



Where in the  
WORD are You?

MAR • APR 2020

# JOURNEY

CHRISTIAN MAGAZINE

## The Bible for All Ages

**The Word Works**

Doug Stringer

**Making the Bible Come  
Alive for Children**

Lynda Pongracz



## Many Generations—One Bible

The Bible is one book that is timeless, applicable, and true for all ages and across all generations. It was life-changing to those living in Old Testament and New Testament times as well as to my direct ancestors and progeny.

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**What little I know of my family and as far back as I can trace, my mom's side came over on the Mayflower to Plymouth Rock, and my dad's side came with William Penn to Pennsylvania—both groups seeking religious asylum. Indeed, Scripture was extremely important to them in their everyday lives. They started a legacy of valuing the Bible in everyday life that carries through to today.**

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I envision each of these families having a large family Bible much like the ones you see in antique stores. I actually have one that dates back to the early 1800's, and I wonder whose family history I am looking at and how it came to be sold. It was a precious book to these families as they stored the records of births, weddings, and deaths—often the only ex-

isting record of these events. But these Bibles also held a place of prominence in the home as their covers were often ornate and made with velvet with interior decorative pages to write on.

These families read Scripture daily, no matter their age. Young children learned to read from the Bible (I imagine it was often the only book a family could afford). Young adults to the elderly read it for daily guidance and inspiration as they faced the toils of daily life. Scripture had a very important place in their lives!

My great-grandfather died in the 1970s and I was blessed to receive two of his Bibles. Well, one was actually called "A Pocket Fisher Men's Guide" and was a small book of Scripture which would fit inside your shirt pocket. It was Scripture related to leading someone to Christ and discipling them. It is well-worn and truly awesome. The other was the Bible he studied. It is full of notes written by Scriptures he wanted to remember or understand better. And, best of all, it is dog-eared in the Prophets, Thessalonians, and Revelation—telling me he was a student of prophecy and end-time events.

His daughter, my grandmother, lived to be 102 years old and died just two years

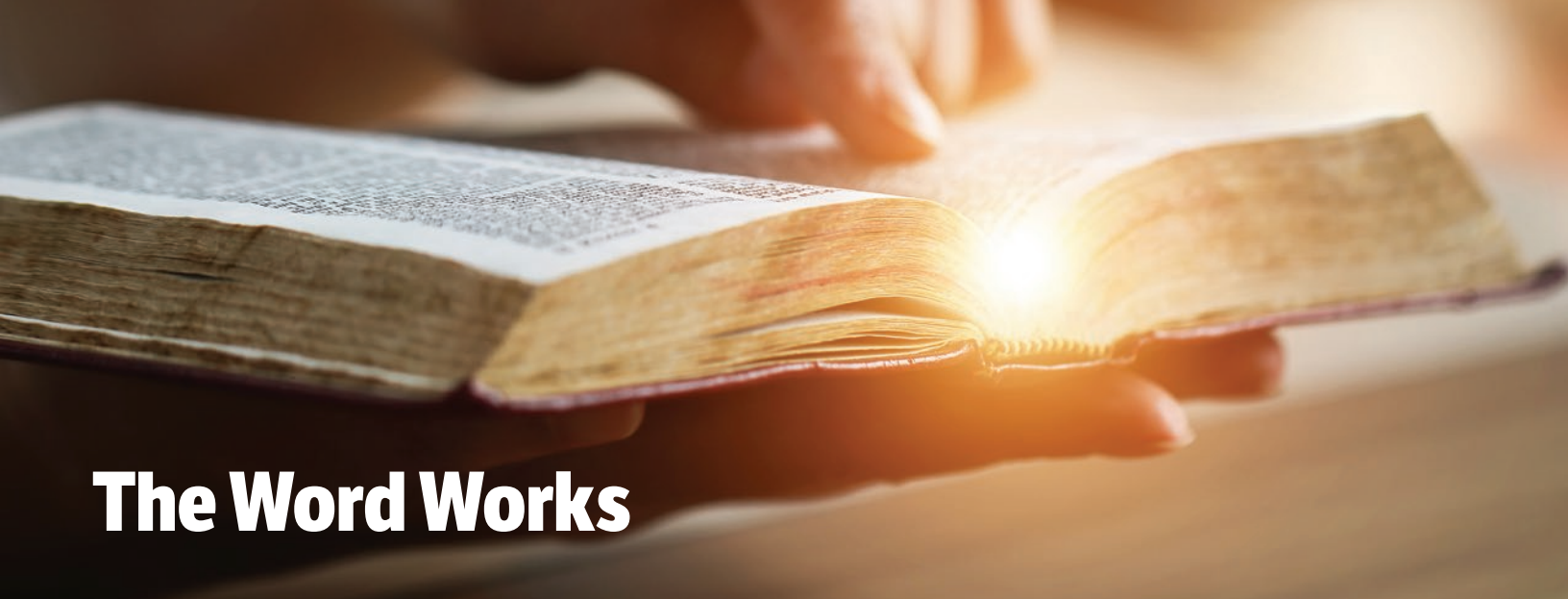
ago. I loved being with her. She read Scripture every day (probably longer than I will be alive). When she died, my son took her Bible. You could tell her favorite passages by looking at where the pages were tattered. She loved reading in Psalms, Luke, and especially Corinthians—showing me where her inspiration came from.

That is the legacy they left behind. But what about me...what will I pass on to my children and grandchildren? They probably won't want the one of a dozen or so Bibles I own in several different translations. It is too easy to buy Bibles today. And I don't have just one that is worn from years of reading. But, I can instill in them a love of reading God's Word, of depending on it in times of need and times of plenty, of creating a life-long habit of delving into Scripture on a daily basis—and most importantly of being "the Bible to everyone I meet" through my actions and everyday life.



**SUSIE SHIELDS**

JCM Executive Editor, Program Director Beyond Words Radio Administrator AWAKE! WNC.



# The Word Works

**W**hen the year 1983 was declared National Year of the Bible by a Senate joint resolution, then-President Ronald Regan stated, “Inside these pages lie all the answers to all the problems that man has ever known.”

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**Today there is no doubt that we need to return to the Holy Scriptures. With so much divisiveness, instability, and challenges around the world, we need a plumb line of God’s truth to guide and direct us to the answers we need.**

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Charles Spurgeon once said, “A tattered Bible is evidence of a life that is not.” Being in God’s Word changes us, renews our minds, and gives us footing to stand on when our world is shaken.

Ephesians 5:26 and Romans 12:2 remind us of the importance of meditating on the Word to renew, refresh, and wash us clean from the external influences of the world around us. There really is a battle for our minds and hearts.

As we meditate on the Word, it renews our minds. Then we pray the Word. As the late Dr. Edwin Louis Cole used to say, “Prayer produces intimacy with the one

for whom you pray, with whom you pray, and to Whom you pray.”

Scripture tells us repeatedly about the power found in God’s Word (see John 1:1, Luke 8:11, Hebrews 4:12). Isaiah declares that His Word will not return void, so we can have confidence in its effectiveness:

*For as the heavens are higher than the Earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts, than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my Word be that goes forth from my mouth, says the Lord. It shall not return to me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it will prosper in the thing for which I sent it. (Isaiah 55:9-11 NKJV)*

There’s power in praying the Word of God and speaking His “Zoe” life over our circumstances and families. It gives us hope and vision beyond our current circumstances. It teaches us the way we should live and the way we should go.

*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye. (Psalm 32:8 NKJV)*

We must be those who know the Word and spread the Word. To do that we must

have a relationship with the Living Word Himself! We need to call upon the Lord, be filled afresh with the Holy Spirit, understand who He really is, and be reawakened to the work of the Cross and the power of the resurrection. It starts with getting back into the Word of God, letting it change us, and being a tangible expression of the Living Word to those around us.

This requires a posture of humility, saying, “God, do whatever work You need to do in me, so You can do a work through me.” When we have an humble posture before God and let the Lord work in us through His Word and Spirit, He unites His Body so He can do a work through us.

It is important for us to be a book of Acts Church again so the world can see the light of Christ within us and shining through us. We need a generation grounded in God’s Word to rise up as a prophetic generation, preparing the way for revival and the coming of the Lord. We have the answers, and we find them in the Word of God.

The Word works. It does not come back void. It is our Word in season. It is the Word of Life!



**DOUG STRINGER**  
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# A Bible for Imperfect Leaders

The Bible is relevant for all ages and stations of life; even for our leaders. Might this be why we want perfect leaders? We expect those who guide us—whether president or priest, principal or parent—to do everything right. Unfortunately, we have replaced the appropriate desire for excellence with demands for perfection. Once a leader falters in today’s media-driven society, that person’s flaws and failures are placed in the public spotlight. The critique and condemnation of our public officials has become a national pastime, almost a new sport. The problem is, we all lose in the end. As the old adage says, “As goes the leader, so go the people.”

Why this insistence for perfecting those at the top? One might think it was derived from the Bible, the book that provided the moral backbone for our culture. In truth, the pages of Scripture show us another way. The Bible is a thousand year-long narrative of imperfect leaders trying to find their way. Even the three great patriarchs of Israel had their flaws. We can learn key insights from their lives to gain a more realistic perspective on leadership today.

If we read Genesis 16-28, for example, it becomes clear that even God’s respected servants are far from perfect. On two different occasions, Abraham lies about his wife Sarah, claiming her to be his sister to save his own skin at the peril of her own safety. Perhaps learning from his father’s example, Isaac does the same thing with his wife, Rebekah. Isaac and Rebekah play favorites between their two sons who eventually struggle for prominence. Jacob, with Rebekah’s encouragement, steals his brother’s blessing.



For each of these stories we might attempt to come up with a defense of the leader’s actions based on circumstances. Yet does not the cumulative effect of three generations of patriarchs remind us that even the great founders and early leaders of God’s people were far from perfect?

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**We learn from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that the key to a leader’s success is not absolute perfection but a willingness to learn and to grow from one’s mistakes.**

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The people in the Bible who become instruments of God to lead others are those who walked humbly, trusting God, and being open to correction. Abraham, for example, was considered righteous by God because he was willing to obey God, even to the point of sacrificing his own son. As the sacrificial gift, Isaac was spared; the young man became a prototype of the sacrifice God our Father would offer us through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Let us remember that to some extent we are all leaders. Leadership may be defined simply as influence, and we each influence others, for good or for bad. Let us then humble ourselves and be willing to receive correction. In this way, we can pursue excellence but not demand the impossible of ourselves: ongoing and absolute perfection. And then maybe, just maybe, we can remind the world around us that God is in the habit of giving us imperfect leaders.

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This article is adapted from our online commentary provided daily in our online Bible in 90 Days class, which begins on March 30th. The class is designed to guide readers in a Bible Overview in 90 days (requiring about 15 minutes a day) or optionally to read the entire Bible. It is not too late to join us, and when we get to the end of the Bible, you can opt to circle around to complete your reading. To have the B90 Overview devotionals sent to you, please contact Mark Lucas at: [mlucas@scriptureawakening.com](mailto:mlucas@scriptureawakening.com)



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## Truth with Authority

For many children, the Bible becomes another story book full of fairy tales that doesn't align with the evolution theology taught in the school system. We have all heard the shocking percentage of teens who fall away from the Faith during their high school years or once leaving their parents' home. It is devastating. There must be a way to counteract this attack of the enemy...

TRUTH! We have been entrusted with the one weapon that never fails, the living and active Word of God. The sword of Truth, the Bible!

It is our job to bring the Bible to life for our kids. The world wants our children to believe that the stories they hear in Sunday School are just that: stories. They don't line up with "mainstream" thinking. They grow up to see them as nice fairy tales and that Jesus was "just another good man."

Our enemy is extremely sly. When you visit the Ark Encounter, you will find a room full of children's books and games depicting Noah's Ark. There is a sign right inside the room that reads, "If I can convince you that the flood was not real, then I can convince you that Heaven and Hell are not real." Around

the frame is the serpent, our enemy. The rest of the exhibit goes into the deception of making a serious account seem like a cute boat with sweet animals on it, floating around until a dove brings them a branch; and boom, now God made a rainbow. A soft depiction of a very real and earth-altering event. If this is what children are taught, then they have no facts, no "weapon" to stand up with when their respected teachers (or others in society) tell them this never actually happened.

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**There are two things I have adopted into my children's ministry to bring the Bible to life for our young seekers—full disclosure and speaking with authority.**

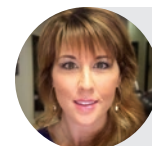
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Why not tell the entire story of the Great Flood? How sin ruined God's creation and that everyone else that was not on the Ark died. It seems gruesome, but have you watched the television shows your kids are watching? Or the video games they play? Kids are already exposed to brutality, so why try to shelter them from the TRUTH of the

Bible. Tell the entire story, explain why these things happened. Let them see that God's Word is not just a fairy tale.

Many young adults have not heard the Bible taught from someone who speaks with authority. So, when a college professor stands up and believes he has all the right answers and presents it in such a way, our kids quickly jump ship. We must stand firm in our beliefs. Don't allow evolution theology to creep into your Biblical accounts. Genesis 1:5 states, "And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day." There were not millions of years; just an evening and a morning. If we put a crack in our child's foundation of the Bible, then the rest will crumble as they age.

Always read the Scriptures with the excitement that once overwhelmed you the day you met Jesus. The Bible is not boring! It's full of life-giving examples that will shape our young ones' lives forever.



**JOANNA WHITAKER**

Pastor's wife, mom, children's education director at Destination Church, and full time hairdresser.

# Making the Bible Come Alive for Children

Maybe you've heard about the child who left the Easter service singing "Up from the grave, a rose!" or quoted 1 Thessalonians 5:17, "Pray without sneezing." These stories make us smile. But consider the child who quotes "Be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32 ESV)—then shoves the child beside her in line. She knows the words, but the meaning of the verse isn't lodged in her heart.

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**What can we do to make the Bible come alive for children? We begin by sharing the Gospel with children in clear and simple terms. No child can or will understand the truths of Scripture or display Christian character traits if he or she is not a believer!**

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Scripture says, "The natural person [unsaved child] does not accept the things of the Spirit of God...he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14 ESV). Trying to produce spiritual growth in an unsaved child is somewhat like watering a dead plant; children need to receive new life in Christ before they can grasp the truths of the Bible and grow per God's design. A simple children's tract or *The Wordless Book*\* can lead children to faith in Christ—that's step one!

Once the Holy Spirit indwells the child, he or she can grasp Scripture and grow. How can you facilitate that growth? The



most effective way is by making practical applications of each truth. Think of times the child might face challenging situations related to an area of truth. For instance, if you're teaching about contentment (perhaps through a discontent Bible character), talk about times a child might be tempted with discontentment. If you're teaching about courage, talk about times children might be afraid. Have them share what makes kids their age afraid. When the problem you are presenting has the child's name written all over it, you will have an eager audience!

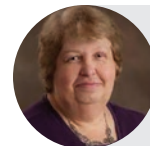
Once you've discussed the problem, answer it from Scripture. Give children practical helps for applying Scripture to specific needs. For discontentment, perhaps, focus attention on who one is in Christ based on Ephesians 2. Have them make a list of things for which they can be grateful and thank God for those things. When they feel afraid, maybe they can think about God's presence through promises like Isaiah 26:3 or Hebrews 13:5b. Have them say the verse aloud, reflect on its meaning, and then talk to God about their fear.

You might want to give children a take-home reminder (like a traffic light with "think," "talk," and "trust" on the red, yellow, and green lights to remind them

of what to do when afraid. **Think** about God's presence, **talk** to Him about my fear, **trust** Him to give me courage). Alternatively, have them make their own reminder to take home. Take a few minutes in the next session for children to share an incident where they applied the truth. You can also share how you applied the truth—your example has impact!

Be realistic when teaching children to apply Scripture. Don't make promises like, "doing this will make the problem go away." Sometimes God takes away the problem; but other times He gives His child strength to face it. The key is trusting God's ways, based on His character and promises. Take every opportunity to teach children who God is and what He is like. The more they know Him, the easier it will be to trust Him.

Bringing the Bible to life for children is more than just making sure they can repeat the words flawlessly. It's about pointing children to the relevancy of the Bible in life's everyday challenges. The Bible is a living book—teach it in a way that it will live in your children!



**LYNDA PONGRACZ**

Executive Director of Education for Child Evangelism Fellowship. [cefonline.com](http://cefonline.com) & [cefcmi.com](http://cefcmi.com)



# Why Men Need the Scriptures

Okay, guys, you know that moment when you've been working on a DIY project or putting together one of your children's toys and you realize something's not right? Maybe the parts aren't fitting together or maybe you can't even figure exactly where they go? So, if you're like me, that's the time when you start looking for instructions to actually read them so you can follow the steps.

The same is true in our Christian walk. If you don't know what the Bible (our Instruction Book) says, how will you know how to respond when you are:

## Facing a Broken Relationship

*So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God. (Matthew 5:23-24 NLT)*

## Afraid

*They swarmed around me like bees; they blazed against me like a crackling fire. But I destroyed them all with the authority of the LORD. (Psalm 118:12 NLT)*

## In Need of Wisdom

*Joyful is the person who finds wisdom, the one who gains understanding. For wisdom is more profitable than silver, and her wages are better than gold, Wisdom is more precious than rubies; nothing you desire can compare with her. She offers you long life in her right hand, and riches and honor in her left. She will guide you down delightful paths; all her ways are satisfying. Wisdom is a tree of life to those who embrace her; happy are those who hold her tightly. (Proverbs 3:13-18 NLT)*

**Just like a step-by-step instruction book, the Bible is full of wisdom and words of encouragement; yet sadly, many of us have so little “Word” in us that we can be overcome easily by life's ups and downs. But, what would your life be like if you really believed who you are in Christ?**

In a 2018 study done by the Center for Bible Engagement they found some

interesting correlations between the time you spend in the Word per week and the actual impact it makes on your life. It's interesting that the study found not much change with one time a week or two times a week. At three times a week they noticed a slight change, however, at four times a week a radical change occurred, and the benefits went “off the charts.” Anger issues dropped 30%, bitterness in relationships dropped 40%, alcoholism dropped 57%, feeling spiritually stagnant dropped 60%. But that's not all. They found that the likelihood of you sharing your faith jumps 200% and discipling others jumps 230%.

Here's the thing, some of you will get up insanely early to jog or head to CrossFit and I'm certain the health benefits are huge. But think about this: there are incredible benefits of hiding God's Word in your heart. The results are truly life changing!



## TIM BRYANT

Tim is the Vice President of The Daniels Group. [www.itwasonmymind.blog](http://www.itwasonmymind.blog)





# Three Reasons Women Need Scripture

**There's not a passing day when we're not in need of God's peace and grace. Women who work, nourish, provide, inspire, and organize need Jesus to make it through their busy days. Each morning we need His sanity to face what's ahead. We need Him to keep us pumped up and filled up as we run around in the earthly roles He has assigned us.**

God is willing to supply fresh energy as we navigate through the morning, afternoon, and evening hours. He offers to guide us in the countless decisions we make on a daily basis. But how do we latch hold of all He graciously extends? THROUGH THE BIBLE!

Not in casually glancing at it or working our way through a chapter or two so that we can mark that duty off our list—but in a living, breathing, active connection with God through the Word He's generously put into our hands.

Here are three obvious reasons every

woman alive needs a heavy supply of Scripture in her arsenal:

## **1 Scripture is Filled with Supernatural Power**

Focusing on a certain verse or passage gives you more than a good feeling; it empowers you with God's ability to deal. God gives us "other-worldly" help, and I sure need it! As His children He equips us with all the peace of mind and stamina for each and every situation we face. But you must hold on to this reality by keeping Scripture in your mind and heart. You see, His Spirit is within you and willing to empower you if you ask Him. In Colossians 1:11, Paul prays for believers to be strengthened with all power according to His glorious might so that we may have great endurance and patience. That strengthening power comes from God's Word.

## **2 Scripture is Filled with Guidance**

We make countless choices every day. These choices have to do with things on the home front, health, finances, plans for the future, children activities, and our personal well-being. Many times, the choices we make

have to do with caregiving of those we love. The responsibility we feel is often heavy. God through His Word is willing to guide us in all the choices we make. We need His Word to support us and encourage us as we step forward in faith, trusting Him to do what He says He will do. *I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go: I will counsel you with my loving eye on you* (Psalm 32:8 NIV).

## **3 Scripture is Our Connection with God**

Spending time with God in Scripture study will banish boredom and enlarge your heart to experience Him in a fresh way. Being intentional to read and speak Scripture will position you to grab hold of fresh energy and delights only to be experienced by savoring His promises found in the Bible.

*Your word is a lamp for my feet  
and a light on my path.*

(Psalm 119:105)



**CINDI WOOD**

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## Scripture Impacting the Ages

And all the people gathered as one man into the square before the Water Gate. And they told Ezra the scribe to bring the Book of the Law of Moses that the LORD had commanded Israel. So Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could understand what they heard, on the first day of the seventh month. And he read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand. And the ears of all the people were attentive to the Book of the Law...And there was very great rejoicing. (Nehemiah 8:1-3, 17)

**A** true and abiding work of revival is centered on a balanced and holistic understanding of God's Word. How easily we search for shortcuts to genuine spiritual awakening only to find ourselves riding emotional and experiential rollercoasters. A good illustration of these truths is well depicted through the story described in the book of Nehemiah.

It was 445 BC. Nehemiah was cupbearer to the king over Persia, serving in the upper echelons of the monarch's court. News came to Nehemiah through one of his brothers that Jerusalem was in disrepair; the walls of the city were broken down and the gates burnt (Nehemiah 1:1-3). In years past, two groups of exiles had returned to Jerusalem to commence the rebuilding process; and yet,

the city was still in shambles. Nehemiah mourned and fasted from Kislev to Nisan, between the general periods of Thanksgiving and Easter on our calendars.

During these months of prayer and fasting, Nehemiah came to realize that he should lead a group back to Jerusalem in order to repair its walls. It must have seemed impossible to Nehemiah that the king over Persia, Artaxerxes, would bless such an expedition. It would require the release of a substantial number of Jews, the provision of timber and construction materials, and the granting of authorized letters from the king for safe passage on a treacherous journey through foreign lands. Nehemiah did the wise thing. He first approached the King of Heaven with his appeal. Only after extended time in prayer did Nehemiah bring his case to King Artaxerxes.

The Persian monarch granted Nehemiah his request, and the cupbearer led a group of exiles to Jerusalem—the third wave of returnees. In 537-536 BC, Zerubbabel had led the first group. Under his leadership, the foundation of the Jerusalem Temple had been laid. The second group had returned under Ezra the scribe in 457 BC. Ezra was known as one who had “set his heart to study the Law of the LORD, and to do it and to teach his statutes and rules in Israel” (Ezra 7:10). Under Ezra’s leadership, a spiritual cleansing and renewal had occurred among the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

And now under Nehemiah’s leadership, a third wave of pilgrims returned to Jerusalem to rebuild the city’s walls. Through wise strategy, tribal unity, sheer determination,

and deep dependence on God, the Lord enabled them to repair the walls in a mere 52 days (Nehemiah 2-7). Once again, however, the people needed to get right with God. Ezra still resided in Jerusalem; his reading and teaching of Scripture would be central to the revival described in the book of Nehemiah.

In Nehemiah 8, we read that the people assembled on New Year’s Day of the Jewish civil calendar, which was the Feast of Trumpets on their ceremonial calendar. The people stood in the square before the Water Gate from daybreak until noon, for five or six hours, listening attentively as Ezra read God’s Word. He paused from time to time and with the aid of 13 priests, providing explanation and instruction, most likely in smaller groups. The people came to realize how much of God’s declared will they had overlooked and violated through their own ignorance (Nehemiah 8:9). They mourned deeply, asking God’s forgiveness. This deep sense of contrition, repentance, and brokenness is a line of delineation between true revival and an emotional or experiential high.

The people were then instructed to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, or Booths. They would feast before God and make sacrifices, living in booths for an entire week as a reminder of the tents the Israelites lived in during their 40-year desert wanderings. And their joy was great. It was the joy of the Lord. Not for a thousand years, since the time of Joshua, had the feast been properly observed. Thus, the Word of God became the platform on which the people could meet with God and be made whole again.

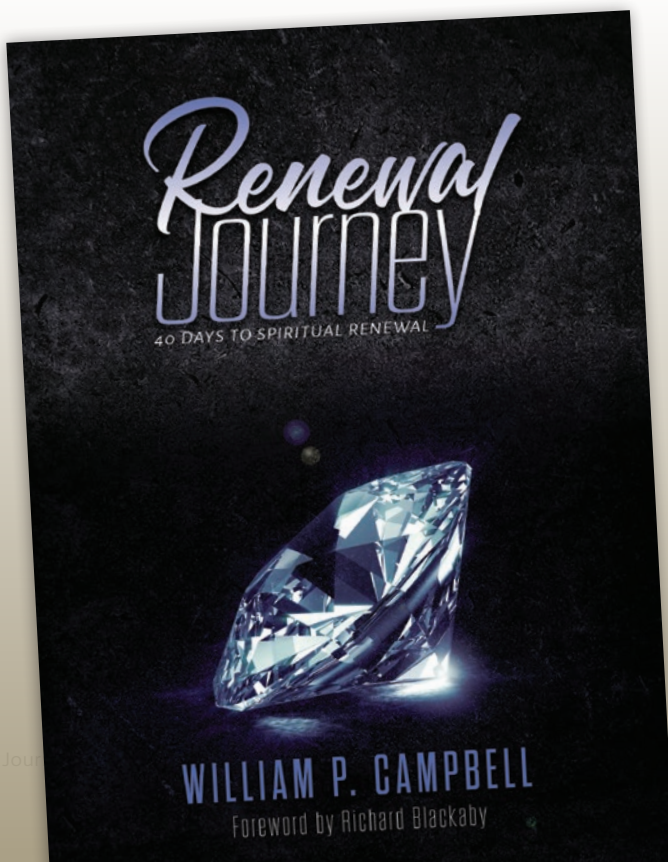
The above article on Nehemiah is an excerpted chapter from an upcoming book authored by William P. Campbell, Founder & President of Scripture Awakening.

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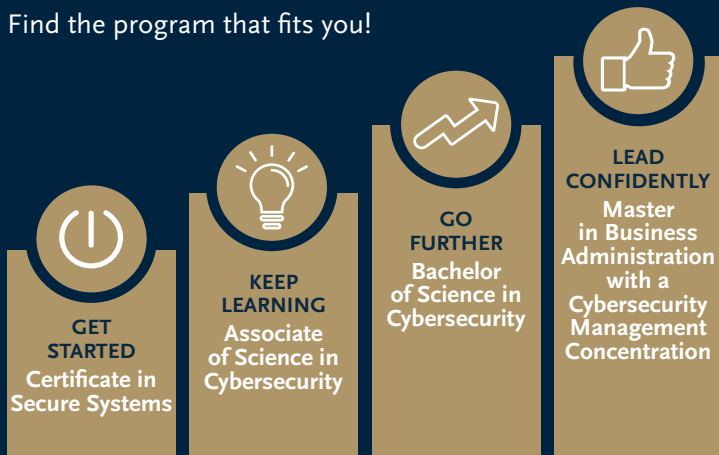
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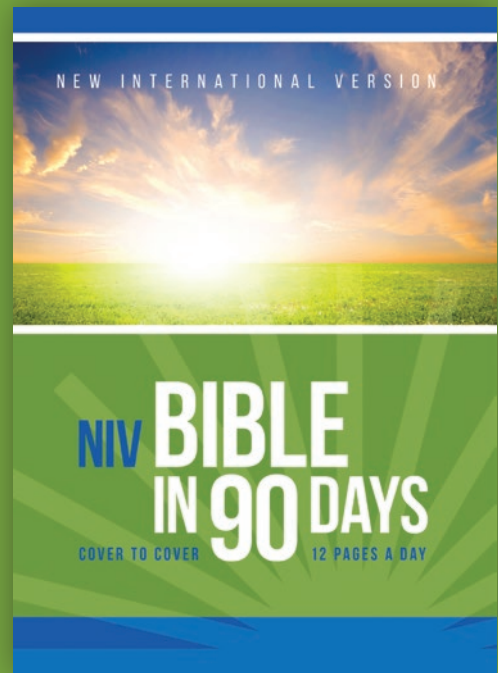


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## You Have His Word...Now Share It!

The Word of God produces the same fruit yesterday, today, and forever. Time has demonstrated this truth over and over again. Of course, the Bible has its long list of men and women who heeded God's Word and made an impact on their world, but we also know of people throughout history who have impacted the world as well: Billy Graham, John and Charles Wesley, Martin Luther, etc. But there are many people whose names we know without knowing their stories. One such story highlights an obscure pastor named John Townsend and his impact on the life of Great Britain's Queen Victoria.

Queen Victoria was born in 1819 and took the throne on June 20, 1837, ruling until her death on January 22, 1901. Taking the throne at the young age of 18, she is the second-longest reigning monarch of England. She became known as an icon of stringent standards of morality. Victoria was an avid journal writer who, according to one biographer, penned up to 2,500 words per day—thus ensuring that we know much about her life and thought processes.

On one occasion, Victoria attended an Anglican Church service at St. Paul's Cathedral. She asked the pastor, "Can one be absolutely sure in this life of eternal safety?" Sadly, he had no response. The Court News reported the exchange and shortly thereafter a young minister, John Townsend, wrote Victoria:

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***"To Her Gracious Majesty, our beloved Queen Victoria, from one of her most humble subjects: With trembling hands, but heart-filled love, and because I know that we can be absolutely sure now for our eternal life in the home that Jesus went to prepare..."***

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He then asked her to read John 3:16 and Romans 10:9-10. He gathered several people around him to pray for the Queen's salvation. About two weeks later, Queen Victoria answered him:

*I have carefully and prayerfully read the portions of Scripture referred to. I now believe in the fin-*

*ished work of Christ for me, and trust by God's grace, to meet you one day in that home of which He said, "I go to prepare a place for you."*

A few years later, she went on to carry with her a booklet entitled "Safety, Certainty, and Enjoyment" which detailed the plan of salvation and the promises and security one can have in Christ. She gave the booklets to those she met, sharing with them the hope she had found in Christ.

Many years later, Queen Victoria was on one of the Royal Estates visiting the tenants. A skittish old lady approached her and gingerly asked, "Your majesty, will I see you in heaven one day?"

Victoria responded with a smile, "By the all-availing blood of Jesus, you most certainly shall, my dear! I have His word on it!"

When Victoria was laid to rest in 1901, the words above the mausoleum door were inscribed with "farewell best friend, here at last I shall rest with thee, with thee in Christ I shall rise again."



## Generations of Hope and Promise

Abraham, Job, Hannah, Sarah, and Mary—all familiar names from Scripture and all with something in common. With generations separating these people, what ties them together and speaks to us today? Grief. From facing the death of a child, to losing everything, to yearning for children, to experiencing ridicule, to having future plans thwarted—each one of these experienced grief in ways we too struggle.

There is another common thread tying these people together: their trust in God and His promises. While Abraham trudged up the mountain, thinking about what God had asked him to do, his words, “God will supply the sacrifice,” would comfort not only Isaac but Abraham himself. Although willing to do as God asked, he knew God had promised that through him (Abraham) generations would come. He clung to the hope of that promise (see Genesis 22).

As Job lost family and health, felt God had forgotten him, and struggled with, “Why me, God?” he still understood that God was God, and Job’s constant struggle brought God back into his presence. Even amid doubt

and unbelievable grief, God watched over him (see Job 14). That is God’s promise; “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

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**Like Job and Abraham, Hannah and Sarah also lived with grief. Having an intense desire for children, Hannah cried out to God in anguish and with hope and trust dedicated her yet unconceived child to God’s service (1 Samuel 1)—and Sarah, ridiculed by others for her barrenness, at 90 years of age held God’s promise in her arms. Even though she doubted, God kept his promise (Genesis 21-22).**

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Fast forward to a young girl who would soon be married, and whose future seemed set. Mary had her plans transformed by God in ways she could not comprehend. Becoming an outcast, losing her fiancé, her world could fall apart—yet, with trust in God’s provision

she surrendered her life into God’s promise of what was to be (Luke 1:26-38).

So many times, during our grief, we forget that generation after generation God has promised to be with us. Whether we lose a loved one, cannot see a bright future or are fearful of what is to come, God is the one who holds our future when we give it to him. Relying on what we know God has done, it is possible to know God is with us too. God did provide a ram for Abraham, a new future for Job, a child for both Hannah and Sarah, and provisions for Mary and the child—God’s Son—that would bring salvation to the world. There is no one God does not love and nothing God cannot do. Grief comes. Trust God’s promises; God has a future and plans for you.

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11)*



**JANET JOHNSON**

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## Sending His Word Forth— In Print and As Living Words

I recently shared a children's storybook Bible with a woman who had assisted us with a family celebration out of town. She was our event contact, so ongoing dialogues leading up to the event had paved the way to express our gratitude. As I offered her the Bible, I asked if she might enjoy having it for herself or for a friend. Graciously, she received it; she stated that she had a small daughter and that they would enjoy reading it that evening! With a second one on hand, I offered it to her as well; inviting her to pass it along to a friend or coworker if she so desired. I was delighted that she received it as well with the expressed intent of giving it to a work associate.

Following our celebration and our subsequent return home, I sent a brief note of gratitude to her via the restaurant in which we had dined. I thanked her for her gracious, professional service during our celebratory event. I was delighted to receive a brief reply; one in which she stated how very much she had enjoyed the gift of the children's storybook Bibles, as well as our words of encouragement. She further stated

that they had already read several of the Bible stories while taking in the accompanying artwork.

Each day God invites us to be a reflection of Himself to the world. I recognize my shortcoming in this area but also treasure His exhortation in Lamentations 3:22,24—that His mercies are new every morning! How grateful I am that His ongoing work in my life invites His ongoing work to go forth through my life!

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**The same is true for you. As God sends us out—each in our unique spheres of involvement—He invites us to be His witnesses when we are willing and yielded to Him to be used to impact others with His grace, affirmation, and living Word.**

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We may not be aware of the ways He reveals Himself to individuals as we go about our everyday activities, but

He states that we are a means through which He desires to communicate with others:

*You show that you are a letter from Christ...written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. (2 Corinthians 3:3)*

As we journey through life, God invites us to be His Servant Ambassadors. He desires to point others to Himself through us. Our lives are positioned to reflect Him as we first draw near to Him (James 4:8), invite Christ to come into our lives (John 3:16), and take up residence. As He renovates us from the inside out, He simultaneously goes forth through us as we live lives that take His Word to heart (Colossians 3:16). The more consistently we abide in Him (John 15:5), the more abundantly His living Word goes forth.



**PATTY STUMP**  
Licensed Christian counselor,  
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women's events.



# Let's Meet Up!

**D**o you want the VERY BEST in life, marriage, family, work, and love? YES!

You are a unique couple, and you deserve to walk out a unique plan for your journey together. The quality of your marriage is determined by the decisions you make together. Many couples make these choices a bit haphazardly hoping everything turns out well, but they wish there was a more structured way to figure things out and build a bright future TOGETHER.

Forty years ago, we were newlyweds with high hopes and the emotional baggage of a 747 airplane! My parents had divorced, Bill's were miserably married. We wanted something MORE, something BETTER, something BRIGHTER! We knew if we didn't pull together, life would pull us apart.

*How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!*  
(Psalm 133:1)

Unity! That was and is our heart's desire! The hope of Psalm 133:1 ignited a determination inside us to create a proactive plan to get—and stay—on the same page and work the plan of life God would give us, step by step, choice by choice.

We have been happily married for 40 years and have published 50 plus books. People often ask, "What is the secret of your marital success? How do you find that delicate balance of work and play?" One of the key ingredients of our personal and profes-

sional success is our "Monday Morning Marriage Meetings". We have discovered that proactive planning dates lower stress and raise the enjoyment level of life.

To celebrate our fortieth anniversary, we decided to publish the fine-tuned strategy sheets with all the activities, prayer prompts, healthy habits, conversation starters, dialogue enrichment tools, and the proven decision-making process that provides strength to our marriage—and every marriage (available at [www.lovewisely.com/product/marriage-meet-ups/](http://www.lovewisely.com/product/marriage-meet-ups/)).

**Woven into each "meet up" are key choices that boost productivity and activities that draw hearts closer and fan the flame of romance—even for the busiest couples! These Marriage Meet Ups are great for EVERY couple who wants the best for their marriage, family, work, and/or ministry.**

*Marriage Meet Ups* provides a plan you can follow to intentionally design the type of marriage, family, and life you want as a couple. It is dynamic, deliberate, and adjustable because it is your plan for your relationship. This collection of strategy sheets will guide you to...

- Gain insight into how your spouse likes to live.
- Have productive conversations that

minimize conflict.

- Make decisions together that maximize emotional, spiritual, and physical connection.
- Improved conversations about money and financial choices.
- Boost productivity so you get more done at work, home, or ministry.
- Delegate well so things do not fall through the cracks of a busy life.
- Nurture your relationship and create more time for the happy side of marriage, romance, and intimacy.
- Get and stay on the same page so you can move forward TOGETHER in unity.
- Strengthen your spiritual life together and draw you closer to God and your partner.

Grab two cups of coffee, nestle into the loveseat, bring your *Marriage Meet Up* planners and watch how God can intertwine your hearts to create a love and life to look forward to living.

*Love does not consist in gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction.*

— Antoine de Saint-Exupery



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# Passing on the Life of the Mind to Your Children

**A**s a person committed to the truth of historic Christianity, I am compelled to pursue the life of the mind to the glory of God. That means that a critical part of my love for and devotion to God involves rigorously using the mind He gave me to pursue truth, goodness, and beauty. The robust Christian world-and-life view reveals that the Triune God is the source and ground of these profound realities; therefore, when I encounter and apprehend these actualities, in a sense I move closer to God.

Whenever I talk about the importance of the life of the mind among believers, I am inevitably asked one question. Christian parents inquire: *How can I help my children to value the life of the Christian mind and to become more critical and discerning in their thinking?*

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**I respond that the best way to help children grow intellectually and develop genuine critical thinking skills is for the parents to model it for them.**

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## Valuing Ideas is Infectious

In a real sense, learning to value the life of the mind is something that is

caught more than taught. More than teachers and even churches, parents have the greatest impact upon their children. When moms and dads model a genuine love for ideas and a deep value of truth their children cannot help but be influenced by it. When parents love learning, the children will as well—even if they initially try hard to resist. Though they might not show it immediately, children will likely return to this love later in life. It is hard to overestimate the power of parental nurturing.

## Three Tips for Parents

Here are three suggestions for parents wanting to model the life of the mind for their children in a general family context:

- 1** Use family mealtimes as a time to discuss important ideas. Feed the body and the mind at the same time. This practice serves to model for your children that the most natural thing that you do as a family includes the life of the mind.
- 2** Combine entertainment with learning. For example, watch television programs and movies together as a family and then discuss the relevant themes and ideas. Even TV can offer opportunities to model critical thinking.

- 3** Take family vacations that involve times of learning and discovery. Visit museums, art exhibits, or sites of historical or natural significance. Children remember these vacations for the rest of their lives so why not take the opportunity to impact their developing minds?

## More Caught than Taught

Now that my three children are adults, my experience tells me that pursuing life of the mind is a contagious act—more *caught* than taught. That is, the things we daily model as parents tend to stay with our children for a lifetime.

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**So, my question for you is: Does the life of the mind exude from your very being?**

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For more about the life of the mind from a Christian worldview perspective, see Samples' book, *A World of Difference: Putting Christian Truth-Claims to the Worldview Test*.



## KENNETH SAMPLES

Passionate to help people understand the reasonableness and relevance of Christianity.



# The Cost of Missed Opportunities

## It was such a unique opportunity.

It was a chance for persons of all ages and backgrounds to work together at finding a solution to save or repurpose the building that—brick by brick for five generations—served as the district schoolhouse. Since the school also served as the pulse of the Woodleaf community, a core group of experienced residents suggested plans and stood ready to work toward making them a reality.

Best of all, our school system and its Board of Education *had* a prime chance to set an example for the youth they serve. Had the system and the Board seized that chance, they would've demonstrated first-hand the value of including multiple generations in decisions of community life to kids far too familiar with today's self-above-others culture.

Isn't that a legacy worth leaving to a young generation: respect and honor for those who've had more time to gather life experiences and common sense than we've had? For those whose problem-solving skills often work better than our own?

**Unfortunately, the system and the Board didn't act on the opportunity. A number of broken promises and a distressed community later,**

**the system has demolished the stalwart building. A slew of new problems plague the modern building that was supposed to be a cure-all for the old problems...most of which remain two years hence. And since the modern building is several miles away in another town, Woodleaf has lost the central landmark of its history, its identity.**

The tragedy has left me to ponder the importance God placed on the intrinsic worth of each individual generation and its need to draw from its forerunners for successful community living. His instruction on the matter spans both the Old and New Testament, clear back to the generations of ancient Israel, with good and necessary consequences.

The Old Testament gives explicit direction on community living. We're called, for example, to "stand up before the gray head and honor the face" of community elders (Leviticus 19:32). God warns us further to respect their authority. Listen to this: "The man who acts presumptuously by not obeying the priest who stands to minister there before the Lord your God, or the judge, that man shall die. So you shall purge the evil from Is-

rael" (Deuteronomy 17:12). The prophets also revealed that younger generations who were strong-minded or insolent toward elders signified God's judgment upon Israel (see Isaiah 3:5).

But it's the following New Testament passages that strike the loudest chord in my mind as I reflect on the community affected by the actions of the school system and the Board. One particularly unsettling scene that replays itself in my mind is that of a middle-aged board member joking—yet not joking—that everything would essentially be fine once the "old timers" settled down and realized the Board would move on with its plans. I'm close to his age.

Paul writes that younger generations are not to "rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father... [and] older women as mothers, in all purity" (1 Timothy 5:1-2). Peter—the apostle who rarely backs down from a challenge—ties respect for elders to godly humility:

*In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time (1 Peter 5:5-6 ESV).*

Christians are called to respect elders. Parents, pastors, and educators are called to instill within children the importance of obedience and respect for other generations.

Adult believers, therefore, are called to act with consistency upon this truth that is so needed in a culture that values personal autonomy as superior to respect for authority.



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## Seniors with a Purpose: Sharing the Gospel

Every generation needs to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That means that every generation can share the Gospel as well. When we talk about evangelism, we often focus on our youth, but we should also be careful not to disregard the elder generation.

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**Seniors have a unique opportunity to share God's love with a community that is often overlooked, lonely, and forgotten. As people retire earlier and live longer, more are looking for a meaningful, fruitful ministry—especially in the realm of personal evangelism and discipleship.**

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Let me share a story with you. Although Betty is a Christian, she had never witnessed to anyone, including the people in the nursing home where she lives. One afternoon, she heard me share a Gospel presentation on the radio and decided to try it. That day, she told a friend in the same nursing home about Jesus, and he prayed to receive eternal life.

Can you imagine sharing Christ for the very first time in your retirement years? Betty did, and it excited her. She found a new ministry and purpose—to share the hope she had found in Jesus right where she was.

Many residents in assisted living centers, nursing homes, and convalescent centers wonder about eternity. Some have only a few weeks or even days to live out their lives. They can feel lonely and without purpose. Visitors are usually welcome, especially for those who don't have family members nearby.

Most communities have multiple care centers, but before visiting, talk to the Activities Director or Volunteer Coordinator about existing opportunities and rules about visiting residents. They know their patients and will be able to direct you to those who would be most open to visitors.

Always go with a servant's heart. Ask permission before entering a room. Introduce yourself and why you are there. Ask questions. Most residents enjoy the opportunity to share their stories. Listen for clues that could be a launching point to share the Gospel

but be respectful of their wish for privacy or not to discuss certain issues. Offer to pray for any specific needs they may have.

Visit again. Many residents can't travel back and forth to church, so offer to bring church to them. Read the Bible together. Bring in a favorite CD of worship hymns or a copy of a recent sermon. If the facility does not offer a church service, ask if some volunteers at your church would be willing to lead one.

People living in care facilities don't have to face eternity alone. Retirees who no longer have daytime responsibilities are in a unique position to offer companionship and spiritual guidance to seniors who need to hear a message of hope. Take a step of faith and plan to visit someone who may need that hope.



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