

Christian MONTHLY

DEDICATED TO THE PROCLAMATION
OF THE WORD OF GOD



Psalms 119:105
**Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path.**

January 2015

The Armor of God

Pastor Orval Wirkkala
Kingston, Minnesota

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

Ephesians 6:10-11

AS WE ENTER A NEW YEAR in the Lord, we face it with confidence and hope because the Lord is strong and powerful. Our expectations are built upon the promises of the Lord for the future, rather than upon that which has happened in the past. Yes, our circumstances may remain the same as we begin this new year, but as we have seen in the lives of people throughout history, circumstances are always changing, sometimes for the worse, but mostly for the better. The experiences of Christmas equip us for the year ahead, for we are called to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might!

As we celebrated Christmas this year, did we not receive encouragement from the sending and receiving of Christmas greetings through cards and gifts? Yes, we did. These times of fellowship are helpful for us, for they point to the reason for our hope and away from the cause of our pessimism toward the future. Many modern forms of communication exist today which the people living in the time of the early church did not have. But though they did not have all that we have, they had that which our Father has ordained for the purpose of communicating: language. They communicated in the same way that people have for all of time, with words. They wrote and received letters, in whatever form they had at that time.

The Apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Christians at Ephesus in the early church years. In his conclusion to the letter, he counseled them with these words: *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. After writing these words, he went on to say, Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. And this is why we must put it on: For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (Ephesians 6:12)*

He lists the pieces of armor which he had called for them to put on, emphasizing that they are to put on the "whole" armor. Here are the parts in Ephesians 6:13-20:



- ***Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore,***
- ***having your loins girt about with truth,***
- ***and having on the breastplate of righteousness;***
- ***And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all,***
- ***taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.***
- ***And take the helmet of salvation,***
- ***and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God:***
- ***Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.***

As we consider this letter which was written to the Ephesians (and to us) by Paul while he was in prison, we can appreciate his giving heart, which we see reflected in the words he wrote while imprisoned: *Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.*

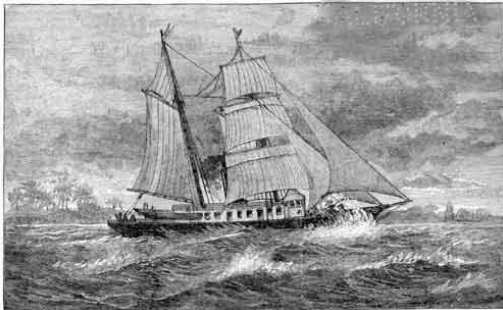
(Ephesians 3:13) The driving force of his life was that those whom he had been called to serve would be pointed to the source of hope and joy, Jesus Christ. He outlines this in a systematic manner, first establishing their position in Jesus Christ through faith, pointing out to them how the body of Jesus Christ, the Church, works together in common love and purpose. Then in conclusion, he calls them to stand in that which God has done for them in Christ and is doing through them as the body of Jesus Christ. As reflected in the verse above, he did not consider his life important, for he spoke to the elders of the Ephesian church in the book of Acts as he said farewell to them as he journeyed toward an unknown future in Jerusalem: *But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.* (Acts 20:24)

May we read and meditate on these verses which have been given for our teaching and edification. May the Spirit of Christ dwell richly in us today and may it be reflected by our understanding of who we are within the body of Jesus Christ. Yes, the armor must be put on individually, but it is through the corporate body that we gain and have more strength, as an army as opposed to acting on an individual basis. May this letter be read and reread by us so that we will understand clearly what it means to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Let us read, meditate upon and pray through Paul's prayers for us in 1:15-23 and 3:14-21, and his call to prayer in 6:18-24. His prayers focus on our increased awareness of the power of Christ which we possess being in Him and that this power is brought forth among us through the serving of one another within His body.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you always.

We Face Tomorrow Without Fear

A.W. Tozer



Sailing Ship in a Stormy Sea by Oliver Optic

EVERY NEW YEAR IS AN UNCHARTED and unknown sea. No ship has ever sailed this way before. The wisest of earth's sons and daughters cannot tell us what we may encounter on this journey. Familiarity with the past may afford us a general idea of what we may expect, but just where the rocks lie hidden beneath the surface or when that "tempestuous wind called Euroclydon" may sweep down upon us suddenly, no one can say with certainty.

Conditions over the world are so grave that no one who thinks at all is able any longer to maintain a spirit of optimism. The world's philosophers have long ago ceased to preach peace, except as a goal toward which the nations should frantically struggle even while they have but little hope of attaining it. The best brains of the world have gone into the production of tools with

which to destroy the world. And if they do such things in the green tree, what shall they do in the dry?

When Pharaoh was faced with trouble, he sent for Joseph; Nebuchadnezzar in distress called upon Daniel. These enlightened men of God knew the score—they could predict the future and point the way to safety. They were wise with a wisdom not of this world and so were able to face the future with cheerfulness even when they knew how dark and troubled that future would be.

Today also there are a few men and women who can face the coming year without discouragement or terror. They are Christians. They are not smiling optimists who draw their comfort from a denial of the facts or base their hopes upon false expectations of peaceful intentions among nations. Rather, they are of all men the truest realists. They will have nothing to do with fantasy—they demand to know the facts, whether those facts are good or bad. They insist upon squaring their beliefs with the truth, and do not hesitate to face up to any truth wherever it is found.

Now more than at any other time in generations, the believer is in a position to go on the offensive. The world is lost on a wide sea, and the Christian alone knows the way to the desired haven. While things were going well, the world scorned him with his Bible and his hymns, but now they need him desperately, and they need that despised Bible, too. For in the Bible, and there only, is found the chart to tell us where we are on this rough and unknown ocean. The day when the Christian should meekly apologize is over—he can get the world's attention not by trying to please, but by boldly declaring the truth of divine revelation. He can make himself heard not by compromise, but by taking the affirmative and sturdily declaring, "Thus saith the Lord."

Whatever the world does in the years ahead, and whatever happens among mankind, true Christians have no cause for worry. They are safe forever by a covenant of blood and are dearer to God than the apple of His eye. No night can be dark enough to put out their light, no fire hot enough to burn them, no flood severe enough to drown them on their journey. The winds and waves are their friends and the stars in their courses fight for them. God is at their right hand, and they shall not be moved.

Let us then face tomorrow with praise and song; let us live in a state of perpetual worship. For are we not kept by the power of God until the coming of a salvation that is "ready to be revealed in the last time"? And the "last time" may be nearer than we think. ~

The Kingdom of God

Carl Niemitalo
Battle Ground, Washington

The late Taneli Kyhala, when he was here from Finland, made a revealing statement as he was given to notice how there is only ONE LORD in the kingdom of God! This kingdom is spiritual, so it is as Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, *I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. (Luke 10:21)* Jesus said to Nicodemus: *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3)* Therefore, the unbeliever is unable to SEE this kingdom here on earth unless he has a spiritual new birth. Nicodemus raised a ridiculous question: *How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. (John 3:4-7)* Jesus was speaking to an unbeliever, not the little children which believe in Him (Matthew 18:6). Nicodemus knew nothing of these spiritual matters. *Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things? (John 3:10)* The water that Jesus is speaking of is the LIVING water that He gave to the Samaritan woman He met at Jacob's well. *But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. (John 4:14)*

This ONE Lord of the kingdom of God gives us the true "eye salve" (Revelation 3:18): "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost (Romans 14:17)." He gives this to all who believe the preached Gospel of this one Lord. *But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. (1 Peter 1:25)* This is the only Lord we can fully believe and trust already in this time of grace, and for our eternal life. His promises are sure and steadfast, unlike the promises from some of the candidates and politicians who are often called "lords" in many countries. ~

My Dear Friends in Christ,

I wish to send a special New Year greeting to all in the most precious faith.

How blessed we are as unworthy sinners that the Christ child has been born in us, and by His infinite grace alone we have been given strength to hold fast to the Word of truth. How often in the Scriptures we are assured of the blessings that follow the obedience of faith. Consider the joy that Elizabeth expressed when Mary the mother of our Lord greeted her and how the babe leaped in her womb and how Zacharias', the father of John the Baptist, tongue was loosed when he believed and obeyed the voice of the angel in the naming of his son John. What a great blessing it is to have witnessed the power and glory of the Gospel, for then the tongue is loosed and the eyes and ears are opened. But sadly to many, the message remains but the report of others, having neither witnessed within themselves the conviction of sin nor the knowledge of the abundance of His grace. Peter writes: *For we have not followed*

cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. (2 Peter 1:16) John writes: *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. (1 John 1:1)* Moses writes in Deuteronomy 5:24: *And ye said, Behold, the LORD our God hath shewed us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth talk with man, and he liveth. And Apostle Paul writes: For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. (2 Timothy 1:12)* Here is the knowledge of experience.

F. W. Krummacher writes, "It is only in experience that faith grows and flourishes." Hath not the Lord sealed His truth into our hearts by striking our roots into the experience of God's power and might knowing by His grace through faith we are given the victory that overcomes the world. Therefore let us continue to proclaim, as His ambassadors and in His stead, repentance and the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name and blood, for we also, through the eyes of faith, are eyewitnesses of His grace and glory.

I am praying that you all would have a blessed new year. Greetings of God's peace from me and my wife Carol and my family.

Pastor Ben Johnson
Astoria, Oregon



God Provides

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

Hello again to all of you, and I do want to again say I hope your day has been good. My day was fine. Our daughter and her little boy are visiting, and that is a good thing. I was able to get outside for a while today, and that was also good. We are entering our rainy season, so we try to get outside when it is not raining. We will have rain off and on until June. That sounds like a lot of rain, and it is, but that is the winter weather where I live. The nice days are always welcome.

I want to share with you some special times in the Bible where God provided for some of His own.

Genesis 22: God tested Abraham in telling him to take his son Isaac, his only son, to the land of Moriah and offer him as a burnt offering. Yes, a burnt offering. Abraham did as he was told because God had spoken and Abraham wanted to be obedient. They reached the place and an altar was built. Abraham took his son and bound his hands and laid him on the wood. He took his knife to slay his son, but God sent an angel to say, *Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.* (Genesis 22:12)

God provided a ram for the offering. Abraham offered up the lamb as a burnt offering, instead of his son.



Abraham by Laurent de La Hyre

Joshua: A harlot named Rahab hid some spies at her home when they were spying out the city of Jericho. She did not want the guards to catch these men, as she told the spies she knew that the Lord had given them this land. She feared the Lord and she asked the men if, for her kindness in hiding them, they would save her and her entire family from death when the city was destroyed. They promised her this, and when the walls of Jericho fell, she was saved



Rahab and the Emissaries of Joshua
Wikimedia Commons

along with her whole family and all that they had. God saw Rahab's kindness and knew she feared Him for she said, "...the Lord your God is God of heaven and earth." **God provided** a way for His spies to be saved from the city guards and also a way for Rahab that she could walk with Him.

Ruth: In chapter 1, we read about a mother named Naomi whose husband had died, as well as her married sons.

Naomi encouraged her daughters-in-law to go back to their own people and live, but Ruth refused to go. She said that she would leave her people to go with her mother-in-law and live with her people. In chapters 2-4, she went with Naomi, and when they came to the land of Naomi's people, God provided a husband for Ruth. His name was Boaz. When they had a son, he became Naomi's joy, and she was the child's grandmother and babysitter. **God provided** and joy returned.



Ruth and Naomi
by Rembrandt

1 Samuel: A woman named Hannah was married to a man named Elkanah. She was so sad because she had no child to love, and she was made fun of by other women who had children. Hannah went to the temple to pray and ask God to give her a son, and if He would, she would give him to the Lord for His service all the days of his life. God saw her sadness and heard her prayer, and also her promise to Him. He answered her prayer and gave Hannah and Elkanah a son whom they named Samuel. How their hearts were full of joy! When Samuel was still young, he went with his parents to the temple of the Lord far from their home. They left him there to work for God. **God provided** a son for Hannah, and she kept her promise and gave him to the Lord's work. No doubt Hannah's heart was heavy as she walked home, but in her heart she also had joy because God had provided for her. He allowed her to have 3 more sons and 2 daughters.



Hannah Giving Her Son
Samuel to the Priest
by Jan Victors

I encourage you children to look at these books for yourself and read them. There are so many more stories where **God provided**. It would take much paper to write them all. Over and over **God has provided** for His own.

He deserves to be praised for all His love for us. We have a God who loves and cares so much for us. Take a moment to think of all your blessings and thank Him. **God still is providing today.** I'm sure you can think of ways He has taken care of you and even answered your prayers. Jesus said: *All things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.* (Matthew 21:22)

God watch over each one of you and bless you.

Peace be unto you.

A Christian Wedding in India

Alvar Helmes; Battle Ground, Washington
Dr. Syam Kumar; Rajahmundry, A.P., India

WHILE THIS ARTICLE DOES NOT fit the normal material published in the *Christian Monthly*, it may be helpful to understand more fully the issues surrounding Christian marriages in India. The bride and groom in this article are from very poor families and were former Hindus. They were converted to Christianity under the ministry of Dr. Syam Kumar from the Mission Hospital. Dr. Kumar is partially supported by the Foreign Mission Board of the ALCA.

The bride was “selected” by the family of the bride, a common practice in India. In this particular wedding, the groom had met his future bride only one time before the wedding. Practically all weddings in India, including Christian weddings, function under the dowry system. Even though the dowry system was abolished by the government in 1961, it is still accepted and practiced extensively, even among Christians. Simply stated, the dowry requires that the future bride’s father (or family) gives the groom’s father (or family) a gift. This is most often money, but it can also be material items like furniture, electrical appliances, bedding, utensils, etc. The value of the gift depends on the economic status of the bride’s parents. At times, the bride’s parents will be indebted to the groom’s parents for many years in paying the dowry. Even though the bride in the picture is wearing a beautiful Indian gown, it was borrowed.

The dowry system has been cited as one of the reasons for families resorting to sex selection in favor of sons. This has distorted the sex ratio in India (950 females per thousand males).

The following explanation of this wedding ceremony, provided by Dr. Kumar, gives us an understanding of the seriousness of a Christian wedding in India.

Alvar Helmes

Introduction to Marriage Culture in India

In India, whether Christian, Muslim or Hindu, 99.5% of marriages are arranged marriages. Only the parents will see the bride and bridegroom at first and then bring the groom to see the bride. In this marriage, this boy may have seen his bride only once, 2 months before the marriage, and now he sees her at the marriage. They did not talk to each other until this time; they will talk to each other after the marriage.

The way we solemnize the marriage in India: Once we hear from the parents to conduct the marriage, they set the time for the ceremony. After the parents are in agreement, they will exchange fruit, leaves, and clothes as an agreement that they confirm the marriage, and after that both parents will take a meal together.

Before the marriage there is a preparation ceremony to make the boy as bridegroom and the girl as bride. In this ceremony, our pastors will ask if the couple who are going to be married have been baptized. If they were

already baptized, we will proceed to conduct the marriage. If not, we will preach the Word and baptize them.

The marriage is conducted in the streets for the poor and in the Marriage Function hall for middle class people. Our pastors arrive in the morning; between 15 and 150 pastors attend to bless the marriage.

Under our organization, 15 supervising pastors in East and West Godavari Districts have Christian marriage license granted by Government of India. I appoint one area Supervising Pastor to be Chairman and Registrar to conduct the marriage.

The Supervising and Chairman of the Marriage Pastor will arrive at the marriage venue at 7 a.m. The rest of the Pastors will arrive before 9 a.m. One of the pastors will open the ceremony with prayer, then the choir team will sing many songs to worship the Lord. Many other pastors read Bible scriptures one after another and a song follows.

As head of the organization and church, I have to conduct 2 or 3 marriages a day in the marriage season. I arrive at 11 a.m. to preach the Word of God.

Brief Summary of Ceremony

The Sermon: *Genesis 2:18-24*: God brought Eve from Adam’s body, so the bride and groom are equal and have no difference. When God created Adam, Eve was inside him but God brought them together as soul mates.

Adam called Eve “bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” For constructing a good and healthy family, both bride and groom should be healthy with the Word of God in faith and in honesty toward each other. The human body consists of bone and flesh. All the other tissue comes under bone and flesh. Eve is all in all to Adam and Adam is all in all to Eve, because the purpose of God’s creation was for Adam to multiply and fill the earth.

The bone gives shape, structure and support to the body like iron mesh in a concrete roof or in the pillars of a building. If the bone is healthy, a family remains healthy and will have beauty, shape, and strength in the family. If the bone is not healthy, the family cannot stand and will lose shape and become weak. I give examples of many bone diseases and how a body will become weak.

Adam and Eve contain flesh along with bone. If the flesh is healthy, the family will be healthy with peace of mind and happiness. In tuberculosis and leprosy the flesh is not healthy so the person will lose beauty and become sick. I encourage the bride and groom to be healthy in prayer, reading the Bible and listening to the Word of God to keep their married life healthy.

John 2:1-11 teaches us how to overcome the problems in married life. Ministry among marriages is very important where the foundation of faith will be laid among the bride and groom for a solid family. The couple will marry and may have children, maybe 2 to 10, so if we teach the couple, we are teaching up to 12 members in a family.

Jesus began His ministry at the wedding feast of Cana. Jesus was asked by His mother to help when the wine had run out. He said that His hour was not yet come, but He was pleased to do the miracle as Jesus understood the importance of bringing wine into the wedding feast.

Many people get married and think that married life will be a happy life like the wine in the wedding feast. In Jewish culture only the wine gives the real joy of the marriage feast. Without wine in that culture at that time the wedding feast was not a wedding feast.

Scripture says every bride and groom enter into married life to enjoy the taste of the marriage. The couple is so excited in the beginning of the marriage, but as time goes on they will lose the happiness, joy and understanding, as the wine in the wedding feast ran out. How are we refilled or bounced back into the real true joy of married life? Come to Christ when anyone runs out of understanding, joy and peace in their new marriage or at any stage of the married life BECAUSE HE IS TRUE WINE.

There are 6 empty jars, but in a family there could be 4 or 20 members who are empty, who have to INVITE Christ into their family to become full. Christ had the empty jars filled with water, and when a family pleads Christ to come into their family, Jesus comes in and commands to be filled by the LIVING WATERS. Then Christ turns the souls of the family after filling with the Word of God to a true real wine. The family will have better life than before, when He changes the family life into the taste of good wine. I encourage the new couple that if they have any problems or their married life becomes empty, to come to Christ, as He is the only restorer of the taste of the new wine and repairer of any married life.

Ephesians 5:22-25 tells about the importance of the head of the family and the equality of the wife in the family. The head stays on top of the body and gives commands and controls the body as it is supreme. But the body (wife and family) are needed for the head to stay strong, and as a place to permanently be fixed at the top of the body. The head depends on the body for its position even though it controls the entire body.

The body is equally as important as the head because vital organs like the heart, lungs and kidneys are in the body. We call the soul mate the heart. The heart supplies blood to keep the head healthy. If the heart is weak (wife), the head (husband) will become sick. Similarly the body contains kidneys which bring out all the filth (sin and filth in the married life) from the body. The intestines absorb food to supply the head and body. Both head (husband) and body (wife) are interdependent and go forward in the family by understanding the importance of each other and caring for each other.

After the Sermon: The Appointed Supervising Pastor who will be Chairman of the Marriage will ask the bride and groom to stand and confess before the congregation. He will ask questions and take their promise to each other.

Parents of the bride and groom will be called forward and the bride's father will be asked to take the right hand of the bride to put into the right hand of the groom.



Wedding Ceremony in India

A special wed lock called *thali*, two small locket like coins held together with yellow thread (made with white thread and turmeric powder), will be tied with only 3 knots, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, around the neck of the bride by the groom. This declares that they are a married couple. The bride will put a ring on the groom.

They exchange wedding garlands and flower garlands, and I pray and slowly drop the *thalambralu* (rice mixed with yellow turmeric powder) on the heads of the bride and groom as a symbol of blessing. After I finish, the rest of the pastors and the Chairman of the Marriage and the congregation will follow wishing the couple, dropping *thalambralu* on the heads of the bride and groom. Finally the bride and groom kneel to receive prayer, and I pray and give the benediction.

The Chairman and Supervising Pastor take the signatures of the bride and groom and two witnesses for the Marriage Certificate, issued before me to the bride and groom. Then I and most of the pastors leave the marriage venue and the rest of the marriage ceremony will be taken care of by the young pastors. The lunch or feast will follow, even among poor families.

In India most marriage ceremonies will end in 4 to 5 hours. There used to be ceremonies lasting 7 days but nobody practices those long ceremonies nowadays.

Dr. Syam Kumar

2015 ALCA Calendars

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Corrie Karlsen, ALC Calendar Committee

The Epiphany

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

IN EARLY JANUARY, THE CHURCH celebrates *Epiphany*, which means “manifestation; appearance.” It commemorates the appearing of God as a human in Jesus the Christ. God clothed in human flesh appeared to His people, Israel, and to the Gentiles, the wise men from the east who came to worship Him.

God appearing in flesh, God walking among men, God becoming man: this seems the stuff of mythology. It isn’t a myth, though. It’s truth, the greatest truth ever revealed to humankind.

The only true God—immortal, sovereign, omnipotent (all powerful), omnipresent (present everywhere), omniscient (knowing all), transcendent (above all), immutable (unchanging), just, righteous, holy, gracious, faithful, merciful, loving and good—this God who spoke all things into existence by His Word and who upholds all things by His power, this God who chose Abram to be the father of His people, this God who led His people from slavery in Egypt with mighty signs and wonders, this God who appeared to the children of Israel as a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, this God who terrified them with His thunderings and lightnings on Mount Sinai, this God who sent prophets when His people turned from Him, this God who was not in the strong wind or earthquake or fire but who spoke to Elijah by a still small voice, this God who reigns as the Supreme Ruler of the Universe forever, this God became human.

This God became human—clothed in frail flesh, subject to hunger, thirst, weariness, loneliness and pain, tempted of Satan, scorned, blasphemed, ridiculed, despised, betrayed, falsely accused, arrested, beaten, spit upon, wounded, rejected by His friends, mocked by His enemies, tried and condemned, sentenced to a criminal’s death on a cross, and—ultimately and most painfully—forsaken by His Father. He died, this God-Man who had shared with the Godhead the glories of heaven from eternity past. He died, this God-Man who knew no sin, who had never broken God’s holy Law, who had given sight to the blind, made the deaf to hear, made the lame to walk, healed the sick, cleansed the lepers and raised the dead. He died, this God-Man who laid down His life, giving it up in obedience to the Father’s will. He died, this Man who claimed to be God.

He was buried in a borrowed tomb, and He stayed there in the bondage of death until the third day. Then,

because He was God, and because He was given authority over death, this God-Man took up His life again. He rose victorious over death, alive forevermore. This God-Man defeated Satan and broke the bonds of sin and death to which humans had been subject since the fall of Adam. This God-Man appeared alive throughout forty days to many people who testified that His resurrection was true. Then, having satisfied the Father’s wrath against sin, He returned to the glories of heaven before the eyes of His friends who believed that He was the Savior of the world.

This God-Man has the power to forgive sin. He has purchased humankind from the bondage to sin and death. He has sent prophets to preach the Gospel, to draw His people back when they turn from Him. He has given the Word and Sacraments to His Church. He has given His Spirit to dwell within the believer’s heart. Believe it. Believe Him.

This God-Man will come again to earth. He will call all those who have died back to life, and He will judge both the living and the dead. He will give all who believe in Him eternal life, and He will sentence those who do not believe to eternal destruction away from His presence.

The manifestation, the epiphany, the revelation of God Himself to man is brought about only by the power of the Holy Spirit. The appearance of God in flesh was worthy of the worship of the wise men, and the God-Man is worthy of our worship today.

*Desire of every nation, Light of the Gentiles, Thou!
In fervent adoration before Thy throne we bow;
Our hearts and tongues adore Thee, Blest Dayspring from the skies.
Like incense sweet before Thee, permit our songs to rise.*

Anna B. Hoppe

May the Epiphany, the manifestation of God, bring His peace to our hearts this new year. ~



Wise Men Adoration
by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo

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Spiritual Leadership

Ryan Kandoll
Intern at Kingston ALC

WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY IS IT TO teach your children the Bible? Is it the Sunday School teachers? Is it the youth leaders? Is it your pastor's job? They can help, but it's mainly the parents' responsibility. In Deuteronomy, God instructs people to teach their own children. He says: *Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.*

Deuteronomy 6:4-7



Our culture redefines gender roles in things that defy our nature. Don't get me wrong; I'm not trying to enforce some archaic guidelines. I'm not saying that there isn't room for people to make adjustments based on their individual situations. But what does the Bible say about gender roles? The Bible tells us many times, in many ways, that the man is to lead his family spiritually. Just by going to church a man makes an extreme difference in the spiritual climate of his home. Imagine how well grounded his children will be if he studies the Bible and teaches them while they are still at home.

One way men (and families in general) can make a step in the right direction is to have family devotions. I know this may seem intimidating to men who haven't grown up with much biblical training. But you don't have to be some Bible scholar to read a portion of Scripture. I was on vacation and visited a friend at his parent's house. As we sat down to eat, his dad read a short portion of scripture before we said the prayer. It only took a couple minutes. He did this every time we sat down to eat together. In the week I was there we covered a few chapters out of the book of Mark and most of Peter's second epistle. Before this, the only time I had heard of a family studying the Bible together was when a family missed church for some reason or another and had a service at home instead. My uncle tells me that those were some of his fondest childhood memories.

One of my housemates and I were talking about how important it is for parents to teach their children and for families to do devotions together. We all decided to start this good habit now while we're still single. Here's what we have been doing. We don't always eat together, but there are a couple times a week that we do all happen to be home for a meal at the same time. Whether it's breakfast, lunch or dinner, what we do is pray, read a portion of Scripture and then while we're eating we talk about what we just read. Some day our families will be greatly influenced by this. If a few single guys living together can find time to do "family" devotions, real families can too.

And the beauty of it is—like I said before—you don't need to be a Bible scholar to do it. Just get the family together (or do it at a regular time when they're already together), pray, read a Scripture and talk about it. If you have questions, no big deal, you can ask your pastor or another elder in the church. They would be happy to help. The calling of spiritual leader is a big one. But don't worry, you were made for it. And if that causes you to fear a little, maybe it's a good thing. Let that fear drive you to look to the Lord for help.

God's peace.

Thou hast indeed made manifest Thy glory, welcome Bridal Guest!
Thou art Messiah, we believe; Our adoration, Lord, receive.
Be Thou our constant Guest, we pray, O Friend of sinners, come to stay.
Our every need do Thou supply, Til we become Thy guests on high.
O heavenly Bridegroom, haste, we pray, That long expected wedding day
When trumpets sound to call us home: "The bridal of the Lamb hath come."

Anna B. Hoppe