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the tapestry



A WORSHIPING COMMUNITY OF GRACE

PASTOR'S PONDERINGS

BY JOHN ARMSTRONG JR.

As most of you know by now, I'm taking a three-month sabbatical beginning in September. I have been made more and more aware of late of my limitations. There is too much to do and not enough of me to do it. That tells me I need to take some serious time off. For that I'm very grateful for the sabbatical that is coming. Now, for this Pastor's Pondering and for the next number of months I've thought it prudent to revisit a series I did 17 years ago on the elements of our worship service. The impetus for that stems from what we have been trying to accomplish with our children in the "Teach Me to Worship" times. Those have not proved to be as helpful as we had hoped and so we are changing what we are doing somewhat in order to get the congregation as a whole more involved in learning about worship. With that I offer up the following:

Pastor's Pondering – May 2008 (Revised and Updated)
Worship in its fullest sense touches on every aspect of our lives, it is not just limited to the short while we spend each week gathered in the sanctuary. So, in essence we have an elephant to eat. Have you ever wondered how you eat an elephant? I often ask that question in counseling. The answer is one bite at a time. So, if we are going to focus on worship, the prelude is as good a place as any to start. There is something about starting at the very beginning, it's a very good place to start...

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Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God. Romans 12:1

As you look at the order of service in the bulletin you will notice that it is broken up into several sections, these are: Praise, Consecration and Communion (as applicable). The first thing under the praise section is the Prelude. What is supposed to happen during the prelude? I'm sure various people will give you various answers. How many of you would give the answer that is printed clearly in your bulletin on the first page before you get to the order of service? That answer is: "Let us all prepare our hearts with silent Bible reading, meditation, and prayer before the service begins." The prelude is a time usually when the accompanist plays, giving the congregation time to sit quietly and pray or read from Scripture. This time is set aside for the very crucial task of preparing our hearts for worship.

In corporate worship we gather as a congregation before Almighty God to lift up His praises, to confess our sins, hear His word read and preached and to respond to Him in faith. Think about this for a moment. This is not something to be taken lightly. In fact, this is gravely serious to present yourself before the holy, holy, holy, living and true God. Serious? Absolutely, and at the same time sweet and awesome, joyous and triumphant.

Worship is to be all of these things. You cannot just step into the sanctuary and flip a switch like you are turning on a light. Your heart doesn't work that way. It takes time and intention to prepare your heart to come before the Lord. It really begins on Saturday night, but more on that later.

When we typically begin the prelude, it rarely lasts more than a couple of minutes. This is not a burden if you use it for its intended purpose. All those other important things that you would be doing otherwise can wait until after the service and if not, plan to get them done in time to spend a few moments silently reading the Scriptures or praying so that your heart is ready to give your best to the Lord in worship. One thing I do know, He is worth it. Give yourself fully to the Lord in worship from prelude to benediction and you will find it a delight.

As a whole our congregation does a great job of singing and participating in worship and as the Teaching Elder I am encouraged by that. Let me encourage you to excel during the prelude, it is a little thing, but excellence in the little things will better prepare you for the big things.

Because of Jane Page

by Heidi Lockridge

Everyone who knew her had a little bit of a love-affair with Jane. And this is because she was the loveliest of people. She cared for everyone with her whole heart: people, parakeets, stray cats, wounded opossums, etc., so much so, that her house was full of wildlife and every person who'd ever had a single conversation with her, thought *they* were Jane's special person.


She was always laughing, loud and charming, and swooping people into her boisterous hugs. There was no pause for mutual consent on those hugs. You were unquestionably hers and she wanted you to know it.

She sang. A lot. She led our church choir for yearrrrrs. She was always encouraging someone. She was like sunshine incarnate.

And now the world will have to figure out how to live without her light.

We are all changed because of Jane. Because of Jane, we can all aspire to care more, to laugh more, to listen better, to really love others. We can emulate her vibrant prayer life and her tenacious trust in God for all good things. We can rest like she did, knowing that our loved ones are in heaven and we are going there too. Because of Jane we can take delight in the small things and share them out loud. We can laugh really hard and tease good-naturedly. We can carry that light onward.

And we can look forward to seeing her again in the blaze of heaven that now shines even more brightly.



How We Got the Bible

Part 7

by Bruce Brierly

There are two more books which we must discuss before wrapping up the books of the Old Testament, Ruth and Job. Neither list a prophet as being the author, so why did the early church and the Jews prior to the birth of Christ consider them to be authoritative?

"No Ammonite or Moabite may enter the assembly of the Lord. Even to the tenth generation, none of them may enter the assembly of the Lord forever," (Deut. 23:3). Doesn't that make the presence of the Moabite Ruth in the lineage of David and of Jesus rather scandalous? Did God change His mind, or was He incapable of restricting her access into the kingly lineage? David many years later wrote how that could have happened in Psalm 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise." That is true for Jew and Gentile alike and we see that contrite and obedient spirit in Ruth. God will never turn away those who humbly seek Him, even a hated Moabite. What an amazing and comforting fact! The book also introduces the concept of a redeemer. Though Boaz was Ruth's redeemer, her far greater redeemer would come from her own blood line, Jesus Christ.

We have to remember, too, that the Jewish Talmud had a different ordering of the OT Scriptures. According to Wikipedia, the Talmud gave the order as Ruth, Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Lamentations, Daniel, Scroll of Esther, Ezra, Chronicles. Therefore when Jesus stated in Luke 11:51, "from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the house of God; yes, I tell you, it shall be charged against this generation,"

He was declaring all between Genesis and Chronicles as authoritative. That would include Job and Ruth, which in the Talmud were listed before Chronicles.

Not only did Jesus indirectly declare Job authoritative, we learn valuable lessons that point us to Christ. Job suffered unjustly. Although not a sinless man, he was falsely accused of being grossly wicked as evidenced by the fact that he was in great misery. "Sin a little, suffer a little. Sin a lot, suffer a lot." That seems to make sense, and was the argument of Job's "comforters". Job's friends had a weak argument but presented it well. As Christians we will suffer unjustly. Jesus told us so (Matt. 10:23, Matt. 23:34, and Luke 21:12, to name a few) and we should not be surprised by it (1 Peter 4:12). But Job points us to someone who was truly guiltless, completely innocent, yet who suffered greater. Unlike Job, Jesus did not contend that He needed an advocate to argue His case with God. Jesus was our advocate. To earn that title He had to suffer as an innocent man for us who were condemned by sin. What Job needed in the midst of his suffering, Jesus perfectly provided in His suffering on the cross.

Both Ruth and Job point us to Christ, our true redeemer and advocate.





Isaiah
41:10

Fear not,
for I am with you; Be not
dismayed, for I am your
God. I will strengthen you,
Yes, I will help you, I will
uphold you with My
righteous right hand.

Happenings

WEEKLY

Sundays:

- 9:15am Sunday School
- 10:15am Fellowship
- 10:45am Worship
- 5:00pm Evening Worship
(1st Sundays only)
- 5:00pm Youth Group**
(All other Sundays.)

Mondays:

- 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal**

Every Other Tuesday: (5th & 19th)

- 12:00pm Men's Bible Study

Wednesdays:

- 12:00pm Men's Lunch Bunch
- 7:00pm Prayer meeting

Thursdays:

- 7:00pm ESL Ministry**

Fridays:

- 10:30am Fiber Fellowship**

Saturdays:

- 10:30am Downtown
Christian
Fellowship

***These ministries are on summer
break until September*

PRAYER FOR US

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
In the raw places where we are
still unformed to Your glorious
image, the places still soft with
excuses, and coated with painful
memories, unshed tears, and self
indulgence; in those places, Lord,
I pray You would give us the will
to do the battle, the words to
define the struggles, and the
Scriptures to conquer in victory.
Let us proceed with honesty to
the inmost parts and find what
You have for us to learn and to be.
With no fear.

Once we have won the inner
battles, the exterior fight loses its
teeth. The evil one couldn't be
more delighted when we neglect
the care and good governance of
our own selves, and so I pray You
would equip us and steady us to
take that hard look inside. For
Your glory alone. Amen.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY August

- 1 Steve Tuel
- 1 Bethany (Tuel) Hudson
- 1 Daniel Newman
- 5 David Phillips
- 8 Cathy Bolen
- 8 Clark Adams
- 9 Bryan Johnston
- 11 Barry Kerstetter
- 13 Julie Nardi
- 18 Charlotte Wilson
- 20 George Cramer
- 20 Lydia Yost
- 23 Chuck Moore
- 25 Quentin Johnston
- 25 Tim Snyder
- 25 Donnie Frost
- 27 Charlie Van Meter
- 29 Steve Cowan
- 29 Susan Hauver
- 29 Caleb Hudzinski
- 29 Megan Kenny
- 30 Jonathan Newman

Coming Events

Join us, Sunday, August 24 at the home of
Lydia Hutchinson for our annual picnic fun.
Swimming, Volleyball, Croquet, Badminton,
and lots of shade for conversation. And of
course, delicious picnic food!



MONTHLY

Third Saturdays, (16th)

- 8:30am Men's Breakfast
- 8:45am Women's Bible Study **

Third Sundays,

- 12:00pm Fellowship Meal

No Fellowship Meal this month

Historic Missionaries You Should Know

jack (1928-2011) and allegra mcbirney

Jack and Allegra McBirney became missionaries to Newfoundland in the early 1960s, together with their six children. The McBirney family spent about seven years on the mission field, teaching God's Word through Bible clubs and home Bible studies. When they had established a Bible-teaching church, they returned to the United States. Jack was instrumental in founding two Christian schools in the San Francisco area. Meanwhile, Allegra poured her heart into her radio ministry, writing, and speaking, traveling the world in her ministry to military families. Jack also made many trips to Russia (in between treatments for cancer), burdened to lead communist teachers to Christ and introduce a Christian curriculum into former communist schools. When Jack's health began to decline due to Alzheimer's, Allegra stopped traveling to care for him. They had been married 61 years when Jack went home to Heaven. Despite severe cataracts and constant health struggles, 90-year-old Allegra continues her ministry and correspondence from her home—often even from the confines of her bed. Allegra calls it her “one-person publishing company” as she continues to oversee the translation and distribution of her books around the world, for the outreach of the Gospel.

You can read more stories from the life of Jack and Allegra McBirney in some of Allegra's books for children:

A Treasury of Very Special Stories for All the Family, Volumes I and II
Little Stories from Mike's House

kindredgrace.com/missionary-heroes-stories

PERSECUTED

BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN

Democratic Republic Of The Congo (DRC)

Overview:

While the DRC is one of Africa's largest countries geographically with a Christian-majority population, Islamist terrorists severely persecute Christians along the DRC's eastern border. One of the principal persecutors is the Islamist Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). The ADF is active in the Rwenzori Mountain area and seeks to establish Islamic law throughout the region. When rebels capture groups of people, they often release Muslims while killing Christians who refuse to convert.

Major Religion:

90 percent are Christians, and 5 percent follow ethnic religions.

Persecutor:

Islamic extremists located in the east are the main persecutors.

What It Means To Follow Christ In The DRC

The church is under immense pressure in areas of the eastern DRC controlled by the ADF. In areas controlled by the ADF, Christian villages have been raided, churches destroyed and hundreds of believers brutally killed. Dozens of local Christians have been abducted by the ADF and told to recant their faith in Christ and convert to Islam. Those abducted have witnessed horrific acts of violence against fellow Christians. Prior to the outbreak of violence, one church denomination had 25 churches in the Beni area; today they have eight. Another denomination had 54 churches and now has 11. Other denominations report similar patterns.

Access To Bibles:

Bibles are available in cities but not in rural areas. Children's Bibles and Bibles in Swahili are highly desired.

VOM Work:

VOM supports the children of two local missionaries who were martyred as well as nearly 4,000 internally displaced believers who fled widespread Islamist attacks.



<https://www.persecution.com/globalprayerguide/>

INTERN'S INSIGHTS

BY QUENTIN JOHNSTON

Lessons from the Cage-Stage

One day, I attended a church event where a friend of mine was one of the 50+ people being baptized. Everyone gathered around the river on the church's property for this hot summer day event. The baptism candidates all stood around in bright, neon-orange shirts that read, "I Chose Jesus." When it was his turn, my friend hobbled into the river and spoke some private words with the pastor, ready for immersion. The pastor baptized him in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the crowd erupted in cheers. When my friend exited the river, I greeted and congratulated him. While my friend was still soaking wet, I remarked with a smile, "I like your shirt. It is right that it says 'you chose Jesus', but just remember that He chose you first." My friend gave me a half-smile and replied, "Okay, Quentin." I had done it! YES! I had successfully inserted my unwelcome theological remark. I really taught him!

I share this story to show a small glimpse of my temperament when I was new to Reformed Theology. What some people derogatorily call "cage-stage Calvinists" would have been an apt description of me. In other words, it would be better for me to be left in a cage than to talk about Reformed Theology.

At Reformed Theological Seminary, there is a teaching emphasis on being winsomely Reformed. "Winsome" means to make something attractive to win someone over. It doesn't mean to compromise your beliefs, so that the Reformed Theology is more appealing, rather, it is the kind of disposition required for a follower of Jesus. To be winsomely Reformed is to embody the values found in the Bible that emphasize compassion, graciousness, kindness, and humility. Jesus embodied these traits. As Dr. Michael Kruger once said, "Being winsome is not a cultural strategy. We don't do it in order to win over the world. We do it to be more like Jesus."

A cage-stage Calvinist does NOT embody these attributes. A cage-stage is marked by overzealousness and an intense focus on the TULIP acronym with arrogance and a lack of grace in their interactions with others. Truly, if one understands the practical implications of Reformed Theology, it should create the humblest people. Sola Gratia means grace alone, not grace plus reading Calvin's Institutes. Unconditional Election, by its definition, means there is absolutely NOTHING inside of you that caused God to elect you. You're not saved because you achieved some higher intellect.

On a funny note, there was another time when I was speaking to a friend who was critical of Reformed Theology, and I quoted Charles H. Spurgeon, who stated, "Reformed Theology is nothing other than biblical Christianity." It makes me laugh remembering that I actually said that. I wasn't wrong! But wisdom would tell me that that's probably not the best thing to say in that situation. Feel free to discuss Reformed Theology with your neighbor, but I caution you not to introduce controversy where it is not necessary. It is not that you should shy away from speaking about Reformed Theology (after all, it's what the Bible teaches), but you should endeavor to talk with graciousness and for the right reasons. Our sinfulness can hinder our ability to articulate the Word of God appropriately. As believers, we should be zealous for the truth; however, cage-stage Calvinists can be zealous for being right rather than for proclaiming God's truth. Ephesians 4:29 says, "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear."

Charlie Van Meter, What are the ten best books you've ever read?

#1 The Bible

Disclaimer: You don't critique the Bible, it critiques you.

The Bible was written over a 1,500 year span, over 40 generations, by at least 40 different authors, written to many different places and different times; written on three continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe. And guess what? It tells a unified covenant history of creation and what happened after that, i.e. The Fall and Redemption.

The Bible is inerrant, infallible, and authoritative. Only an omnipotent, omniscient God could write such a book. The main message of salvation through the Gospel is clear, nevertheless, certain parts of the Bible are hard to understand (see 2 Peter 3:16). Therefore, to really understand the greatest book ever, you should avail yourself of a good Commentary.

Like any study, there is a certain inertia to overcome in order to get started. There is first the desire to want to learn what God has to say. Pick a text you are curious about, read the text, then see what a good reformed commentary has to say. This will enlighten you beyond your expectations.

There is gold in these verses. Once you start it will be hard not to study. God's Word is never boring but awesome. It will never be conquered by you, but will instead conquer you. It's depth on truth knows no rivals. To have and hold the Bible in your hands is a privilege not to be taken for granted. matter of fact, I would start with Genesis and take your time, no hurry, you have the rest of your life.

I might add you have a pastor, teachers, Sunday School, sermons and Bible studies to aid you along the way. And don't forget, despite all the good books, it is only the Bible that is TRANSFORMATIVE!!



Early Church FATHERS

CLEMENT OF ROME (? - 100)

Little is known about Clement. He was a leader in the Roman church, and was martyred around 100. He was a companion of Peter and Paul, and probably knew John. He wrote a letter (1 Clement) to Corinth to correct their jealous and proud behaviour, appealing for unity - one of the earliest Christian writings, which nearly was included into the NT. He refers to the martyrdom of Peter and Paul. This letter assumes the prominent position of the church in Rome.

He wrote:

1 Clement: A letter to Corinthian church

HEGESIPPUS (110-180)

Hegesippus was a historian, who was the first to work out lists of apostolic succession. These were lists of bishops, starting from the apostles, which guaranteed an unbroken handing down of the apostle's doctrine. This was to counter the Gnostics who appealed to a succession of teachers traced back to the apostles.

www.julianspriggs.co.uk/Pages/ChurchFathers





Faith Church's
Baby Bash



The Ochoa, Wilson, Adams, and Baker families are all expecting their babies in the next few weeks!



CHILDREN ARE A
HERITAGE FROM
THE LORD
Psalm 127:3

