

Virtual Christian Magazine

Hope And Encouragement
For The Real World

“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”—2 Peter 1:20-21

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The Prophetic Mountain Range

By Dan McGee

Sometimes people attempt to change or force the future, when what they really need to do is study and wait.



AS WE WITNESS WORLD EVENTS and continue to watch and pray, we can at times see events that are very obvious, while other prophetic signs can seem veiled to our understanding.

On the front page of a recent *Wall Street Journal* was the headline, “Germans in Talks to Buy Big Board (NYSE).” The article went on to point out that for 219 years the citadel of American capitalism, the New York Stock Exchange, was, by world standards, one of the greatest exchanges for trade. To those to whom prophecy is veiled, this would just be another headline and more than likely of no significance. And we must ask ourselves, is this a significant event or not?

Years ago, I worked with an older gentleman who posed the question to me, “How do you eat an elephant?” As a young man at the time, I pondered the question, rather confused, only to have the elderly gentleman simply state to me, “One bite at a time.”

We know that within the scriptures we have to search to find “here a little and there a little” (Isaiah 28:10). Precept must be upon precept. And knowing that when we gaze out at our prophetic horizon, the mountain range of time is not a smooth, uphill climb, but a continual ascent marked with peaks and valleys.

The information we are receiving now could play a vital role in the dominance of the soon-to-arrive European power. With the unrest in the Middle East and the ever-weakening US, the prophetic horizon could become more of a vertical climb. That will lead to the epic moment when we reach the summit and our soon-coming King will be standing on the Mount of Olives.

So, what is our responsibility? As the end of this age approaches, our true desire **must be (more than ever) one of seeking God’s will so that He will find His** servants doing what is required (Matthew 24:46). We must be humbly serving, giving of ourselves, and preaching the Gospel as a witness until the end comes (Matthew 24:14). We do not get to decide when the work is over. We are **instructed “until the end” and we are to be doing His will and proclaiming the** gospel of the good news of the world tomorrow.

As the end of this age approaches, our true desire must be (more than ever) one of seeking God’s will so that He will find His servants doing what is required.

Many religions have sought to speed the return of Christ. Some have proclaimed that He will be here on such and such a date, only to be disappointed by these predictions. Scripture reveals that the prophetic events that lead up to the return of Christ will not be of any private interpretation (2 Peter 1:20), nor will there be any doubt as to the ultimate return of Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:27).

Preparedness, along with a humble, serving attitude will allow us to see the events that are coming to pass, and know with confidence that He who began a good work in us will be faithful to complete it (1 Thessalonians 5:24).

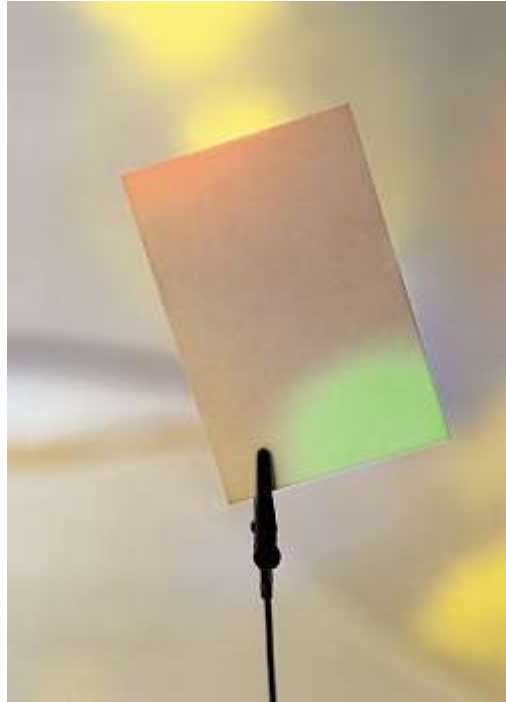
As the dominos of prophetic events continue to fall, as we get closer to the mountain range and start to climb, we must trust and rely, not on ourselves or our own understanding, but maintain a vigilant search of the scriptures to bring us to the oneness in serving Jesus Christ our Lord.

Ask for your free copy of [The Middle East in Bible Prophecy](#) and [The United States and Britain in Bible Prophecy](#).

Holding It Up to the Light

By Katherine Rowland

If we want to get a good view of ourselves, the only way to do it is through the illumination that God provides.



I WAS LISTENING TO A SONG this week by the Smalltown Poets, a now-defunct Christian group. **The song is called, “Hold It Up to the Light,” and while I was listening to it, I was thinking of the** imagery of taking an object and holding it up to the light. What could that mean? What are some things I hold up to the light in the course of my days? Why would you hold something up to the light, anyway?

I hold things up to the light to see whether they’re correct.

The first thing I thought of was making labels at work. My job as a library clerk entails making a lot of labels: labels for library cards, barcode labels for books, and spine labels. When I am ready to print my labels, I rarely skip the intermediate step of printing out a test sheet of labels on regular paper, and then holding them and the guidelines (a blank sheet of labels) up to the light. The light shines through that set of guides and shows me whether my work lines up the way that it should.

As Christians, we are not to compare ourselves with other Christians as our guideline.

It wouldn’t make much sense for me to hold the test sheet up against an imperfect set of labels. They might look good, relatively speaking, but there would be no way for me to evaluate whether the new sheet was actually correct, or whether the new labels were just imperfect in different ways from the imperfect sheet.

Likewise, as Christians, we are not to compare ourselves with other Christians as our guideline. We are told in **Matthew 5:48**, “**Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.**” The example we hold ourselves up to is the Light itself: the example of Christ, the perfection of God.

Have you ever tried to guess what was in an envelope or a translucent box? The guidelines I use can be compared, I think, with the commandments of God. **The psalmist writes, “The law of the LORD is *perfect*, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple” (Psalm 19:7). The Light** has revealed the laws of God, which help us to hold ourselves up to the light and see the needed corrections in our own ways.

I hold things up to the light to see whether they are genuine.

The next thing I thought of was the example of paying for something with a larger-denomination bill. I have often seen a cashier hold the bill up to the light, checking for the security features that will tell him or her whether that bill is legitimate legal tender.

Peter admonishes us that trials “have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed... Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear” (1 Peter 1:7, 17, New International Version).



I hold things up to the light to see what’s inside.

Have you ever tried to guess what was in an envelope or a translucent box? Odds are, you’ll hold it up to the light at some point, to try to get a better view. It’s possible to think that one really knows what’s inside until the light reveals something different; our hearts are the same way.

Jeremiah 17:9 reminds us that “the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?” It is entirely possible to think that we know ourselves really well: and then somehow we are given the opportunity to hold ourselves up to the light, and we discover that our own hearts have all kinds of shapes and shadows that we had never seen before.

There are probably other ways to hold things up to the light, and other reasons to do so. **What’s the bottom line?** If we want to get a good view of ourselves, the only way to do it is through the illumination that God provides. The example of Jesus Christ gives us the bar we should be aiming for. Looking to others and judging ourselves by them will do us no good at all. Instead, we have to hold ourselves to the light of God’s Word and His ways.

For more about examining yourself, read: [Where Do We Stand Before God?](#)

Blessings of Abraham (Part 2 of 4)

By William Miller

Today, the blessings that God promised to Abraham are being spiritually fulfilled in God's Church, which is made up of those who are called and chosen by God and live according to His revealed way.



IN GENESIS 12:2-3, God gave five promises to Abraham:

1. God promised to make him a great nation.
2. God promised to make his name great.
3. God promised he would be a blessing to others.
4. God promised to bless those who blessed him and to curse those who cursed him.
5. God promised that in him all families of the earth would be blessed.

Examine the third blessing. According to the *New King James Study Bible*, the phrase, “You shall be a blessing,” in Hebrew, is a command. When Abraham pitched his tent between Bethel and Ai, God’s Word says he “called on the name of the Lord” (Genesis 12:8). The *Study Bible* says Abraham was evangelizing. If so, he was not the first one to teach others about God. Based on biblical accounts, I believe Enoch and Noah preached the Word as well.

On page 61 of the original *Bible Story* by Basil Wolverton, it says that if Abraham obeyed God he would become the father of the most famous nation on earth which would someday enjoy some very special blessings. Various biblical passages teach this concept. Do we still believe and teach this promise? If we do, what does it mean for our day and age?

The spiritual descendants of Abraham

God told Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the dust of the earth (Genesis 13:16). Even the most religious and historically astute people would probably agree that this promise

was not fulfilled during the life of Abraham or even during the next few generations. If this promise was going to be fulfilled later, how much later would that be? How can we know?

God told Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky (Genesis 15:5). There are between 3,000 and 6,000 stars visible to the naked eye, but we know that many billions exist. Did God intend this massive promise to be fulfilled? If so, then it still awaits a powerful fulfillment in the future. When would that fulfillment occur? How do we know? All these questions deserve to be answered.

If the promises are to be fully enjoyed by God's Church, perhaps this is what we are to do: like Abraham, we need to believe in advance!

Genesis 15:6 shows that Abraham believed God way back then, even before the **birth of his first son. If the promises are to be fully enjoyed by God's Church, perhaps this is what we are to do: like Abraham, we need to believe in advance!** God's Word says this was "accounted to him for righteousness." What must we do in advance to have righteousness accounted to us? How long did Abraham have to wait for the fulfillment of the promises that God gave him?

Faith is the key component

When the Eternal first speaks to Abraham, He makes great promises. Abraham then waits 25 years before the physical fulfillment of those promises. Or does he? After the Eternal speaks, Abraham begins his journey from Haran and God is with him, blesses those who bless him, and curses those who curse him. God was even then fulfilling His promises.

Are we not even now on a journey and is God not with each one of us every day?

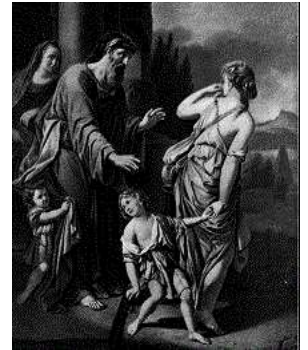
Consider his interlude with the king of Egypt. When Abraham and Sarah went to Egypt, was God not intimately involved? How do we know? We actually know because it was recorded for us in Genesis 12. Are we not even now on a journey and is God not with each one of us every day? How do we know that God is with each one of us now? Well, ask yourself what has occurred and is occurring in your life. It should be clear to us all that God is working in our lives today. God makes things happen!

After Abraham goes from Canaan to Egypt and back, the Eternal, in Genesis 15:1, speaks to him again. He renews at least some of His promises. God says Abraham will inherit Canaan. Abraham asks, "How shall I know that I will inherit it?" (Genesis 15:8). God's answer comes in the form of a vision after Abraham falls into a deep sleep in verse nine. He sees what will happen to his descendents after captivity in Egypt. The Hebrews would become slaves and be subjected to rigorous service; 400 years would pass before Moses came to help release them. In this vision, Abraham saw the future—before his son, Isaac, was even born.

Impatience can get us into trouble

Sarah then had an idea. Thinking that she was past her childbearing years, she **decided to have a child through a surrogate! Was this Sarah's idea or did the Eternal really plan something like it and simply allow her plan to go forward?** Sometimes God allows our plans to transpire to teach us lessons.

How have your plans worked out in your life? Have you ever made some bad choices that are perhaps still affecting your life? Remember that the promises God made to Abraham are made to us also. But when we actively try to bring this **or that about, sometimes we should and sometimes we shouldn't. The results can be very confusing.**



God remains faithful to His promises

Let's return to Genesis 15:1. Putting this verse in context gives a vibrant picture to us of why we should have nothing to fear about our future. God spoke again **with Abraham after Abraham defeated the "kings" of Elam, Goyim, Shinar, and Ellasar, who had beaten five other petty tyrants—the "kings" of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Bela. Even if they all were leaders of tiny areas, they were still capable of putting up a good fight. Abraham defended his property with all his combined might and THEN the Eternal told him, "Do not be afraid... I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."**

Abraham defended his property with all his combined might and THEN the Eternal told him, "Do not be afraid... I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward."

Perhaps Abraham remembered the Eternal's earlier promises. Most likely Abraham prayed to Him daily. But in this particular instance, Abraham fought, succeeded, and THEN received an update on the promises. There could be a lesson here for us.

Both God the Father and God the Son not only care about everyone, but They keep track of billions of people. **We, God's firstfruits, are special**—first in care and regard. We are individually chosen so that **God can work with us now. God's promises to Abraham are being fulfilled in part in God's Church today.**

Stay tuned for part three in this series.

To learn more about developing the kind of faith evident in Abraham's life and desired by God of us today, request the free booklet, [*You Can Have Living Faith*](#).

Blessed Are Those Who Mourn

By Janet Treadway

“I walked a mile with Pleasure, she chatted all the way; but left me none the wiser, for all she had to say. I walked a mile with Sorrow and ne’er a word said she; but, oh, the things I learned from her when Sorrow walked with me!” —Robert Browning Hamilton



“BLESSED ARE THOSE who mourn, for they shall **be comforted” (Matthew 5:4).** It is hard to understand how we can be blessed while going through great sorrow and pain. Sometimes things come crashing into our lives that cause us great sadness, mourning and throw us out of sync. No one wants to go through sorrow, yet life is simply not filled with laughter and joy all the time. Believe it or not, it is not good for us.

Grief comes many times throughout our lives, such as when there is a death of a loved one, the death of a pet, the loss of a job, or the loss of advancement in a job. It can come through divorce, the loss of a friend, a move from one community to another, the loss of a dream (goal), the aging process, or when children leave home by going to school or by getting married. Grief can come from marriage itself, financial difficulties, the illness of a friend, or a friend moving. The list could go on and on.



In John 11, we read about the death of Lazarus who was **Mary’s brother (Mary, the one who anointed Christ’s feet with fragrant oil).** Her brother was ill, so she sent word to Christ Jesus who loved Lazarus. You have heard the expression, **“Boys don’t cry”**—well, Christ wept. Many thought He wept because of His love for Lazarus, but He actually mourned over their lack of faith in Him and in the Father. Verse 4 states that when Jesus heard that Lazarus was ill He said, **“This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it.”** Then, in verse 40, He states, **“Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?”**

Those who are able to feel the pain of the loss of a loved one are better off than those whose feelings are numb. Psychologists now confirm that people who never feel sorrow can never feel joy. It is literally true that the happiest people are those who experience the depths as well as the heights of human emotion.

It is much like coming through a cold bitter winter or a horrible storm. When the sun comes out, then and only then can we truly appreciate the sunshine. If it were always sunny, how could we truly appreciate it? There is an old Arab proverb that says, **“Sunshine all the time makes deserts.” Nothing grows in the desert that is continually filled with sunshine! It is the rain that brings forth the greatest growth. Ecclesiastes 7:4 says, “The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.” So why is it good to mourn?**

Let us be kind and patient with each other in times of sorrow. It is a necessary part of growth.

What I have learned about sorrow

- Going through sorrow causes us to stop and take stock in our lives.
- It makes us ponder the whys of past or current events.
- It gives the opportunity to draw closer to God.
- It gives God and others the opportunity to love and comfort us.
- It teaches us how to comfort others.
- **It gives us understanding of other’s sorrow and grief.**

Through sorrow, we grow strong as we let God into our hearts through the broken places. L. B. Bridgers discovered this the day he lost his wife and family in a tragic fire in their residence in Harrodsburg, Kentucky, on March 26, 1911. His response was to write the song, **“He Keeps Me Singing.”**

“**There’s** within my heart a melody.
Jesus whispers sweet and low,
‘Fear not, I am with thee. Peace, be still,’
In all of life’s ebb and flow.
Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, sweetest name I know.
Fills my every longing.
Keeps me singing as I go.”

Let us be kind and patient with each other in times of sorrow. It is a necessary part of growth. Be there for one another. Encourage one another and remember there is hope and sunshine after the rain that produces growth in you and in others.



The Friendship Book, written in 1950, has a quote about suffering. “When misfortune comes to you, it is two things. It is a pity. Who would choose to be bereaved, to have to tread a hard road, to be out of work, to suffer pain, to have sadness in his heart? But it is also a challenge. It is a challenge to make the best of things, to keep on somehow, to be patient, brave, and hopeful; a challenge never to let misfortune make you bitter or break your spirit. And the wonder is this—that so often misfortune brings a blessing **with it to those who accept the challenge.**”

Going through sorrow is certainly a challenge, but there is a promise that God holds out for all of mankind. **Revelation 21:4 states, “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away (King James Version).”**

Yes, blessed are all of us who go through periods of mourning, for we shall be comforted, the sun will come out, and spiritual growth will emerge!

For more answers to the question of death, request your free copy of [What Happens After Death?](#)

Uncle Cec—Where Have You Gone?

By Hector M. Earle

Losing someone is difficult, but there is hope.



MY UNCLE ‘CEC’ WAS A GREAT INSPIRATION to me. I often think of him and the things he instilled in me as a child. The last time I saw him was at my brother’s funeral in Roddickton, Newfoundland, Canada, in April of 2007. He had grown a little feeble and I thought I saw a glaze in his eyes, very unlike the man I knew as a child. I remembered him as a strong man with broad shoulders, big biceps, and, wow, could he saw wood with a bucksaw! As we sat in my sister’s living room that day, Uncle Cec was in a reflective mood as we reminisced about all the times he visited me as a child, and the triumphs and tragedies of his life.

Cecil Earle (Uncle Cec was what we affectionately called him) was my dad's brother, the second of five boys growing up in the 1930's in St. Leonard's, on Newfoundland's great Northern Peninsula. Life in Newfoundland during the Great Depression wasn't easy for anyone, and Uncle Cec had his share of troubles too. But, as he always used to say, "Life is what you make it." He told me of some really hard times like the great 'Nor-Wester'—the storm in the fall of '37 that stripped his family clean. My grandfather used to tell me of this tragedy in bits and pieces but Uncle Cec seemed to recall it more vividly. He told me of winds gusting up to 120 km per hour and 2 metre waves crashing against the cove, ripping my grandfather's wharf and stage to shreds. The old "five-Acadian" motorboat was torn from its mooring and crashed to bits against the rocks, along with the little dories and all the fishing gear on the shore.

I'm convinced that his faith was as solid as the old rock on which his daddy's house was built.

"Lost everything that fall," he said. "Everything... and we didn't have much to begin with."

But he told me he gained courage from reading in the family Bible about the tragedies of Job and the trials of Paul. He told me how he helped my granddaddy rebuild that spring and how the fish were so plentiful that year. "What goes around comes around," was another of his favourite quotes. I'm convinced that his faith was as solid as the old rock on which his daddy's house was built.

Actions speak louder than words

One summer he came to live with us at our house in Roddickton, 120 miles south of St. Leonard's. There was only one winding narrow gravel road connecting the communities in those days, so Uncle Cec elected to take a two day trip down the coast in an old schooner. He arrived tired and hungry but full of cheer and good wit. Dad told us that Uncle Cec came to help build our new house and to ease him of the burden of working all day in the woods and trying to construct a home for his family after dark. But the way he took the time for my brother and me that summer, I think he also came to be our friend. Tired as he was after working all day, he took the time to joke, tell stories, and take us fishing on Saturdays.



I learned a lot from Uncle Cec. He taught me not so much in what he said but in what he didn't say. The saying, "Actions speak louder than words" was certainly true for my most beloved uncle. It seemed that nothing got him down. I honestly never saw him get discouraged. It seemed he never saw a situation as a problem—only a challenge that could be overcome. When a situation arose, he would roll up his sleeves and get to it.

Uncle Cec was not a wealthy man by any stretch. He saw riches not so much in money as in making people happy. Riches to him were just a good reputation. I never saw him get the blues. Blue to Uncle Cec was just the Atlantic Ocean on a calm sunny day.

Uncle Cec never married. I don't know why; I'm sure he would have made a fine husband and father. Love, responsibility, and integrity were just a way of life to him. He certainly was a father figure to me. He was the best role model anyone could ask for. He taught me to trust in God and never rely on what I think I know (he must have read Proverbs 3:5 many times). Lying, he used to say, makes a hard life because you are always working to cover it up; honesty gives you a clear conscience and makes life easier. There are not too many around like him today. We all certainly know we need more people like Uncle Cec in this world of unrest and rebellion.

Lying, he used to say, makes a hard life because you are always working to cover it up; honesty gives you a clear conscience and makes life easier.

That kind of man

As we were saying good-bye after my brother's funeral, I thought I saw tears in Uncle Cec's eyes.

"I hope to see you again someday," I said.

"I sure do, too," he responded. "Still got this," he said, as he picked up his Bible, "the only sure thing in this world!"

I nodded in agreement as I shook his hand.

Uncle Cec doesn't understand the process of conversion, the steps leading to eternal life in God's Kingdom, and the wonderful world beyond today. But one thing I am certain of—when God opens up his **mind and the plain truth of God's Word is explained to him, he will embrace it.** He is just that kind of a man. What a great opportunity it will be for me to explain it to him when we meet in the resurrection.



Hang in there, my beloved uncle. Next time, it will be my turn to tell YOU a story—a different kind of story.

For more information on the resurrection request our free booklet, [What Happens After Death?](#)

Like Little Children

By John Elliott

Becoming like little children is something that seems easy at first glance, but what does it really mean?



AN INTERESTING MIX OF CULTURES passed by our airplane window as my wife and I flew from eastern Arabia across the length of Iran, Azerbaijan, Russia, and over their respective capital cities of Tehran, Baku, and Moscow. The earth is covered with God’s children who are submerged in a myriad of conflicting traditions, prejudices, and religions—a sampling of these peoples was sequestered together on our airplane. All of God’s children, created with marvelous diversity, are passionately pursuing their lives. But we each have been misled in that quest, and tend to spoil our lives more than fulfill them.

As children of Adam, humans are highly impressionable and have an open receptiveness to outside influence (Rom 5:12-14). Humanity readily adopts the mindset of its father the devil who promotes hatred and deception (John 8:44). **Wouldn’t it be nice for us all to have a do-over, a fresh chance to receive pure information from a truthful Father and live the right way? In God’s Kingdom** humans will experience that new Father. They will see a dramatic change and will live differently (Jeremiah 3:19).

As children of Adam, humans are highly impressionable and have an open receptiveness to outside influence.

As we prepare to celebrate the coming of God’s Kingdom, we might ask, “Who will He welcome into it?” Jesus said, “Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it” (Mark 10:15), and then proceeded to bless little children. This passage gives us an admonition to be among those to whom He will give the special blessing of salvation. We should pause to consider what it means to become like the little children that He blessed.

Traits of little children

In the Western culture, one typically encounters little children when they are outside the home. But since the Western lifestyle tends to stay inside the home, seeing the traits of little children comes only in brief glimpses. In contrast, rural African families spend much of their lives outdoors, which lends to an endless display of the lives of little ones. In such an environment, one can more easily witness the traits of little children. During my twenty-two visits to Africa and constant observation of children, I have learned more about the statement Jesus made above.



One trait of a young African child is in the naive response to things that are new to them. A unique example of that trait is displayed each time an mzungu (white man) abruptly steps into the **environment of a child. A toddler's eyes will widen**, his heart rate increases, and shock or panic may ensue at the sight of an mzungu. He may cry, try to hide, or attempt to run away. The father of one such boy told me that his toddler was afraid that I might eat him!

However, as a child enters the talking stage of life, their reactions become quite pleasant. Their minds quickly assess that the pale thing before them is human. Their mouths drop open, they gasp, and they squeal with excitement. This is combined with jumping legs, waving hands, and big smiles. Little hands reach up to shake, touch, and then stroke the curious looking flesh, followed by an innocent check to see if any white rubbed off.

Sometimes they walk with you, holding your hand for as long as possible. A few have declared us to be their new parents or grandparents. The little boy who at age two thought I might eat him, informed us at age four that he would be coming to live with us. The mind of a child is not merely open to new concepts; it is responsive, trusting, and exuberant in its embrace of them.

Jesus' statement warns us about becoming un-childlike in our receiving of His Kingdom and His mindset.

What the apostle John wrote speaks to us as little children in a relationship with a new Father. Our reaction upon discovering God should be like that of little children—responsive, trusting, and exuberant in embracing the mindset of our loving God. Additionally, we should treat **each other as little children who love others. They embrace, forgive, and forget.** “You are of God, little children... Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is *born of* [engendered by] God and knows God” (1 John 4:4-7, emphasis added).

Traits change as children grow

Sadly, the minds of little children change as they grow up, as evidenced by the maturing reactions to mzungus. By school age, the innocence has faded, replaced by a polite indifference. Then, by adolescence there is typically no response at all—just empty stares.



If not careful, God's little children can grow up, too. Jesus' statement warns us about becoming un-childlike in our receiving of His Kingdom and His mindset. Consider again His words to us, "Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it" (Mark 10:15). Hopefully, the above example of how children of various ages react to a newcomer gives some insight as to how we also might react to God's appearance in our lives. God's calling goes out to many (Matthew 22:4), but He says that few respond appropriately (Matthew 22:5, 14). He wants our response to be like that of little children.

Let us endeavor to become as little children in God's eyes. If we do so, Jesus will also give us the blessing He symbolized with those toddlers that He held (Matthew 25:34).

For more on this topic, ask for the booklets: [Life's Ultimate Question: Does God Exist?](#), [The Road to Eternal Life](#), and [Who Is God?](#)

Spilled Milk

By Robert Berendt

Attitudes come from the heart. God wants us to cultivate good attitudes and build His character. What happens when the pail we are carrying is bumped by the incidents of everyday life? Are Godly attitudes revealed?



WHEN I WAS A BOY, our family would spend a couple of weeks vacationing on my uncle's farm. We helped out with the chores and learned a lot about farming. One of the more difficult tasks for me to master was milking the cows. One of the things I could do to help was to carry two pails of milk from the barn to the room where a separator was used to separate the cream. My uncle had a yoke with which to carry the pails. A yoke is a wooden carrying device shaped to fit comfortably over the shoulders with a metal hook on each side on which two pails can be hung. It was a lot easier than holding two pails with my hands.

The only thing a person had to be careful of when carrying two full pails of milk was not to bump into anything or anyone. It took a few trips to get used to entering the little shed where the separator stood and once or twice I bumped the side of the door quite hard. Guess what came out of the pails? No, it was not lemonade, soda pop, or even water—it was milk. Every time anyone carried two pails of milk and bumped something, it was always milk that spilled onto the ground.



There are a lot of great lessons to be learned on a farm. I never did learn to milk a cow very well, but I was good at carrying milk, using the separator, and cleaning the barn. There is a spill-over from lessons a person learns while working, as long as we are alert enough to recognize those greater applications. I have found many helpful pieces of knowledge which continually crop up in the spiritual applications to life. I believe God has designed us to learn lessons by doing certain tasks and then applying those lessons to everyday life.



As we live our lives, we are constantly trying to negotiate our way through smaller doorways—occasionally we are going to bump into a doorway or, worse yet, we will bump into people. With my four cousins and all of us going in and out of the barn, even the cows got nervous. In a way, we all carry pails of attitudes which, when spilled, tell the world what we are really like. It is not until we get bumped hard enough when what is in our pails is spilled. It is in unexpected circumstances when what we carry deep in our hearts spills out.

Some people look at a garden and see weeds, while others see flowers. Some people realize that accidents happen to all—the good and the not-so-good. Some people realize that there are many circumstances in life fashioning and forming us. Some realize that when we mature, we have the ability and opportunity to see what is in our pails.

What does our pail reveal?

Paul wrote that we reap that which we sow (Galatians 6:7). This was not new knowledge; it is something that has always been true. He also wrote that he who sows sparingly will reap sparingly and he who sows bountifully will reap bountifully (2 Corinthians 9:6). We may find it difficult to see exactly what is in our pails as we go through life—and the contents in our pails change (unlike the milk). If our lives are full of attitudes of anger, grouchiness, pessimism, bad temper, or an ugly disposition—this is what will spill out of our pail every time someone bumps into us. If our lives are full of attitudes of kindness, understanding, cheerfulness, geniality, optimism, and friendliness—this is what will spill out of our pails.

We can carry bad attitudes for some time without revealing too much about our inner selves but bumps come unexpectedly and that is when you find out what is really inside of another person. The bigger the bump, the bigger the spill will be. If we are alert, we will see what is really in the pails we carry. If our lives are happy and full of good things you can be sure the pails we carry are full of the right stuff. If we have few friends and life seems to be a chore we do not enjoy, then we need to change what is in our pails.

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The good thing is we humans do have the ability to change what we carry, as long as we have the will to change it. An attitude of being positive, doing the best we can do, and helping others as we also help and improve ourselves is necessary to being happy and content. It is as essential as water is to a fish, the sky to the birds, and the earth to worms. This is a law that is absolute—you reap what you sow.

The book of Proverbs did not appear in the Bible by accident. It is full of wisdom and help in ensuring that our lives are as happy as God intended. Problems will come and we will bump people and doors, but we can be sure that what spills from our pails is a blessing to ourselves and to others. Much is written about the heart and what is inside of a person. Attitudes, disposition, and character reside internally. That is what our pails contain. We can know these absolutes of behavior and reap the benefit of obeying the Author.

Here are a few examples:

“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold” (Proverbs 22:1). Guard your name and reputation and be concerned about other people.

“He who loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich” (Proverbs 21:17). Success requires hard work, diligence, and self-control.

“Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man do not go, lest you learn his ways and set a snare for your soul” (Proverbs 22:24, 25). Bad company leads to bad manners.

“Whoever has no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down, without walls” (Proverbs 25:28). Take the time to work on attitudes harmful to yourself and others.

“A fool vents all his feelings, but a wise man holds them back” (Proverbs 29:11). We can all get angry and frustrated—what we need is to control the anger.

“A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel” (Proverbs 1:5). We can change the contents of our pails.

About wisdom: “Do not forsake her, and she will preserve you; love her, and she will keep you” (Proverbs 4:6). We grow in grace and knowledge when we put our minds to it. The ingredient driving all of this is the will.

Grow in grace and knowledge

Christians are commanded to grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 1:5-9). Peter was known to react strongly when he was bumped before his conversion. He also came to know the need to change what manner of man he was. His words are written from experience and understanding.

Peter advises us all to give diligence to adding virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, and brotherly kindness to what and who we are. He tells us if we possess these items we will never stumble and will make our calling and election sure. It is a comfort to know there are things we can do to ensure our election and future.

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Jesus Christ was always mindful that He carried the “express image” of the Father (Hebrews 1:3). He was responsible for what people thought about God by His own actions. That responsibility has been passed on to us, though we live almost 2000 years after Christ became the Passover Lamb. True followers realize the pails they carry should represent the nature and character of Jesus Christ. The people we bump into are looking, as are angels. We carry that load carefully, but as He said, His yoke is easy and light (Matthew 11:30). It is like being on a vacation on a farm—it can be fun.