

OUR WORLD NEEDS KINDNESS

By Joe Dale Wilson

Ephesians 4:32 begins with “and be ye kind one to another.” The inspired Paul added to that in 1 Corinthians 13:4, “love . . . is kind.” Paul listed “kindness” as one of the qualities a new Christian is to “put on.”

Glen Campbell had a real catchy song several years ago that suggested, “try a little kindness, then you’ll overlook the blindness, of narrow-minded people on the narrow-minded streets.”

Our world needs kindness. Kindness is the product of our love for others. Love and kindness make the world a better place to live. As Christians, we are in the world to change the world by our wholesome influence. We live with kindness radiating from our words and actions. We teach the gospel, which is God’s

expression of His loving kindness to mankind.

Hatred walks our streets, is seen in e-mails and other sources of communications, bubbles out in our political arenas, and produces wars. Many follow a god of bitterness and vengeance. The world needs the loving kindness of God to be personified in Christians today.

In our day to day dealings we need kindness. People will do things that will disturb us. We can either jump on them with spurs on or reply with kindness. Which one will have the greater influence for Christ? We are here to win them to Christ, not to condemn them to the devil. Our words and actions must be seasoned with the wisdom of kindness.

Every day in the news we hear of people who are unkind to their fellow man. But every day there are those who go out of their way to show love and kindness to someone who is not in a position to help himself. Christians should be the ones who are more prone to be kind; and in my experience, they are!

If your life has not been marked by kindness, try it - you’ll like it!

— Vernon, TX

“Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.” (1 Peter 3:8,9.)

PEACE

by Danny Tunnell

It may surprise some to hear Jesus say, “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth . I did not come to bring peace but a sword.” (Matthew 10:34.)

Some may say, “I thought He was the Prince of Peace. I thought when He was born He had come to bring peace on earth! (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 2:14.)

Jesus said, “I came to bring a sword.” Then He goes on to explain that there would be conflict between a son and his father, a daughter and her mother, and that a man’s foes would be those of his own household. (Matthew 10:35,36.) In other words, Jesus said, “Some will believe Me and some will reject Me. This will bring division.” He went on to say, “Those that love father or mother more than Me, or son or daughter more than Me are not worthy of Me. Those that won’t take up the cross, and follow Me are not worthy of Me. He that finds his life will lose it, and he that loses his life for My sake shall find it.” (Matthew 10:37-39.)

Those who come to Jesus must love Him supremely; He must be first in every relationship and every area of life. That may sound hard, but actually attracts people to Christ. In the 1960’s, John Kennedy started the Peace Corps.

A spokesman for the Peace Corps said, “We found a very interesting and unique thing. When we stopped soft-pedaling the Peace Corps, and the harder, and rougher, and tougher we made it, the greater the response.” Young people love a challenge! A fellow went through flight training in the military. He said, “At first I looked at it as a challenge and later it became fun!” What Jesus said may seem hard, but it’s the kind of challenge people need.

Peace will not always be possible between the believer and the unbeliever. But when it is possible, the Christian needs to be the peacemaker. (Matthew 5:9.) “If it be possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.” (Romans 12:18.) Jesus knew that the vast majority of the human race would take the broad road that leads to destruction and that few would take the narrow way that leads to life. (Matthew 7:13,14.)

The Bible talks about three kinds of peace. First, there is peace with God. (Romans 5:1.) Those without Christ are actually at war with God, but God has taken the initiative to remedy that. (John 3:16.)

The second peace spoken of in the Bible is the peace of God. Jesus said, “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you.” (John 14:27.) The peace of God makes life so much better. We can face death and still have the peace of God; or if a spouse dies, or our children get sick, or we lose a job, we have a peace beyond understanding. (Philippians 4:6,7.) The peace of God is more than just a cessation of hostility. The word “peace” in Hebrew is “shalom.” It means “to be whole, with nothing missing and nothing broken; to have not only peace of mind but wholeness or soundness in every area of life - spiritual, relational, physical, and prosperity.” God has those kinds of thoughts of peace for us. (Jeremiah 29:11.)

The third peace in the Bible is future peace. “Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord . . . that they may rest from their labors.” (Revelation 14:13.) Satan is on this earth right now, but he is not in heaven. (Revelation 12:7-9; Luke 10:18.) Heaven is a place of peace. (Revelation 21:4,5.)

— Miami, OK

Old Paths

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“ask for the old paths” (Jer. 6:16)

UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE

By David Deffenbaugh

Is the Bible easy or difficult to understand?

That’s really not a very fair question because the Bible, in a sense, is both.

There must be a sense in which it is easily understood because it is God’s desire for all men to understand and be obedient to His will. (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9.) How could God expect something of all men that is beyond their capacity to do?

There are also some parts of Scripture that are difficult. Peter even acknowledged this fact specifically regarding some of Paul’s writing. (2 Peter 3:16.) Any honest student of Scripture is going to agree with Peter.

But just because there are parts that are difficult, it does not mean it is all difficult and beyond our comprehension. This is precisely the point at which some people make a tempting, but false, leap in their thinking. After all, if all of Scripture is difficult would this not excuse a lack of obedience?

How can you do what you don’t know or understand?

Mark Twain is credited with a statement that is probably closer to the truth and more honest than most people may want to admit. He said it wasn’t the parts of the Bible that he didn’t understand that troubled him, it was the parts that he did understand.

It’s an age-old problem. Man’s failure to do what is right is usually not because he doesn’t know any better; rather it is a failure to do what he already knows.

Many times people aren’t in need of knowing more; they’re in need of doing what they already know. The plea of God is for mankind to repent, to change the mind, heart and will from self-service to submission of His will.

Are we willing to do what we know? It might seem easier to just plead ignorance or an inability to really know - that is, at least for now.

“So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” (James 4:17.)

— Paragould, AR

“So be very careful how you live. Do not live like those who are not wise, but live wisely. Use every chance you have for doing good, because these are evil times. So do not be foolish but learn what the Lord wants you to do.” (Ephesians 5:15-17.)

THE WORLD’S BEST BOOK

By Dalton Key

The Psalmist speaks for so many of us! “How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psalms 119:103).

That said, few would argue with today’s reality. Reading from the Bible, once a regular practice for Christians, a daily pastime for families of the Lord’s people, and, further, a personal and beloved regimen of the masses, has more recently fallen upon hard times. In fact the reading and study of the Bible is too-often belittled and ridiculed as amounting to nothing more than the wasted efforts of those with small minds and even smaller intellects.

We beg to differ, as have the ablest leaders and most brilliant minds in history.

Sir Isaac Newton, renowned scientist, mathematician, and philosopher, once confessed, “I find more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history whatsoever.”

William Penn, founder of Pennsylvania, declared, “The Scriptures contain a declaration of the mind and will of God. They ought also to be read, believed, and fulfilled in our day. We accept them as the words of God Himself.”

Martin Luther, whose determination sparked the early fires of the Reformation, was a man in love with God’s Word. Though we believe him wrong on many counts, he was “spot on” in observing, “Holy Scripture is a sweet-scented herb, and the more you rub it, the more it emits its fragrance.”

Our country has been blessed with leaders at the highest levels of government professing deep respect for the Bible. George Washington once said, “It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible. He is worse than an infidel who does not read his Bible and acknowledge his obligation to God.” John Adams stated, “The Bible is the best book in the world.” Thomas Jefferson declared, “I have always said and always will say that the studious perusal of the Sacred Volume will make better citizens, better fathers, better husbands. The Bible makes the best people in the world.” And Abraham Lincoln, perhaps the most admired and loved of all past presidents, once acknowledged, “I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible,” further advising, “Take all of this book upon reason that you can, and the balance by faith, and you will live and die a better man before God.”

Today’s pseudo-intellectuals who take pleasure in dismissing the Bible and disparaging its readers are on the wrong side of history. The Bible is still, as always, the best book our world has ever seen.

The Risk Of Riches

By Joe Slater

Contrary to popular belief, money is not the root of all evil. The “love” of it is “a” root of “all kinds of evil.” (1 Timothy 6:10). Think about this: You don’t have to be rich to love money; and those who are rich don’t necessarily love money.

Three questions help to determine whether wealth endangers your soul: 1) How did you get it? 2) How do you use it? 3) What is your attitude toward it?

Wealth may be earned, inherited, or freely given to you. It may also be obtained through theft, fraud, or other dishonorable means. Both Old and New Testaments condemn those dishonest practices while commending work, inheritances, and giving.

Wealth may be used for good or evil. One reason for working is to “have something to give to him who has need.” (Ephesians 4:28.) The rich fool in Jesus’ parable used his wealth only selfishly. (Luke 12:16-21.) Paul praised the brethren who gave cheerfully and generously to help the poor and support the preaching of the gospel.

How you obtain wealth and how you use it may be affected by your attitude toward it. As seen earlier, it’s not money itself but the love of money that is a root of all kinds of evil. Greed (covetousness) motivates people to acquire it dishonestly and use it selfishly. Material wealth becomes a virtual god. The righteous patriarch Job said, “If I have made gold my hope, or said to fine gold, ‘You are my confidence’; if I have rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because my hand had gathered much . . . this also would be an iniquity deserving of judgment, for I would have denied God who is above.” (Job 31:24-28.)

Riches carry risk. You can successfully manage that risk by obtaining wealth legitimately, putting it to godly use, and viewing it as the temporary tool that it is.

— Justin, TX

“He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity. When goods increase, they increase who eat them; So what profit have the owners except to see them with their eyes? The sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eats little or much; But the abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep. There is a severe evil which I have seen under the sun: Riches kept for their owner to his hurt.” (Ecclesiastes 5:10-13.)

EDITORIALLY SPEAKING . . .

PAUL THE POSITIVE

By Dalton Key

Paul faced difficulties we find difficult even to imagine. Following his conversion to Christ, his life was littered with countless examples of opposition, affliction and persistent persecution. His letter to the Corinthian brethren recounted several examples: “. . . in labors more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequently, in deaths often. From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeys often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils of my own countrymen, in perils of the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in hunger and nakedness - besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches.” (2 Corinthians 11:23-28.)



A lesser man might have complained of his fate and given up the fight. But Paul was made of sterner stuff. While imprisoned in Rome, his words to the Philippians ring forth with amazing faith and faith-based optimism. “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain . . . one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus . . . Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say rejoice!” (Philippians 1:21; 3:13,14; 4:4.)

The zenith of the apostle’s positivity is revealed in the powerful words of Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”

This powerful perspective runs counter to the message put forth by today’s modern, conventional wisdom. Paul’s attitude appears unthinkably naive to the boorish intellectuals dominating modern media. Did Paul not realize - could he not own - his victim hood? Was he unaware of just how unjustly he was being treated? We can imagine today’s talk show hosts sobbing over Paul’s pitiable story while insisting he “open up” and “vent his rage.”

Paul’s view of things may have been unusual and may still be out of the ordinary, but his mind-set squarely agrees with heaven’s will. “Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.)

Paul believed with unbridled fervor that which many of us have either never known or long forgotten. He believed in personal responsibility - “I.” He believed in positive, forward-thinking affirmation - “I can.” He believed in assertive action - “I can do.” He believed in limitless potential - “I can do all things.” And of highest importance, he believed in divine providence - “I can do all things through Christ.”

What an example! We’d all do well to imitate Paul as He imitated Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1.)

FROM ONE GENERATION TO THE NEXT

By Milton Smith

The Psalmist has written, “Now also when I am old and gray headed, O God do not forsake me, until I declare Your strength to this generation, your power to everyone who is to come.” (Psalm 71:18.) We quickly note the concern that the inspired writer had for the generations that would follow him. He wanted to show God’s strength and power to “this generation” and “everyone who is to come.”

Our attitude should be the same. It was not so many years ago that I was young, and the older generation was there to teach me the strength, power, and ways of God. I will always be indebted to that “older” generation for doing so.

May we never forget that God’s truth must be taught and re-taught to each generation. The aged apostle Peter wrote to the young and old alike, “I will not be negligent to remind

you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me.” (2 Peter 1:12-14.) In this passage, Peter strongly emphasizes the need to always remind people of divine truth, even though they may already know these things.

I belong to a generation that has witnessed a change in direction within the church. Beginning several decades ago, attitudes started to change. Less emphasis was given to what the Bible calls “first principles.” (Hebrews 5:12.) The Hebrew writer lamented the fact that such “first principles” had to be taught over and over again to some in the church who should have been “teachers” themselves. This tells us

that we do not need to teach only first principles - especially to those who know and honor such simple truths. But if first principles are not being followed and respected, it becomes necessary to teach and re-teach them.

We will always owe the next generation the knowledge of fundamental divine truths. Failure to do so today will bring nothing but trouble tomorrow.

— Tulsa, OK

“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4.) “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” (Deuteronomy 6:6,7.)

ROARING LIONS

by Richard Dent

Samson was a judge over Israel for 20 years. In Hebrews 11:32 his name is listed with the heroes and martyrs of faith. He is remembered for his great strength. It was God-given and as long as Samson served God he was a mighty power. One of the facets of the Nazarite vow was not to cut your long hair off. Remember that Delilah used that knowledge about Samson’s strength to deliver him to the Philistines and thus, he was captured by them.

One of Samson’s adventures took him to a village named Timnah. (Judges 14:5-9.) To Samson’s surprise, a young lion came roaring against him. He killed the lion and went on his merry way. He did not tell his father or mother what he had done. He went on down the road to see his girlfriend and she pleased him well. Samson’s father went down to inform the lady that Samson was pleased with his choice for a bride.

Life is a great journey for all of us. Have you ever had temptations arise suddenly as roaring lions? These

young lions (temptations) may threaten our body and soul. Peter warns us to be sober and vigilant because our adversary, the devil, is as a roaring lion seeking to devour us. (1 Peter 5:8.) Even our Lord was not free from Satan’s temptations. (Matthew 4:1.)

What are some of the “young lions” of our day? It could be the desire to be richer than we need to be (1 Timothy 6:9,10); or to enjoy the pleasures of this world for a season. (1 John 2:15-17.) We don’t have the physical strength of Samson but we have something even better. It is the “sword of the Spirit.” That weapon has slain many a lion. Samson’s reward from killing the young lion was honey. (Judges 14:8,9.) Our reward will be a crown of life. (Revelation 2:10.)

— Liberal, KS

“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he

may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” (1 Peter 5:6-9.)

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