the Law, and he makes reforms throughout Judah. Nebuchadnezzar deports Judah twice, and the Lord sends many enemies in judgment for her sins.

MOW FALL 2023 CONCLUSION

But you, beloved,

- *building yourselves up on your most holy faith,*

- *praying in the Holy Spirit,*

- *keep yourselves in the love of God,*

waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.

—Jude 20-21

Men of MCBC, we conclude this MOW cycle at our Saturday meeting on November 11, 2023. If you have participated and attempted to grow in the godly character of Titus 2, we praise the Lord with you. We trust you have enjoyed the prayer/breakfast meetings, the outing at the Wilds, and using this manual. We hope your family worship times have become more meaningful and spiritually successful. And we especially appreciate if your prayers with your prayer partner have been mutually encouraging and spiritually rewarding.

A few suggestions going forward...

- Consider praying weekly with a **prayer partner** between now and late January, when the next three-month MOW cycle begins.
- Continue with special effort to make your **family worship** times interesting for everyone.
- Choose a book from the **five-year reading plan** and discuss it with your spouse or prayer partner.
- Review Pastor Minnick's **New Year's sermon** (see appendix) with your family and put the four emphases into practice.
- Select one of the **Titus 2 qualities** that you want to grow in, ask your spouse or prayer partner to hold you accountable, and purpose to review your progress regularly.

Let us realize that our growth to become Titus 2 men is an on-going, life-long process, one that deserves our regular attention, one in which our church body participates and contributes, and one in which we in turn build up the whole church to the glory of God.

The church is the mirror that reflects the whole splendid brightness of the divine glory. It is the grand scene in which the perfections of Jehovah are displayed to the universe.

—Charles Bridges (1794-1869)²⁵

FAMILY WORSHIP QUESTIONS

Family worship is a key element in this cycle of MOW. We want to encourage every father toward spiritual success in this important ministry. The following questions are of course optional; they are offered in support of your efforts should you desire to use them. Even if you are not using the M'Cheyne Reading Plan, you may want to read these chapters in 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings during this cycle. All these questions are based on those readings. When you use them with your family, hopefully they will help to reduce pressure and assist you in better engaging your children—to make Family Worship a joy for the whole family as God intends it.

The daily reading sections include M'Cheyne's schedule and our MOW suggested questions for your family worship. There are also age-related questions that can be used with younger children and teens.

Notes: The verse references after a question are for fathers to use in prompting discussion (not read with the initial question to the family). When there is more than one question, use only those that seem most relevant to your family and that fit into the time available for the ages of your children.

WEEK 1 SEPTEMBER 3-9 TEMPERATE

Titus 2:2a Temperate: "sober" (KJV), "sober-minded" (ESV).

Gill: vigilant and watchful over themselves, their conduct, and conversation.

9/3 Sunday 1Sa 27 1Co 8 Eze 6 Psa 44

1. In what was David trusting when he escaped to the Philistines: human or godly wisdom (see verse 1)?
2. What are some of the differences between human wisdom and godly wisdom?

Youth: Notice the lie in verse 10. Does God ever require us to lie in order to do His will?

Teens: Why should David have known better than to flee to Israel's enemy? (See 1 Samuel 16:1,12-13.)

Fathers: God had anointed David as the next king. He should have known he could trust God to protect him.

9/4 Monday 1Sa 28 1Co 9 Eze 7 Psa 45

1. Notice verse 5. Why was Saul so afraid?

(Was the source of his fear primarily something external to him, or his internal attitude?)

Youth: How does this compare to David's attitude in 1 Samuel 17:26b, 36, and 47?

Teens: What are the battles that you are facing this year? Does your response resemble Saul or David? Why?

2. When God seems to be silent, is it ever appropriate to seek answers from other "spirits"? Why?

What are our sources for answers to spiritual questions?

Note: If you have not done it lately, this would be a good time to review your old family Bibles with your children, or visit the Bible collection at Bob Jones University.

9/5 Tuesday 1Sa 29-30 1Co 10 Eze 8 Psa 46-47

1. When Achish refused to let David join in his fight, how did God use it for good? (*Note: there are multiple ways.*)

Fathers: Share an experience when you were disappointed at first, but later saw how God used it for good.

(See Romans 8:28-29)

2. Who did David credit for his victory over the Amalekites? (See 1Sa 30:23)

How is this different from most modern-day politicians and professional athletes?

9/6 Wed. 1Sa 31 1Co 11 Eze 9 Psa 48

1. How did the events of 1 Samuel 31 fulfill prophecy? (See 1Sa 15:22-23)

Youth: Is there any other being in heaven or earth that can proclaim the future and then bring it to pass?

Teens: How does this strengthen faith in God?

9/7 Thurs. 2Sa 1 1Co 12 Eze 10 Psa 49

1. Upon Saul's death, what might David have been tempted to do after Saul's many attempts to harm him?
2. How are David's responses "temperate" as in Titus 2:2a?

9/8 Friday 2Sa 2 1Co 13 Eze 11 Psa 50

1. In 2 Samuel 2:26, Abner said, “Shall the sword devour forever? Do you not know that it will be bitter in the end?” What did he mean by this? How is this true today?

Youth: How does this apply to disagreements in the family?

Teens: Can there ever be a “just war” (that is, a war that is justified in God’s eyes)? (See Wikipedia “Just War”)

9/9 Saturday 2Sa 3 1Co 14 Eze 12 Psa 51

1. How was David’s response to Abner’s death honorable?
2. Often a leader leads indirectly by his actions, and not just by his spoken commands.
How did David lead indirectly in this incident (see 3:36)?
How was David’s response “temperate” (Titus 2:2, NASB)?

WEEK 2 SEPTEMBER 10-16 DIGNIFIED

Titus 2:2b Dignified (NASB, ESV): “grave” (KJV).

Gill: [serious] in behaviour, speech, and dress; as opposed to levity of conversation, frothy language, and airy dress.

9/10 Sunday 2Sa 4-5 1Co 15 Eze 13 Psa 52-54

1. Why did David become “greater and greater”? (5:10)
2. To whom do people in the world give the credit when they are promoted to higher positions of authority?
What was David’s response to becoming greater? (5:12)
Fathers: You could take your children to a monument of some famous person, or to a war memorial (see next).
3. Who did David consult about his battles with the Philistines? (2Sa 5:19,23)
4. Why did David have such great victories? (2Sa 5:25)

9/11 Monday 2Sa 6 1Co 16 Eze 14 Psa 55

1. Does what happened to Uzzah seem to you unfair and harsh, or just? (6:7)
Why was this appropriate justice from God? (See also Exo 25:14,22; Lev 10:1-2)
Note: That which is holy is set apart for the Lord’s use and is to be dealt with according to God’s commands.
2. *Teens:* Why were David’s actions in vv. 14-15 accepted by God, even though Michal thought they were not “dignified” as in Titus 2:2b (NASB)?

9/12 Tuesday 2Sa 7 2Co 1 Eze 15 Psa 56-57

1. Notice three distinct parts to this chapter in 2 Samuel: vv. a) 2-10, b) 11-17, and c) 18-29.
What is each part about?
2. *Teens:* Why are verses 11-16 historically significant? Why is this called a “covenant”?
Is it conditional or unconditional?
Fathers: This is the Davidic Covenant, a binding commitment between two parties, whereby God unconditionally promises to place a descendant of David on the throne of His people forever! This is fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ (Mar 12:35).

9/13 Wed. 2Sa 8-9 2Co 2 Eze 16 Psa 58-59

1. How do the events of 2 Samuel 8-9 display David’s character as “dignified” (Titus 2:2)? (See 8:11,15; 9:7)
2. Why was David so successful in his military campaigns? (8:6b,14b)

9/14 Thurs. 2Sa 10 2Co 3 Eze 17 Psa 60-61

1. What did Hanan do to the servants of David?
Teens: Why did he do this? (See 10:3)
2. How was David “dignified” in his treatment of his own servants when they returned from Hanun (vs. 5)?
3. How does Hunan’s action parallel many unbelievers’ response to the gospel?

9/15 Friday 2Sa 11 2Co 4 Eze 18 Psa 62-63

1. Which of the Ten Commandments are broken in chapter 11?
2. What is God's response?
3. Realize that God has a similar response whenever we break one of His commandments.
How should this motivate us always to obey?

9/16 Saturday 2Sa 12 2Co 5 Eze 19 Psa 64-65

1. Any stealing is wrong, but why is it especially wrong for someone who has plenty to take from the poor?
Fathers: Include the Tenth Commandment in the discussion.

WEEK 3

SEPTEMBER 17-23

SENSIBLE

Titus 2:2c Sensible: "temperate" (KJV), "self-controlled" (ESV).

Gill: [moderate] "in eating and drinking...discreet, sober-minded...[self-controlled, and vigilant,] chaste, modest, moderate, wise, and prudent in all things.

9/17 Sunday 2Sa 13 2Co 6 Eze 20 Psa 66-67

1. Was Jonadab a true friend of Amnon? Why or why not?
2. What kind of a person was Jonadab? (See 13:3)
Would you like to have a friend like that?
Would you ever want to be like him? Why or why not?
3. *Teens:* When did Amnon start to go wrong: in verse 17, 14, 11, 10, 6, or 1?
4. How did Amnon fail in being "sensible" (Titus 2:2c)?

9/18 Monday 2Sa 14 2Co 7 Eze 21 Psa 68

1. How did Absalom fail here in being "sensible" (Titus 2:2c)?

9/19 Tuesday 2Sa 15 2Co 8 Eze 22 Psa 69

1. How did Absalom steal the hearts of the people (vv. 4-6)? Is this common today?
Fathers: If your children are familiar with social media apps, discuss how they can be used to steal hearts today. This might be a good time to visit The Vault at the BJU library (2nd floor), where Sermon Audio is setting up independent cloud servers to avoid the censorship of Big Tech.
2. How did Absalom fail in being "sensible" (Titus 2:2c)?
3. Absalom professed to serve the Lord (vs. 8) while plotting treason. How common is such today?

9/20 Wed. 2Sa 16 2Co 9 Eze 23 Psa 70-71

1. How did Shemei show a lack of "sensitivity"?
2. How did Abishai show a lack of "sensitivity"?
3. How did David show "sensitivity"?
4. How did Hushai show "sensitivity"?
5. How did Ahithophel show a lack of "sensitivity"?
6. How did Absalom show a lack of "sensitivity"?

9/21 Thurs. 2Sa 17 2Co 10 Eze 24 Psa 72

1. Why was Ahithophel's counsel defeated? (See 17:14)
2. How did the men in vs. 27 show "sensitivity"?

9/22 Friday 2Sa 18 2Co 11 Eze 25 Psa 73

1. Why did "the forest devour more people that day than the sword devoured" (vs. 8)?
2. How did the unnamed man of vs. 10 show "sensitivity" (vv. 12-13)?
3. *Teens:* How does David's grief over the death of his son reflect (in a small way) God's sorrow at the cross?
How does it reflect every father's love for his children?

9/23 Saturday 2Sa 19 2Co 12 Eze 26 Psa 74

1. How does David's treatment of Shemei illustrate God's mercy toward us?
2. Compare Mephibosheth's relation with David to our relation with God.

Fathers: Mephibosheth was undeserving, just as we are, but received great mercy and blessing—just as we do when we know Christ.

WEEK 4 SEPTEMBER 24-30 SOUND IN FAITH

Titus 2:2d Sound in faith.

Gill: [All Christians] should be sound in their minds in the doctrine of faith, lest they should lead others into error. Their faith in Christ should appear to be right and genuine.

9/24 Sunday 2Sa 20 2Co 13 Eze 27 Psa 75-76

1. Things looked bleak for the city of Beth-maachah. How did the wise woman (vv. 16-22) demonstrate being "sound in faith"?

Fathers: In the event in 2 Samuel 20, the wise woman manifests "sound in faith" by trusting God completely.

9/25 Monday 2Sa 21 Gal 1 Eze 28 Psa 77

1. How seriously does God take vows and oaths? (*See Joshua 9; notice vs. 15.*)

What evidence is there for this in this chapter?

2. How does keeping the promises we make demonstrate being sound in faith?

Fathers: Some believe that these four giants were on the field with Goliath when David fought him, and that this is the reason David took five stones. See 1 Samuel 17:40.

9/26 Tuesday 2Sa 22 Gal 2 Eze 29 Psa 78:1-37

1. 2 Samuel 22 is a hymn of praise. What verses stand out to you as special in this song of praises to God?

Fathers: See Psalm 18, a beautiful complement to this chapter. Perhaps ask each family member to write a psalm of praise. Consider reviewing Praise Glorious, MCBC's hymnal. Notice all the praise psalms, how many have music and lyrics composed by MCBC members, and how many are from prior centuries.

2. What should be our response when God does good for us?

9/27 Wed. 2Sa 23 Gal 3 Eze 30 Psa 78:38-72

1. What are the two parts of 2 Samuel 23?
2. What is David's main focus in verses 1-7?
3. What role have David's mighty men played during his life?

Fathers: Note their role in assisting David during Saul's pursuit, in rescuing the Ziklag captives (1Sa 30), and in defeating Absalom's rebellion.

4. How important is it to have friends of good character whom you can trust?

9/28 Thurs. 2Sa 24 Gal 4 Eze 31 Psa 79

1. How many men did David have under his command in total?
2. Why was numbering the army such a great sin? How was it a lack of faith?

Fathers: During David's reign, God had made the small nation into a great empire with repeated military victories. Even Joab recognized that the numbering of the fighting men fed a reliance upon men instead of on God.

3. How did David show wisdom in choosing the third option for his punishment? (24:14b)

4. How did David show wisdom in his purchase of the threshing floor? (24:24b)

9/29 Friday 1Ki 1 Gal 5 Eze 32 Psa 80

1. What moved Adonijah to proclaim himself to be king? *Fathers: Pride knows no bounds in its ambitions!*
2. Why were Adonijah and all those with him so quickly afraid when they learned that David had made Solomon king?

9/30 Saturday 1Ki 2 Gal 6 Eze 33 Psa 81-82

1. Even though David had shown mercy during his own lifetime, why was justice necessary as Solomon took the throne?
2. *Teens:* List the sins of Adonijah, Joab, Abiathar, and Shimei.

WEEK 5

OCTOBER 1-7

SOUND IN LOVE

Titus 2:2e [Sound] in love.

Gill: “sound in [agape] love to God, to Christ, and to His people. [Such] love should be real and sincere, and be taken off from the things of the world, of time and sense.” Agape love is a decision to set affection unconditionally on its object, without considering merit.

10/1 Sunday 1Ki 3 Eph 1 Eze 34 Psa 83-84

1. See 1 Kings 3:7b. Is what Solomon said to God surprising? Why or why not?

2. Would you have asked for wealth or wisdom (vs. 9)? Why was Solomon’s request pleasing to God?

Fathers: Consider visiting a wealthy neighborhood and discussing why such wealth is not something to be envied.

3. How did Solomon show “soundness in love” in his dealing with the two women?

10/2 Monday 1Ki 4-5 Eph 2 Eze 35 Psa 85

1. What are the warning signs in 1 Kings 4 that Solomon was drifting away from God even while God was blessing him abundantly? Could we say of Solomon that he was “sound” in love?

Fathers: See 4:26 and Deuteronomy 17:16.

2. How did Solomon show wisdom in 1 Kings 5:6?

10/3 Tuesday 1Ki 6 Eph 3 Eze 36 Psa 86

1. How would you describe the house of God that Solomon built?

10/4 Wed. 1Ki 7 Eph 4 Eze 37 Psa 87-88

1. How would you describe the furnishings for the house of God?

10/5 Thurs. 1Ki 8 Eph 5 Eze 38 Psa 89

1. How does Solomon show “soundness in love” in His prayer in 8:30-52?

2. What does it mean for your heart to “be wholly devoted to the LORD” as in 8:61?

Is your heart wholly devoted to the Lord?

10/6 Friday 1Ki 9 Eph 6 Eze 39 Psa 90

1. “The LORD appeared to Solomon a second time” in 9:3-9.

What are the conditions for Israel’s kings to obey in order for the promised blessings to come?

What are the sanctions (the penalties) if they do not obey God?

10/7 Saturday 1Ki 10 Phi 1 Eze 40 Psa 91

1. *Youth:* Who was responsible for Solomon’s rise to greatness?

2. Who would be Solomon’s equivalent today?

3. What evidence is in this chapter for Solomon’s future failure?

Fathers: See verse 26 and Deuteronomy 17:16.

WEEK 6

OCTOBER 8-14

SOUND IN PERSEVERANCE

Titus 2:2f [Sound] in perseverance: “patience” (KJV), “steadfastness” (ESV). Gill: Patience should...bear...whatsoever sufferings they may be called unto for the sake of Christ and His gospel...and run out the race that is set before them (Heb 12:1).

10/8 Sunday 1Ki 11 Phi 2 Eze 41 Psa 92-93

1. Was Solomon “sound in perseverance”? Why or why not?

Fathers: Notice especially 11:4-6.

2. What was the result of Solomon’s change of heart?

10/9 Monday 1Ki 12 Phi 3 Eze 42 Psa 94

1. Contrast the counsel of the old men (vs. 6ff) and the young men (vs. 10ff). Which counsel was more godly?
2. What was the result of Rehoboam's following the young men?
3. How did these events fulfill prophecy?

Fathers: See 11:31.

10/10 Tuesday 1Ki 13 Phi 4 Eze 43 Psa 95-96

1. What miracle did God do at the altar of Bethel?
2. Why did God do this miracle?
3. Notice the lie in 13:18. What was its consequence? Why is it so important not to lie?

10/11 Wed. 1Ki 14 Col 1 Eze 44 Psa 97-98

1. Why did God take the kingdom from Jeroboam?

Fathers: See 14:8-9.

2. Why did God take the kingdom from Rehoboam?

Fathers: See 14:22-23.

10/12 Thur. 1Ki 15 Col 2 Eze 45 Psa 99-101

1. How many generations might God bless because of a godly man or woman?
2. When receiving blessings because of a godly forefather, how can there still be consequences for our own personal sins?

Fathers: Consider reviewing old family photos from your parents and grandparents. Discuss what you know about their lives, secular and spiritual.

10/13 Friday 1Ki 16 Col 3 Eze 46 Psa 102

1. How does God use wicked men to accomplish His purposes?

10/14 Saturday 1Ki 17 Col 4 Eze 47 Psa 103

1. Elijah comes on the scene doing many miracles. By what power did he do them? Who sent him and why?

Fathers: See 17:24.

WEEK 7 OCTOBER 15-21 GOOD DEEDS

Titus 2:7a An example of good deeds: "a pattern of good works" (KJV), "a model of good works" (ESV). Gill: [We] should through the whole of [our behavior] be a pattern of every good work.

10/15 Sunday 1Ki 18 1Th 1 Eze 48 Psa 104

1. How much faith did Obadiah have when he told Ahab of Elijah's whereabouts? Why?
2. How was Elijah "an example of good deeds" in this chapter?
3. How did the people respond at Mount Carmel? How should we respond today?

10/16 Monday 1Ki 19 1Th 2 Dan 1 Psa 105

1. Describe how Elijah and God communicated at the cave. How does God communicate with us today?
2. How was Elisha an "example of good deeds" after being called by Elijah?

10/17 Tuesday 1Ki 20 1Th 3 Dan 2 Psa 106

1. Was Ahab an "example of good deeds" when he pardoned Ben-hadad and made a covenant with him?
2. *Teens:* Is partial obedience acceptable to the Lord? Is it better than disobedience? How and why?

10/18 Wed. 1Ki 21 1Th 4 Dan 3 Psa 107

1. Which of the Ten Commandments did Ahab break regarding the vineyard?

Fathers: Consider visiting a park in your area. Discuss why a vineyard might be very attractive, especially in a dry and dusty land. Discuss why all people need greenery and park-like areas.

2. If Ahab were an "example of good deeds," how would his behavior have been different regarding acquiring the vineyard?
3. Is the Lord gracious even to the wicked? (21:29)

- 10/19 Thur. 1Ki 22 1Th 5 Dan 4 Psa 108-109
1. When did Jehoshaphat show and not show prudence? (22:5,4,30)
 2. How did Micaiah show wisdom? (22:14)
 3. *Youth*: Was the arrow that struck Ahab happenstance, or was it guided? If guided, by whom?
- 10/20 Friday 2Ki 1 2Th 1 Dan 5 Psa 110-111
1. How did the third captain of fifty show wisdom? What was the difference in him from the other two?
- 10/21 Saturday 2Ki 2 2Th 2 Dan 6 Psa 112-113
1. How did Elisha show wisdom when he answered Elijah's question? (2:9)
 2. How were the "young lads" foolish (2Ki 2:23)? What kind of consequences has foolishness?

WEEK 8 OCTOBER 22-28 PURITY IN DOCTRINE

Titus 2:7b Purity in doctrine: "in doctrine showing uncorruptness" (KJV), "in teaching show integrity" (ESV).

Gill: [Preaching and teaching] should be...free from every mixture and invention of man's...[and] given forth...with all integrity. [For all:] The sense is...to let the conversation [i.e., behavior, conduct] be pure and uncorrupt, free from the pollutions of the world, and from any governing vice...in all our dealings.

- 10/22 Sunday 2Ki 3 2Th 3 Dan 7 Psa 114-115
1. How is the battle plan against Moab different from earlier battles? What does this teach us about God's ways?
Fathers: God is not limited in His methods, and does not follow formulas.
- 10/23 Monday 2Ki 4 1Ti 1 Dan 8 Psa 116
1. How did Elisha demonstrate "purity in conduct" in dealing with each of the two women?
 2. Are our good deeds (4:10) always repaid?
Fathers: Consider both time and eternity.
- 10/24 Tuesday 2Ki 5 1Ti 2 Dan 9 Psa 117-118
1. How did Naaman demonstrate foolishness? (5:11-12)
 2. How were Naaman's servants wise? (5:13)
 3. Was Gehazi "pure in doctrine" as he pursued after Naaman? What was a consequence of this spirit in him?
- 10/25 Wed. 2Ki 6 1Ti 3 Dan 10 Psa 119:1-24
1. Why is it significant that the axe head was borrowed and not owned?
Fathers: We have an obligation in love to our neighbor to take extra care for his interests above our own (Phi 2:3-4).
 2. What spiritual truth is demonstrated in 2 Kings 6:16-17?
- 10/26 Thur. 2Ki 7 1Ti 4 Dan 11 Psa 119:25-48
1. Why was the office of prophet so important in the Old Testament? Who occupies the prophetic role today?
Why is this role so important to us?
 2. Describe the great miracle told in 2 Kings 7?
- 10/27 Friday 2Ki 8 1Ti 5 Dan 12 Psa 119:49-72
1. The southern kingdom had many good kings, but those mentioned here are not. Why?
- 10/28 Saturday 2Ki 9 1Ti 6 Hos 1 Psa 119:73-96
1. Who promoted Jehu to be king and sent him on his mission?
 2. Why does God sometimes use unrighteous men like Jehu to accomplish His will?
Fathers: Consider taking your children to a courthouse to observe our judicial system in action, and to discuss God's justice.
 3. What role does a watchman fulfill (9:17,20)? (See Eze 33:1-7)
Why is it extremely important? Who is the watchman in your family?

Titus 2:8 Sound in speech which is beyond reproach, so that the opponent will be put to shame, having nothing bad to say about us. "Sound speech, that cannot be condemned" (KJV; ESV).

Gill: No rotten speech, or corrupt communication...nothing but what is pure, sound, graceful, and edifying; no filthiness, nor foolish talking and jesting, which...are rightly condemned.

10/29 Sunday 2Ki 10 2Ti 1 Hos 2 Psa 119:97-120

1. Why should unsaved men in power mostly not be trusted (without accountability, checks, and balances)?
(See 10:19b)

Fathers: Consider visiting a police station. What would happen in your city if there were no police?

2. After Jehu's obedience to God in destroying the house of Ahab, why was God still displeased?

What is "partial obedience"? Is it acceptable to God?

Can you give an example of when you gave only partial obedience?

3. Why were the golden calves such an abomination to God, if the people were still trying to worship Jehovah?

10/30 Monday 2Ki 11-12 2Ti 2 Hos 3-4 Psa 119:121-144

1. Realize that in 11:1, Athaliah attempts to have all her own grandchildren killed. How could anyone do such a thing? (See Isa 49:15; Micah 7:6; Mat 15:19)

2. Why was the rescue of the child Jehoash (Joash, in Judah) so important, and brought about with certainty by God's preservation?

Fathers: This was the Davidic line to the Messiah.

10/31 Tuesday 2Ki 13 2Ti 3 Hos 5-6 119:145-176

1. Did Joash king of Israel have "sound speech" (as in Titus 2:8) (13:14)? Why or why not?

2. How did Elisha demonstrate "sound speech" thereafter?

3. Why was the Lord gracious to Israel (13:23)?

11/1 Wed. 2Ki 14 2Ti 4 Hos 7 Psa 120-122

1. Why does God use wicked men to accomplish His will for His people? (See especially 14:23-27)

11/2 Thur. 2Ki 15 Titus 1 Hos 8 Psa 123-125

1. What differences do you notice in the reigns of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah in this chapter (2Ki 15)?

11/3 Friday 2Ki 16 Titus 2 Hos 9 Psa 126-128

1. *Youth:* When God is your king, are foreign alliances ever wise?

Fathers: Consider looking at a globe or a world map. Discuss the various alliances among the nations.

2. *Teens:* When Israel allied with Aram (Syria), Judah allied with Assyria. Why was this unwise? (See 17:3)

3. How did King Ahaz desecrate the Temple?

11/4 Saturday 2Ki 17 Titus 3 Hos 10 Psa 129-131

1. Why did the Lord allow Assyria to capture the northern kingdom and carry it away into exile?

2. Of all the national sins mentioned, which ones stand out to you as especially wicked?

3. Is it possible to mix worship of the one true God with other worship? Why or why not?

4. *Youth:* Does God expect His covenants to be followed?

5. *Teens:* Why is the national covenant relisted in 17:35-39?

Titus 2:9 Subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative...showing all good faith so that they will adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect. "Obedient unto their own masters...pleas[ing] them well in all things; not answering again" (KJV); "Submissive to their own masters in everything" (ESV).

Gill: All their lawful commands ought to be obeyed...not only to obey and serve them, and do what they order, but to seek and endeavour to do it in such a way as may be grateful, acceptable, and well pleasing to them—whereby an interest in their affection, esteem, and commendation may be gained.

11/5 Sunday 2Ki 18 Phm 1 Hos 11 Psa 132-134

1. How does being “subject to their own masters” apply to Hezekiah in relation to God? (See 18:6)
How does it apply to each one of us? What was the result of Hezekiah’s obedience to God? (18:7)
2. What are the lies spoken by Rabshakeh to the men on the wall?

11/6 Monday 2Ki 19 Heb 1 Hos 12 Psa 135-136

1. God considered Rabshakeh’s words as more than threats—what did God consider them to be? (19:6)
2. How did Hezekiah respond when he was faced with an overwhelming enemy? (19:14-19)
3. How did God defend Jerusalem?

Youth: Is anything too great for Him to accomplish? Why?

11/7 Tuesday 2Ki 20 Heb 2 Hos 13 Psa 137-138

1. Why do you think God allowed Hezekiah’s illness?
2. Why did Hezekiah show the Babylonian’s his treasures?

11/8 Wed. 2Ki 21 Heb 3 Hos 14 Psa 139

1. What were some of the sins of Manasseh?
2. Why did God judge him?

11/9 Thur. 2Ki 22 Heb 4 Joel 1 Psa 140-141

1. How did Josiah illustrate being “subject to his own master”? (22:11-13)
2. How did God show grace in the midst of righteous judgment? (22:18-20)

11/10 Friday 2Ki 23 Heb 5 Joel 2 Psa 142

1. How did Josiah respond to God’s grace? (23:1-3)
2. How did Josiah reflect the command of Deuteronomy 6:4-5? (23:25)
How does your heart reflect this command?

11/11 Saturday 2Ki 24 Heb 6 Joel 3 Psa 143

1. Why did God send enemies to attack Judah, His own people? (24:3-4)
2. How did Jehoiakim and Zedekiah fail to observe “being in subjection” to their masters? (24:1,20)
What was the result in each case?

APPENDICES

MCBC ELDERS AND DEACONS

We provide this list for your reference. These are the men who serve our congregation untiringly twelve months every year. Let us pray for them regularly.

An elder is a God-appointed, scripturally qualified man that occupies one of the two offices in a New Testament church. Scripture indicates that some churches had a multiplicity or plurality of elders and deacons.

The New Testament uses three Greek words translated five different ways in the KJV. These words describe the elder's function.

<i>Episkopos</i> (bishop, overseer)	refers to his function
<i>poimen</i> (shepherd, pastor)	refers to his function
<i>presbuteros</i> (elder)	refers to his stature, spiritual maturity

1 Timothy 5:17 conveys that all elders rule, but some also labor in the Word and doctrine, which typically have more authority. MCBC has both scripturally qualified full-time pastors and laymen in this office. We do not restrict laymen from this office because, in the New Testament, we see Paul appointing laymen to serve as elders.

Pastors/Elders

Mark Minnick	Senior Pastor
Eric Newton	Education and Outreach, Bookstore
Jeff Rush	Youth and Children's Ministries
Jerid Jones	Administration, MOW, Master Planning

Elders

Bruce Arnold	Seniors Ministry
Chris Baker	Man of the Word
Doug Becker	President of Elders, Missions Committee
David Boyd	
Brian Collins	Church Clerk, Communion, Missions Committee
Ed Freeman	Hispanic Ministry, Missions Committee
Paul Keck	Calvary Lighthouse Mission
Dick Kelly	Master Planning Committee
Gene Merkle	
Gary Santiago	Seniors Ministry, Teen ministry (serving under Pastor Rush), Master Planning Committee
Michael West	Vice President of Elders, Finance Committee
Jim Wiginton	College and Career

Deacons

The scriptural office of deacon is simply one who serves. Deacons serve the congregation sacrificially in many ways as appointed by the elders.

Paul Baker	Jake Nicholson
Jerry Broere	Benson Quattlebaum
Al Ellison	David Rogers
Jeff Foster	Michael Schaedel
Anthony Griffith	Randy Smith
Dave Howell	Phil Sterr
David Lowry	

FIVE-YEAR READING PLAN

The following books have ministered to many in the congregation over the years. The pastors highly encourage all MCBC attendees to embark on reading these books. All titles are available in the church bookstore.

Year 1

Evangelistic Sermons at Aberavon	David Martyn Lloyd-Jones
Pilgrim's Progress*	John Bunyan
The Knowledge of the Holy	A. W. Tozer
Five English Reformers	J. C. Ryle
Profiting from the Word*	A. W. Pink
A Guide to Prayer	Isaac Watts

Year 2

The Everlasting Righteousness*	Horatius Bonar
The Ten Commandments	Thomas Watson
The Incomparable Christ	J. Oswald Sanders
Worldly Saints: The Puritans as They Really Were	Leland Ryken
Call the Sabbath a Delight	Walter Chantry
A Method for Prayer	Matthew Henry

Year 3

The Gospel According to Jesus	John MacArthur
Studies in the Sermon on the Mount	David Martyn Lloyd-Jones
Knowing God	J. I. Packer
Christian Leaders of the 18th Century	J. C. Ryle
Psalms 119	Charles Bridges
Letters of Samuel Rutherford**	Andrew Bonar, editor

Year 4

Revival and Revivalism	Iain Murray
Spiritual Depression	David Martyn Lloyd-Jones
The End for Which God Created the World <i>(in God's Passion for His Glory, John Piper)</i>	Jonathan Edwards
Singing in the Fire	Faith Cook
Holiness* <i>(in Faithfulness and Holiness, J. I. Packer)</i>	J. C. Ryle
The Mortification of Sin* <i>(abridgment by Richard Rushing)</i>	John Owen

Year 5

Revival	David Martyn Lloyd-Jones
Desiring God	John Piper
The Mystery of Divine Providence	John Flavel
Hudson Taylor in Early Years	Dr. and Mrs. Howard Taylor
Praying with Paul: A Call to Spiritual Reformation	D. A. Carson
Morning Exercises	William Jay

Suggestions

1. Add your reading of these to your regular devotional time.
2. Read even just 10-15 minutes a day, five days a week.
3. Overview a book and its chapters before beginning.
4. Use a series of colored highlighters to outline harder books.
5. Store some of the good thoughts in the margin of your Bible.
6. Don't fret over not finishing a title.
7. Move on to the next new title every couple of months, or...
8. ...read more than one title at a time.
9. Talk to your prayer partner about your reading. Share it!
10. Buy a book for someone else.

* Also available from Chapel Library without charge, www.ChapelLibrary.org,
a) worldwide as eBooks or PDFs, and b) North America in print.

** 28 of the best letters available as a booklet from Chapel Library.

FOUR COUNSELS FOR 2023

The following message was preached to MCBC by Pastor Mark Minnick in the morning Lord's Day service on January 1, 2023. We include it here to reinforce its message and help us apply it in the remainder of this year and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

The past few years have seemed to bring just one crisis after another, and this new year promises to be very difficult once again. We will need the Lord's presence to face its challenges victoriously. This is not external to us; it is a gathering of the Holy Spirit *in* the Lord's people. I want to draw our attention to four counsels that will bring us this blessing this year.

1. CONSIDER GOD THE LORD OF TIME

First, let us lay the foundation of a new conviction: Our God, who has loved us with an everlasting love, is *absolutely the Lord of time*. He is the Lord of 2023. In Hebrews 1:2, the Son of God "made the ages," that is, all the time of human history. He is absolutely sovereign over time; He is the "Lord of Time."

As we enter this new year, all who know the Lord want to take the "crown of the year" off our own heads: all of our planning, ambitions, anticipations. None of us are a lord over this year or a single day of it (Pro 27:1). Crown Jesus Christ as the Lord of your time in 2023.

This week I started a brand-new page in my journal with "2023" at the top. The rest of that page, and every page after, is blank. That's essentially this year. I cannot control a day of it. But what I can do is this: to look out the window of my soul every day and see the things of the Lord, like looking out a window and seeing only a godly church amidst a world of chaos. If by God's grace I can consistently do that, then I am assured that what I record in my journal this year will all be for my good.

2023 is 365 blank pages to be filled in by God. Each day we will look out through the window of our soul and see God at work. The whole of this coming year is His; He is the Lord of time.

2. BE TRANSFORMED

A. Be Transformed in Relationship with God

Secondly, let us renew our commitment to Romans 12:1-2 Christianity.

"By the mercies of God"; we all have experienced these in our lives, many of them in this last year.

"I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that" every day this year you will "present your bodies a *living sacrifice*." It truly is a sacrifice to live God's way; we deny ourselves many short-term worldly pleasures in order to maintain the true joy of holiness.

"That you offer your bodies a living sacrifice wholly [consecrated] unto God, which is your reasonable service, and be not conformed to this world [i.e., age]," in 2023, "but be transformed by the renewing of your minds; that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

There is for each of us on every day of this new year, a good, acceptable, and perfect will of God for that particular day. As we grow in the fruit of God's Spirit each day, we will be possessed of greater love (1Pe 1:22), more joy (Phi 4:4), an overwhelming guarding peace in our hearts (John 14:27), and the meekness that characterized the Lord Jesus (Mat 11:29). We will be gentle in our dispositions to one another (Rom 12:10). We will be quick to forgive, remembering everything that we have been forgiven by God (Eph 4:32). We will be slow to take offense (James 1:19). We will have perseverance in trial (1Pe 1:7). We will have faith that overcomes the world (1Jo 5:4). All of this will be ours in greater measure when we renew Romans 12:1-2 Christianity for ourselves this year.

B. Be Not Conformed to This Age

Now, realize that this is the Lord of time who made this age; therefore He can say to each of us with absolute authority: “Stop being conformed to this age!” There are three ways in which we are tempted to conform ourselves to this present age, and each opposes the Lord’s sovereignty over our time.

First, the pressure to have relationships with more and more people. Social media has created a terrible temptation to have many superficial relationships—which displace our time with the Lord!

Secondly, the pressure to find out about more and more products and experiences, just because the web makes it possible for us to research every conceivable kind of thing.

Thirdly, there is the pressure to succeed on a larger and larger scale. But such success only multiplies the cares of life, increasing our responsibilities and burdens.

Friends, it will be our personal tragedy in 2023 if we choose increasingly more of the “good” things of this age—we probably already have more than enough! Stop being conformed to your covetous age, and renew your commitment to Romans 12:1-2 Christianity in 2023.

3. REFUSE TO LIVE ANXIOUS LIVES

Consider now Matthew 6:25-34. Here the Lord talks about the many things that are necessary for living: food, clothing, and shelter. Our lives being as uncertain as they are, we are given to worry about these things. So, in verse 34 the Lord counsels us: Do not worry about 2023! “Each day has trouble” of its own, without adding to it the crushing weight of all the tomorrows in this new year.

Let’s refuse to live with worry this year. Let’s ask God to give His grace for when we are the hardest pressed, when we are suddenly gripped with a frightening trial. Let’s day by day commit ourselves to an earnest *refusal* to live a worried, harried, anxious life; and sincerely to believe in our hearts: Everything that happens to us is by God’s appointment; He is the Lord of time.

How are we supposed to deal with anxiety over our need for the necessities of life? The answer is a certain kind of seeking that will relieve you of worry, and that is when you know that you are “seeking first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness” (6:33), truly trusting the Lord for all those other things. But we can deceive ourselves about this. A real help is to ask ourselves regularly: Do I actually have always in view the things of God when I look out the window of my soul?

4. BE IN THE SPIRIT ON THE LORD’S DAY

The fourth counsel from the Lord is one of the ways we know we are living for the things of God: by resetting the “rhythm” of our scriptural worship every week. This includes our personal worship, our family worship, and the corporate worship of the church together on the Lord’s Day.

Every week in all human history, even from the first week of creation, has included a particular day that God has called His own. He exercises a particular lordship over the Sabbath, which has reference to rest (Gen 2:2-3; Exo 31:15). We learn that we are to cease from our ordinary interests that day.

Jesus taught, “The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath” (Mark 2:27), that is, we were not made for a servile bondage to that day, but that day was designed to *minister to us*. In Isaiah 58, the Lord is taking great issue with the people: they delighted in the nearness of God (58:2), yet they were compromising the Sabbath. The Lord challenged them, “If because of the Sabbath you turn your foot from doing your own pleasure *on My holy day* and call that Sabbath a *delight* [not a bondage], the holy day of the Lord and honorable, and honor it, desisting from your own ways, from seeking your own pleasure and speaking your own word, then you will take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth” (58:14)—a wonderful result!

Revelation 1:10 tells us the state in which every one of us ought to be every Lord’s Day in this new year. John writes, “I was *in the Spirit* on the Lord’s Day.” It is His will for all His people to be in the Spirit on the Lord’s own special Day, His peculiar possession.

Now, some good people misuse the Lord’s Day, and these tempt us also to misuse it. Therefore, we would do well to read about good examples, the many godly Christians in history—the Lord will use them to encourage our hearts.

These are days for assembling ourselves (Heb 10:25). If we prepare our hearts, we're ready to sing, pray, read, be instructed, and have our hearts recalibrated toward the Lord. These are days for recovering from all the battle strife of the week, for renewing our affections for Christ. Every one of us contributes to this because Jesus the Head has us as His hands and His feet. In this new year, be willing to come and expend yourself energetically for the rest of us. God will use every member of the body to encourage others.

MESSAGE CONCLUSION

By the grace of God, lay the foundation of new convictions this year that overthrow some of your attitudes that may not be quite right.

- 1) Crown Him the Lord of this year.
- 2) Let that begin by renewing your commitment not to be pressure-molded any more into following the values of this age.
- 3) Acknowledge how vulnerable you are to anxiety. Ask God, "Help me to live as You direct by my truly *resting* in You and seeking first Your kingdom."
- 4) Determine for yourself directly: "The Lord's Day is the *Lord's* Day. Period! I will cooperate to come into elevated joy in Christ. By God's grace I surrender every single Lord's Day this year to the Lord of the Day."

May the Lord bless all of us each day in this new year as we submit ourselves to Him. ✨

ENDNOTES

All quotations about prayer are cited in *Pathway to Prayer*, edited by Matthew J. Hancock; copyright 2021, publication pending, used by permission. Matthew and his family are EMU missionaries to Cambodia.

- ¹ Ezekiel Hopkins (1634-1690), Josiah Pratt editor, *The Works of the Right Reverend Father in God, Ezekiel Hopkins*, Vol. 4 (London: C. Whittingham, 1809), 375.
- ² Thomas Brooks (1608-1680), *The Privy Key of Heaven*, 1665.
- ³ Richard Adams (1626-1698), *Puritan Sermons*, vol. 3 (Wheaton, IL: Richard Owen Roberts Publishers; 1981), 553.
- ⁴ D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899-1981), *Praying in the Spirit*, Sermon 4250 (Eph 6:18).
- ⁵ John Calvin (1509-1564), William Pringle translator, *Commentaries on the Epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 310-311. [lightly edited]
- ⁶ Andrew Murray (1828-1917), *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, 1884.
- ⁷ Thomas Vincent (1634-1678), *A Family Instructional Guide*, electronic edition based on the first Banner of Truth ed., 1980 (Simpsonville, SC: Christian Classics Foundation, 1996), 164-165.
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