



# IPC MESSENGER

A BI-MONTHLY PUBLICATION OF THE INDEPENDENT PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH  
(912) 236-3346 | info@ipc sav.org | www.ipc sav.org | 207 Bull Street, Savannah, Georgia 31401

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## Covenantal Priority

TERRY JOHNSON

*So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Gal 6:10)*

Can one be too committed to the church? The question is raised by those who fear we may be committed to our church to the exclusion of other believers and the friendship with unbelievers. Are we in danger of becoming a Christian ghetto? Aloof from outsiders, isolated from unbelievers, cloistered to the point of irrelevance? This is not an unimportant question, especially if considered historically. Variations on the monastic impulse have appeared and reappeared throughout the centuries. From hermit monks, to communal monks, to Benedict, to the Cistercians, to the Jesuits, to the Anabaptists such as the Mennonites and Amish, separation from the world has been a temptation and a strategy for Christians.

### **In, not of the world**

The old formula is a good one: be *in* the world, not *of* the world. Jesus commands us to be light and salt *in the world* of darkness and corruption. We are to be “a city set on a hill” that cannot be hidden (Mt 5:13, 14). Jesus commands,

*let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Mt 5:16)*

Our light is to shine “before others” who are able to “see (our) good works” with the salutary result of God’s glory. Similarly the Apostle Paul, undoubtedly echoing Jesus’ teaching, instructs us to be

<sup>15</sup> *blameless and innocent, children of God without*

*blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,<sup>16</sup> holding fast to the word of life. (Phil 2:15-16a)*

Note where he places us: “in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation,” yet “as lights in the world.” Elsewhere he intends that we *should* “associate” with the “sexually immoral of this world... the greedy and swindlers” and “idolaters,” since to avoid them we “would need to go out of this world” (1 Cor 5:9, 10). It is only when such evil-doers claim to be Christian brethren that we are not to “associate” with them, “not even to eat with such a one” (1 Cor 5:11). Clearly the implication is that we would have significant relationships with worldlings. We are to be *in the world*.

On the other hand, we are not to be *of the world*. Hence, in Jesus’ “High Priestly Prayer,” He prays, “I do not ask that you take them out of the world,” but that we be protected “from the evil world” (Jn 17:15). Indeed, “I have sent them *into the world*” (Jn 17:18). Yet “the world has hated them because they are not of the world just as I am not *of the world*” (Jn 17:14). Again,

*They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. (Jn 17:16)*

We are to remain separate from the world and its ways. We are to “love not the world or the things of the world” (1 Jn 2:15). Most emphatically the Apostle Paul, citing Leviticus 26:12 (!), commands us,

*Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord,*

*and touch no unclean thing; (2 Cor 6:17; cf Rev 18:4, 5)*

### **Covenantal priority**

How do we put these two strands of thought together? By establishing a covenantal priority. Our first and primary obligation is to my Christian brothers and sisters to whom I am bound by covenant vows. We are part of the same family, not by birth, but by covenant. This priority is perhaps most clearly expressed by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 6:10.

*So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Gal 6:10)*

We are to aim to “do good to everyone.” Yet the priority is “the household of faith.” They “especially” are the objects of our love and care. For example, the charitable, diaconal ministry of the church does not aim at alleviating all human suffering, but that within the church. The widows that receive the care of the church are Christian widows, and not just any Christian widow, but one “having been the wife of one husband, and having a reputation for good works: if she has brought up children, has shown hospitality, has washed the feet of the saints, has cared for the afflicted, and has devoted herself to every good work” (1 Tim 5:9b-10). That is a pretty high bar for being on the receiving end of diaconal help. The priority is the faithful within the covenant community.

The “one anothers” of our previous study are directed to members of churches (e.g. Rome, Ephesus, Colossae,

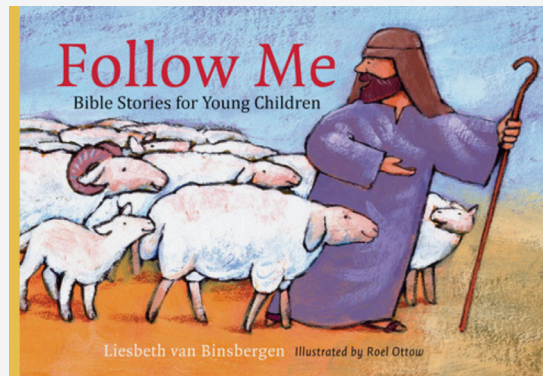
Corinth, Galatia, etc.) regarding their fellow members. Sometimes they are explicitly directed to give to believers and churches outside their congregations, as when the Apostle Paul urges the Corinthians to give to the needy Jerusalem church, even to give generously as the churches of Macedonia (e.g. Philippi) had done (e.g. 2 Cor 8-9; cf Rom 15:25-28; 1 Cor 16:1-4). However, this is the exception that proves the rule. Unless otherwise indicated, the Apostles are directing us (in their 28 one anothers) to love, care for, and bear the burdens of our fellow church members. It is not that we are to withhold care and kindness from other believers or unbelievers. Of course we should be Good Samaritans to everyone with whom we come into contact. Rather, we are being guided in establishing priorities and ordering our commitments accordingly.

Can we be too committed to the church? Yes, if it means that we are either isolated from outsiders or withhold kindness to them. Yet frankly, I’ve not been aware of this as a significant problem. Indeed, I don’t recall seeing anyone in the last 30 years who was too committed to the church. Not one. On the other hand, I’ve seen lots of believers compromised by love of the world. I’ve seen lots of believers failing to “love one another” because all of their energies are poured into their “friends,” from whom they derive social satisfaction and benefit. I’ve seen lots of believers who are (typically, to be honest) worldly Christians or outright worldlings. My priority, that which ought to receive the benefit of my thoughts, time, energy, and love should be the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the Jew and the Gentile, hip and the unhip, the cool and the uncool, the connected and the unconnected of my own church home. •

See more of Mr. Johnson's writings at [reformationtoday.org](http://reformationtoday.org)

## Children’s Church Update

Beginning in May, our 4 and 5-year-olds will be hearing selections each week from *Follow Me: Bible Stories for Young Children* by Lisbeth van Binsbergen, published by Reformation Heritage Books. This book contains 116 Bible stories for young children, allowing us to have a two-year cycle taking us through the Old Testament and New Testament. The writing is age-appropriate, but “meaty” enough for our IPC covenant children, who are, already at the age of 4, more biblically literate than the “average” 4-year-old. Each week the children in Children’s Church continue to recite the Lord’s Prayer, Apostles’ Creed, and Ten Commandments; hear God’s Word through a story from *Follow Me*; answer questions about what they have heard; and then complete a simple craft to help cement the point of the lesson in their hearts and minds. If you would like to take a look at this new addition to Children’s Church, there are copies available in the Lending Library outside the Choir Room. In addition, you can read more about this resource on the Reformation Heritage Books website at [www.heritagebooks.org](http://www.heritagebooks.org). •



COMMUNION  
SEASON 2025



September 19-21, 2025  
Speaker: Rev. Bart Lester



**FUN IN THE SUN  
FAMILY DAY**

**SATURDAY, JULY 5  
10 AM - 2 PM**

**at Point Pleasant  
441 Suncrest Blvd**

**Come enjoy the new pool and  
inflatable waterslides!  
Bring your own lunch and drinks.**

**Questions? Contact Lucy Biemiller**



COLLEGE  
SUMMER  
KICKOFF

*JUNE 3 AT 7PM*

*The Jacksons  
14 Marsh Harbor Dr N  
Savannah, GA 31410*

*We will continue from that date  
forward to meet on Tuesdays at  
7 P.M. in the Hull Street House  
(18W Hull). We will be studying  
the Book of Romans.*

YOU'RE INVITED TO SUMMERTIME  
IPC WOMEN OF THE CHURCH

GATHER *to Pray*

TUESDAY MORNINGS

8-9 AM AT THREE TREE COFFEE  
215 W. COLLINS ST., POOLER

*Questions? Contact Rita (912) 572-6448 or Barbara (912) 306-9876*

9:30-10:30AM AT IPC

*Questions? Contact Emi (305) 283-7853 or Linda (912) 547-3833*

LADIES OF ALL AGES WELCOME!

# SUMMER 2025 SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES

## Garmer (70s+)

### THE BEATITUDES IN THE PSALMS

*Dr. Burt | 1<sup>st</sup> Floor - Whitaker Building*

We are all familiar with the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount. There are several psalms that begin with the same formula, "Blessed is the one who..." beginning with the first verse of the first psalm. This class will explore these Old-Testament beatitudes as new-covenant promises.

## Agape (60s)

### JEREMIAH

*Mr. Field | 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor - Whitaker Building*

Few biblical characters were given more challenging missions than Jeremiah, and this quarter, we'll look at the highs and lows of his life and message. For over four decades, Jeremiah stood as a lone minister of the Lord during Judah's darkest days. From oracles of destruction and exile to promises of a new covenant and a branch of David, the book of Jeremiah plays a central role in our understanding of both God's wrath and His mercy.

## Emmaus (50s)

### GOD'S WORD IN WRITING

*Rev. Ellis | 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor - Whitaker Building*

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each have a key role in giving us the Scriptures. Our purpose in studying those roles will be to gain a deeper understanding and a renewed appreciation of what God says to us in writing.

## Berean (40s)

### THE TORAH

*Mr. Corbitt | 4<sup>th</sup> Floor - Whitaker*

In this class we will seek to survey the first five books of our Scriptures together. These five books of Moses contain some of the most beloved passages of Scripture as well as the most neglected. We will seek to study an overview of the Torah with the intention of helping us to engage more thoughtfully with the rest of the Scriptures in light of God's Law.

## New Covenant (30s)

### I SAMUEL

*Rev. Shaw | Room #30 - 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Axson Building*

We continue our study in the life of David as we are confronted by his example: his successes and failures, and the ways in which he foreshadows David's greater Son.

## Jerusalem (20s)

### WELCOMING WORDS FOR WEARY WARRIORS

*Rev. Dr. Willson | Room #31 - 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Axson Building*

Romans 7 and 8 preach the gospel to our souls which enlivens, encourages, and arms us for effective spiritual battle. We will study these all-important chapters together to be encouraged in the gospel!

## College (Undergraduate)

### OUR DUTY

*Rev. Gear | Parlor - Hull Street Building*

It is a father's duty to love his children, a student's duty to study, a soldier's duty to obey his superior's commands... Each of these is given direction for his life by a sense of what we call "duty". So, what is your duty as a Christian? Where is the direction for my life in Christ to be found? Come and join us as we seek, with the help of the testimony of Scripture and our catechisms, to answer these questions over the next few weeks.

## Youth (6<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade)

### HEBREWS - THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST

*Rev. Sutherland | 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor - Hull Street Building*

Matthew Henry wrote concerning the book of Hebrews, "If we compare all the epistles of the New Testament, we shall not find any of them more replenished with divine, heavenly matter than this to the Hebrews." This summer we will seek to study the "divine and heavenly matter" in this portion of the Bible. We will think about the glory and supremacy of Jesus Christ and what he has done for us in the gospel. We will also consider the challenges and temptations that these Christians faced with an understanding that in many ways we continue to face the same temptations to turn away from the fullness of Christ. It is our goal this summer to grow in our knowledge of and love for the Lord Jesus Christ as we study Hebrews.



## CHILDREN'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

### Pre-Kindergarten: (Axson Building, Room 10)

Serving the Savior: Learning to trust and obey Jesus through New Testament lessons

*Mrs. Sharon Robinson and Mrs. Claire Webb*

### Kindergarten: (Axson Building, Room 11)

Serving the Savior: Learning to trust and obey Jesus through New Testament lessons

*Miss Kirstie Brodmann and Mrs. Amy Veatch*

### 1st/2nd Grade: (Axson Building, Room 33)

Pleasing God: The Ten

Commandments: growth in Christian character

*Mrs. Liz Brodmann and Mrs. Sue Hinely*

### 3rd/4th Grade: (Axson Building, Room 32)

God's Servants: Stories of little-known people in the Old and New Testament

*Dr. and Mrs Mark and Carol Dusek*

### 5th Grade: (Axson Building, Room 36)

Genesis: Creation, the Fall, the flood, the Abrahamic covenant, the patriarchs, and Joseph

*Mr. Jody Robinson and Mr. Brad Taylor*

## WEDDINGS

*Mr. and Mrs. William Bryson Unrub were united in marriage by Mr. Johnson on Saturday, April 12, 2025, in the sanctuary of Independent Presbyterian Church.*

*Mrs. Unrub is the former Miss Amber Tharau.*

\*

*Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin M. Robinson were united in marriage by Mr. Gear on Saturday, May 3, 2025.*

*Mrs. Robinson is the former Miss Anna Lei Brown.*

\*

*Mr. and Mrs. William "Will" James Immel were united in marriage by Mr. Gear and Mr. Johnson on Saturday, May 17, 2025. Mrs. Immel is the former Miss*

*Adeline Elizabeth Barrett.*

## BIRTHS

*Grace Lynn Kicklighter was born Thursday, April 4, 2025, in Savannah, GA, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. S. Joshua Kicklighter (Heather).*

\*

*Charles Major Oswald was born Thursday, May 1, 2025, in Savannah, GA, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Louis Oswald (Rachel).*

## BEREAVEMENT

IN MEMORIAM

*Ernest Earl Mitchell entered the Lord's presence on Monday, April 7, 2025 in Savannah, GA*

\*

**BLESSED ARE THE DEAD, WHICH DIE IN THE LORD.**

*Revelation 14:13*

## NOTE TO THE CHURCH

Dear IPC Family,

I have seen the spirit of Christ as all of you have ministered to me during my time of grief after losing Ed. I love all of you, and thank you so much!

Robbie Forester

# PSALMS & HYMNS

O F T H E M O N T H

J U N E

*(Year 1-10)*

## #100 - Holy, Holy, Holy

*Reginald Heber, 1783-1826*

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee.  
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,  
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;  
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,  
Who wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide Thee,  
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see,  
Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee  
Perfect in pow'r, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth and sky  
and sea.  
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

TUNE: NICAEA 11.12.12.10.  
John B. Dykes, 1861

*(Year 11-15)*

## Psalm 88

*Verses 1-8*

- 1 O Lord, the God of my salvation tried,  
All day and night before Thee I have cried.
- 2 O let my prayer before Thy presence rise;  
Incline Thine ear to hear my pleading cries.
- 3 My soul is full of anxious cares and gloom;  
My weary life draws nigh the silent tomb.
- 4 I count as those that to the pit descend;  
I'm like the man whose strength is at an end.
- 5 As one cast off among the dead am I;  
I'm like the pierced ones in the grave that lie,  
Whom Thou hast not remembered any more,  
Those cut off from Thy hand where none restore.
- 6 By Thee within the lowest pit I'm laid,  
In deeps and in the place of darkest shade;
- 7 Thy furious wrath on me has come to rest,  
And with Thy breakers Thou hast me oppressed.
- 8 My former friends Thou hast estranged from me;  
Yes, their abhorrence I am made by Thee;  
Shut up am I, imprisoned here must stay;  
Through deep distress my eyes both waste away.

TUNE: ELLERS 10.10.10.10. (88B)  
("Savior Again, to Thy Dear Name")

## SUMMER CHOIR

Are you interested in music but not able to attend to weekly rehearsals? Have you been wondering about joining choir but hesitant to make a long-term commitment? You are warmly invited to join our summer choir (grade 6 through adult, with whole families certainly welcome). For **four Sundays (June 15, 22, 29, and July 6)**, we meet in the choir room at 8:30 a.m. and sing a relatively simple anthem for the AM service. There are no mid-week rehearsals and no further commitment required (though of course we hope that some will decide to continue into the fall!). Please write or call Jacob Fuhrman with any questions.

(Year 1-10)

## Psalm 63

- 1 God, Thee, my God, I'll early seek;  
My soul's athirst for Thee.  
On dry land, weary, waterless,  
My flesh has longed for Thee.
- 2 Thus have I looked for Thee before  
Within Thy holy place  
That there I might behold Thy strength  
And glory of Thy face.
- 3 Because Thy grace is more than life  
My lips Thee praise shall give;
- 4 I in Thy name will lift my hands  
And bless Thee while I live.
- 5 My soul with rich, abundant food  
Shall be well satisfied;  
With shouts of joy upon my lips  
My mouth shall praise provide.
- 6 And when I turn my thought to Thee  
Upon my bed at night,  
As watches pass I meditate  
On Thee with great delight.
- 7 Thou art my help; I sing for joy  
In shadow of Thy wings.
- 8 For Thy right hand has held me fast;  
To Thee my spirit clings.
- 9 But they go down to depths of earth  
Who would my soul destroy;
- 10 They are delivered to the sword  
For jackals to enjoy.
- 11 The king shall then rejoice in God  
And all that by Him swear;  
For stopped shall be the mouths of those  
Who do a lie declare.

TUNE: ST. COLUMBA CM  
("How Sweet and Awful is the Place")  
Old Irish hymn melody

(Year 11-15)

## #699 - Like a River Glorious

Frances R. Havergal (1874)

Like a river glorious  
Is God's perfect peace,  
Over all victorious  
In its bright increase;  
Perfect, yet it floweth  
Fuller ev'ry day,  
Perfect, yet it groweth  
Deeper all the way.

*Refrain:*  
Stayed upon Jehovah,  
Hearts are fully blest,  
Finding, as He promised,  
Perfect peace and rest.

Hidden in the hollow  
Of His blessed hand,  
Never foe can follow,  
Never traitor stand;  
Not a surge of worry,  
Not a shade of care,  
Not a blast of hurry,  
Touch the spirit there. *[Refrain]*

Ev'ry joy or trial  
Falleth from above,  
Traced upon our dial  
By the Sun of Love.  
We may trust Him fully  
All for us to do;  
They who trust Him wholly  
Find Him wholly true. *[Refrain]*

TUNE: WYE VALLEY 6.5.6.5.D. ref.  
James Mountain (1876)



## ABOUT THE PSALMS

### Psalm 88

"There is no sadder prayer in the Psalter," says Derek Kidner. "Assuredly, if ever there was a song of sorrow and a psalm of sadness, this is one," Spurgeon agrees. The only ray of hope is to be found in the first verse. The God before whom he pours out his soul is, "O LORD, the God of my salvation." Otherwise the psalm begins in the night (v 1) and ends in darkness (v 18). Henry points out that "it does not conclude, as usually the melancholy psalms do, with the least intimation of comfort or joy, but from first to last, it is mourning and woe." The worshiper's role in singing this Psalm is to be a "companion in prayer," says Kidner, with those who are despondent or outcasts.

### Psalm 63

The superscription says this is "A Psalm of David, when he was in the wilderness of Judah." Written perhaps when he was in the desert fleeing from Absalom (cf. 2 Sam 15:13ff; especially v 23), the deprivations there supplied David with a metaphor for his soul. Even as his flesh yearns for water in a hot and dry place, so also, my soul thirsts for Thee, my flesh yearns for Thee, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. (Ps 63:1) "There was no desert in his heart," says Spurgeon, "though there was a desert around him." "This Psalm has in it as much of warmth and lively devotion as any of David's Psalms in so little a compass," says Matthew Henry.



# Teaching Children Theology

## PART TWO: How do we teach it?

LUCY BIEMILLER

In the last Messenger we explored definitions of theology and why it should be an integral part of what we are doing with our children in the home and in the church. The conclusion of this discussion will focus on ways to intentionally use theology to help shape our children's world-view. There are practical ways that we can incorporate theology into what we do with our children at home, in Sunday School, and in Sunday morning worship. We can focus on four components as a framework for teaching theology in our children's lives: keeping who Jesus is and what we know about God at the center of our teaching; praying for and with our children; providing times for formal teaching; and using informal teaching in our daily lives. We will discuss the first two components in this issue.

First, in all aspects of our spiritual interactions with our children we must relentlessly point our children to the cross and what Jesus has done for us. Charles Spurgeon suggests that in our teaching and conversations with children: "The most fundamental truth should be made the most prominent; and what is this but the cross... Teach the little ones that Jesus died, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God."<sup>1</sup> Sam Luce, in his book, *How to Teach Kids Theology: Deep Truths for Growing Faith*, further suggests that "...when we understand our story as finding its origin, meaning, and future hope in Christ's story, it profoundly changes how we live."<sup>2</sup> Isn't changing and shaping how they live the ultimate goal of teaching spiritual truths to our children? We can only present all of who Jesus is by looking at the whole story of God's people, which means using the whole Bible – the Old Testament and the New Testament. Luce states: "When we realize that every page of the Old Testament is written in anticipation of Christ and every

page in the New Testament is written in reference to Christ, the realization forces us to proclaim Christ."<sup>3</sup>

In addition to relentlessly focusing our children towards Christ, we can also point our children to what we know about God to teach them theology. Looking at the attributes of God provides an excellent framework for our children to process what they see, hear, and do in this world. God's Word gives us an excellent example of how this can work in the book of Job. When Job lays out his case to God with his complaints and sufferings, God's response is not to answer Job's "whys," but to describe who He is and what He has done through His Creation. This explanation and description put Job's suffering in perspective and evaluate Job's life, events, and actions in light of God's greatness. Just as God pointed Job to who He is to help Job make sense of the world, we can follow this same pattern. We can direct our children to who God is by continually pointing them back to His attributes and therefore shaping how they see and interact with the world.

Praying for and with our children is another key component to aid in presenting theology to our children. Parents are the primary teachers of their children. Praying for our children is the first responsibility in this process. We were chosen by God to disciple our children. We are responsible for discipling our children, but the Holy Spirit empowers us to do this hard work as well as strengthen our children to be faithfully obedient. As Sam Luce suggests: "He (the Holy Spirit) alone has the power to change hearts and transform lives."<sup>4</sup> To that end, we must be in fervent prayer for our children that their lives and hearts would be changed and that they would be called to obedience and faithfulness. Paul gives us an excellent example in Ephesians 1:16-19 of how we can pray for this change and growth in our children:

*"I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might."*

As we faithfully teach our children, we must pray that the Holy Spirit will use our efforts to help our young ones see the greatness of God and all the other amazing truths and promises that He gives to His people.

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Not only is praying for our children a crucial part of discipling our children, but praying with our children is a practical way to teach theology. For example, when we pray to the Father, on the basis of what the Son has done, asking for the help of the Holy Spirit, we are giving our children a picture of the Trinity. As another example, by using Scripture in prayer, we are teaching the importance of God's Word in shaping our own thoughts and words. We give a glimpse of God's sovereignty when we are modeling through prayer that God always hears us, but does not always give us exactly what we ask for. He answers us in His time and in His way. These are just several examples of the theology that we are imparting to our children when we pray with them.

We have touched on two of our four components of a framework for teaching theology in our children's lives. We have discussed the importance of keeping who Jesus is and what we know about God at the center of the teachings to our young ones. In addition, we looked at the tools of praying for and with our children. In the next issue of the Messenger, we will discuss ways to provide times for formal teaching and how to incorporate informal teaching into imparting theology to our children. •

<sup>1</sup> Spurgeon, C. H. (2023). *Come ye children*. Icthus Publications, 45.

<sup>2</sup> Luce, S., & Williams, H. (2025). *How to teach kids theology deep truths for growing faith*. New Growth Press, 63.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 73.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 15.



# Walk Humbly With God

EVAN GEAR

Last time, I wrote of hope. Our hope is not of this world but of the world to come. It is not a more just Egypt but a promised land. The good we seek in this world is always conditioned by the only good man who ever walked its earth.

Allow me to provide an example from an often-misapplied text.

Micah 6:8 — *He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

You see this verse everywhere, emblazoned upon everything from social media posts to tattoos. It seems to the casual reader a call to a simple morality. In the context the more careful reader finds something of a movement away from Old Testament worship and sacrifice. Here is a progressive step towards the new and away from the old. The liberal theologian may even see evidence of the evolution and maturing of religious man as he grows out of the antiquated barbarity of blood sacrifice into the refined morality of justice and kindness.

The text itself is preceded by a series of questions. As we read them our default is to understand them rhetorically. They are questions we are not intended to answer, but I would contend that these questions do, in fact, expect answers. They are found at verses 6-7 of Micah chapter 6:

<sup>6</sup> *“With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”*

Four successive questions each seem to require a negative answer: I don't know how to come before the LORD; certainly not with burnt offerings, even a thousand of them; and the last one would be the height of absurdity! Of course He is not asking for my first born!

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But take a closer look.

The first question is a familiar inquiry: *With what shall I come before the LORD...?* We read something very similar to that in the Psalter.

Psalm 15:1 — *O LORD, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill?*

Psalm 24:3 — *Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?*

The prophets voice a similar refrain. Isaiah 33:14b for example: *“Who among us can dwell with the consuming fire? Who among us can dwell with everlasting burnings?”*

Each of these, like those in Micah, is phrased as an open-ended question. It is the question that pulses through the Old Testament revelation, the question for which all creation longs for an answer. It is the question to which the New Testament provides the authoritative answer. Who shall; who can; who will; who has ascended the hill to stand acceptable before God? The answer is Christ Jesus our Lord.

So, then, when we enter upon this section of Micah we come by way of a question and answer. The door through which we enter is Jesus, the Lamb slain from the foundations of the world.

The first question and its answer bring us to the second: *Shall I come before HIM with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?* Well, yes and no. For Jesus is most certainly an offering but he is more than a calf.

What about verse 7? *Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil?* This one seems to acknowledge the need for more than a calf, but it does so quantitatively and that misses the mark. So, no, not thousands of offerings. Yet, the sense of the need for something greater, not numerically, but in some way hangs in the air.

This leads us to the final question: *Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression; the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* Here, at last, we have hit upon it. The answer is yes. It is the logic of the pagan world – the ultimate sacrifice for the ultimate need. Yes, the thing needed is the firstborn, the fruit of our body. But while the pagan world feels after this blindly, the Scripture lights the way. It opens our eyes to see it is not Isaac but a Lamb. It is not my son or your son, but the Son. It is Jesus, the firstborn, for the sin of my soul.

We are thus, as New Testament readers and believers, brought to Micah 6:8 by the right way. These words have direct reference to the great act of salvation by which God has answered his questions. They must be read in light of such an answer. Apart from the context of the sacrificial death of Christ our interpretations will wander into paths of self-made righteousness. We will hear the words *justice*, *kindness*, and *humility* and define them on our own terms. But if we hold fast to Christ (our head) we will see that such terms find their meaning in Him.

The first one is *justice* – literally “judgment.” Where else can you find *justice* and judgment in its full purity apart from the death of Christ? Only at the foot of the cross are sinners justified and the wicked caught in a trap. Only there is God’s wrath satisfied. It is that act, that man and our response to him which will be the substance of the final judgment. Here, the prophet calls us to live according to that; he says, *do justice*. We might paraphrase it, *“deny yourself take up your cross and follow me.”*

Then Micah, by the Holy Spirit further elaborates for us what it means to seek that great end by adding a parallel command to *“love kindness.”* Doing so, he answers the question - how are we to do justice? The answer is to love kindness which is the Hebrew word *chesed*. It is covenant faithfulness – the covenant faithfulness of God exhibited in His Son. Love that. And loving that we will find strength to follow him. For loving Him and His faithfulness will invigorate you to “take up” and “follow” in His steps.

And, lastly, such doing and loving will cultivate in us humility. When we seek to follow Jesus, we will learn to *walk humbly* with our *God*. Because we will know ourselves sinners justly deserving His wrath and displeasure. We will learn to distrust our own sense of righteousness and justice. We will acknowledge HIM in all our ways knowing that it is His work and not ours. As surely as we cannot offer our son so we cannot do the justice or love kindness or walk with God in humility. The only place these things are ours is in Him. We walk with God where He walked with us. Any other way, even if it goes by the name of *justice* and *kindness*, is the epitome of pride. It is to seek another kingdom upon which we blazon these words which are His; and when He comes to get them, we will find ourselves encountering Him as a thief in the night.

Let us hear the voice of the Teacher behind us saying, *this is the way. Walk in it.* •

# JUNE BIRTHDAYS

1	Abigail Brodmann	10	Davis Rushing	16	Ross Rambo	21	Robbie Forester
1	Elizah Gear	10	Ruth Edie Steward	17	Vivien Gift	23	Jeffrey Dean Blevins
1	Ivy Monroe	10	Amber Unruh	18	J. D. Blevins	24	Bill Monroe
1	Thomas Wallace	11	Jessica Coleman	18	Jonathan Stewart	24	Caroline Tanner
2	Jerry Dillon	11	David Gobel	19	Carolyn Downs	25	Susan Glenn
2	Carol Teasley	11	Mose Laffitte	19	Elise Hudson	25	Suzanne McCaslin
4	Tim Ragen	11	Elliott Oliver	19	Eleanor Johnson	25	Josiah Robison
6	Molly Pavlo	12	Sherwin Prescott	19	Tom MacMillan	25	Mark Rustine
8	Angela Breland	12	Sean Smith	19	Donna South	26	Matthew Mullinix
9	Chip Breckenridge	12	Steven Wohlfeil	19	Tamara Thompson	28	Joe Monroe
9	Jobe Gear	13	Brad Stevens	19	Amy Veatch	29	Bob Oliver
9	Jody Lanier	14	Jack Monroe	20	Plenty Groover	30	Luke Brown
10	Gus Bell	15	Marc Biemiller	20	Billings Johnson	30	Natalie Chester
10	Jake Busch	15	Lee Rambo	20	Philip Morgan	30	Marcie Hill

# JULY BIRTHDAYS

1	Samuel Carpenter	9	Caroline Laffitte	15	Clay Nolen	24	Frederick Dugal
1	Landon Essenburg	9	Kate Robinson	16	Opal Gear	24	Levi Hazeltine
1	Abby Spencer	9	Mike Spittle	16	Hazel Soutar	24	Warren Hazeltine
2	Karen Koechlein	9	Lynette Ward	17	Jack Brodmann	24	Beverly Suther
2	Ginger Thompson	10	Caroline Bradley	18	James Barron	25	Griff Hogan
3	Luke Edwards	10	Cole McAllister	18	Kirstine Flanagan	26	Neal Cope
3	John Gentry	11	Brooks Mathews	18	Parker Williams	28	Natalie Brown
3	Collins Gobel	11	Gabe Quinley	19	Sides Bell	28	Mills Gross
3	Jack Kreger	12	Charlie Brown	19	Phil Fruin	28	Annabelle Mayes
3	Elizabeth Oliver	12	Jim Fletcher	20	Freya Johnson	28	Joel Parrish
3	Elizabeth Wallace	12	Joan Smith	20	Sam McAllister	29	Doug Henrick
5	Zachary Harris	13	Boaz Corbitt	20	Jeff Murns	29	Joshua Lane
5	Denice Jefferson	13	Tim Shaw	20	Leann Thompson	29	Rosemary Taylor
6	Luke Cruzado	13	Haven Shull	21	Jose Flanagan	30	Gracie Carpenter
6	Mike Hazeltine	13	Thadd Stevens	21	Cecilia Martin	30	Cameron Sutherland
7	Liz Brodmann	14	Rick Mullinix	21	Sally Martin	30	Bucky Ward
7	Bill Immel	14	Benjamin Rodenberg	21	Tom Sullivan	31	Chris Garrick
7	Catherine Williams	14	Megan Rodenberg	22	Michael Hazeltine	31	Warren Hill
8	Eugenia Hannon	15	David Jefferson	23	Paula Heritage	31	George Toly
8	Ruth Anne Sutton	15	Laura Kate Mathews	23	Bev Meng		

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