

A Light in the Valley

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

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First Generation Christians

by: Justin Brewer

The terms “second generation” and “third generation” are often used to describe Catholics, Baptists, Mormons, and even some Christians in the religious world today. More often than not, these terms are intended to be harmless and to simply express that an individual’s parents and grandparents were of the same religion. Unfortunately, too many of the people who use these terms are a “second” or “third” generation simply because their parents or grandparents were of that religion and not because they have sought out and grounded themselves. If questioned as to why they are Christians rather than Baptists, Mormons, or Catholics, could they give a definitive answer that is supported Scripturally?

Every parent is to bring up their children “in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:1-4), but every Christian needs to be a “first generation” Christian in the sense that we have personally evaluated the evidence found in the Bible and developed our

own faith. While Christian parents are to teach their children about God and what to do, we are also to teach why we obey God. Consider how in 2 Peter 1:16-21 Peter used the fulfillment of prophecy as evidence of faith and the reason righteous men spoke as the oracles of God. In this manner, Peter showed through evidence why he had faith in Christ and why he was obedient. Peter, like the rest of the Apostles (except, perhaps, for Judas), had made his faith his own; he had to examine the evidence and to adhere to the gospel of his own volition, not only because someone else in his life had believed.

In order to develop our own faith, we must be willing to question, and we need to teach our children to question conclusions, demand Scriptural evidence for a conclusion, and accept conclusions that are founded only in Scripture. In Acts 17:10-12, there was a group of Jews who were considered “fair-minded” because they questioned the teachings of the Apostle Paul. While

Paul could have been offended by this questioning, he was not; rather, Luke records positive words concerning them. Like Paul, every modern day evangelist and Bible teacher should welcome those who question their conclusions and test them against the Scriptures to ensure validity. Parents, likewise, should strive to maintain a true Scriptural grounding and teach their children how to establish authority from the Scriptures as well.

There is an abundance of evidence in the Bible that proves its validity; in Romans 15:4, we are informed that the things written in the Old Testament were written for our learning, and that we can gain faith and hope from these writings. From the Old Testament, we learn of those who had great faith, we learn principles of obedience to God, and we learn about the power of God to bring about His plan(s). Throughout the Old Testament, we are provided with numerous prophecies; some of these prophecies were fulfilled within the times of the Old Testament and some were fulfilled in the New Testament. Both stand as evidence of the power and omnipotence of God.

God's promise to Abraham that his descendants would be a great nation stands as a wonderful example of a prophecy that was both given and fulfilled in the Old Testament (Genesis 22:15-19; Exodus 1:1-10). In addition to this example, we have other prophecies which are specific in nature, such as the one concerning King Josiah found in 1 Kings 13:1-5. The prophecy, given in approximately 930 B.C., provided the name of the king, the king's tribe, the place where the prophecy would be fulfilled, and particulars about what would happen during the fulfillment. From an examination of the prophecy and its fulfillment in 2 Chronicles 34:1-5, we see that it was not a generalized prophecy; some purported "psychics" today make generalized prophecies and they make them in bulk in hopes of getting one or two correct. The prophecy concerning Josiah was specific in nature and the fulfillment came approximately 300 years later in 630 B.C. How can this not stand as evidence for the validity of the Bible?

In addition to the prophecies like the one mention above, we also have numerous prophecies in the Old Testament that are fulfilled in the New Testament. Many of them directly relate to the coming of the Christ, life of Christ, or His death and resurrection, and there are too many of them to fully explore here. We will, however, take a look at one such prophecy. Few people think about the fact that King David (who lived approximately 1000 years before Christ) was also a prophet, and yet there are multiple prophecies in the book of Psalms pertaining to the Christ. One such prophecy is located in Psalm 22:16-18 where we read, "For dogs have

surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots.” The fulfillment of this prophecy is located in Matthew 27:33-36 where Jesus has been nailed to the cross, the guards divided His garments and cast lots, and they stared at Him as He died. The fulfillment of prophecies is powerful evidence that proves the validity of the Bible and our faith in God.

Belief and faith are absolutely necessary for salvation; Hebrews 11:6-13 states that it is impossible to please God without having faith. Therefore, we cannot simply go through the motions and hope to be saved. Likewise, Jesus stated in John 8:24 that we must believe in His deity if we desire salvation; denying His deity will result in our own condemnation. Faith can be established through a variety of methods; Thomas required physical proof (John 20:24-31), but the Centurion required no such evidences (Matthew 8:5-13). We fall somewhere in between because we are unable to see the miracles of Christ and the Apostles firsthand, but we have been provided with records of “infallible proofs” (Acts 1:1-3; 1 John 1). Our faith is to be established by the hearing of the word and the proofs contained therein (Romans 10:14-17). In addition to the “infallible proofs” referred to by Luke, we have numerous examples of great faith in the Bible that were shared for our learning (Romans 15:4). The Hebrew writer provided many such examples in Hebrews 11, and both the Old and New Testaments give us examples such as Jonathan and his armor bearer (1 Samuel 14:1, 6-23), Elijah (1 Kings 18:22-39), Stephen (Acts 7:54-60), and so many more.

In Philippians 2:12-13, Paul encouraged the Philippian brethren to “work out” their “own salvation with fear and trembling.” Was Paul suggesting that the Philippians could dictate their own methods for salvation? From the context, Paul was actually showing his confidence in the Philippian brethren for their ability to maintain their faith and obedience even without his physical presence. Paul wrote that they had always obeyed, not only in his presence, but much more in his absence. In essence, Paul established in this passage the principle we are driving at with this brief article; these Christians had their own faith and were not dependent upon Paul’s physical presence to drive them to obey the commandments of God. Like them, we need to ensure that our faith is our own and firm up our foundation in the Lord. Great examples, like those mentioned previously, can aid us in the establishment of our own faith, but that simply makes us first-generation Christians!

Glory and Honor

by: Kris Brewer

As I have been reading the Psalms following the daily reading schedule this year, one thing in particular has stood out to me: the reverence the authors show toward God. When we read the Psalms, we should get a good idea of how we should relate to God. There seems to be, in today's society, an attempt to bring God down to man's level. That is, there are many who want to address God and have the same kind of relationship with Him as they have with their family or their friends. They want to speak of the relationship that they have with God in familiar terms, with some even seeking to speak to Him in these familiar terms. In reality, God is not our "buddy" and he is not our "pops." Such flippant approaches to God are disrespectful at the least, and blasphemous at the worst!

The authors of the Psalms relate to us the type of respect and honor that we should give to God. This attitude should be reflected in the way we think about Him, the way we talk about Him, and the way we talk to Him.

While any number of the Psalms could be used to illustrate this point, we will be looking at David's writing in Psalm 29. In this Psalm, David shows the type of glory and honor that should be shown to Jehovah, but he also shows some of the reasons *why* God is deserving of such glory and honor. Consider how David started the Psalm:

*Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name;
worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness. (Psalm 29:1-2 ESV)*

David calls on the reader to "ascribe to the LORD glory and strength." This glory, according to David, is "due his name." This is not something that is given to Him simply because He asked for it, but rather because He is worthy of it. The rest of the Psalm contains several reasons for God being deserving of the honor and glory that David calls upon his reader to provide.

The focus of David's praise for Jehovah in this Psalm is on God's voice. David expounded upon the power that was present in the voice of God. He is able to speak and accomplish great things. In His spoken word was more power than anyone could possibly imagine!

*The voice of the LORD is powerful;
the voice of the LORD is full of majesty. (Psalm 29:4 ESV)*

God, in His power, could break the great cedars (Psalm 29:5). He could cause nations to rise and fall (Psalm 29:6). By His voice, He can control nature (Psalm 29:7-9). His power was displayed over the great flood (Psalm 29:10). These, and any number of other examples that David could have used, illustrated just how worthy God was of the glory and honor that could be bestowed upon Him. He had proven Himself to His people over and over again! Because of who He is, and what He has done, He is worthy of all glory and honor!

How does this translate into our attitude toward Him today? Certainly nothing has changed concerning God. He is still powerful, and He is still worthy. While the law that we obey has changed (Colossians 2:11-15), the way that we acknowledge and treat God has not. We have the great blessing of being called the “children of God” (John 1:12-13), but that does not grant to us some right of being disrespectful in the manner that we speak to Him or about Him.

David was called “a man after [God’s] own heart” (Acts 13:22), and yet he did not consider himself to be so familiar with God as to think that he could address Him flippantly. In fact, his relationship with God made him realize, it seems, that there was a need to speak with the utmost respect when addressing Him. We need to recognize that He is worthy of this honor in all of our interaction with Him. Jesus, when He taught the disciples to pray, taught them to use the same type of respect:

*Pray then like this: “Our Father in
heaven, hallowed be your name.
(Matthew 6:9 ESV)*

If the disciples of the first century were expected to show such honor and glory to God when they prayed, then we should show the same honor and glory to Him today. We can learn much from the psalmist on how to show such honor to God! Let us not think that our relationship with God allows for us to speak in a flippant or disrespectful way when addressing our Heavenly Father.

Study Opportunities

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM
Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

Meeting At

Homewood Suites of Bozeman
1023 E Baxter Ln,
Bozeman, MT 59715

Everyone Welcome!

“Let Us Not Grow Weary...”

Ladies

by: Machella Goad

Cover

“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” (Galatians 6:9)

Are you struggling with exhaustion, discouragement, or a tendency to give up on your responsibilities of doing good? As a homemaker, wife, and mother of three boys, “exhausted” is a common self-description. However, I often find that it is the battle I create myself which causes the fatigue! Whether you have the same responsibilities or different ones, I know I am not alone. As the verse in Galatians instructs, we must NOT become tired of carrying out the good work God expects of us! Our reward will only come at the proper time IF we do not become faint-hearted. It is a challenge, for sure; but not impossible. We need to recognize and address what causes our “give up” attitude; at the same time, we should actively seek opportunities to sow seeds of goodness, which will lead to a bountiful harvest!

First, let us remind ourselves that in keeping the commands of God, we are doing good. If you are a wife, your “good work” includes helping your husband (Gen. 2:18), having a desire for him (Gen. 3:16, 1 Cor. 7:2-5), loving him (Titus 2:4), and submitting yourself to him (Eph. 5:22-23, Col. 3:18). We need to challenge ourselves to think of specific ways we can excel in those areas, list them out, and work toward putting them into practice. As a homemaker, showing hospitality (Rom. 12:13, 1 Pet. 4:9) and managing the house well (1 Tim. 5:14) are worthy goals. Again, write specific ideas and implement. The responsibility of having children may be the most important. We labor to raise the next generation of God’s people! We must love them (Titus 2:4) and train them up in the Lord (Prov. 22:6, 2 Tim. 1:5). This takes a lot of effort...requiring strength, yet gentleness; expectations, yet patience; creativity, yet complete trust that God’s way is best.

With these things in mind, let’s examine some destructive thoughts that can lead to an unproductive cycle in the particular areas mentioned above.

We don’t do enough! (or so we think) Sometimes we fail to realize that taking care of our husbands, our homes, and our children are important aspects of our good deeds, feeling guilty for not doing more for others outside our own homes. Please do not misunderstand--helping others is a goal of every Christian woman, but we must not neglect our role within the family.

We should find a way to do one without leaving the other undone! Realize that by creating and maintaining a Christian home, we will, by default, help others through our example of following God's commands. And don't underestimate the impact of what we may consider a "small" act of kindness. A simple, heartfelt letter can be a huge encouragement, and only takes a few minutes. Praying for others is another way to help, and should be done whether we can do more or not.

We do not feel appreciated. Sometimes we become discouraged in our work when it feels as though no one appreciates our efforts. However, we must remember that our deeds are done to please God, not man (Matt. 6:1-4, Eph. 6:5-7)! So even when it seems our husbands and/or children do not see and appreciate what we do for them, we must continue to serve them with gentleness and understanding. When we develop the attitude of working to please God, it may take away our need for recognition from those around us, knowing our diligence is seen by our Father. If we serve quietly and patiently, faithfully keeping God's commands, He promises to reward us!

We focus on the negative, not recognizing the positive. This is a huge problem, and a tactic of the devil! Remember that training children is a process that takes a lot of patience. We must be fair in our view of progress. We should not fail to see the good fruit produced by the labor of our family. If negativity fills our homes, discouragement will set in and destroy future efforts of spiritual growth. Isn't that exactly what Satan wants? Of course we must recognize and address shortcomings, but also praise our children for their growth. It will spark within them a desire to continue learning how to please God!

These are only a few reasons we may begin feeling overwhelmed to the point of defeat. Do not lose focus on the goal. When discussing priorities, a dear friend once said something like this: "I serve God first, and serving everyone else falls in place." When we are following the commands of God, we are fulfilling the responsibilities in our own homes and that is "doing good." Although it takes preparation, commitment, and can become very tiring, it is important that we take these commands seriously and recognize the importance of carrying them out well. Providing a Christian home is vital to our spiritual growth, as well as our family's. While we honestly examine our productiveness, Satan wants us to believe we are failing. Remind yourself of the effort and labor you put forth within your own home, and keep up the good work! You are not alone. God sees your good works, and will reward your faithfulness!

Daily Bible Reading

February 2016

February 1	Psalms 75–77	February 16	Psalms 107
February 2	Psalms 78	February 17	Psalms 108–110
February 3	Psalms 79–82	February 18	Psalms 111–115
February 4	Psalms 83–85	February 19	Psalms 116–118
February 5	Psalms 86–88	February 22	Psalms 119:1–48
February 8	Psalms 89–90	February 23	Psalms 119:49–112
February 9	Psalms 91–95	February 24	Psalms 119:113–176
February 10	Psalms 96–100	February 25	Psalms 120–128
February 11	Psalms 101–103	February 26	Psalms 129–133
February 12	Psalms 104–105	February 29	Psalms 134–137
February 15	Psalms 106		

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