

The Old Paths

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“What Does God’s Word Mean To You?”

Jarrold Jacobs

This question ought to cut us to the heart. What does God’s word mean to you? Does it mean everything? Does it mean little? When we open up the Scriptures themselves, we learn that God’s word ought to mean everything to us. I say this because the Bible reveals, *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”* (II Tim. 3:16-17). The Scripture is profitable because it furnishes or equips us completely unto all good works. It is our guide, and by this word we can be saved (Rom. 1:16).

To Timothy, it is also written, *“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”* (II Tim. 4:2). Notice, Timothy was not to preach opinions, or the wisdom of men, but *“preach the word”* — that which is inspired of God! This type of preaching is needed because it is by the preaching of the “word” or the “Scriptures” that we will be equipped spiritually as we need to be!

Again I ask, “What does God’s word mean to you?” I ask this question because ultimately, this is all that matters. It matters not what the Pope of Rome thinks of the Bible, nor what Billy Graham’s thoughts are. It mat-

ters not what “mom and dad” think of the Bible, nor what your spouse thinks of God’s word. My response to God’s word is what will have the effect upon my soul. Whether or not I am faithful to God’s word and finally go to Heaven depends upon what God’s word means to me now!

Yes, some have lost their lives in the preaching of God’s word. This is revealed to us in Scripture (Matt. 14:1-12; Acts 12:1-3; Heb. 11:33-37; Rev. 2:13). After the Bible was completed, some lost their lives because they tried to preserve God’s word! Some were not happy to see God’s word spread to the “masses,” and so those who were working to put God’s word in the “common” language were exiled and even put to death for their effort. Such facts make us acutely aware of what the Bible meant to men and women in history. Yet, I ask again, “What does God’s word mean to you?”

What God’s word means to us is evident to men when they observe our speech and our actions. Do folks (including our family) see us spending time in prayer? Do they see us reading our Bible? Do they see us acting in a way consistent with Scripture, and hear us speaking the truth in love? People watch us and know what God’s word truly means to us. Remember, *“by their fruits ye shall know them”* (Matt. 7:16, 20)! Most important of all is that God sees us and He knows! What does God’s word mean to you? Your life reflects your attitude! Think about it!

CHILD ABUSE

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The Psalmist said, *“Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord”* (Psa. 127:3). Paul said, *“the parents ought to lay up for the children”* (2 Cor. 12:14). Jesus said we should *“give good gifts”* to our children (Matt. 7:11). How sad to hear of the abuse of children. There are several kinds of abuse. We will consider four of them.

Physical Abuse: Some children are sexually abused. Often this comes from live-in boy or girl friends, or from step-parents. Children have a right to privacy and need to be taught the value of modesty. Frazzled and frustrated parents sometimes take it out on the children who have very little means of protection. Anger often turns into rage and children end up seriously injured, or dead. All of us need to *“gird up the loins of your (our) mind, and be sober”* (1 Pet. 1:13). We are called upon to add *“temperance”* (self-control) to our faith (2 Pet. 1:6). Older women are to teach the younger women to *“love their children”* (Titus 2:4). Those who understand and practice what the Word of God says will not drown their children in a bathtub, strap them in car seats and then drive the car into a lake, or beat them to death.

Mental Abuse: When parents show favoritism, they are abusing their children. “Why can’t you be more like your sister?” “Can’t you do anything right?” “Are you stupid, or what?” The households of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all made this same mistake. Because they did not learn, the descendants to this day are still at odds. Mental abuse breaks the spirit of children. *“Fathers, provoke not your children to anger lest they*

be discouraged" (Col. 3:21). Children are mentally abused when we expect too much of them. They need time to be children and to grow up.

Parental Neglect: The excitement of having a baby soon fades into the mother going back to work and the father being too busy with his work and interests to care. Babies are often left in the care of grandparents or other relatives, with hired nannies, or in day care centers where others will feed them, put them down for naps, comfort them when they are sick, and also hear their first words, and see them take their first steps.

Once, during a meeting, I stayed in a home which also ran a day care business. Every morning, sleepy children were brought early, and some of them were picked up late in the day. I watched one four-year old boy run to the window and watch his mother's car disappear down the road, then turn and sadly walk away with tears running down his face. That happened every day I was there. I saw some children who did not want to go home with the parent who came for them. Sometimes the frustrated parent would offer a bribe (everything from going to McDonald's, to a new toy). Then we hear about "quality time." Listen, there can be no *quality* time without *quantity*. That "quality time" has to compete with grocery shopping, laundry, household chores, yard work, social engagements, homework, religious activities, scouts, little league, and you name it. Divorce only compounds the problem. Children are batted back and forth like ping pong balls, caught in a dreadful tug of war. Anyone who thinks this is not harmful to children is a brick short of a load.

Spiritual Abuse: The abuse with the worst consequences is spiritual in nature. Each child is a living soul. That soul is bound for an eternal destination. If the child lives to the age of moral and spiritual accountability, then he will be eternally lost unless he/she obeys the gospel and serves the Lord. Yet, this abuse is given little attention by so many. A failure to teach them the way of the Lord is spiritual abuse, pure and simple. Israel was to instruct the children, in the house, at bedtime, and when they walked by the way (Deut. 6:4-9). A father is to exhort, comfort, and charge his children (1 Thess. 2:11). Paul said to "*bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*" (Eph. 6:4).

Correction is a part of training. The word "nurture" involves the whole training of a child, including corrective discipline. "*Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him*" (Prov. 22:15). "*He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes*" (Prov. 13:24). "*A fool despiseth his father's instruction: but he that regardeth reproof is prudent*" (Prov. 15:5). "*A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother*" (Prov. 15:20). "*Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying*" (Prov. 19:18). Remember Eli? He was a good man and attended well to his responsibilities, with one

exception. His sons became vile and "*he restrained them not*" (1 Sam. 3:13). Of course, correction is not pleasant, but afterwards it yields "*peaceable fruits*" (Heb. 12:5-11).

Parents who do not correct their children when they throw fits at home, in public places, including church services, are abusing their children spiritually. "Time out" and "I am counting to ten" are jokes and the children know it. The world at large is full of unruly, undisciplined children. It is sad to see this among Christians. Church services are disrupted by children who are old enough to be corrected and more and more parents don't have a clue about how to handle such disruptions. Some allow their children to talk constantly during prayers, sermons, and at other times, including the Lord's Supper. Listen up, parents who allow this behavior without taking steps to correct it are abusing their children.

It is spiritual abuse when parents fail to set the right example. When they preach one thing and practice another, don't think that little eyes are not watching and little ears are not listening. If parents expect children to grow up to serve the Lord, they must be given a worthy example to follow.

Let's stop child abuse!

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