

BIBLE ARTICLES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Vol. 1



A collection of 52 Bible Articles for Young People

Willie A. Alvarenga

About the Author



Willie A. Alvarenga is a 2001 graduate of the Brown Trail School of Preaching. In 2016 he received his Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies from Heritage Christian University in Florence, Alabama. At the present, he is a candidate to receive his Master of Arts in New Testament from Amridge University in Montgomery, Alabama (December 2020). For the last 16 years he has been the director and one of the instructors for the Brown Trail School of Preaching Spanish Department located in Bedford, TX. Willie has preached the gospel in Panama, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico and various States in the US. He has published 34 books in Spanish. For the last 13 years Willie has been the editor for the quarterly Spanish publication, "Instructing the Brethren." He also preaches live on Mondays at 10:00 a.m. through the online radio station www.btradio.net / www.unasolafe.org Willie is married to his wife Lucy, and both have two daughters, Maggie and Vanessa. Maggie is married to Marco Arroyo, who preaches for the Aledo Church of Christ, in Aledo, TX, and also serves as one of the instructors in the Spanish Department at the Brown Trail School of Preaching.

**BIBLE ARTICLES FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE**
Vol. 1

by
Willie A. Alvarenga

Purpose of this book

The purpose of these Bible articles is to provide Biblical encouragement to all the young people who have a deep desire to grow in the knowledge of God's written Word. This book may also be used as devotional material.

ALVARENGA PUBLICATIONS

P.O. BOX 210667
Bedford, TX 76095
(817) 545 4004; 681 4543
backtothebible75@yahoo.com



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To My Dear Students in My Sunday and Wednesday
Bible Class at the Birdville Iglesia de Cristo. It has
been, and continues to be, a great blessing teaching
you God's Word.

Israel Luna, Jared Luna, Esmeralda Luna, Victoria
Torres & Avril Torres. **Past students:** Vanessa
Alvarenga, Vannia and Saúl Hernández

Table of Contents

4 Bible Reasons Why We Must Pray	1-2
How to Get the Best of Each Bible Lesson?	3-4
PocketSword and Our Young People	5-6
The Importance of Being a Good Example	7-8
3 Reasons Why Study the Bible	9-10
What Does the Bible Say About Our Speech?	11-12
Why Is Bible Knowledge Important?	13-14
You Can Know Who Jesus Is!	15
How Can I Be A Good Example in My School?	16-17
Great Truths About the Bible	18-19
Great Truths About God	20-21
The Importance of Bible Conviction	22-23
Great Truths About the Holy Spirit	24-25
Planning Spiritually for the Future	26-27
The Benefits of Bible Memorization	28-29
Overview of Our Sunday Morning Bible Classes	30-31
How to Write Notes on the Margin of Your Bible	32-33
How May I Show Respect to the Word of God?	34-35
How Will Heaven Be Like?	36-37
Thinking About the Future for God	38-39
Ways to Show Your Parents You Really Love Them	40-41
How Is Jesus An Example to Me?	42-43
What Does the Bible Say About the Second Coming of	

Christ?	44-45
The Greatest Weapon God Has Given You	46-47
We are a Blessed People	48-49
How to Retain Biblical Information	50-51
The Great Benefits of Rereading the Biblical Text	52-53
Do We Really Love Jesus?	54-55
Using Your Time Wisely	56-57
We Need More Christians Like Timothy	58-59
7 Ways on How to Overcome Negative Thoughts	60-62
3 Great Truths About the New Testament Church	63-65
3 Characteristics of a Diligent Student of the Word	66-68
Does the Bible Condemn Inappropriate Jokes?	69-71
Does the Bible Condemn the Use of Drugs?	72-73
7 Bible Truths About Marriage You Need to Know	74-78
Apologetics and Our Young People	79-81
What About Sex Change?	82-85
Do I Have to Get Marry or Can I Stay Single?	86-89
How Do I Know that God Hears My Prayers?	90-92
Satan's Attacks on Young People	93-97
3 Reasons Why Satan Attacks Young People	100-101
What About Low Self-Esteem?	102-106
Great Examples in the OT: Joseph	107-108
Great Examples in the OT: Daniel and His Friends	109-110
The Second Coming of Christ	111-112
Preparing for the Second Coming of Christ	113-115
Ways on How Young People Can Be Helpful in the Church	116-120

You are Very Important to God

121-122

4 Bible Reasons Why We Must Pray

Willie A. Alvarenga

A careful study of the Bible helps us to understand that prayer is not an option in the Christian's life, but a command from God. In 1 Thessalonians 5:17, we read, "Pray without ceasing." The verb "pray" comes from the Greek word *proseuchomai*, which is found in the imperative mood. This means that God commands us to pray all the time. With this in mind, let me provide a few reasons why we as Christians must pray.

We must pray because prayer helps us to defeat temptations. In Matthew 26:41 we find the text which tells us that prayer can help us to overcome temptations in our lives. The more we pray, the better we will be able to say NO to temptation.

We must pray because Jesus is our example in prayer, and we must be imitators of Him. We are encouraged to follow the steps of Jesus (1 Peter 2:21-22). Jesus was a man of prayer (Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12); therefore, if we want to be like Him, we must also practice prayer every day.

We must pray because Jesus has told us that God will answer our prayers. Jesus told His disciples to pray to God in His name (John 14:13). If we do so, then God will hear our prayers and will grant the desires of our hearts (1 John 5:14-15).

We must pray because praying shows God that we want to obey His commandments. As stated early, prayer is a command from God. If we pray, then God will see that we want to do His will. Prayer not only shows God that we want to obey Him, but also shows God that we depend upon Him for everything. May God help us to take prayer seriously! To God be the glory!

How to Get the Best of Each Bible Lesson?

Willie A. Alvarenga

Each week you are privileged to attend two Bible classes and two sermons. The valuable information presented in each lesson provides you with a great opportunity to increase your knowledge of God's Word. For this reason, let me encourage you to take heed to the following advices on how to get the best of each lesson.

Arrive to each lesson on time. This will help you to get the entire lesson and not miss a portion of it. You can encourage your parents to get ready on time so they can beat traffic on their way to services. Make sure *you are always ready on time*, so your parents don't have to be late because of you!

Take as many notes as possible of all lessons. In order to accomplish this, you will need a notebook on which to take good notes. As you take notes, learn to abbreviate some words so you don't have to write them all. When the teacher gives a Bible verse such as Matthew 5:8; write down 5:8 first, and then the book. Make sure you review your notes every week.

Pay close attention to the lessons presented. Try as much as you can not to be distracted by your phone, the person next to you, or anything on your surroundings. Always make sure you are listening

attentively to what the preacher is saying. Remember that you are listening to the Word of God!

God's Word has the power to save our souls (James 1:21), to make us wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3:15), guide us in the right direction (Psalm 119:105), and equip us unto every good work (2 Timothy 3:17). If this is the case, and it is, then we must always strive to let God's Word sink into our hearts (Luke 9:44), and be doers of His Word (James 1:22). God bless us all!

PocketSword and Our Young People

Willie A. Alvarenga

What is PocketSword? PocketSword is a Bible phone or iPad app that proves to be very helpful in the study of God's Word. Our young people here at Birdville have been introduced to this great app and now they are able to use it very well. This Bible app is recommended to the serious and diligent student of the Word of God. In this app you will find various translations of the Bible in order to help you compare texts. You will also find various Bible dictionaries that will define for you what a particular word means. Several good commentaries are also available to give you an insight into what a verse may mean; nevertheless, you must remember that a commentary is just what it is, a commentary. The author is just giving you what he thinks the verse means. The diligent student of the Bible will examine the context of the verse he or she is studying in order to arrive at the correct meaning. In this app you will also find an interlineal, which shows to you the Greek and the English word side by side. This way you can know what the Greek word is for a particular word found in the text. Finally, in this app you will find a lexicon which shows what the grammar of the verbs found in the text are. The grammar of the text is very important to be studied because it shows whether a verb is a command to obey, or if the action needs to be done by the person, or to a person. Each student of the Bible

must strive to dedicate time to the study of God's Word (2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Peter 3:18). This will help you in your spiritual journey to heaven (Psalm 119:105). Our young people are doing such a great job in learning how to study the Bible properly using this Bible app, so please make sure you visit your app store to download it for free. May God continue to bless us always!

The Importance of Being a Good Example

Willie A. Alvarenga

The Apostle Paul wrote the following words to Timothy, *“Let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity”* (1 Timothy 4:12). If you pay close attention to the life of Timothy, then you will notice that he was a great example in all of these areas. Let us then ask the question, why must I be a good example to others? Please carefully consider the following reasons:

We must be a good example to others because God commands us to do so. Yes, the Creator of heaven and earth expects us and commands us to be a good example to others. If God is asking for us to be a good example to others, then the most logical thing to do is to obey His will, that is, if we really love Him (John 14:15).

We must be a good example to others because when we do so, we provide a way by which God is glorified. This is what Jesus taught in Matthew 5:16 where he said that if we let our light so shine before men, then they will glorify our Father in heaven. To let your light shine before men means that you are a good example to others. So, let me encourage you to let others glorify God through your excellent example.

We must be a good example to others because our eternal salvation depends on doing do. God says through the Bible that only the faithful will enter heaven (Matthew 7:21). If you are a bad example in speech, then you will not make it to heaven (Matthew 12:36-37; Ephesians 4:29). If you are a bad example in other areas, then God will not be happy with you, and if God is not happy with you, then He will not allow you to be in heaven with the faithful. So, let us always strive to be a good example to others!

3 Reasons Why Study the Bible

Willie A. Alvarenga

God, through the Scriptures, encourages us to be diligent students of the Bible (2 Timothy 2:15). He also expects us to grow in the knowledge of His Word (2 Peter 3:18). As such, we must be diligent in our efforts to allow God's Word to abide in our hearts richly/abundantly (Colossians 3:16). Why should you and I care about growing in the knowledge of God's Holy Word? Let me suggest a few reasons why:

The Bible can help us not to sin against God (Psalm 119:11). This is the reason why we should know more and more about the Scriptures. They are described as "the sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17). With this weapon we can defeat Satan (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10).

The Bible can help us be equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We can be better persons by having God's Word in our hearts, and also by practicing what the Word teaches (James 1:22-25). We can be better students, employees, sons, daughters, etc., just by allowing God's Word to change our lives for the better. Only the Bible can give us the best instruction in the world!

The Bible can help us to be wise for salvation (2 Timothy 3:15). In the Scriptures we find all the necessary information to be able to make it to heaven. As such, we then must study the plan of salvation in order to know what God expects of us with regards to

our eternal salvation.

The more you study the Bible, the more knowledgeable you will be. Therefore, let me encourage you to take time to read and meditate upon what God teaches us through the Scriptures. Our knowledge of God's Word will help us to be the kind of people God would have us to be. This knowledge will also help us to give God the glory and honor He deserves. Remember, you have a great brain, use it to the glory of God!

What Does the Bible Say About How We Ought to Speak?

Willie A. Alvarenga

In the Bible we find the answer to most of our questions. The question for today deals with what the Bible says about how we should speak to others. Sadly, in the world in which we live, we find many young people who really don't care how they talk. Lots of cussing, and disrespectful words are coming out of the mouths of those who have no respect for God. In this brief article let me show you some verses you can study with regards to how our speech should be. Remember, if there is a word that you do not understand, use PocketSword or Logos to define it.

Verse #1: Matthew 12:36-37, "But I say to you that for every idle word men, may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgement. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

Verse #2: Ephesians 4:29, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification that it may impart grace to the hearers."

Verse #3: Colossians 4:6, "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one."

Verse #4: Ecclesiastes 5:6, "Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error..."

Verse #5: Proverbs 19:1, "Better is the poor who walks in his integrity than the one who is perverse in his lips, and is a fool."

We are encouraged to give God the glory and honor He deserves. We can accomplish this by paying closer attention to the way we talk to others. May our words that come out of our mouths give positive encouragements to others, but most importantly, may these words provide a way for others to glorify our Father in Heaven.

Why Is Bible Knowledge Important?

Willie A. Alvarenga

The knowledge of God's Word is available to anyone who desires to learn more about God and His will. As we read the Old and New Testament, we find several passages that speak or answer the question why Bible knowledge is important. Let me share with you a few reasons and verses that can help us to see the need to grow in the knowledge of God's Word (2 Peter 3:18).

Bible knowledge is important because it helps us not to be destroyed (Hosea 4:6). In this text, the prophet provided the reason why God's people were destroyed under the Old Testament. They rejected the knowledge of God's Word, and by doing so, terrible consequences came to them. Satan is looking for you and for me (1 Peter 5:8). He wants to destroy us! Nevertheless, with the knowledge of God's Word, the Sword of the Spirit, we can defeat Satan (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). You can overcome any temptation by being knowledgeable in the Scriptures!

Bible knowledge is important because it helps us not to be taken into captivity (Isaiah 5:13). The prophet Isaiah tells us that God's people were punished and taken into captivity because they refuse to learn more about His Word. The world can take you captive if you do not take Bible knowledge seriously. Atheism, Worldliness and other things want to take you captive; nevertheless, you will be able to escape by applying

God's Word to your life (2 Timothy 2:22).

Bible knowledge is important because it helps us to always be ready to give an answer (1 Peter 3:15). Bible knowledge can help you to help others come to the understanding of God's will for their lives. We will not be able to teach others unless we know God's Word. You will be able to answer questions your friends ask because you know the Bible very well.

Remember, you are God's creation; you can use your brain to give God the honor and glory He deserves. Therefore, take time to memorize and to meditate on God's Word (Psalm 119:97).

You Can Know Who Jesus Is!

Willie A. Alvarenga

How well do you know who Jesus Christ is? As far as I know, the Bible has a lot to say regarding who Jesus is. As a matter of fact, you can find Jesus in every book of the Bible. And so, with this in mind, let me tell you who Jesus Christ is:

Jesus is the Son of God (John 20:30-31).

Jesus possesses the same divine nature/essence with God (John 1:1; 1 John 5:20).

Jesus is the Savior of the world (Matthew 1:21; 1 John 5:11; 1 John 2:1-2).

Jesus is the Bread of Life (John 6:35, 48).

Jesus is the Door to salvation (John 10:9; Acts 4:12).

Jesus is the way to heaven/the Father (John 14:6; 2 Timothy 2:10).

Jesus is the one who is always with us (Matthew 28:20).

Jesus is our example to follow (1 Peter 2:21; 1 Corinthians 11:1).

Jesus is the one who created the world with God (Genesis 1:1; John 1:2-3).

Jesus is the one who loves you (John 13:1; John 3:16).

Jesus is the Light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5).

Jesus is the one who can take away our sins (John 1:29; Ephesians 1:7; Mark 2:10).

All of this information should cause us to love Jesus even more, and not just love Him, but also to do what He tells us to do—Obey God! Let me encourage you to follow the example of Jesus, and to always consider what He tells us through the Bible. If you do so, you will find the sure way to heaven!

How Can I Be a Good Example in My School?

Willie A. Alvarenga

The Bible commands us to be a good example to others. Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in Heaven” (Matthew 5:16). Having read the words of Jesus, let us now turn our attention to how you can be a good example in the school where you attend Monday through Friday.

You may be a good example in your school by not using profanity in your speech. Most of your friends may use bad words in their speech but be careful not to allow their bad influence to get you to do the same. Remember, the Bible condemns profanity (Matthew 12:36-37; Ephesians 4:29).

You may be a good example in your school by being diligent in your homework and other assignments you may have. The Bible commands us to do everything from the heart as if we were doing it for the Lord (Colossians 3:23). Always make sure you turn in your homework on time. Always be on time for class, and never, ever, skip a class.

You may be a good example in your school by always showing respect to your friends and teachers. The Bible also commands us to treat others with respect (Mark 12:31). If you treat people with respect, they will notice that, and will know that you are a good example.

You may be a good example in your school by not being ashamed to pray for your meal. Some young people are ashamed to let others see them praying or reading their Bibles. The Bible commands us not to be ashamed of Jesus (2 Timothy 1:8; Mark 8:38). It is okay for your friends to see you praying for your meal or reading your Bible, but always make sure that you do it for the right reasons, and not just to be seen by others.

May God help you to always be a good example in your school! Remember, you can do it!

Great Truths About the Bible

Willie Alvarenga

There are so many great truths we need to learn about the Bible—The greatest book ever written! Let me share with you some of these great truths:

Truth #1: *The Bible is inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16).* What this means is that God is the Divine author of the Holy Scriptures, and as such, we can know that it does not contain contradictions. Those who wrote the Bible were guided by the Holy Spirit, who made sure that what they wrote was and is the Word of God (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Truth #2: *The Bible can guide my life in the right direction (Psalm 119:105).* Every wise advice the Bible provides will help me tremendously in making sure that my life is always in accordance with God's Will. The knowledge of the Scriptures can help me to be a wise person (cf. Deuteronomy 4:6). If you always take into consideration God's Word, then you will make right decisions in life.

Truth #3: *The Bible can guide my life into heaven.* This is accomplished by showing me the correct way to make it to heaven. This correct way is called Jesus Christ, who according to His own words, is the way, the truth and the life to the Father (John 14:6). God, through the Bible, shows me what I must do to be saved. This plan of salvation is found within the pages of the New Testament, especially the Book of Acts, which shows

you what people did in order to have their sins forgiven. They heard and believed the Gospel (Romans 10:17; Mark 16:15-16; John 3:16), they repented of their sins (Acts 2:38; 3:19), confessed Christ as the Son of God (Acts 8:37; Romans 10:9-10), were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16), and lived a faithful life in Christ (Revelation 2:10).

These and many more great truths about the Bible can be learned as we dedicate time to the study of God's Word. Therefore, take time to learn more about the Bible!

Great Truths About God

Willie Alvarenga

We are thankful to God for His Word because through the Scriptures we can learn a lot about who He is. In this brief article we will examine some great truths about God we should never forget.

Truth #1: *God is the Creator of Heaven and Earth, not evolution (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 19:1; 33:6).* Atheism would have us believe that evolution created the Heavens and the Earth, but this is far from being true. The Old and New Testament reveals that God and Jesus created the world in which we live. This is one great truth we should never forget.

Truth #2: *God is always available to help us in time of need.* Through the book of Psalms, we learn that God is always there for us. He is there to help us with our burdens (Psalm 55:22). He is there to help with our afflictions (Psalm 34:19). His help is always available to us (Psalm 121:1-2). What a great blessing and joy it is to know that God is there for us!

Truth #3: *God wants to have us in Heaven with Him.* This is the reason why He sent His Son to die on the cross for you and me. It is through Jesus that we can get to the Father (John 14:6). The Apostle Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:4 that God desires for all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. One day God will send His Son to Earth to come and get us and take us to the Father (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18). This is why we must be ready for His coming!

Let me encourage you to read your Bible daily so that you may learn more great truths about who God is, and what He thinks of us. This knowledge will keep us encouraged during the difficult moments of our lives. We thank Him for His great love with which He loved us (Ephesians 2:4). To Him be honor and glory forever!

The Importance of Bible Conviction

Willie Alvarenga

The word “conviction” means to hold a firm belief or opinion about something (online dictionary). The more we study the Bible, the stronger our convictions will be with regards to what we believe. With this in mind, let me share with you a few reasons why Bible conviction is important:

#1. Bible conviction is important because it can help us to remain in the Word of God, and not to depart from it. Those who doubt and whose convictions are not strong, will always fall by the wayside, and will not be able to stay the course. If you strongly believe about the existence of God, then no one will be able to change your mind. The Apostle Paul once said, “I know in whom I have believed” (2 Timothy 1:12). This is the kind of conviction we need today!

#2. Bible conviction is important because it can help us to help others who doubt. There are many today who doubt many things from the Bible. If we have learned these things and are very sure the Bible teaches them, then we will be able to help them come to the knowledge of the truth. But we have to keep in mind that we, ourselves, need to be fully convinced first. Our full assurance will help us to be able to give an answer to those who ask us a question (1 Peter 3:15).

#3. Bible conviction is important because without it, we cannot make it to heaven. No one who doubts

about God, the Bible, Jesus, etc., will be in heaven. Heaven will be populated only by Christians who strongly believe in God and His Word. Therefore, let me encourage you to work hard in your study of God's Word so that you can build a strong faith/conviction that will help you to make it to heaven. The more you read and meditate upon God's Word, the stronger your faith will be. May the Lord grant you a strong conviction in His Word!

Great Truths About the Holy Spirit

Willie Alvarenga

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead. The Godhead is composed of God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Throughout the New Testament we read about all three individual persons of the Godhead. In Matthew 28:19 Jesus mentioned the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit when teaching about baptism. In Jesus' baptism, we see the presence of all three members of the Godhead: The voice from heaven—The Father, Jesus being baptized—The Son, and the Holy Spirit descending upon Jesus as a dove (Mark 1:9-11). The Holy Spirit has always existed with God and Jesus, since He is eternal. Therefore, with this in mind, let us examine 5 great truths about the Holy Spirit.

Truth #1: The Holy Spirit is given to those who are baptized into Christ as an earnest of their salvation (Acts 2:38; 5:32; Ephesians 1:13-14).

Truth #2: The Holy Spirit guided the Apostles into writing the New Testament Scriptures (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13).

Truth #3: The Holy Spirit guided the prophets of the Old Testament to write the Scriptures (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Truth #4: The Holy Spirit helps the Christian as he prays to God, since He makes intercession for us (Romans 8:26).

Truth #5: The Holy Spirit will give life to our bodies at the last day (Romans 8:11).

We need to be thankful to God for His Holy Spirit who guides our lives through the Word of God. Everything we know about God and Jesus is thanks to the Holy Spirit providing the inspired Scriptures that have taught us all we need to know about them, and about our eternal salvation. May God help us to always appreciate the work and person of the Holy Spirit!

Planning Spiritually for the Future

Willie Alvarenga

The year 2019 is just a few days from becoming history. If it is God's Will, we might be alive in 2020. As we approach the new year, the process of planning becomes even more real. People make plans to lose weight; others plan to buy a house or a car. There are those who plan to attend college, or simply go back to High School to complete their senior year. What about you? What are your plans for 2020? As you plan your future, I would like to encourage you to make plans, but from a spiritual standpoint. Let me suggest some areas in which you can focus as you plan your life for 2020, that is, if the Lord wills.

Plan to memorize as many verses as possible from God's Word. We are commanded to grow in knowledge (2 Peter 3:18), and to be diligent students of God's Word (2 Timothy 2:15). Let me encourage you to read, study and meditate more and more on what God says in His Word.

Plan to dedicate more time to prayer. Prayer is a great blessing from God because through it we can approach God's Throne with confidence (Hebrews 4:16). Let your prayer life be constant every day (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Let God know that you need Him in your life and that you depend on Him always.

Plan to be present for every church service we have in 2020. The more you attend Bible classes, the more you

will increase your Bible knowledge, and the closer you will be to God. During church services we enjoy the opportunity, not only to study God's Word, but also to have fellowship with the saints. Therefore, make plans to attend every church service you are able to attend.

Plan to be more faithful to God in 2020. As you study God's Word, you will learn all those things that can help you to be more faithful to God. Make every effort to always put God first in your life (Matthew 6:33; Colossians 3:1-4; Mark 12:30). The more you think about God, the more faithful you will be as you practice God's Word (James 1:22-25).

The Benefits of Bible Memorization

Willie Alvarenga

God has blessed us with an amazing brain! This brain can be used for several purposes such as in the context of school, work, family, etc. In this brief article I want to encourage you to think about the great benefits that can come our way as we use our brains to memorize God's Word.

#1: Bible memorization is helpful because it helps us to grow in the knowledge of God's Word (2 Peter 3:18).

The more time we spend memorizing the Scriptures, the more knowledge we will have about the Bible. If you notice carefully, those who do not memorize, have little Bible knowledge.

#2: Bible memorization is helpful because it helps you to always be ready to present a defense about the hope that is in you (1 Peter 3:15).

The Apostle Peter says that we are to always be ready to give an answer/defense. The more Bible verses you have memorized, the better prepared you will be to defend the Word of God against those who attack it.

#3: Bible memorization is helpful because it helps you not to sin against God (Psalm 119:9, 11).

The more you memorize Scriptures, the more knowledge you will have about those things God does not want you to practice. The Bible is filled with so many Scriptures that teach us how to live a holy life in Christ. Such Scriptures must be memorized and practiced so that

God can be glorified through our lives (James 1:22-25). **#4: Bible memorization is helpful because it helps you to show God you love Him (John 14:15).** According to the Bible, we show God we love Him by keeping His Word. We can only keep His Word if we know it! By memorizing God's Word, you show God you care for the Scriptures. Spending time with the Scriptures you are memorizing will show God you love His Word (Psalm 119:97).

These are only a few reasons why Bible memorization is beneficial to you and those who memorize the Scriptures. May God help us to spend more time committing to memory His Word!

Overview of Our Sunday Morning Bible Classes

Willie Alvarenga

Last Sunday we were privileged to begin a new series of lessons entitled, *"Building a Strong Faith."* The purpose of this series is to assist our young people in developing a strong faith that will please God (Hebrews 11:6) and will help them to overcome the world's temptations.

Our first lesson was based on learning what faith is not, and what Biblical faith is. We are presently considering the importance of having a Biblical faith, and how we can accomplish such a task. After we complete our first lesson, which might take a couple of weeks to finish, then we will begin to study subjects that have the purpose of strengthen our faith. These subjects will deal with the area of apologetics: The existence of God, the inspiration of the Scriptures, the Deity of Christ, the one true church of the Bible, and many more. Each student must have a folder in which to keep all of the study sheets that I will give them. Additional material in written form will also be given to each of the students for their spiritual benefit.

In order to get the best of all of these classes, each student must be present at all times. They also have to bring a notebook to take notes, a calendar to write their memory verses for the next meeting time. A serious attitude to learn God's Word is also a must in this class! There will be times when the students will have some tests to take home and answer with open Bible and

notes. The purpose of these tests is to strengthen their knowledge of the things they have learned during each Bible class. Personally, I am excited about the privilege of being able to teach our young people at Birdville. They are an amazing people with a willingness to learn as much as they can from God's Word. I thank God for the opportunity to have a small part in their training.

How to Write Notes on the Margin of Your Bible

Willie Alvarenga

It is a great blessing being able to have a copy of the Bible! Many years ago, it was almost impossible to have access to copies of the Holy Scriptures; nevertheless, God, in His providence, has always made it possible for people to have access to His written Word.

Some Bibles have a wide margin, while other copies don't. If you have a Bible that provides you the opportunity and space to write notes on the margin, then I would like for you to keep in mind the following tips on how to write notes on your Bible.

Make sure you have a plan before you start writing notes. Think about where you want to place your notes. Also think about writing in small letters so you can write what you desire to annotate.

You can write key verses that may be connected with the one you are studying. Some Bibles already have cross-references. If this is the case, then you don't have to write verses next to it.

Underline key words that appear in the text, and then make some kind of an explanatory note beside it. You may even write the Greek word that goes with the one you have underlined.

Write brief definitions of the words you have underlined. If you have located a synonym that best explains the word you are studying, then write it on the margin.

Write a practical lesson you can learn from the text you are studying. If the text talks about prayer, then write “prayer” next to the verse. If the verse talks about preaching the Gospel of Christ, then you can write “evangelism” next to the verse.

Write a brief outline of the passage you are studying. For example, if you are studying the Book of Philippians, then you may write 4 “Ps”: Chapter 1: Purpose (1:21), chapter 2: Pattern (2:5), chapter 3: Prize (3:13-16), and chapter 4: Power (4:13). Hope you can enjoy writing notes on the margin of your Bible. God bless you!

How Can I Show Respect to the Word of God?

Willie Alvarenga

The greatest Book in the whole world is without any doubt the Bible! This Book is so amazing because it provides guidance to our lives (Psalm 119:105). The Bible is the means by which we come to a perfect understanding of what we must do to be saved and spend eternity in heaven with God (James 1:21). This great Book brings joy to our existence (Jeremiah 15:16). This great Book comes from God (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21). As such, each and every one of us should always hold this Book in great regard and respect. But the question is: how can I show respect to the Bible? Consider the following ways and put them into practice (James 1:22-25).

I can show respect to the Word of God by reading its pages which contain God's message for me (1 Timothy 4:13; Ephesians 5:16-17).

I can show respect to the Word of God by considering His Word more than my necessary food (Job 23:12).

I can show respect to the Word of God by loving the Scriptures and meditating on them day and night (Psalm 119:97).

I can show respect to the Word of God by putting into practice what I learn from the Scriptures (James 1:22-25; 2 Timothy 2:15).

I can show respect to the Word of God by always acknowledging that it comes from God (2 Timothy 3:16).

I can show respect to the Word of God by taking care of my Bible, and not mistreating it.

I can show respect to the Word of God by allowing the Bible to equip me unto every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

May we always be mindful of the greatest Book ever written! May God help us to always show respect and love for His Word! May we always be thankful to all those men who died in order to give us the Word of God! To God be the glory!

How Will Heaven Be Like?

Willie Alvarenga

Thank God for the promise of Heaven! (John 14:1-3; Philippians 3:20). This promise is made possible only through the sacrifice of the Son of God on the cross. There would be no promise of Heaven if Jesus would not have died for us. The purpose of His death was to set us free from sin (1 Peter 1:18-20). The Gospel message of salvation tells us that it is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). This message tells us that Jesus came, died for our sins and then was buried, but at the third day, He was raised by the power of God (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). If someone wants to be in Heaven one day, then he or she must obey the Gospel of Christ. In view of this, let me tell you what the Bible says about Heaven:

Heaven is a place where our citizenship is found (Philippians 3:20).

Heaven will be a place where there will be no more death, sorrow, pain, crying (Revelation 21:4).

Heaven will be a beautiful place where God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and His angels will be.

Heaven will be a place of rest (Hebrews 4:1).

Heaven will be a place where we will spend eternity with God (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

Heaven will be the place where we will find our hope

of eternal life (Colossians 1:5).

God has made a plan available in order for you to make it to heaven. This plan is called Jesus Christ (John 14:6; 1 John 5:11). You must then be obedient to His Gospel (Romans 10:17; John 3:16), you must also repent of your sins (Acts 2:38), confess Christ as the Son of God (Romans 10:9-10), be immerse in water for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38), and then live a faithful life in Christ (1 Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10). By doing this, you will make sure that Heaven is your eternal place of rest! Again, thank God for Heaven!

Thinking About the Future for God

Willie Alvarenga

The future is not promised to any of us (Proverbs 27:1). If we get to live more in this life, then it is thanks to God who is the giver of life. The Bible says that we need to include God in our future plans (James 4:13-17). We need to get in the habit of always saying, "If God wills, then we will do this or that." The phrase, "Lord willing" is a common one among Christians. We should always think about God as we plan things in the future. In this brief article I want to encourage you to think about the future but including God in your plans.

One of the ways how you can think about the future for God is by always including Him in every decision you make in life (James 4:15). Anything you plan to do with your life, always include God and ask Him to bless your plans.

Another way how you can think about the future for God is by starting to think on the various ways on how you can serve God in the future. Most of you (the male Christians) who are young at this time cannot serve as elders or deacons in the Lord's church; nevertheless, you can start thinking right now about how you can best prepare for the future when you will be able to serve in these capacities. The church of Christ needs godly elders and deacons who can serve and guide the congregation in the right direction (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:27-35).

You may think about the future for God by considering becoming a gospel preacher in the near future; one who can preach the powerful gospel of Jesus Christ (Matthew 9:36-38; 2 Timothy 4:1-8). Male Christians have the great privilege of serving the local congregation in the preaching ministry. I hope you will consider become a preacher someday.

May God give you the wisdom and understanding as you plan your future! Remember; always include God in your plans. God bless you!

Ways to Show Your Parents You Really Love Them

Willie Alvarenga

Parents are a blessing from God! If you have them, then you are enjoying a great blessing from God. Nevertheless, many young people have parents, but they do not show respect to them. The Bible teaches us that we are to obey our parents in the Lord. Notice what Paul said in Ephesians 6:1-3, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ²*"Honor your father and mother,"* which is the first commandment with promise: ³*"that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth."* In these three verses the Apostle Paul encourages young people to obey their parents, and to show honor to them. These are two ways how you really show your parents that you love them. You may say to your parents, "I love you," but if you do not obey them, and give them honor, then you are just saying words without any significant meaning. If we truly love our parents and appreciate what they have done for us, then you will make every effort to obey them in everything they ask of you. God has given godly parents wisdom to guide their children in the right direction. For this reason, we must love and respect our parents and follow their direction. Parents have also experience, which gives them the wisdom to tell us what is right and what is wrong. God instructs parents to train their children in the way of the Lord (Proverbs 23:6). Every time your parents ask something of you or ask you to come with them to church services is because they care for your well-being, and they truly want you to be in heaven

someday. And so, if you really want to show your parents you love them, start by obeying them, by showing honor to them, and by doing these things, you will convince them that you really love them. Remember, if you do these things, you will do what is right in the sight of God!

How Is Jesus An Example to Me?

Willie Alvarenga

The Apostle Peter wrote the following words, “*For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps*” (1 Peter 2:21). Notice the part that says, “leaving us an example.” Here Peter communicates to us that we have an example from the life of Jesus Christ. The second part of this verse says, “*that you should follow His steps.*” This part of the text is a call to action, that is, to follow the steps of Jesus. The question is: In what way is Jesus an example to us? Let me encourage you to consider the following ways on how Jesus is a great example to us.

Peter says in verse 22, that Jesus “*committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth.*” Here we find an example that encourages us to stay away from sin. We must stay away from breaking the law of God (1 John 3:4), since doing this will cause us eternal death (Romans 6:23). This verse also says that no deceit was found in Jesus’ mouth. This means that Jesus did not practice lying in his life or dishonest speech. The Bible also encourages us to not lie to one another (Colossians 3:9), since “*lying lips are an abomination to the Lord*” (Proverbs 12:22).

Jesus is also an example of not taking vengeance on those who do us evil. Peter says in v. 23 that when people reviled against Jesus, He did not revile in return. The term *revile* comes from the Greek word

loidoréo, which means to mistreat or reproach someone. Peter also says that when Jesus suffered, He did not threaten people, but committed Himself to God who judges righteously. When we suffer for doing the right thing, that is, for following what God says in His Word, we should adopt this same kind of mentality and attitude Jesus had.

Thank God for the great example we find in the life of Jesus Christ. May God help us to be more like Him!

What Does the Bible Say About the Second Coming of Christ?

Willie Alvarenga

The Bible says a lot about the second coming of Christ. For example, Jesus himself spoke a lot about His second coming. In John 14:1-3, Jesus promised that He would return again to receive us unto Himself. Matthew 24:36 says that no one knows when Jesus will come again. In Matthew 24:44, Jesus said that He will return when we least expect. In the process of Jesus ascending to heaven, some men dressed in white clothing told the apostles that Jesus will return in the same way He left (Acts 1:9-11). The Apostle Paul also wrote concerning the second coming of Christ when he wrote to the Christians in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians). At the end of each chapter of 1 Thessalonians, a reference to the second coming of Christ is made for our benefit.

What are some of the things that will happen at the second coming of Christ? According to the New Testament, when Jesus returns: (1) Judgement day will take place (2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:27), (2) there will be a resurrection of our bodies (Matthew 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58), (3) it will be the end of the world (2 Peter 3:9-11), (4) some will be sent to hell, and others to heaven (Matthew 25:32-33), (5) the faithful who did God's will, will travel to heaven to be with God forever (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

Christ's second coming is real! The question you must ask yourself now is: Am I ready for the second

coming of Christ? If not, then you must make every preparation to be ready, because Jesus will come when you least expect Him (1 Thessalonians 5:1-2). We must be thankful to God for giving us His Word so that we can learn how to get ready for the second coming of His Son, Jesus Christ. It is my prayer that you can make it to heaven some day!

The Greatest Weapon God Has Given You

Willie Alvarenga

The Bible is the greatest weapon God has given you to overcome Satan. The Apostle Paul refers to the Bible as the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:17). The prophet Jeremiah described the Word of God as fire and a hammer that breaks the rock (Jeremiah 23:29). If the Bible is the greatest weapon God has given us, and it is, then you and I must use it in order to defeat our greatest enemy—Satan. The question we must ask ourselves is: How can I defeat Satan through the Word of God? Well, consider the following verses you can use as you are being tempted by Satan.

Verse #1: 2 Timothy 2:22 “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” When tempted by Satan, this verse will remind you to escape temptations, and to follow righteousness, faith, love and peace. If you do this, you will be victorious over Satan.

Verse #2: 1 Corinthians 15:33 “Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.” This verse will help you to avoid any company or friends that will become a bad example to you. God reminds you through these verses what will happen if you hang around bad friends.

Verse #3: Matthew 12:36-37 “But I say to you that for

every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. ³⁷For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” These two verses will help you stay away from speaking cuss words that God condemns. There are serious consequences when you do so!

Verse #4: Ecclesiastes 12:1 “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, I have no pleasure in them.” This verse will help you to dedicate your life and youth to God and not to Satan. May God help you to remember these verses, which serve as a great weapon to defeat Satan!

We Are a Blessed People!

Yes, we are a blessed people! Let me share with you some reasons why this is the case:

1. We are a blessed people because we believe in an All-Intelligent, All-Powerful God who created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 33:6).
2. We are a blessed people because we have Jesus Christ as our Savior (Matthew 1:21; 2 Timothy 2:10; John 3:16).
3. We are a blessed people because we have the Holy Spirit to guide us through His Word (2 Peter 1:20-21; 1 Corinthians 2:14).
4. We are a blessed people because we have God's Word to guide our lives in the right direction (Psalm 119:105; 119:24).
5. We are a blessed people because we have the powerful Gospel of Jesus Christ to help people be saved from their sins (Romans 1:16; Mark 16:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4).
6. We are a blessed people because we have the hope of eternal life in Jesus Christ (Titus 1:2; 1 John 5:11).
7. We are a blessed people because we have the avenue of prayer to communicate with God (Hebrews 4:16; Ephesians 6:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).
8. We are a blessed people because we have a great example in the life of Jesus Christ, as recorded in the four Gospel accounts (1 Peter 2:21; 1 Corinthians 11:1).

What a great blessing it is to have fellowship with

God and enjoy all of these great spiritual blessings! May God help us to not take for granted these blessings but let us appreciate them by living a faithful life in Jesus Christ.

How to Retain Biblical Information

Every week we study God's Word together when we gather to worship God. Bible class and sermons are ways to help us grow in the knowledge of God's Word. Every opportunity we have to study the Bible we learn information that will help us grow spiritually. All of this information we learn must be retained in our minds so that we can teach others God's Word. But the question is: How do we retain all the Biblical information we learn on a weekly basis? Well, here are a few suggestions on how to accomplish this task.

1. We retain information by paying close attention to what we hear as that information is being taught to us (Luke 8:18).
2. We retain information by determining in our hearts to place such information in the long-term memory, not the short one (Psalm 119:16).
3. We retain information by meditating upon what has been taught to us (Psalm 119:97).
4. We retain information by thinking about how the information we have learned can help us in a positive way (Psalm 119:49-50).
5. We retain information by using what we have learned as we converse with others (Mark 16:15).
6. We retain information by asking God to bless our minds (Psalm 119:17).
7. We retain information by being diligent students of God's Word (2 Timothy 2:15).

We have to remember that God wants us to always be ready to give an answer/defense of our faith (1

Peter 3:15; Jude 3). We will not be ready to do this unless we retain as much information as possible. School teachers, preachers, mechanics, carpenters, etc., cannot do what they do unless they remember all the things they have learned in the past. Such people were taught, and then they tried their best to retain as much information as possible.

Therefore, remember next time you are taught something, pay close attention; place the information in the long-term memory; meditate upon that information; think how such information can help you grow; use/share what you have learned as you talk to others; pray to God to bless your memory; and be a diligent student of the things you learn. By doing this, you will be able to retain a lot of information for the many years to come.

The Great Benefits of Rereading the Biblical Text

In 1 Timothy 4:13, the Apostle Paul gave instructions to Timothy to take time to reading. The text says, *"Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine."* As you study the Greek grammar of this verse, you will find that the verb "give" is found in the present tense, and imperative mood. This means that such an action is to be done continually, that is, in a persistent way. The imperative mood denotes a command to obey. This means that to read the Scriptures is not a suggestion, but a command from God to be obeyed. With this in mind, let me suggest some great benefits we can enjoy as we reread the Biblical text. *As you read the passage of Scripture over and over again, you will...*

- (1) Discover words that connect one thought to another
- (2) Understand the message of the text even better
- (3) Memorize some key words in the text
- (4) Learn the practical lessons of the text
- (5) Spend more time with the Word of God
- (6) Remember other verses that are connected to the one you are reading
- (7) Be encouraged to read more and more God's Word

These are seven great benefits or blessings you can enjoy when you take time obey God's commandment to read His Word on a continual basis. Sadly, many today do not feel the need to read and learn from God's Word. I pray that this will not be the case with you, but that you will find joy in reading the Scriptures more and more. Therefore, let me encourage

you to find a passage of Scripture, read it at least 7 times, and take notes of the great things you can learn. Write down key words, pay attention to the verbs, and summarize in your own words what you think the text means. Trust me it will help you learn more efficiently God's Word.

Do We Really Love Jesus?

Willie A. Alvarenga

How much do we love Jesus? Is He someone very important in our lives? How much do we think about Him? These are important questions that we must ask ourselves if we truly say we love Jesus. It is one thing to say we love Him, and another different thing to really do. Someone once said, *"Actions speak louder than voice."* I hope and pray that we do not just say we love Jesus, but that we truly show Him with our actions. The question I want to answer in this article is: How do we know we truly love Jesus? Let me suggest a few things that can help us to really know if we truly love Him. *We really love Jesus when we...*

- (1) Are not ashamed to call Him our Savior (Mark 8:38; 2 Timothy 1:7-8).
- (2) Thank God for the sacrifice of His Son (Ephesians 5:20).
- (3) Spend much time learning about His life through the Bible (2 Peter 3:18).
- (4) Talk to others about what He did for them on the cross (Mark 16:15-16).
- (5) Keep His Word in our lives (John 14:15; Luke 11:28).
- (6) Show Him that we are eagerly waiting for His second coming (1 Thessalonians 1:10).
- (7) Love Him and God with everything we have (Mark 12:30).

Jesus did not have to come down and die for us! We were guilty of sin (Isaiah 59:1-2), and as such, we deserved death; nevertheless, because of God's love and the willingness of Jesus to come and die in our

place, it is here where we see His love for us. We need to love Jesus because He is a special person who gave us the best example on how to live a life that is pleasing to God (1 Peter 2:21-23; 1 Corinthians 11:1). If it wasn't for Jesus, we would not have the hope of eternal life! But we thank God for His great love and mercy (Ephesians 2:1-4). Now, if we do His Will, we can enjoy the opportunity to spend eternity in Heaven (Matthew 7:21-23). Therefore, let us examine our lives and ask this question: Do we really love Jesus? I hope the answer is YES!

Using Your Time Wisely

Willie A. Alvarenga

The Apostle Paul wrote the following words to the church at Ephesus, *“See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is”* (Ephesians 5:15-17). Based on these verses, there are three things we can do in order to use our time wisely:

- (1) **We must walk circumspectly as wise and not as fools.** The word “circumspectly” means that which pertains to strict conformity to a norm or standard, involving both detail and completeness—accurate, accurately, strict, strictly (Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, [*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*](#) (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 673. Other translations use the phrase “walk carefully.” To walk carefully means to have a conduct at all times that pleases God (Philippians 1:27). Wise people always listen to God, the fool doesn’t (Matt 7:24-28). We must always pay close attention to the way we live our lives before God. Christ always walked carefully as He pleased His Father—So must we!
- (2) **We must redeem the time.** To redeem the time means to make the most of our time, that is, to use it wisely, and in harmony with God’s Word. It also denotes doing something with intensity and urgency. God’s Will needs to be practiced with urgency! Some young people many times

use their time in things that really don't matter – This should not be the case!

(3) We must understand what the will of God is.

The only way to know and understand God's Will is to study it and meditate on what the message says to us (2 Timothy 2:15; Psalm 119:97). It also means to apply to our lives that which the Bible teaches us (James 1:22-25). The principles of Bible interpretation can really help us to understand the Bible. Use your time wisely and study such principles that can help you in your studies.

If we practice these three things found in our passage of Ephesians, then we will be using our time wisely. By doing so, we will please God at all times. It will help us to think constantly on the things that really matter in life, that is, the spiritual things pertaining to God.

We Need More Christians Like Timothy in the Church

Willie A. Alvarenga

How much do you know about the life of Timothy? Have you considered his exemplary conduct in life and faithfulness to God? A careful study of the New Testament reveals so many great lessons about the life of Timothy that you and I can learn from. In view of this, let me show you a few reasons why the church needs more faithful Christians like Timothy.

First, Timothy is an example of a Christian with an outstanding reputation. We read about this in Acts 16:1-2, where Luke tells us that Timothy enjoyed great reputation in many parts of the world. If we want to be a blessing to the church, then we must strive to be a good example to others (1 Timothy 4:12; Philippians 2:19-24; Matthew 5:16).

Second, Timothy was a faithful Christian who defended the truth of God's Word. In 1 Timothy 1:3, we learn that Paul had asked Timothy to remain in the city of Ephesus so that he could refute the error of his day. There were some who were teaching things contrary to the Word of God, and Timothy's job was to let them know that they should not be teaching error. We need young people prepared in the Scriptures that they may refute error, when such arises in the church (1 Peter 3:15).

Third, Timothy is an example of a life dedicated to the service of God. As you study his life, you will

learn that Timothy dedicated much of his time to serving God in His Kingdom. He traveled with the Apostle Paul to preach the gospel in many places. He served Paul like a son serves his father (Philippians 2:19-24).

The church for which Jesus died on the cross deserves faithful Christians like Timothy serving God's Cause. The church will be in great hands by having young people who will prayerfully consider serving God in the days of their youth (Ecclesiastes 12:1-2). It is my fervent prayer that our young people today will follow the faithful example of Timothy. May the Lord bless you with wisdom to do His Will!

7 Ways on How to Overcome Negative Thoughts

Willie A. Alvarenga

The Bible teaches that *Satan walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour* (1 Peter 5:8). His main objective is to discourage people from doing God's Will and living a positive life. Satan's main battle ground is our mind, and for this reason, he will always try to mess with our minds in order to discourage us and make us doubt. In this brief article we will briefly examine several ways on how we can overcome negative thoughts.

(1) We can overcome negative thoughts by acknowledging that Satan's power is limited, and as such, he can only do what we allow him to do (Job 1:12; 2:6). These verses teach the limited power Satan has. Satan will be successful in attacking your mind, but only if you allow him to do so. As those negative thoughts come to your mind, think about how Satan's power is limited and how you can overcome him.

(2) We can overcome negative thoughts by acknowledging that we have a powerful God who can help us (1 John 4:4; Hebrews 13:5; Psalm 34:19; 55:22). These verses clearly teach that God is with us, and as such, He will be with us in our times of need. We just have to have faith in these verses.

(3) We can overcome negative thoughts by developing a strong faith in God, for this will help us to overcome the world (1 John 5:4). The Apostle John is clear in letting us know that our faith, that is, our trust in God and His Word can help us to overcome anything that is in the world.

(4) We can overcome negative thoughts by acknowledging that we can be victorious over Satan (1 John 2:13-14; Psalm 119:9, 11). With God on our side, and His Word, we can defeat Satan. Many in the past defeated him, and so can we.

(5) We can overcome negative thoughts by acknowledging the need to fill our minds with positive thoughts, which will occupy our minds (Philippians 4:8-9). If we fill our minds with positive thoughts, then there will be no space for negative ones. Remember, two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time. The more you think about the blessings you enjoy, and the great things God has done, this will help you to overcome negative thoughts.

(6) We can overcome negative thoughts by acknowledging the need to pray more frequently (Matthew 26:41; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; Mark 1:35). We must pray to God, not only when we need something, but all the time. We must show God that we depend upon Him always, and not every now and then. Jesus is our great example of praying to His Father all the time.

(7) We can overcome negative thoughts by filling our minds with God's Word. This is why memorization is so important, since it helps you store many Bible verses you can use to defeat Satan. The more verses you have memorized, the more resources you will have at your disposal to defeat Satan. Remember, Jesus defeated Satan with Scripture (Matthew 4:1-11). You can use those verses you memorize and quote them when you have negative thoughts (Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 3:18).

May the gracious Lord give you the wisdom and the understanding (James 1:5-6) necessary to be a strong person who is able to defeat Satan's attacks on your minds. Remember, with God's help we can overcome anything! God bless you!

Three Great Truths About the New Testament Church

Willie A. Alvarenga

There are many great subjects discussed by the Bible. One of these is the church of Christ. Sadly, there are many who do not know enough about the one true church of the New Testament. Many do not know what the Old Testament teaches about the church of Christ. Many do not know when this church was established. Others do not know how we are to refer to this church, that is, her designations. Consequently, there is much ignorance regarding this very important subject. With this in mind, let us examine a few great truths about the New Testament church known as the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Please examine them carefully so you won't be deceived by Satan into believing that the church of Christ is just another denomination among many.

Truth #1: The church of Christ is of divine origin because she was in the mind of God even before the foundation of the world. How do we know this is the case? Well...the Bible teaches that the members of Christ's church were in the mind of God before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4). This church, according to the words of the Apostle Paul, was purchased by Christ with His own blood (Acts 20:28). The blood of Christ, according to the Apostle Peter, was in the mind of God before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:18-20). These passages do teach that the church of Christ occupied God's thoughts even before the foundation of the world. Accordingly, this

great truth makes this church special and unique.

Truth #2: The church of Christ has Jesus Christ as her founder. This is exactly what Jesus said when he spoke in response to Peter's great confession of truth (Matthew 16:16). In Matthew 16:18, Jesus claimed that the church was/is "My church." This is the case because He said it, but also, consider the following reasons why the church belongs to Christ: (1) He bought this church with His own blood (Acts 20:28), (2) He is the head of the church (Colossians 1:18), (3) The church is the Body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23), (4) He is the Savior of the church (Ephesians 5:23), (5) He will come back one day for this church (Ephesians 5:26-27). Therefore, this great truth #2 clearly teaches that the church is special and unique.

Truth #3: The church of Christ was established before any denomination came into existence. The New Testament teaches that the church of Christ was established on Pentecost, according to the Old Testament prophecies such as Isaiah 2:1-4; Daniel 2:44. When the day of Pentecost came, recorded in Acts 2, the church of Christ was established. The date for the establishment of this church is approximately 33 AD. If you study Biblical church history, you will notice that there was no denomination present during this year. The only church we read about in the book of Acts is the church that belongs to Christ; nondenominational in nature. You can read the pages of the New Testament to try to find any denomination, but you will not be able to do so. Why? The answer is simple: There were no denominations present during

this time such as the ones we hear about today.

These are three great truths about the New Testament church. These great truths have been proclaimed by faithful gospel preachers throughout the ages. Satan has tried to convince many young people that one church is as good as another, but this is simply not the case. There is only one true church of Christ, and salvation is found only within the Body of Jesus Christ. These three great truths presented in this article should motivate us to love the church for which Jesus gave His life. May we never forget this!

3 Characteristics of a Diligent Student of the Word

Willie A. Alvarenga

How can we tell if a person is a good and diligent student of the Bible? Are there any distinctive characteristics in his or her life that may give us a hint that such is the case? Personally, I think we can actually tell if a person is a good student of the Word. His distinctive characteristics are obvious in his or her life. With this in mind, let me suggest a few characteristics a diligent student of the Bible must have in his or her life.

Characteristic #1: *A diligent student of the Bible will have a deep love for the Word of God.* This was actually the case with David, who in Psalm 119:97 said, “Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.” A person who loves the Word of God will consider the Bible more than his necessary food. This is what Job expressed in Job 23:12. How do we know if a person has a deep love for the Scriptures? Well, if such a person enjoys studying the Scriptures, then you can tell that he or she has a sincere love for the Bible. If a person always looks for opportunities to study the Bible, then you can tell that such has a genuine love for the Bible. Do you love the Scriptures? Do you long for the moment when you can sit down and read and study the Bible? If so, then you have a great characteristic that shows people and God you are a diligent student of the Bible.

Characteristic #2: *A diligent student of the Bible has a deep*

respect for the Word of God. To this student of the Word, the Bible is the greatest Book ever written. When a person has a deep respect for the Bible, such will always strive to live his or her life according to the commandments of God. The Bible will become a priority in his or her life. This person will always make every effort to uphold the authority of the Scriptures (Colossians 3:17; 1 Peter 4:11). If a person does not care what God thinks concerning a certain conduct of life, then such a person does not have a deep respect for the Bible. We must remember that at the end of the day, the Scriptures will judge our actions in this life (John 12:48-49; Ecclesiastes 11:9). Do you have a deep respect for the Bible? I hope and pray that you do!

Characteristic #3: *A diligent student of the Word of God will make sure his or her heart is pure so that God's Word can find a special place in it.* Two objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time. This is the case with God's Word. We cannot have sin in our hearts and then expect for the Word of God to be in the same place at the same time. We must follow the prescription given by God in Proverbs 4:23, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life." The phrase "keep your heart with all diligence" denotes the action of making sure our hearts are free from sin. Once we sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts, then we will be ready to treasure God's Word in our minds (1 Peter 3:15; Psalm 119:11). Keeping our hearts free from sinful practices is something we must do on a continual basis. Are you working hard on keeping your heart pure for the Lord? I hope your answer is an emphatic, yes!

These are three great characteristics that describe a diligent student of the Scriptures. Do you have these in your life? If so, then glory be to God! If not, then let me encourage you to work hard in having them present in your life. The rewards will be great for you in this life, and the next to come!

Does the Bible Condemn Inappropriate Jokes?

Willie A. Alvarenga

How do we know the Bible condemns bad jokes, that is, the ones that use a double negative meaning? Does the Bible say anything about inappropriate jokes? The answer to these two questions is YES. The Bible does indeed condemn any speech that is contrary to the faithful principles taught in the Scriptures.

For instance, in Ephesians 5:4, Paul makes the following exhortation, “and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks” (NASB). The English Standard Version uses the phrase “Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking...” The Christian Standard Bible uses the phrase “Obscene and foolish talking or crude joking are not suitable.” These Bible versions helps us to have a pretty good idea of what God is trying to communicate to us.

In Ephesians 5:4, Paul teaches Christians to stay away from filthiness and silly talk, as well as coarse jesting. The phrase “coarse jesting” comes from the Greek word *εὐτραπεία*. This word is defined by various lexicons as that which denotes the act of being involved in vulgar expressions and indecent content or speech. The careful study of this verse helps us to understand that as Christians we cannot be involved in any jokes which may be classified under this definition.

Furthermore, the Apostle Paul instructs Christians to be very careful in the way they speak. Notice what he said in Colossians 4:6 “Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will now how you should respond to each person.” Let us notice that Paul is very specific as to how our way of talking to others should be—always with grace and seasoned with salt. Our speech should always be a mark that tells others that we belong to Christ. This is what happened in Jerusalem as the Apostles Peter and John were described as people who have been with Christ. Notice what the text says, “Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). These people recognized that they had been with Jesus by their faithful conduct. Can others tell that we have been with Jesus by the way we speak? If this is not the case, then we may be providing a way for God to be evil spoken of (Romans 2:24). Let us remember that we must let our light so shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

Finally, Paul also spoke about the way our speech should be as we talk to others, “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear” (Ephesians 4:29). Inappropriate jokes will not give grace to those who hear us but will let others know that we are not the kind of people that

give God the honor and glory He deserves. May our speech reflect the kind of faithfulness our God expects from all of us. May we stay away from pronouncing jokes that will keep us away from being a blessing to others.

Does the Bible Condemn the use of drugs?

Willie A. Alvarenga

There are some that argue the Bible does not condemn the use of smoking, or drugs. Their faulty reasoning is based on the following statement, “Well, the Bible nowhere says we are not to smoke or do drugs.” This kind of mentality is based upon a lack of correct reasoning from their part. There are some that just do not want to take the time to examine the issue at hand in a manner that is critical and reasonable.

By the use of the word “drugs” I am referring to illegal or legal substances that can harm our physical bodies and our minds. The term “drugs” is also used to refer to pharmacies where you get your medicines your doctor prescribes. This is not what I am referring to by the use of the word “drugs.”

If we study the Bible correctly, we will arrive at the conclusion that drugs are condemn by God. For instance, in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, we read about how Paul taught the Corinthian brethren to take care of their physical bodies because such is the temple of the Holy Spirit. In 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Paul also talks about the need to keep our bodies pure. Any substance, whatever it may be, if it will hurt our physical bodies, then we need to abstain from it.

In Galatians 5:19-21, the Apostle Paul gives a list of what constitutes the works of the flesh, that is, sinful practices. In this list, Paul mentions the word

“sorcery,” which comes from the Greek word **φαρμακεία** (pharmakeia). From this word we get our word “Pharmacy.” Lexicons define the word *pharmakeia* as the use of or administering of drugs on people (Thayer’s Greek Lexicon). As we can see, a word study of the term “sorcery” does imply the use and abuse of drugs.

As young people you must be very careful not to be deceived into the use of drugs, which can harm your minds and bodies. Any person who encourages you to use drugs does not care at all about your well-being. Such a person wants to see you get into trouble, and sick as well. You must be very careful and be smart about it. We need to remember that the eyes of God are everywhere (Proverbs 15:3).

The use and abuse of drugs is condemned by God and according to Galatians 5:21, those who practice such things will not inherit the Kingdom of heaven. This means that their final abode will not be heaven, but eternal punishment (Revelation 21:8). So, with this in mind, let me encourage you to keep your bodies pure for the Lord (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Also remember that just because a specific practice is not condemned explicitly in the Bible does not mean God does not condemn it implicitly. We must be careful to examine the evidence given to us within the pages of God’s Word and reason correctly about it. God bless you!

7 Bible Truths About Marriage You Need to Know

Willie A. Alvarenga

The Bible has a lot to say regarding marriage. What the Word of God teaches about marriage should concern our young people who, in the future, may end up entering the marriage relationship in order to form a family. Let us take a close look at some great truths we can learn about marriage. Please make every effort to remember these truths, not only because you may marry in the future, but also because you may teach others about God's law for marriage.

Truth #1: *Marriage is a divine institution established by God.* We are thankful that this is the case because if it was not, then we would be in great trouble. Man cannot be responsible for establishing marriage because man cannot have the proper wisdom to establish the laws that govern marriage. Proverbs 14:12 and 16:25 says, "There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end is the way of death." Also, Jeremiah 10:23 says, "O LORD, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps." These two verses help us to understand that man alone cannot be the standard of right and wrong. God is! We know that marriage was established by God because this is what the Bible teaches, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). It was God who created man, and it was Him who joined them in marriage. Therefore, marriage is a divine institution

established and governed by God, not man.

Truth #2: *Marriage is something that is practiced between a man and a woman.* According to the laws of God, marriage is between a man and a woman, not a man joined to another man, or a woman joined to another woman. In the passage of Genesis 2:24, God said that a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife. Jesus emphasized this truth in Matthew 19:4-5, "And He answered and said to them, Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?" This truth was also taught by the Apostles of Jesus Christ. For instance, Paul and Peter wrote about marriage and they always taught that marriage was between a man and a woman. Nowhere in the Bible we read about two men or two women being joined in marriage. This teaching comes from men, not from God. Therefore, marriage is between a man and a woman, just like God established it.

Truth #3: *Marriage is something that God expects for a man and a woman to practice till death do them apart.* The Bible teaches that marriage is for life, that is, until death separates the husband from the wife. Jesus taught in Matthew 19:6, "So then, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate." Those who enter marriage must acknowledge the fact that they are in for life. Such will spend the rest of their earthly life together till death do them apart. If someone cannot

accept this, then such are advice not to enter the marriage relationship.

Truth #4: *Marriage can only be terminated by either the man or the woman committing fornication.* According to the Bible, the only ones who can marry are: (1) Those who have never married before, (2) Those who have lost their spouse to death (widows), and (3) Those who are innocent in a marriage where one of the spouses has committed fornication. In this case, only the innocent is permitted to remarried. Jesus said in Matthew 19:9, “Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.” According to the passage, only fornication (sexual immorality) is the one cause by which a marriage can be terminated in the eyes of God. Other causes are not authorized by God. If there happens to be a sexual immorality in a marriage, both must work together to forgive and to make their marriage work. This is why it is so important that those who marry must be faithful to one another and love each other according to the laws of God.

Truth #5: *Marriage is for the purpose of avoiding sexual immorality.* In 1 Corinthians 7:1, Paul wrote, “Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.” Marriage can help a man and a woman stay away from fornication. There are some who do not marry but love to spend time with many women or

many men, committing sexual sins that are condemn by God. A man and a woman must decide whether they want to be married or not. If they don't, then such must stay away from sexual immorality because such is condemned by God, and it will keep people away from entering heaven someday (Revelation 21:8).

Truth #6: *Marriage is for the purpose of forming a family.* One of the blessings that marriage produces is the forming of a family. A family where husband and wives have children to enjoy. Only those who are married are authorized by God to procreate children. This is a blessing that those who are not married cannot have, unless they marry according to the laws of God. It is a great blessing being able to have children to love and raise according to the laws of God.

Truth #7: *Marriage has laws that must be upheld with respect.* Since God is the creator of man and woman, and since He is the one who instituted marriage, He is therefore the one authorized to provide laws that will govern marriage. What are these laws? According to the Bible those who marry must love each other, must respect the Word of God, must be faithful to one another, the husband must take care of his wife, the wife must take care of her husband. These laws can be found in Genesis 2:24; 1 Corinthians 7; Romans 7; Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-7, just to mention a few passages. Those who enter marriage must be very familiar with all the passages that deal with the laws of God on marriage. This will help them to know what God expects of them.

Thank God for marriage! You and I are here because of marriage. Our parents got married and then we came to the scene. One day you will get marry, and when that day comes, you will then experience the blessing this institution will bring to your life. Therefore, let me encourage you to study about marriage so that when the moment comes, you will be knowledgeable and will know what God expects of you. Be wise when it comes to selecting who you will spend the rest of your life with, and choose someone who will love you, but most importantly, one who will help you make it to heaven.

Apologetics and Our Young People

Willie A. Alvarenga

What is apologetics? This word comes from the Greek word *ἀπολογία*. Its meaning is to present a defense, an answer of the Christian faith. This word is found in several passages of the New Testament (Acts 22:1; 25:16; 1 Corinthians 9:3; 2 Corinthians 7:11; Philippians 1:7, 16; 2 Timothy 4:16 and 1 Peter 3:15). 1 Peter 3:15 says, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” This passage encourages Christians to always be ready to give a defense. This means that we need to prepare ourselves in the knowledge of God’s Word so we can provide a reasonable and Biblical answer to those who speak against what we believe. For instance, if someone were to say to us that God does not exist, then we must be prepared to help such a person understand that his belief in the non-existence of God is not valid. We then provide him with the evidence that he can examine in order to revisit his thoughts on the existence of God. Consequently, this implies the need to study the Bible and all the relevant information that we can know and use to help people come to a belief in God. We must first be convinced that God does exist in order to help someone else come to the same logical conclusion.

As young people attending classes at a public school, you may have friends who may not believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, and that such is an

authentic and historical Book that came from God. There may be those who do not believe you have to do something to be saved eternally. Being this the case, then there is a pressing need for you to study the Bible diligently in order to be able to teach others about God and His Word. Therefore, let me encourage you to study helpful material on the existence of God, the inspiration of the Bible, the historical Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, the one true church of the Bible, and the plan of salvation. These fundamental subjects, when studied correctly, will assist you in your efforts to bring people to Christ for salvation. Let me encourage you to take advantage of your fresh mind and start storing as much information as possible that can help you to help others come to Christ. But remember, you must be fully convinced first of all of these things in order for you to be able to be fully prepared to give a defense of the things you believe (1 Peter 3:15). The Apostle Paul was fully convinced about Jesus Christ, the one true church of the Bible, the existence of God, and many other fundamental subjects of the Christian faith. Because of this, he was able to teach the gospel of Christ to as many people as he could. Paul once stated, "I know in whom I have believed..." (2 Timothy 1:12). I pray that you will be able to have the same firm conviction about the things we believe about God. Let me encourage you to save up some money and purchase the "Defending the Faith Study Bible" from Apologetics Press. This Bible contains helpful information that will help you be prepared for the task of apologetics. In this Bible you will find several articles you can read on a weekly basis. Such will help you grow in the knowledge of

God's Word. May God bless us in our efforts to always be ready to give an answer of the hope that is in us.

Answer to Question Asked on Sex Change

Willie A. Alvarenga

A question was asked a few weeks ago by one of our young people at church. The question, in a summarized way, goes as follow: Is it okay for a man and a woman to change their natural sex gender? For instance, can a male change his sex to be a female, and a female change her sex to become a male? If these people do so, are they allowed to be married? If so, is their marriage approved by God?

This is a very important question because it deals with principles taught within the pages of the inspired Word of God. As we read in the book of Genesis, we learn that at the beginning of creation, the Creator, God, created men and women in His own image. Genesis 1:26-27 says, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." In this passage we learn that God created male and female for the purpose of being fruitful and multiplying the earth, as well as having dominion over the things that were created. We learn then that God,

as the Creator, knew exactly what He had created, and as such, man needs to understand that he or she does not have the authority to change what God has already created. In other words, a male cannot change his nature/sex in order to become a female, nor a female can change her nature/sex in order to become a male. Such practices go against what God has created. Even Jesus Christ said the following: "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them *male and female*, and said, for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no man separate" (Matthew 19:4-6). Those who try to change their sex in order to be described as the opposite sex are guilty of not reading and obeying what God has taught on this subject. If a male was created by God as male, then he needs to keep and uphold his manhood. The same goes for a female.

There is no passage in the entire Bible that provides authorization to do something that is not authorized by God. Therefore, a man and a woman does not have the permission from God, explicit or implicitly to change what God has created.

In the Book of Romans, the Apostle Paul spoke concerning this issue we are discussing. Notice what he penned, "For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. *For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise, also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one*

another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due” (Romans 1:24-25). Paul clearly talks about those man and women who had exchanged their God-given nature, in order to become what they were not. They practiced abomination before God by doing what they were doing. He even talks about men committing acts of immorality with other men, and women likewise. All of these things go contrary to God’s Will, and as such, we can know for sure that this is not approved by Him.

What would happen if a male changed his sex in order to be described as a female, and a female change her sex in order to be described as a male, and then both of them get “married”? Can their supposed “marriage” be approved by God? It does not take a rocket scientist to know the obvious answer to this question. The answer is an emphatic NO! First, such a union is not considered by the standards of God a marriage. Marriage is defined by Bible terms as a union between a man and a woman. Anything other than this does not in any way constitute a marriage. People may call it “marriage,” but in reality, it is not.

What would happen if a man discovers that the person he is married to used to be a man and not a woman? The answer is simple: Such a man needs to keep away from such a relationship. He has been deceived by the other person into thinking that he was a she, when in reality, he is a he. Remember that such “marriage” is not a marriage approved by God.

In summary, we can see that God does not

approved of any person to change their sex just because they want to do so. Such a practice constitutes a sinful one, and as such, they need to abstain from participating in it. God only authorizes the union in marriage of a man and a woman, not a man who wants to be a woman, or a woman who wants to be a man. The practices of homosexuality are condemned in the pages of the Bible, and as such, man needs to abstain from it (Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:24-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; 1 Timothy 1:10).

We pray that those who have done things contrary to God's Will, will repent of their sins and turn to God for forgiveness. If we have the opportunity to preach the gospel of Christ to them, we should do so. They have a soul that needs saving, and only God can save them if they repent of their sinful practices. The world in which we live is under the wicked one (1 John 5:19). For this reason, we need to always stay closer to God so that one day we can spend eternity with Him.

Do I have to Get Marry or Can I Stay Single?

Willie A. Alvarenga

This is another great question asked by one of our young people at church. It is a great question because the Bible deals with this subject. When it comes to marriage, it is important for us to understand that marriage was instituted by God at the beginning of time (Genesis 2:24). After God created Adam (Genesis 2:7), He saw that he was alone, and spoke the following words, "It is not good for man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18). After God said this, then He went ahead and performed the first operation on a human being, "Go the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place" (Genesis 2:21). This is similar to what happens in an operation room where the person is given anesthesia and then the surgery takes place.

After God created Eve, the text says, "The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man and brought her to the man. The man said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man" (Genesis 2:22-23). Once God brought the woman to the man, then He performed their wedding, so to speak, with the following words, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). This is how we are introduced to the first married couple in the history of mankind. I

said all of this to prove the point that God is the one who instituted marriage and as such, marriage is an honorable institution that should be withheld in high regard (Hebrews 13:4).

Now we discuss the question whether a man or a woman have to get married or not. One thing we must understand is that marriage is not for everyone. This was taught by Jesus in Matthew 19:1-12. In this passage of Scripture, Jesus taught about marriage, divorce and remarry. After Jesus taught to His disciple that the only reason by which a marriage can be terminated in a divorce is by fornication only, that is, sexual immorality. When the disciples heard this, the following was their reaction, "The disciples said to Him, if the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry" (Matthew 19:11). What the disciples were saying is this: If fornication is the only reason by which a marriage can be terminated, then it is better not to marry. The Jews were accustomed to divorcing their wives for any reason. Jesus comes to the scene and tells them that this is not the case. He stresses the fact that fornication is the only authorized reason by which a married couple can be divorced. After hearing their comments on the subject of marriage, Jesus went ahead and stated the following: "...He who is able to accept this, let him accept it." (Matthew 19:12). That is, let him who wants to enter the marriage relationship do so if he is willing to accept the teaching of Jesus; and if not, then don't do it. In this passage we see that marriage is not for everyone, but only for those who are able to accept the laws established by God concerning marriage. If I am

not able to accept God's laws on marriage, then I should not enter into the marriage relationship.

There is another passage that needs to be considered when it comes to deciding whether you want to get married or not. This passage is found in 1 Corinthians. Notice what the Apostle Paul wrote concerning those who are single: "But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband" (1 Corinthians 7:2). He also wrote, "But this I say by way of concession, not of command. Yet I wish that all men were even as I myself am. However, each man has his own gift from God, one in this manner, and another in that. But I say to the unmarried and to the widows that it is good for them if they remain even as I. But if they do not have self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn with passion" (1 Corinthians 7:6-9). What is Paul saying here? Well, he is basically teaching that he would like for a man and a woman to remain as he is, that is, single. Paul was a single person. There is no evidence in the New Testament that he was a married person. He would love for them to remain single, but he also states that if a woman and a man do not have self-control, then they should get marry. By self-control it is implied that those who are single, or widows may fall into the temptation of being guilty of sexual immorality while being in such a state. Those who are single may be tempted to practice fornication with other persons. And so, Paul says that if they are able to have self-control, and not be able to commit fornication, then such people should remain married, but if they cannot do so, then they should get marry.

The Apostle Paul is trying to avoid people from committing sin while being single or widow.

Getting marry is a decision that each man and woman must make. When a person studies the subject of marriage, he or she will learn that such a divine institution is a beautiful one because it is the means by which a man and a woman who love each other can spend the rest of their lives together in marriage. Marriage is also a blessing because it is the only way by which a married couple can procreate children to form a family. Nevertheless, if a person decides that he does not want to spend the rest of his life in marriage, and does not seek to form a family, then such a person is within his right not to do so. As you study the subject of marriage, you will learn that such is not a command by God. It is a privilege that God allows, but only for those who are able to keep His laws on marriage. The Apostle Paul decided to stay single in order to serve God in His Kingdom. If a man or a woman wants to do so, then they are able to live this way. He or she must only make sure that their lives are lived in such a way as to always give God the glory and honor He deserves. Hopefully, this information will answer your questions and doubts you may have concerning marriage. May the Lord continue to bless your desire to grow in the knowledge of His Word!

How Do I Know That God Hears My Prayers?

Willie A. Alvarenga

Most of the time people are under the impression that God does not hear their prayers. Others think that God always hears and answers their prayers. How do I know that God hears my prayers? Is there anything in the Bible that can help me understand that God is always there for me and that He hears my prayers? The Bible does have a lot to say about prayer. For instance, in the Gospel of John we have one particular verse where it says that God does not hear the prayers of the sinner. Notice what the text says, “Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him” (John 9:31). These words were spoken by the man whose eyesight was restored by Jesus. In speaking with the Pharisees, he told them that God does not hear sinners. Even though this man was not inspired by the Holy Spirit, his words carry a lot of truth. God, indeed, does not answer the prayers of a sinner, but if such a person wants to do His will, then God will hear him.

In the Book of Acts, we have the story of the conversion of Cornelius. According to the first verses of chapter 10, this man was a devout, and honest person. The record says that he prayed to God, and He sent Peter to preach the Gospel to him. In this narrative we see how God answered the prayer of Cornelius. Nevertheless, this man was one that was seeking to do God’s will. At the end of chapter 10, Cornelius and his household obeyed the Gospel and were saved. This is

how we know he wanted to do God's will.

Another passage that can help us to know whether God hears our prayers is 1 John 3:22. The text says, "And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight." Through this passage we learn that in order for God to hear and answer our prayers, we must keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. If someone does not do His will, then such person cannot expect God to hear and answer his or her prayers. Therefore, we must always seek to keep the commandments of God and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.

Based on these verses we have read we can be sure that God will hear and answer our prayers only if we keep His commandments, and only if we ask things according to His will (1 John 5:14-15). Are you keeping the commandments of God? Are you doing those things that are pleasing in His sight? If you and I practice lying, cheating, stealing, or anything that violates the commandments of God, then we cannot expect God to hear our prayers. We need to make sure we do God's will so that next time we need His help, He will be there for us. And whatever we ask according to His will, he will hear us (1 John 5:14-15).

Just imagine if our parents get sick and then we want God to help them, but when we pray to God, our lives are not in harmony with His will. God will not hear and answer our prayers if we are not keeping His

commandments. Prayer is a beautiful blessing from God. Let us make sure that we take good care of this blessing so that next time we need anything from God, He will be there to help us (Hebrews 4:16). God bless you!

Satan's Attacks on Young People (1)

Willie A. Alvarenga

Notice the following words penned by the Apostle Peter: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Through this passage we learn that we are to be sober and vigilant because the devil walks about like a roaring lion seeking to devour us.

The word “sober” comes from the Greek word νήψατε which basically means to be in control of one’s thought process and thus not be in danger of irrational thinking. It also carries the idea of not being drunk (Louw & Nida).

The word “vigilant” comes from the Greek word γρηγορήσατε which carries the idea of being awake, and to be in continuous readiness and alertness to learn (Louw & Nida). The reason why the Apostle Peter wants Christians to be sober and vigilant is because the devil is our adversary (enemy) and as such, he wants to destroy us.

Peter used the metaphor of a lion in order to describe how powerful the devil can be, and how terrible his destruction of Christians can be. This is the main reason why we need to stay awake and not let Satan destroy us. He has devoured many Christians who have fallen asleep in their spiritual life.

What would happen to you if you went to the jungle where there are roaring lions and then you fall asleep close to where they are? I believe the answer is an obvious one: The lions will kill you! A similar thing will happen to those who get distracted and fail to be sober and watchful – The devil will devour them!

It is imperative that we understand that Satan is real, and that he is after us in order to not let us make it to heaven. This is why we must understand how he works and what his intentions are. Throughout thousands of years Satan has tried to use various means to attack young people and make them do his will. In the next series of articles, I will deal with some of the methods he uses to attack young people. Please take a few moments of your time to think about the various ways on how Satan can destroy you. Once we know these methods, we need to be extra careful not to be deceived by him.

In 1 John 2:15-17, the Apostle John exhorts us not to love the world, nor the things that are in the world. In this passage he also tells us the ways Satan uses to tempt people. John mentioned, “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the vain glory of life” (v. 16).

The word “lust” comes from the Greek word ἐπιθυμία which means to greatly desire to do or have something. In this context the word carries a negative connotation, meaning, to greatly desire that which is forbidden by God. As I discuss the methods used by the devil to tempt us, we will clearly see these three

ways in every temptation that comes from him. Consequently, let us be sober and watchful so that Satan will not destroy us. If we truly have a deep desire to make it to heaven, then we need to do whatever it takes to remain faithful to God and do His will. Heaven will be a beautiful place, but in order to enter, we must be willing to resist Satan, and do God's will (Matthew 7:21). The next article will deal with part II. To God be the glory!

Satan's Attacks On Young People (2)

Willie A. Alvarenga

On our first article from two weeks ago we examined how Satan is trying to attack young people today. As a matter of fact, he has tried to attack young people for thousands of years. Please be sure to read again the first article, since this one included several definitions that we need to keep in mind in order to be well-prepared to defeat the enemy.

In this article, we will examine how Satan uses various means to tempt people. In our Sunday morning Bible class, we considered how the enemy sometimes uses bad influences in order to tempt us to do evil. In this world you will find good people who will encourage you to always do good, and also bad people who will encourage you to do evil. As a young person with Bible knowledge, you must be wise in your conduct and be smart about selecting the people you hang around with. In 1 Corinthians 15:33, Paul penned the following words, "Do not be deceived: Evil company corrupts good habits." The New Berkeley Version says, "Do not be misled. Bad associations corrupt good morals." In other words, we must be careful about the people we associate with because this may result in our departing from that which is good.

In Proverbs 13:20, we also read the following words, "He who walks with wise men will be wise, but the companion of fools will be destroyed." God through this passage is telling us the key to becoming

a wise person it to—walk with, associate with, those who are wise. Friends who practice sin will never become a good example to us. With this in mind, let us ask ourselves the following questions: What kind of friends do I have in school? Are they a positive influence in my life? If the answer to these two questions is a negative one, then the question is: What am I going to do about it?

Remember that your salvation depends in part on the kind of people you have as friends. A real friend will always look out for your own well-being. May God give you the necessary wisdom to not allow Satan to tempt you through bad company. God bless you all!

Satan's Attacks On Young People (3)

Willie A. Alvarenga

Last week we examined how Satan uses bad influences or friends in order to attack young people and cause them to sin. We also examined what the Bible teaches regarding how careful we need to be to wisely select the company we will have. Let us remember that evil company will corrupt our good morals (1 Corinthians 15:33; Proverbs 13:20).

In this article, we will consider another way Satan uses to tempt people. This means is call "technology." Technology can be very useful in a positive way. We use it all the time for our own benefit. Through technology we can accomplish the following things: Study online, find places, buy things, etc. Nevertheless, through technology we can also find sin one click away! This is one method Satan has used successfully in order to cause people to sin against God.

The use of computers, cell phones, and tablets can be the means by which people can end up in eternal punishment. Now, more than ever, sin is just one click away. You can have access to illicit websites where pornography is advertised, or the sale of drugs is made available. All kinds of sin can be access through the technology we have available. For this reason, we must be very careful not to use our computers and cell phones to practice sin. The Apostle Paul penned the following words in Romans 6:12-13,

“Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. And do not present your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness to God.” Notice the phrase Paul uses, “Do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin.” In this phrase, Paul is saying, do not present your bodies in order to serve sin. Allow me the opportunity to change the wording so I can make a good point. We could use Paul’s words and say, “Do not present your computers and cell phones as instruments of unrighteousness to sin.” In other words, do not even think about using your body or any other means to serve sinful practices.

Let us remember that sin will cause us to be lost eternally (Romans 6:23; Revelation 21:8). And, as such, let us not fall into temptation by using our technology in favor of Satan, but let us use it to the honor and glory of our heavenly Father.

3 Reasons Why Satan Attacks Young People

Willie A. Alvarenga

We have been considering ways Satan uses to attack our young people. So far, we have seen that his goal is to take to hell as many people as possible. He knows that hell has been prepared for him and his angels (Matthew 25:41, 46), and for this reason, he does not want to go there by himself. Consequently, he will try everything he can to cause our young people to be lost eternally. God's desire is for everyone to be obedient to His will so that they can be saved (1 Timothy 2:4). Obviously, this is not what Satan desires. His desires will always be the opposite of what God wants for us.

Now, with this in mind, let me suggest three reasons why Satan wants to destroy our young people:

1. ***Satan knows that young people have a great potential to serve God faithfully like Joseph, Daniel, Timothy, Titus, and many others.*** He wants young people to serve him, not God. So far, he has been successful in causing young people around the world to serve him. Nevertheless, we still have a lot of young people who have obeyed the Gospel of salvation and are now serving God faithfully in His Kingdom. Therefore, do not let Satan cause you to not serve God.
2. ***Satan knows that young people are the present and the future of the Church of Christ.*** He knows that once parents die, someone has to continue the work that has been done. Satan knows that young people will be the future

preachers, teachers, elders, deacons, and faithful members, and as such, he does not want them to serve in these capacities. Satan wants to destroy the church, but he will not be successful. God is greater than Satan (1 John 4:4). Consequently, do not allow him to keep you away from continuing the work of God.

3. *Satan knows that some young people don't have enough Bible knowledge, and for this reason he is making every effort to tempt them.*

One of the subtle ways on how Satan tempts people is when they are weak. If you remember, in Matthew 4:1-12, Jesus was very hungry when Satan came to Him and told Him to turn the stones to bread (v. 3-4). If you do not have enough Bible knowledge to withstand Satan, then he will destroy you. So, let me encourage you to not open the door to Bible ignorance, but keep your door of your heart open to God's inspired Word!

As a young person, you must acknowledge the fact that Satan is out to get you. Consequently, you must be strong enough to be able to defeat him with God's help. Let me encourage you to recognize the need to grow in the knowledge of God's Word so that you will be able to keep sin away from your life (Psalm 119:1-3, 9, 11). A failure to recognize the importance of Bible knowledge will result in your soul being lost eternally in hell (Hosea 4:6; Isaiah 5:13).

Does the Bible Say Anything About Being Insecure of Oneself and Having a Low Self-Esteem?

Willie A. Alvarenga

This question under consideration is a very important one, and the Bible has a lot to say in response to it. Let me start by defining what low self-esteem mean? According to a source, low self-esteem is characterized by a lack of confidence and feeling badly about oneself. It is argued that people with low self-esteem often feel unlovable, awkward, or incompetent.¹ We may also suggest that those who struggle with this type of problem often have a low view of themselves to where they think they may not be good for anything. Such a feeling has troubled the lives of many people around the world.

Having defined what low self-esteem is, let us now turn our attention to what the Bible says about the view we should hold about ourselves. According to the inspired Word of God, human beings have been created in the likeness and image of God.

The inspired writer penned the following words, “Then God said, Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. God

¹ <https://www.psychalive.org/low-self-esteem/>

created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:26-27). Let me begin by saying that the Hebrew word for "man" in this passage refers to both, male and female. It is a generic word used to describe humanity. Thus, just because the Bible uses the word "man" most of the time does not mean that women are excluded.

In this Genesis passage we see how God holds a high view of human beings. He thinks very positively and highly of His creation. As a matter of fact, when God finished creating everything, humans being the last of His creation, God said the following: "God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day (Genesis 1:31). It is worth noticing that God used the adjective "very good" right after He created man. All other instances where He created animals and everything else, God said, "It was good" (Genesis 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25). This phrase "very good" helps us to understand what God thinks about us. We are indeed very important to Him.

In Psalm 8, we can see what God thinks about us. Let us read it together: "O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth, Who have displayed Your splendor above the heavens! From the mouth of infants and nursing babes You have established strength because of Your adversaries, to make the enemy and the revengeful cease.

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your

fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained; What is man that You take thought of him, And the son of man that You care for him? Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty! You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, All sheep and oxen, And also the beasts of the field, The birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, Whatever passes through the paths of the seas. O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth!"

If you read this Psalm carefully, you will notice that God thinks we are very important to Him. Remember, we are His creation! In Psalm 139:13-14, the psalmist said, "For You formed my inward parts; You wove me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Your works, and my soul knows it very well. Consequently, if God thinks we are important to Him because we are His creation, then it follows that we should hold the same view of ourselves.

We are also able to see that we are important to God because He was willing to send his unique Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for us. John 3:16 tells us that God loved us so much that He sent Jesus to die for us. We must reason correctly about this: If we are not that important to God, then it follows that He would not have sent His Son to die for us.

God has prepared a beautiful place in heaven because He wants us there. The Apostle Paul said that

God desires for all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). This is why the grace of God that brings salvation to all men has appeared to us through His Son, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:11). Paul also said that even though we were sinners, God sent His Son to die for us (Romans 5:8). God will make sure that through our obedience to Him, we make it to heaven. In Isaiah 41:10, He said, “Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” God has promised to help us in time of need. Why? The reason is obvious: We are important to Him!

There is also an excellent passage in the New Testament that can help us to always have the right view about ourselves. Notice the words that the Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy, a young evangelist of the first century, “For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.” This passage has a great message for those who have a low self-esteem. God has equipped you to be able to overcome any negative thought that may come to your minds. In Christ we are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37). Remember that we can do all things through Christ who gives us the strength (Philippians 4:13).

All of these things that we have considered thus far should help us to always have an optimistic view of ourselves and never open the door to a low self-esteem attitude. God loves us so much, and He wants

the best for us. Satan, our enemy (Matthew 13:39), knows exactly what God thinks of us. For this reason, he has made it his diligent effort to get us to think that we are not important to God and to ourselves. He wants us to have a low and negative view of ourselves. The devil wants us to think that we are worthless and good for nothing. He knows that if he can get us to have a low self-esteem, then he will succeed in keeping us down from doing God's Will. Those who have a low self-esteem will keep their minds busy with negative thoughts that will hurt them.

Therefore, let us remember who we are. We are important to God, and as such, we must also hold a positive view of ourselves. If we do this, then we will be able to keep our minds busy with those things that will help us to be better persons in this world. We will be able to give God the honor and glory He deserves! Consequently, let's get busy doing the Lord's work! God bless you all!

Great Examples of Young People in the Old Testament:

Joseph

Willie A. Alvarenga

The Bible is filled with great examples of young people who served God faithfully. God has provided these examples in order for our young people to study them and follow their examples. Let us remember that the Bible encourages us to be imitators of good examples (1 Corinthians 4:16; 1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians 3:17; 1 Peter 2:21; 3 John 11).

In this first article we will examine our first great example from the Old Testament—The life of Joseph.

Joseph is a great example of moral purity

We can learn about his life in the book of Genesis, especially chapters 35-50. Joseph's example of moral and spiritual purity is one every young person must consider carefully. In chapter 39 we learn how Potiphar's wife tempted Joseph into committing sexual immorality. She said to him, "lie with me" (v. 7). This was a sinful invitation to commit sexual immorality. In this same passage, the text says that she looked at Joseph with desire. This word is in the imperfect tense, which means that she continually looked at Joseph with sinful desire. Joseph's response to this temptation was and continues to be worth imitating. Notice his response to Potiphar's wife, "*There is no one greater in this house than I, nor has he kept back anything from me but you, because you are his wife. How then can I do this great*

wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9).

Joseph was really concerned about not sinning against God, and against Potiphar, a person who had entrusted him with everything. When temptation comes our way, we must first think about our commitment to God and to others. If our lives are lived faithfully, then we will be able to overcome the temptations of this world. As you grow older, Satan will try his best to tempt you in every possible way. We must then be ready to defeat temptation by always remembering how faithful we need to be towards God. Joseph remembered this, and this is the reason why he was able to be victorious over temptation.

If temptation ever knocks at your door, remember Joseph, and remember how much you love God and how faithfulness can lead you into eternal reward in heaven. Never forget that with God's help, you can overcome temptation.

Great Examples of Young People in the Old Testament: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah

Willie A. Alvarenga

In the book of Daniel, we read about four young men who have become a great example to many young people throughout the ages. Sadly, some young people today have not even taken the time to read about them and learn as much as they can. These four young men are: Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah. The names of these young men were changed: Daniel was named Belteshazzar, Hananiah was named Shadrach, Mishael was named Meshach and Azariah was named Abed-nego (Daniel 1:7).

These young men were part of the Jews who were taken into captivity by the Babylonian empire. The place where they lived now presented a serious threat to their faith. It was not easy to live a faithful life to God in such a place; nevertheless, these four young men provide a great spiritual lesson that no matter where you live, you can still live a faithful life that will bring honor and glory to God.

In chapter 1 we read how Daniel and his friends refused to contaminate themselves with the food of the Babylonian kingdom (1:8). Their food consisted of things that were in direct violation with the Mosaic

laws to which these young men adhered. We may say that perhaps the food was attractive and delicious, but they refused to take part in it. Daniel 1:8 says, "But Daniel made up his mind that he would not defile himself with the king's choice food or with the wine which he drank; so, he sought *permission* from the commander of the officials that he might not defile himself." In this passage we learn how Daniel and his friends (vs. 12-13) were courageous enough to say NO to those things that could defile their faith in God. The lesson we can learn here is that we must be willing to say NO to the things of this world (1 John 2:15-17; Hebrews 11:25); things that can defile our obedience to God.

As long as we are in this world, we will be presented with a lot of things that can pull us in the wrong direction. As young people whose only desire is to please God, we must be willing and courageous enough to say NO to the devil and yes to God's will. Daniel and his friends could have been in serious trouble by refusing to partake of the Babylonian food; nevertheless, they were willing to take the risk in their desire to please God, rather than man (Acts 5:39). May God give us more young people like Daniel and his friends who were courageous enough to do God's will!

What the Bible Teaches About the Second Coming of Christ

Willie A. Alvarenga

The Old Testament announced the first coming of Christ during the times of the New Testament. This was done through prophecies spoken by the Old Testament prophets. In the New Testament we read about how Jesus did indeed come fulfilling all Messianic prophecies. The New Testament also teaches that Jesus will come back again. With reference to this, what does the New Testament teach regarding His second coming? In this brief article, we will examine the answer to this question. In next week's article, we will answer the question: How can people get ready for the second coming of Christ?

The New Testament teaches that Christ will indeed come back again. During the ministry of Jesus, He provided several teachings where He taught people about the reality of His second coming. For instance, in Matthew 24:36 and 24:44, Jesus taught that His coming was going to take place when people least expected. This means that we must be ready all the time! In John 14:1-3, He encouraged His disciples about coming back one day to take them to His Father's house in heaven. Thus, we can see that His second coming is real!

The New Testament also teaches that when Christ comes back again it will be the end of the world. This teaching was given by the Apostle Peter in 2 Peter 3:9-13 (please read). In this section Peter tells us that the earth will be destroyed, and that faithful Christians will enter heaven to be with God. We must

remember that it was never God's plan to allow the earth to remain forever. One day it will be destroyed, and for this reason we must get ready.

The New Testament also teaches that Christ will come back again on a cloud. This teaching is found in Acts 1:9-11 where Jesus ascended to heaven, and two men dressed in white garments spoke to the apostles and reassured them that just as He left, He will indeed come back in like manner. The Apostle Paul taught in 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 that Jesus will come back in a cloud with His angels. John, the Apostle, also taught that Jesus will come in the clouds (Revelation 1:7). This will be a wonderful day when we get to see the Son of God, the Savior of the world coming back in a cloud.

The New Testament also teaches that when Christ comes back again, judgement day will take place. The NT teaches the reality of a judgement day (2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:27). This passage says that we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ to give an account of all the things we have done while in our physical bodies. At the coming of Jesus Christ, those who did not obey His gospel will experience everlasting punishment (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). This is another reason why we must be ready!

We must keep in mind all of these four things we can learn about the second coming of Christ, and much more that the New Testament reveals. Next week, Lord willing, we will examine the things that can be done in order to be ready for this wonderful day. May God help us to be mindful of the second coming of His Son!

Preparing for the Second Coming of Christ

Willie A. Alvarenga

Last week we examined some truths about the second coming of Christ. This article will focus on what you and I can do in order to be ready for this wonderful day in which we will be able to take a beautiful journey into our heavenly abode. How exciting it is to think about heaven! I don't know about you, but every time I think about this beautiful place, I feel like I want to be there already. We must keep in mind that God wants to have us there (1 Timothy 2:4). He desires the salvation of everyone (2 Peter 3:9), but sadly, not everyone will make it to heaven (Matthew 7:13-14). What about you? Are you ready for the second coming of Christ? Have you thought about what's going to happen if you don't make it to heaven? These are questions that need answers from all of us! With this in mind, let us examine what you and I can do to be ready for the second coming of Christ, and by doing so, also be ready to enter heaven one day.

First, a person must have a strong desire to be in heaven someday. Any person who does not have the desire to make it to heaven will not do anything to be ready for the second coming of Christ. A strong desire in our lives is what motivates us to accomplish a lot of things in life. From a spiritual perspective, a person must want to be in heaven in order for such a person to do something about it.

Second, a person must comply with God's will in order to be ready for the second coming of Christ and also be ready to make it to heaven. Jesus made this clear when in His Sermon on the Mount stated the following words, "Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord, will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but only He who does the will of my Father in Heaven" (Matthew 7:21). This passage needs no explanation, since it is clear as water. A person desiring to enter heaven must acknowledge the fact that he or she must obey God's will.

Third, a person must obey the Gospel of Christ in order to be ready for the second coming of Christ and to enter heaven. According to the Apostle Paul, the Gospel is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16). If this is the case, and it is, then a person must obey this message in order to enjoy God's power to salvation. The Gospel of Christ consists in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Any person who desires to enter heaven must be obedient to this powerful message of salvation.

Fourth, a person must live a faithful life in Christ in order to be ready for the second coming of Christ and for heaven. Jesus also made this clear when He said to the church at Smyrna, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10). Only the faithful will be able to be part of those who will enjoy a journey to heaven. Consequently, a person must be mindful of the need to live his or her life in accordance with God's written Word.

The second coming of Christ is real, and it will happen. The question is: Are we ready for this great day? It is my prayer that we can answer this question with an emphatic YES! If your answer is no, then let me encourage you to do everything you can to be ready for Christ. Remember, God and Jesus want you in heaven, but it will be up to you whether you will spend eternity with them. May God help us to be mindful of the need to be prepared for this wonderful day in which we will meet Jesus in the clouds.

Ways on How Young People Can Be Helpful in the Church (1)

Willie A. Alvarenga

How can our young people be a great blessing to the church? In what areas can they contribute to the work of the Lord? In this brief article I would like to examine a few areas of service where our young people can be helpful to the work of the church. As you examine these areas please make plans to be an active participant so that you can give God the glory and honor through your faithful service in His Kingdom.

- (1) ***Young people can be a blessing to the church by first obeying the Gospel of Jesus Christ.*** In order to be able to please God, a person must be willing to obey Him (John 14:15). We can only give God the glory He deserves when we are part of His church (Ephesians 3:21). When a person obeys the Gospel of Christ by being baptized for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), such a person also is added to the Body of Christ, which is His church (Acts 2:47; Ephesians 1:22; 5:23). Therefore, if you want to be a blessing to the work of God, you must then be obedient to God first by obeying the Gospel.
- (2) ***Young people can be a blessing to the work of the church by asking the preacher how they can help with the work in God's Kingdom.*** We must acknowledge the fact that we must not ask what the church can do for us, but what we can do for the church. Sometimes we are too busy thinking about what others can do for us, and by doing so, we fail to think about what we can do for

others. Let us start our efforts to serve the church by asking what we can do for the Lord.

- (3) *Young people can be a blessing to the church by encouraging and commending others for the work they do in God's Kingdom.* In the church you will find a lot of members who sacrifice a lot for the work of the Lord. Such members should be encouraged to continue giving God the glory He deserves. We are to give honor to whom honor is due (Romans 13:7). Your encouraging words will make a great positive impact in the life of those who serve God. Be an encourager!

- (4) *Young people can be a blessing to the work of the Lord by helping maintain the building clean.* If you see trash on the floor, pick it up. If you see chairs out of place, fix them. If you see the literature on the back table disorganized, organize it. If you see things you can help with, then do it. We cannot be of great help to the work of the Lord by just staying still. We must get up and do something for the Lord!

Next week we will consider more ways on how our young people can be of great service to the work of the Lord. In the meantime, please take the time to read this article again, and after you do, think about what is missing in your service to the Lord. Once you recognize these things, then this will serve as a motivation to be a faithful participant in the work of God.

Ways on How Young People Can Be Helpful in the Church (2)

Willie A. Alvarenga

The first article from last week provided a list of 4 things our young people can do in order to become a blessing to the work of the Lord. In this second part 4 more ways will be provided on how you can be a blessing in the church. May you please consider these things carefully!

- (5) *Young people can be a blessing to the church by praying for the work of God.* When was the last time you prayed for the church? We can help with the work of God by praying for the preacher, the elders, and the members who work hard in God's Kingdom. We are to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Please take a moment to remember in prayer those who labor in the church.
- (6) *Young people can be a blessing to the work of the church by inviting friends to come and study God's Word with you.* There are some young members of the church who really take this part seriously. Some of them have brought visitors to the church services. We thank those who take the time to remember the spiritual well-being of others. One of the best things you can do for the Lord is to bring more souls to Him. Consequently, as you have opportunity, remember to invite your friends to church services; they will learn a lot from God's Word!
- (7) *Young people can be a blessing to the church by being a good example to those outside the*

church. One of the ways by which the work of the church has been damaged is by members who are not a light to the world (Matthew 5:16). A good example will be a blessing on someone's life, so take the time and make every effort to be a good example to your friends and anyone who can be blessed by your good conduct (1 Timothy 4:12).

- (8) *Young people can be a blessing to the work of the Lord by being the kind of young people God would have you to be.* If you make every effort to be like Daniel, Joseph, Timothy, Titus, Paul, etc., then you will be the kind of young people God desires (1 Corinthians 11:1). By being what God would have you to be will help you to be a great blessing to the work of the Lord. Every morning you wake up, make sure you think about how you will conduct your life before the world. Always remember that God wants you to be faithful to Him. If you strive to be a faithful Christian, then you will be what God wants you to be.

There are many ways on how you can be a blessing to the work of the Lord. May you take the time to consider these 8 ways on how you can help with the work of the church. Remember, Jesus paid a great price for the church (1 Peter 1:18-20; Acts 20:28). May God help us to never be a stumbling block to the work of the church. We have so much potential to be a blessing to the church. Also remember that you are the present and the future of the Lord's church. You will be the ones who will continue the work others have started but are no longer with us. I pray for the Lord to give

you the wisdom and knowledge to always do His Will.
Thank you for what you do in God's Kingdom!

You are very important to God!

Willie A. Alvarenga

This is article #52, the last one that will be included in this book I am planning to publish soon. This book will include 52 Bible articles that were written the last part of 2019, and part of 2020. It is my prayer that this book will be a great blessing to those who take the time to read it.

In this last article I want to convey the wonderful idea that you are indeed very important to God. Consequently, let me share with you a few reasons why you are so important to Him.

(9) ***Young people are very important to God because they are God's creation.*** Yes, you are God's creation. You are not a product of an evolutionary process, but part of God's creation. In the book of Genesis (1 & 2), we learn that God is the one who creates humans. Consequently, if God is our creator, then we must be very important to Him! It was only after creating humans when God said in Genesis, "Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good..." (1:31).

(10) ***Young people are very important to God because they can serve Him while being young.*** Young people such as Joseph, Daniel and his friends, Timothy, Titus, and more, gave God their youth in service to Him. Their strength was used in order to give God the glory He deserves. God loves you because He sees a great potential in your life. There are many things you

can do that older people can't. Therefore, serve God with all your youth, strength and heart!

- (11) *Young people are very important to God because they have great potential to store God's Word in their minds.* The majority of the time young people are the ones who have a great and fresh mind to be able to memorize hundreds of Bible verses. Their youth allows them the opportunity to study God's Word and to commit Bible verses to memory. These passages can be used to share the good news of salvation with as many people as possible. Consequently, allow God's Word to find a special place in your heart (Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 3:18).

Do not ever think that you are not special to God because indeed you are! God loves you so much and desires for you to honor Him through your youth. You have great potential to do many things for the Lord. Therefore, remember that you are important to God because you are His creation; second, you have great potential to honor God in your youth, and third, you have great potential to treasure God's Word in your minds. May the Lord bless your life in your faithful service to Him!

Final Words

It has been a great blessing being able to write these 52 articles. I can say with much joy that I have learned a lot from God's Word just by studying and writing these articles. It is my fervent prayer that this material be of great spiritual help to those who have taken the time to read each article, and to those who will read it for the first time.

I now look forward to writing 52 more articles that I am confident will be a great blessing to you. Thank you for your interest in learning more from God's written Word.

May God always give us the sincere desire to continue learning from the Scriptures. To God be the glory in everything we do in His name!