

The Christian Life

Professor Geoffrey Bromiley told me how one day, standing in the mountains of the Sierra Nevada in California, high above Yosemite Valley, he was gazing at the beauty of the scene – the cascading waterfalls, the gigantic sequoia redwood trees, the lake below – when someone beside him exclaimed: “Do you know, if they put a dam down there, they could flood this valley and irrigate the farms of central California!” This person was preoccupied with the question of how to find enough water to meet human needs! It shows the pragmatism of our culture, which evaluates our world in terms of utility, means and ends. Here were two people with the same perceptual field but with two totally different apperceptions. The one saw beauty and the other only utility. So it can be in the world of theology. We can be so preoccupied with the problems of humanity, of society, of individual need or the problems of the self, that we see the Gospel exclusively in terms of these issues. We adopt an anthropological starting point, and then seek to justify religion in terms of its pragmatic value or relevance for our contemporary self-understanding – offering programs, structures, organizations, machinery to deal with these problems and the countless calls for action. It is as though by doing something, becoming more efficient, we will be successful and find solutions. Bonhoeffer’s plea to such a world is to give primacy to the question of *who* in our theology. He points out that, throughout the Bible, the indicatives of grace always precede the imperative of law and obligation. It is only as we know *who* God is and *what* he has done and is doing that we can find appropriate answers to the question of *how*, and then see the incredible relevance of the gospel to every area of life.

James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community, and the Triune God of Grace*, p. 70.

For Torrance, if we have no doctrine of the risen righteousness of Christ and of our union with him through the Spirit then we have mutilated and gravely emptied the doctrine of justification of much of its content. For him therefore a ‘purely legal’ or a ‘purely forensic’ understanding of justification (that our status as sinners is purely one of having righteousness ‘reckoned’ to us, i.e. that through Christ we are treated as righteous in terms of the law while still sinners in ourselves) overlooks the positive righteousness of the risen Jesus and the fact that we are brought into real union with him through the Spirit. We are still sinners and have no righteousness of our own, but through real union with Christ and his righteousness we do have a real righteousness in him and are made righteous in him, not simply declared to be righteous.

Thomas F. Torrance, *Atonement*, ed. Robert T. Walker, p. xlix

To leave a man entrapped by sin to his own devices (self-help, self-determination, self-discipline, self-reformation, etc.) is to throw upon him a burden he cannot bear and to affirm that God Himself cannot transform the helpless, uphold the weak, and raise the dead with the power of His might. As the Apostle Paul said, “The life that I live is not I, but Christ who lives in me.”

James Nickel

Knowledge puffs up but love edifies" (I Corinthians 8:1). The tendency in gaining knowledge is to develop pride in that knowledge. Arrogance will attach itself to knowledge unless that knowledge is enveloped in the love of God. In this encasement, knowledge will never show off; it will serve.

James Nickel

Any and all attempts at self-restoration end in futility since these attempts are made in who we are as independent agents. God in Christ became one of us to do for us what we cannot do in ourselves.

James Nickel

My fourteen-month-old grandson has just learned to use his legs. With unsteady steps and a few falls, he has learned to explore the rooms of our home. After experiencing this freedom, he shakes his head indicating an emphatic “no” when placed in a room where the doorways are “child gated.”

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This afternoon, I led him outdoors to our gate-free front yard. I opened the door of my office. Then, the screen door. With both doors open, I beckoned him to the outside. A tentative look and non-mobile legs indicated he wanted to stay put, but I held out my hand. Grabbing it, he crossed the threshold with me. Then, I let go of his hand and he took a few steps toward the front-yard and stopped. For the next few seconds, I could see that he was assimilating the ambiance of the outdoors ... the invigorating fresh air, the flowing clouds in sky high above, the sounds of children playing across the street, the “drip drop” of a light rain. Then, with as much boldness and freedom as his wobbly legs would allow, he advanced into God’s universe with the expression of pure joy radiating in his face.

And so it is intended to be, as children of God walking in the freedom of Christ, the New Man who, by His redefinition of the imago Dei, has laid the groundwork, in His Incarnation and Atonement, for us to explore the wondrous joys of the New Creation in and with Him.

James Nickel

I was fellowshiping with a couple of local pastors one morning and one pastor made a comment on the purpose of pastoral ministry: to equip the saints for the work of service (Ephesians 4:10-12). The Greek word for equip in Eph. 4:12 is *katartismos* and was used in NT times as a word describing the mending of nets and for the setting of broken bones.

What intrigued me in this discussion and what I highlighted was the parallel to Galatians 6:1 where the word “restore” is *katartizō*. Same root! So, equipping the saints is amplified in meaning by the context of Galatians 6:1 ... loving restoration, the setting, the healing, of broken lives. Such is the heart of the Great Shepherd of the Sheep and the heart of His calling to all under shepherds.

James Nickel

Every man has a train of thought on which he rides when he is alone. The dignity and nobility of his life, as well as his happiness, depend upon the direction in which that train is going, the baggage it carries, and the scenery through which it travels.

Joseph Fort Newton

You can trust Someone who went to the uttermost depths to save you.

James Nickel

Life in Christ is a journey, from glory to glory, where we learn to participate in the self-giving love, the glory, of the Triune God as He envelops us, embraces us, and empowers us by His Spirit to be conformed to His likeness (what predestination is after ... Romans 8:29-30) by demonstrating, better yet, incarnating, God’s way of loving to our neighbors.

James Nickel

If you have taken a wrong turning, then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man.

C. S. Lewis

There are situations in life where no one is a winner; all parties; i.e., both sides have lost. The sad fact about this is that, while both sides have lost, usually one side thinks it has won. It will unfortunately take time (along with some heartrending experiences) for this side to realize its total and absolute blindness to the reality of losing.

James Nickel

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When you betray somebody else, you also betray yourself.

Isaac Basbevis Singer

Hateful to me as the gates of Hades is that man who hides one thing in his heart and speaks another.

Homer

It is for people whom we care nothing about that we demand happiness on any terms: with our friends, our lovers, our children, we are exacting and would rather see them suffer much than be happy in contemptible and estranging modes.

C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*

“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20). “The testimony” is God’s revelation as a system of belief and a rule of duty. If men will not obey every word of God, there is no light in them, or, no dawn or morning, no future, for them.

Joseph Addison Alexander, *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, p. 193

The value of the gift is in the thoughts of the giver.

Lila A. Nickel

The Biblical Christian is not primarily concerned with knowing the will of God (a man-centered, anthropological, non-theistic approach); the Biblical Christian is primarily concerned with knowing God for it is in knowing God that we will know His way and His will (a God-centered, theological approach).

Glenn R. Martin (1935-2004)

When people concoct evil in the name of God, note the devious ways in which they quote Scripture to justify their positions.

James Nickel

An unnatural focus on evil can draw evil to you.

Mike Tefft, *The Monkey House on Sanepa Hill*, p. 123

What we suffer from today is humility in the wrong place. Modesty has moved from the organ of ambition ... [and] settled upon the organ of conviction, where it was never meant to be. A man was meant to be doubtful about himself, but undoubting about the truth; this has been exactly reversed. We are on the road to producing a race of men too mentally modest to believe in the multiplication table.

G. K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, pp. 31-32

There is no future in frustration.

Anonymous

God is not constrained by our petty timetables.

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, p. 26

Christianity that is nothing but certainties quickly becomes haughty and arrogant, rigid and unbending.

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, p. 26

... real professions of faith manifest themselves in a principial death to self-interest, in a principial commitment to the cause of Christ and his gospel.

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, p. 71

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... grief and compassion without outrage reduces to mere sentiment, while outrage without grief hardens into self-righteous arrogance and irascibility.

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, p. 100

We are all under the sentence of death; we are all terminal cases.

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, p. 106

Pain tends to make people better; or bitter.

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, p. 108

Much more to be condemned is that form of theology that tells believers they *ought* to be healed, and that if they are not, it is because they lack faith. As far as I have been able to observe, those who propagate such theology die at no slower a rate than those who do not adhere to such theology. The sad fact is that this triumphalist theology is not only theologically ungrounded, it is pastorally cruel. Thoughtful Christians must come to grips not only with the truth that God can and sometimes does heal, but also with the truth that this side of Jesus' return "people are destined to die" (Heb. 9:27).

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, p. 112

... the object of much of the biblical revelation is not to make us comprehend exhaustively, but something else. Doubtless God could have told us more than he has; doubtless we will find out more things in the new heaven and the new earth. But we are sufficiently self-centered that extra knowledge about God would simply pander to our desire to be gods ourselves.

[Never] assume that everything that takes place in God's universe *ought* to be explained to us.

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, p. 152

In short, God is less interested in answering our questions than in other things: securing our allegiance, establishing our faith, nurturing a desire for holiness. An important part of spiritual maturity is bound up with this obvious truth. God tells us a great deal about himself; but the mysteries that remain are not going to be answered at a merely theoretical and intellectual level. We may probe a little around the edges, using the minds God has given us to glimpse something of his glory. But ultimately the Christian will take refuge from questions about God not in proud, omniscient explanations but in adoring worship.

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, pp. 219

What is clear is that it is in extremity that many Christians drink most deeply of the grace of God, revel in his presence, and glory in whatever it is—suffering included—that has brought them this heightened awareness of the majesty of God.

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, pp. 218

To the eyes of faith, there are, finally, no accidents, only incidents; and in these, Paul assures us, God is working *for our good* (cf. Romans 8:28-30).

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, pp. 214

The mystery of providence defies our attempt to tame it by reason. I do not mean it is illogical; I mean that we do not know enough to be able to unpack it and domesticate it. Perhaps we may gauge how content we are to live with our limitations by assessing whether we are comfortable in joining the biblical writers in utterances that mock our frankly idolatrous devotion to our own capacity to understand.

D. A. Carson, *How Long, O Lord? Reflections on Suffering and Evil*, pp. 201-202

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A person cannot receive the depth of purification that he needs if he retains an independent spirit, because the independence itself represents a crucial stronghold for sin.

Vern S. Poythress, *Redeeming Science: A God-Centered Approach*, p. 57

Heresy is not merely and only doctrinal aberration. In the Greek, the word means “a choice,” a choice that engenders disunity, disruption, divisiveness. Heresy is a choice made on the side of any issue with the intent to inflict pain on another person. Heresy fractures the unity of the Spirit through the sledgehammer of personal destruction. The Biblical Christian seeks to know Truth and seeks to express Truth through love (Ephesians 4:15). To absolutize Truth at the expense of love or love at the expense of Truth is to open the door to sectarian divisiveness.

James Nickel

Why is it that those who are the quickest to judge are often those in possession of the fewest facts?

John R. Wooden

Joel 2:15, “I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you.” Galatians 6:7, “Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.” God in His unmerited grace promises restoration when we repent of our sin or acts of foolishness. God restored King David, after his sin of adultery and murder, but he also was not allowed to build the temple and his family was, using modern parley, dysfunctional (i.e., there was a reaping to his sowing). There is both restoration and reaping. God’s restoration is comparable to our singing again of His wonderful and marvelous grace. Reaping is comparable to our singing, not in major key, but in minor key.

James Nickel

No person in the world ever attempted to wrong another without being injured in return, somehow, somehow, sometime.

Earl Nightingale (1921-1989)

Wisdom is a central aspect of God’s covenantal relationship with man. In Proverbs 8, wisdom is personified, a truth revealed in the Wisdom that is in Christ (Colossians 2:3). The Bible stresses that men who do not want wisdom from God, a wisdom that is therefore God-centered, will get the vanity of self-centeredness instead (the message of Ecclesiastes). Unless the wisdom men pursue is founded upon the Truth of the revelation of God revealed in His Word, any building they construct will be founded on sand (Matthew 7:24-27). The epitome of foolishness is to absolutize anything other than the full authority of God’s Word. A life furthered in such foolishness will be under the burden of God’s curse, a curse that can only be lifted by surrender to the covenant of God in Christ.

James Nickel

We turn to God when our foundations are shaking, only to learn that it is God who is shaking them.

Charles West

It is when, “having put aside all earthly care,” we seem to have left *this world*, that we, in fact, recover it in all its reality.

Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*, p. 45

The one spiritual disease is thinking that one is quite well.

G. K. Chesterton

To laugh is to risk appearing a fool.

To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.

To reach out for another is to risk involvement.

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To expose feelings is to risk exposing our true self.

To place your ideas, your dreams, before the crowd is to risk loss.

To love is to risk not being loved in return.

To live is to risk dying.

To hope is to risk despair.

To try at all is to risk failure.

But risk, we must, because the greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing. The man, the woman, who risks nothing, does nothing, is nothing.

Unknown

Many who have lost the faith of their forebears or who have experienced a crisis of faith have become rabid denominationalists, confessional polemicists, high church ritualists or simply latitudinarians willing to live and let live. Such persons are also inclined to become theological faddists, swayed by the latest ideologies penetrating the church from culture. With the erosion of faith, demons enter to fill the spiritual vacuum in the soul.

Donald G. Bloesch

Whereas the Greek mystery religions were oriented about the manifestations of the sacred, appealing to the visual sense, biblical religion rests on the proclamation of the faith and has an iconoclastic dimension.

Donald G. Bloesch

It is the neglect of dogma that makes for dullness. The Christian faith is the most exciting drama that ever staggered the imagination of man—and the dogma *is* the drama.

Dorothy L. Sayers, *Creed-or-Chaos*, p. 5

If you hug to yourself any resentment against anybody else, you destroy the bridge by which God would come to you. If you do not forgive other people, you yourself can never *feel* forgiven, because you will never *be* forgiven. How can I be so sure about that? Simply because Jesus said so ... “But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matthew 6:15.) Jesus was not sentimental about the alternatives. He was blunt and honest. In other words, if you will forgive others when they offend you, then your Heavenly Father will forgive you too. But if you refuse to forgive others, then your Heavenly Father will not, indeed cannot, forgive you your offenses. So—if you would have peace in your heart—if you would know the forgiveness of God—it is a case of forgive—or else.

Peter Marshall (1902-1949), *A Man Called Peter*, p. 318

The power of God will be manifested through the man or woman who humbly receives (i.e., stands under) the Living and Abiding Word of God. Pseudo-power, impotence in God’s eyes, will be manifested through pride.

James Nickel

We are all in the same boat on a stormy sea and we owe each other a terrible loyalty.

G. K. Chesterton (1874-1936)

Robust theological confession (belief) and Christ-like practical compassion (behavior) are never to be separated; they go hand in hand.

James Nickel

Don’t destroy something good simply because it has been abused.

Martin Luther (1483-1546)

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Worship is to be fascinated with who God is ... worship in truth therefore brings us into alignment with the purposes of the God who is there and is not silent. To worship God is to express our humanity to its fullest extent.

James Nickel

What matters most is not what happens to us, but how we interpret what happens to us.

James Nickel

As a believer submits to and worships the truth of who God is, he will discover that God's will is his delight (i.e., God's will does not run counter to the *imago dei* redeemed). Jesus saw the fulfillment of His Father's will as His highest delight and joy (Hebrews 12:2; Psalm 40:7-8). Jesus, through the outworking of the Holy Spirit, lives the will of His Father through His people. True fulfillment and joy can only be known by being God's servant friend and bearing fruit thereby.

James Nickel

God's will does not run counter to a believer. Jesus saw the fulfillment of His Father's will as His highest delight and joy (Hebrews 12:2; Psalm 40:7-8). Jesus, through the outworking of the Holy Spirit, lives the will of His Father through His people. True fulfillment and joy can only be known by being God's servant friend and bearing fruit thereby.

James Nickel

In our most trying times, it is not we who hold on to God, but God who holds on to us.

James Nickel

Worshiping the Triune God does not restrict or narrow one's life; in worship, one loses his life (and sin's entrapments) and thereby gains a foretaste, and only a foretaste of the "imago dei."

James Nickel

quid hoc ad aeternitatem - "time is short, eternity is long." Eternity is a value beyond compare.

James Nickel

One of the advantages of hitting rock bottom (no matter how painful or devastating) is that God slays the monster of arrogance that resides in you.

James Nickel

"All the words of my mouth are righteous; there is nothing twisted or crooked in them. They are all straight to him who understands, and right to those who find knowledge" (Proverbs 8:8-9). If a person does not receive God's Word as truth, that person will not understand, will lack knowledge, will not be wise, and if that person uses Scripture, he or she will end up twisting Scripture into a contorted mess.

James Nickel

How words change: that great American privilege and aim, the "pursuit of happiness," originally involved a now almost obsolete use of the word "happiness." Then, it meant "blessedness," a state of the "favor of God" that produces an internal sense of satisfaction or contentment. Now, happiness suggests having "fun" (from Eric Sloane, *The Seasons of America Past*, p. 8).

James Nickel

In Scripture, both the Greek/Hebrew words translated in English as "obedience" and "listening" are cousins. This relationship should remind us that we cannot fully hear God's Word unless we both receive it and submit to it in our daily lives.

James Nickel

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When words would not convince us, God often leaves us to learn from the things that happen to us.
John Chrysostom (347-407), thoughts about the Prodigal Son (Luke 15)

Far too many people collect and identify injustice in others as a means to justify (or excuse) their own unjust thoughts and actions.

James Nickel

“He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him” (I Cor. 6:17). This adherence is not one of fearful conformity to a capricious God nor slavish obedience to external law. It is a union of hearts that can best be described as love that indeed fulfills the law. By yoking ourselves to God, even though we still live lives fragmented in space and time, we advance “from glory to glory” (II Cor. 3:18).

James Nickel

The true source of Liberty for any individual, any family, any church, any community, any nation is obedience to the Living Word of God.

James Nickel

Parents are not perfect. It is in and by their imperfections that they attempt to train/love their children. They will err and sin in their parenting. Unfortunately, some children assume the mantle of being “perfect” judges of their parents. Ignoring their own imperfections and sins, these children judge their parents and thereby compound their sin by their dishonor.

James Nickel

Many of the Psalms have repetitive parallelisms (a statement followed by another statement that rephrases the first statement). Since the Psalms were set to music (i.e., meant to be sung in antiphonal fashion), this duplication of thought tells us we need to slow down, to pause (Selah), and carefully register in our heart the truth revealed.

James Nickel

You cannot put straight in others what is warped in yourself.

James Nickel

To paraphrase Augustine, in every command of God is the grace to obey it. This grace was available even in the Old Testament (cf. Luke 1:6). If we look to God in faith to supply His grace and joyfully receive His commands, God will work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13). “If you love Me, you will obey Me,” said Jesus, echoing the Psalmist David, “Oh, how I love Thy law!”

James Nickel

Eternal life is not a matter of the duration of life, but a truth about the quality of life (John 17:3).

James Nickel

“Let the beasts teach you” (Job 12:7). Scripture implores us to pay attention to the animal kingdom and learn thereby. Everyday, I look into the eyes of our dog, I watch his actions, and I learn the lesson of loyalty. How we need, in this day, to apply that lesson in our daily interactions with the people God brings across our paths (family, friends, strangers).

James Nickel

The purpose of trials, the purpose of troubling experiences, the purpose of failure ... is to wean us from the idea that God exists to pamper us to the reality that God, and God alone, is our fortress and our rock.

James Nickel

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To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.

John Henry Newman (1801-1890)

Christianity without heartfelt song is not Christianity. Emotionless Christianity is not Christianity. The unmerited, undeserved, and contra-deserved grace of God transforms the whole man and generates a response of worship from the whole man to the Triune God ... this is Christianity.

James Nickel

Arrogance and humility have done a flip in our day (thanks to postmodern “evangelical” pundits). To them, to proclaim a confident “Thus saith the Lord” is the epitome of arrogance while to articulate a sensitive “Let’s enter into a conversation so we can interact about our subjective feelings of the Bible” is the epitome of humility.

James Nickel

As long as we remain on “this side” of heaven, there will always be interpersonal issues to resolve, especially in families. Usually, both parties are at fault (How many times have I been at fault? Let’s see, let x approach infinity ... that’s about right). Show mercy and you will receive mercy. We are all imperfect and that makes families imperfect. Grace is the oil that reduces the friction of imperfection.

James Nickel

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (II Cor. 13:14). It is only when this blessing is fully realized in us that we are fully human (Christ in us, the hope of glory). Any understanding of ourselves outside of this blessing dehumanizes us in the deadly maelstrom of autonomy.

James Nickel

Over a lifetime, I’ve learned (sometimes the hard way) that we cannot ignore the authority of God’s Word and His commands contained therein. If we do, we enter a state of blindness to the nature of reality (we cannot understand rightly what is happening around us or to us) ... unless there is true repentance, hurricanes of foolishness swirl about our path and the scimitar of peril hangs over our heads.

James Nickel

When I was in my 20s, I thought I was a top-notch intellectual/theologian. I had the knowledge, the doctrine, the answers, but I hadn’t lived life long enough to develop the requisite wisdom. Now, approaching 60, I implore all 20s to 40s to above all seek wisdom, a wisdom that may require you to restrain your hasty and sometimes ill-conceived judgments on life, theology, family, politics, etc.

James Nickel

Whenever the Psalter is abandoned, an incomparable treasure vanishes from the Christian church. With its recovery will come unsuspected power.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Doctrinal correctness, albeit very important, can, at times, trump compassion. Truth and compassion are not enemies; they are friends.

James Nickel

While performing his duties as the 16th President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln used to allow his children to regularly disrupt his meetings and state engagements. This is indicative of indulgence, not training in love (deference) and self-control (I Cor. 13; Gal. 5:16-24). A parent should always be available for his children, but children also need to be trained in the discipline of deference (there is an appropriate time for everything under heaven). In other words, when a parent says to a child: “No, not

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now,” it does not mean “No, not ever.”

James Nickel

Psalm 65 is divided into two parts: First, the blessedness of knowing one’s iniquities are atoned for as a basis for entranced into the goodness of God’s restorative presence (v. 1-4). Second, the psalmist moves outside of himself, to look at God’s attention to creation and creation’s response of unreserved joy; i.e., the mountains, seas, rivers, morning and evening stars, farm products, pastures, meadows, valleys (v. 5-13). Now, every human being, covenant-keeper and covenant-breaker, can see these creation entities with their physical eyes. But, only the “atoned for” are given redeemed eyes that can see creation truly, i.e., dancing for joy! Only the redeemed can take true delight in creation wonders because God has come to earth to atone for their sins (Psalm 96:11-13), “Let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice, let the sea roar, and all that fills it; let the field exult and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD, for He comes, for He comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in His faithfulness.” Praise God that He came to earth 2000 years ago in the form of a tiny infant to judge/save the world in His righteousness.

James Nickel

The Blessing is one of the most important doctrines taught in the Bible. The Blessing is always intimately connected to the Covenants revealed in Scripture, i.e., Creational, Noachic, Abrahamic, Sinaitic, and Davidic. The New Covenant encapsulates all of these covenants in Christ. Without a proper understanding of the import and reality of the Blessing, we can neither rightly understand the Gospel nor live in the fullness of its power.

James Nickel

Against sanguine enthusiasm one can argue no more than to try to blow the trumpet into strong headwinds.

Stanley L. Jaki, *Advent and Science*, p. 65

He who has never failed and knows it fully and deeply, he who has never really “messed up” and has repented humbly and sincerely, has no authority to oburgate anyone who has fallen and subsequently turned around in grace seeking restoration from God, especially if one, when adjudicating the recovery status of a sinner, wears the cloak of “self-righteousness” (Luke 18:9-14; Matthew 18).

James Nickel

According to Plato, freedom is bound together with the perception of truth. For the Biblical Christian, freedom is bound together in a relationship to the Person of Christ, who is the embodiment of truth, not a perception.

James Nickel

In the Garden of Eden, we see man in three possible conditions: (1) in easy friendship with God, (2) grasping to become God, or (3) running away from God. There you have it in a nutshell ... the key to understanding history and the human race.

James Nickel

“Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him” (John 6:56). “If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples. As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoke to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:7-11). Fellowship, receiving God’s word, specific prayer, and obedience = abiding in Christ’s love = eating Christ’s flesh and

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drinking Christ's blood. The result? A company of people whose hearts are filled with joy and a world transformed by the fruit of the glory of God (Isaiah 27:6).

James Nickel

God has gifted many people, past and present, with cultural passions, or callings. Think of the craft of writing, composing music, teaching, painting, or entrepreneurialism. When related to the kingdom of God, these callings either (1) enable God's people to better grasp God's ways and thereby worship Him more acceptably or (2) evangelize, or pre-evangelize, unbelievers. Very few people realize the time and effort, sometimes at great cost, required to fulfill these callings. Every minute joyfully devoted to such callings, every hour, every day, every week, every year, every life, is an act of honorable service to the King and His kingdom. Pause to think of some of these people who have impacted your life and thereby God's kingdom. Give thanks to God for them.

James Nickel

When God shows us the path of life, it means that He reveals to us the fullest and highest way of living, a way that He intends humans made in His image to live. This life is a life of harmony, a resonate interaction with the loving fellowship known, from everlasting to everlasting, by the Triune God. It is in this communion, it is in His presence, that we experience the fullness, the completeness, the quintessence of joy. With His right hand, the hand of authority and the hand of the shepherd's love, He lifts us to His face and in face to face rapport, there is eternal pleasure (Psalm 16:11).

James Nickel

Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commands." By the law of contraposition, this means if we do not keep the commands of Christ, the encapsulation of the entire Bible if seen rightly, then we do not love Him.

Christ commands us to love Him with the entirety of our being and to love our neighbor as ourselves; i.e., as we interact with people God brings across the "doorstep" of our lives we abide in God's Word: do not murder, do not bear false witness, do not commit adultery, do not covet ... welcome the stranger, feed the hungry, clothe the naked, aid widows and orphans, visit the sick and those in prison. If we do not love our brother, then we do not love God.

Love is the fulfillment of the Law.

Christ's commands are not burdensome; they are light. His yoke is easy. Why? Christ's commands are His enablings in the power of the Holy Spirit.

James Nickel

Biblical love (I Corinthians 13) is to escape the black hole, the vortex, of self-absorption and clinging egotism, and to live for someone else.

James Nickel

If you wish to correct somebody or complain about someone, then do so exactly in the measure by which you are committed to help that person deal with the problem you have identified. If you are not willing to do this, then close your mouth (Matthew 18).

James Nickel

The heart of the Apostle Paul's theology is not justification, redemption, propitiation, adoption, sanctification, glorification, election, or predestination. The focus of Paul's theology is one phrase ... *in Christ* ... without a deep and profound knowledge what being in the "place of Christ" means, then our understanding and application of the rest of what he teaches will be "off center."

James Nickel

The Christian Life

God graces the humble, irrespective of wealth or status, with the blessedness of His kingdom. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

James Nickel

One's family heritage can reveal stories of courage, success, and sacrifice, but also sin and suffering. We receive our heritage as a gift of God, treasuring the good and learning from the "rough spots," but always extending to our living and dead ancestors the grace of respect for without them, we would not be.

James Nickel

Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), a political liberal, atheist, and materialist once said, "The No to God is the Yes to Man." In contrast, the 'Yes' to God is a most emphatic 'Yes' to man. Or, in the words of Irenaeus (2nd century church father), "The glory of God is a human fully alive."

James Nickel

Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now I'm found; I once was blind but now I see. It was grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved ...

John Newton (1725-1807).

Be warned when people use the trump card of hearing God's voice while they disregard God's word.

James Nickel

There can be no higher authority (subjective or otherwise) than the authority of God's objective word.

James Nickel

How many of my readers bear resentment towards others and feel no remorse? But, God is holy. He deplores unforgiveness and warns us in strong terms to hate it as He does or risk the unforgiveness of our sins. "But if you do not forgive men their sins your Father will not forgive your sins" (Mt 6:15).

William P. Farley, *For His Glory: God's Ultimate Purpose and Why it Matters to the Church*, pp. 44-45.

... God uses light to represent His glory because light always exposes things hidden in darkness. God's light exposes sin. No one can see God, in the sense I am describing, and continue to walk in the darkness of his self-righteous selfishness. Deep, heartfelt repentance is always the effect of a genuine encounter with the glory of God. By the absence or presence of this repentance we can discern whether someone has encountered God or another spirit. Has their self-righteousness been shattered? Has the joy of repentance become their abiding companion? To the degree that we are without this knowledge of God and ourselves, we still live in darkness. The light of God's glory exposes hidden sin and permanently shatters the arrogance of this sin-racked world.

William P. Farley, *For His Glory: God's Ultimate Purpose and Why it Matters to the Church*, pp. 40-41

All too often we mistake the good for the best and to make matters worse, the good often thwarts the best.

James Nickel

... God's purposes must be accomplished with His means. The goal is forever marked with glory or corruption by the means used to pursue it.

William P. Farley, *For His Glory: God's Ultimate Purpose and Why it Matters to the Church*, p. 5

The Christian Life

... positive thinking is a help, but sometimes it is just positively stupid because it does not face the facts of what is really happening. Positive thinking is often a pretend world and not truly dealing with what is around us. If life is to be balanced, we need to face the whole of reality; and that involves cloud as well as glory.

David Adam, *Clouds and Glory*, p. 2

The limitation of fundamentalism (historic and current) is that it reduces the Faith to a set of fundamental “non-negotiables” (e.g., the Trinity, the Deity of Christ, the Resurrection of the body, etc.) The Faith, although built upon these non-negotiables, is not limited by them. A reductionist Faith is a small faith. The Bible unfolds a Faith that is Christocentrically full-orbed (it speaks to, directs, and requires obedience to Christ in the whole of life); Biblical Faith is a great Faith. A small faith generates an evangelical ghetto mentality along with retreatism and eventual disinterest and ridicule because it produces small men. The kings and nations of the earth will eventually bow before a great Faith because it produces great men.

James Nickel

Beware of enjoying the freedom to affront God with the blessing of a majority of your cohorts.

James Nickel

An honorable life cannot grow from seeds of dishonor.

James Nickel

We run carelessly to the precipice, after we have put something before us to prevent us seeing it.

Pascal's *Pensées*, #183

... if we are going to choose what He [God] does not want, He will check, and we must heed. Whenever there is doubt, stop at once.

Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, p. 155

When you think some action or some choice is God's will and God raises red flags, heed the flags. The flags are warnings of His love.

James Nickel

... in the spiritual domain nothing is accomplished by criticism ... the Holy Ghost is the only One in the true position to criticize, He alone is able to show what is wrong without hurting and wounding. It is impossible to enter into communion with God when you are in a critical temper; it makes you hard and vindictive and cruel, and leaves you with the flattering unction that you are a superior person.

Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, p. 169

Occasions make not a man fail, but they show what the man is.

Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, p. 148

... one look at family or community life shows the resentment, hatred, and violence that results when one member's isolated will is forced upon the rest.

Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, p. 57

The Christian Life

We, then, must change from within ... The repentance in which we pine for our life and world to be really different, the authentic metanoia which Christ opens us to in his gospel (Mark 1:15; 6:12), comes upon us as we are given a vision of the majesty, holiness, and goodness of God. It's a vision sufficient to impart a vivid realisation of our terrible readiness to mistrust God and hurt others and ourselves as we take things into our own hands. This sharp, heartbreaking realisation of our condition silences all argument and hair-splitting rationalisation. It makes us simultaneously recoil from God, because we realise that he also sees us for what we are, and yet we reach out for help and refuge in him.

Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, p. 237

The highest education, as well as the strictest doctrinal views and religious practice, often leave untouched the heart of darkness from which the demons come to perch upon the lacerated back of humankind.

Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, p. 245

... the mark of disciplined persons is that they are able to do what needs to be done when it needs to be done.

Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, p. 156

... the very person best prepared for any situation is the one who experiences the greatest freedom and spontaneity in it.

Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, p. 157

The idealisation of poverty is one of the most dangerous illusions of Christians in the contemporary world. Stewardship - which requires possessions and includes giving - is the true spiritual discipline in relation to wealth.

Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, p. 201

... it is as great and as difficult a spiritual calling to run the factories and the mines, the banks and the department stores, the schools and government agencies for the kingdom of God as it is to pastor a church or serve as an evangelist ... Holy people must stop going into 'church work' as their natural course of action and take up holy orders in farming, industry, law, education, banking, and journalism with the same zeal previously given to evangelism or to pastoral and missionary work.

Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, p. 223

... get all you can; save all you can; freely use all you can within a properly disciplined spiritual life; and control all you can for the good of humankind and God's glory. Giving all you can would then naturally be a part of an overall wise stewardship.

Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, p. 227

The role of Christian ministry or the special 'religious' vocations is to embody and communicate the gospel of God's government to all and to prepare those who stand in the crucial 'secular' areas of the world to be religious caretakers of the world's goods.

Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, p. 228

Mystics without study are only spiritual romantics who want relationship without effort.

Calvin Miller, *The Table of Inwardness*, p. 83

You will never get a second chance to make a first good impression.

Old American proverb, cited in Ron Aharoni, *Arithmetic for Parents*, p. vii

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). Confession of sin is a basic discipline of the Christian life. It is acknowledging to God that we have strayed from His righteous ways with the intent, by His grace, to

The Christian Life

walk fully in His paths. By it, we maintain fellowship vertically (with God) and horizontally (with others). A lack of Biblical confession of sin leads one into strange behaviors: (1) covering up, (2) pretending there is nothing wrong, (3) quarreling that is unexplainable, (4) fracturing of friendships and families, etc. A lack of Biblical confession of sin is one reason why sons follow their father's sinful behaviors even *without any knowledge of such behavior!* As Scripture states, a father's unconfessed sins will be visited upon his children to the *third and fourth generation*. So, if behooves us to confess our sins before God, to keep short accounts between God and men, so that His blessings will be manifested long-term ... *to a thousand generations*.

James Nickel

Sharing a meal with someone else is much more than eating; it is a sign of fellowship, companionship, covenant. Because of this relational aspect, a solitary diner is a very lonely person. It is like going to Disneyland by yourself. 99% of the delight of Disneyland is in *sharing the enjoyment with your friends and family*. To share a meal is to "break bread" and to "walk together." For one to share a meal under pretense, to break bread with the purpose of betrayal, is probably one of the vilest acts a person could ever commit.

James Nickel

"... looking diligently over lest anyone be failing of the grace of God, lest any root of bitterness springing up may give trouble, and through this many may be defiled; lest anyone be a fornicator, or a profane person, as Esau, who in exchange for one morsel of food did sell his birthright, for ye know that also afterwards, wishing to inherit the blessing, he was disapproved of, for a place of reformation he found not, though with tears having sought it" (Hebrews 12:15-17).

Beware of selling your birthright for immediate gratification (seeking short-term gain while ignoring long-term loss). There will come a time when you will come to your senses but it will be too late to inherit a blessing, even if you ask for it with tears.

James Nickel

Very rarely do people, on their own, grasp the reality of seeking long-term blessings of God. Why? Modern culture has deceived us into thinking that we can "get what we want when we want it," and, when we get it, we will not suffer any consequences. The Word of God is true and the story of Esau, who lost his long-term blessing because he wanted short-term gain, should ring in every man's ears. If any idea or person leads you down the pathway of Esau, beware of the hiss of the serpent, who said to Eve, "Eat of this fruit *now*. You can be your own 'god' and determine for yourself what is right and what is wrong; you will not die" (Genesis 3:1-5).

James Nickel

"... that ye may not become slothful, but followers of those who through faith and patient endurance are inheriting the promises" (Hebrews 6:12).

To every man, God will arrange circumstances that require both faith *and* patience. Patience is one test of true godliness. A man who runs roughshod to get what he wants when he wants it is neither a man of faith nor a man of patience; he is a sloth. His life will be entangled with thorns (Proverbs 24:30-34).

James Nickel

Unless our commitment is to invite the objective and written Word of God to form and govern our every thought, action, and decision, then we have no truth in ourselves.

James Nickel

The Christian Life

God in Christ is in the business of reconciling an estranged world to Himself and He has given His followers the same task (II Corinthians 5). If the ministry of reconciliation is not one of your priorities, then you had better ask yourself who you are following.

James Nickel

Dr. Seuss, Theodor Seuss Geisel, (1904-1991), author of many children's books, once said, "Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind." Without qualifications and context, this statement is nothing but rampant humanism. For the Biblical Christian, he is who he is because of God's creative and redemptive grace and, because he is totally responsible to God, the Biblical Christian does not say what he feels because he must speak the Truth in love irrespective of his feelings. *The Biblical Christian speaks the Truth of God because God minds and God matters; this is enough.* According to Dr. Seuss, to "be who you are and say what you feel" is an affirmation of denying responsibility to the Creator. It is man determining for himself what is good and what is evil (Genesis 3:1-5) and saying his "peace" no matter what God says. God minds when we "say what we feel" without regard to His Word. From a Biblical Christian standpoint, here is what Dr. Seuss is really saying, "Because you are absolutely free and independent, be who are and say what you feel because those who mind (the Biblical God and those that honor His Word) don't matter and those who matter (absolute free and independent spirits like you) don't mind (or, more appropriately, do not have a mind, i.e., a basis for sound thinking)."

James Nickel

Where sin has broken a relationship, repentance is the only grounds for hope and joy, the ground for reconciled, joyful relationships.

John Alexander

Those like myself whose imagination far exceeds their obedience are subject to a just penalty; we easily imagine conditions far higher than any we have really reached. If we describe what we have imagined we may make others, and make ourselves, believe that we have really been there - and so fool both them and ourselves.

C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, p. 128

They say that those who never make mistakes never make anything; certainly, these men [Abraham, Moses, David, Jonah] made mistakes, but through their mistakes God taught them to know His grace, and to cleave to Him in a way that would never have happened otherwise. Is your trouble a sense of failure? the knowledge of having made some ghastly mistake? Go back to God; His restoring grace waits for you.

James I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 228

It is to be feared that many Christians spend all of their lives in too unhumbled and conceited a frame of mind ever to gain wisdom from God at all. Not for nothing does Scripture say, with the lowly is wisdom (Proverbs 11:2).

James I. Packer, *Knowing God*, p. 91

Man cannot organize the world for himself without God; without God man can only organize the world against man.

Whittaker Chambers, *Witness*, p. 83

... the witness of mercy unlocks the possibility of a cycle of redemption, and that any other locks upon men the old coils of hatred, multiplying new evil.

Whittaker Chambers, *Witness*, p. 727

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Anger is an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it stands than to anything on which it is poured.

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948)

When Shalom Aleichem returned from a visit to Switzerland, he was asked if it is really as beautiful as people say. "The view isn't bad," he replied, "Too bad it is hidden by the mountains."

Cited in Ron Aharoni, *Arithmetic for Parents*, p. 196

In the designs of Providence there are no mere coincidences.

Karol Wojtyla ... Pope John Paul II (1920-2005), on the first anniversary of the assassination attempt that nearly ended his life (1982)

To depart from righteousness is to choose a life of crushing burdens, failures, and disappointments, a life caught in the toils of endless problems that are never resolved.

Dallas Willard, *The Spirit of the Disciplines*, p. 2

When a person is racing in the direction of a precipice, it is godliness to yell stop and it is sin to say nothing at all.

James Nickel

I believe in the sun when it is not shining. I believe in love even when I cannot feel it. I believe in God even when he is silent.

Written by a Jew on the wall of a prison cell in Cologne, Germany, awaiting certain death at the hands of the Nazis in World War II

Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow; it empties today of its strength.

Corrie Ten Boom

Indifference is not only a sin, it is a punishment.

Anonymous

There is little room left for wisdom when one is full of judgment.

Malcolm Hein

The London Times once asked a number of prominent people to write essays on the topic, *What's Wrong with the World*. G. K. Chesterton reply is the shortest and most to the point in history:

Dear Sirs:

I am.

Sincerely,

G. K. Chesterton

Let us look calmly upon the world; or better yet, let us look down upon it from above where Christ is seated and we are seated in Him.

A. W. Tozer, *Man: The Dwelling Place of God*

We're paratroopers, we are supposed to be surrounded.

WWII Lt. Richard Winters, when told that his company (Easy) of the 101st Airborne would be surrounded by Germans in Bastogne (Battle of the Bulge)

Hard pressed on my right. My center is yielding. Impossible to maneuver. Situation excellent. Am attacking.

WWI French General Ferdinand Foch sent this communiqué to headquarters from the battlefield

The Christian Life

That the world is a playground instead of a battleground has now been accepted in practice by the vast majority of fundamentalist Christians. They are facing both ways, enjoying Christ and the world too.

A. W. Tozer, *This World: Playground or Battleground?*

The returning sinner is not saved by some judicial transaction apart from a corresponding moral change. Salvation must include a judicial change of status, but what is overlooked by most teachers is that it *also includes an actual change in the life of the individual*. And by this we mean more than a surface change, we mean a transformation as deep as the roots of his human life.

A. W. Tozer, *The Divine Conquest*

Lawlessness is what many Christians think is a synonym for grace.

James Nickel

To escape the error of salvation by works we have fallen into the opposite error of salvation without obedience.

A. W. Tozer, *Paths to Power*

Our Lord told His disciples that love and obedience were organically united. The final test of love is obedience.

A. W. Tozer, *That Incredible Christian*

If you want to have a happy marriage, be the kind of person who generates positive energy and sidesteps negative energy rather than empowering it.

If you want to have a more pleasant, cooperative child, be a more understanding, empathic, consistent, loving parent.

If you want to have more freedom in your life, be a more responsible, a more helpful, a more contributing person.

If you want to be trusted, be trustworthy.

If you want the secondary greatness of recognized talent, focus first on the primary greatness of character.

Stephen R. Covey

I sometimes feel that I am living just as long as I have something great to work for.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

There is no need to be worried by facetious people who try to make the Christian hope of "heaven" ridiculous by saying they do not want "to spend eternity playing harps." The answer to such people is that if they cannot understand books written for grown-ups, they should not talk about them. All the Scriptural imagery (harps, crowns, gold, etc.) is, of course, a merely symbolic attempt to express the inexpressible. Musical instruments are mentioned because for many people (not all) music is the thing known in the present life which most strongly suggests ecstasy and infinity. Crowns are mentioned to suggest the fact that those who are united with God in eternity share His splendour and power and joy. Gold is mentioned to suggest the timelessness of Heaven (gold does not rust) and the preciousness of it. People who take these symbols literally might as well think that when Christ told us to be like doves, He meant that we were to lay eggs.

C. S. Lewis

At present we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door. We discern the freshness and purity of morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the splendors we see. But all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumour that it will not always be so. Some day, God willing, we shall get in.

C. S. Lewis

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Not to acquire a taste for the realistic is childish in the bad sense; to have lost the taste for marvels and adventures is no more a matter for congratulation than losing our teeth, our hair, our palate, and finally, our hopes.

C. S. Lewis

Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. We are fighting today for costly grace. Cheap grace means grace as a doctrine, a principle, a system. Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

Absence is to love what wind is to fire; it extinguishes the small, it kindles the great.

Roger de Bussy-Rabutin, *Decision Magazine*, February 1982

God has made me for a purpose - for China; but He has also made me fast, and when I run, I feel His pleasure.

Eric Liddell, *Chariots of Fire*

True godliness doesn't turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavors to mend it.

William Penn

Worldliness is not loving your brother.

Malcolm Smith

It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness.

Anonymous

We do not exist to become something, but to contain Someone (II Corinthians 4:7).

Malcolm Smith

Activity from inadequacy is strain; activity from adequacy is rest (Matthew 11:28).

Malcolm Smith

People wrap themselves up in the flimsy garments of their own righteousness and then complain of the cold.

Anonymous

A faith that disintegrates is a faith that has not rested in God Himself.

Elizabeth Elliot

The saint never knows the joy of the Lord in spite of tribulation, but because of it.

Oswald Chambers

A solemn regard to spiritual and eternal things is an indispensable element of all true greatness.

Daniel Webster

The unattended garden will soon be overrun with weeds; the heart that fails to cultivate truth and root out error will shortly be a theological wilderness.

A. W. Tozer, *Man: The Dwelling Place of God*

The Best Memory System

Forget each kindness that you do as soon as you have done it.

The Christian Life

Forget the praise that falls to you the moment you have won it.
Forget the slander that you hear before you can repeat it.
Forget each slight, each spite, each sneer ... wherever you may meet it.
Remember every kindness done to you whatever its measure.
Remember praise by others won and pass it on with pleasure.
Remember every promises made and keep it to the letter.
Remember those who lend you aid and be a grateful debtor.
Remember all the happiness that comes your way in living.
Forget each worry and distress; be hopeful and forgiving.
Remember good, remember truth, remember heaven is above you.
And you will find through age and youth that many hearts will love you.

Village Times (Kailua-Kona, Hawaii: Youth With A Mission), October 1-7, 1981

Impression without expression is depression.

Jim Brown

Truth taught without the context of love generates death.

Jim Brown

In every home there are spiders. Many of us, trying to get rid of sin, are like housewives who destroy the spiders' webs without destroying the spiders.

Sandhu Sundar Singh

90% of the friction of daily life is caused by the wrong tone of voice.

John Wanamaker

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing.

Edmund Burke

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

Jim Elliot

Life is filled with a myriad of wonderful opportunities disguised as impossible situations.

James Nickel

There are just two types of religion: the one type tries to meet God in reconciliation and realization at the top rung of a long ladder; the other meets God at the lowest rung. In the one we go to God, climbing up by our good deeds, by our prayers, by our mortifying of ourselves, by our gaining merit, by our obedience to rites and ceremonies, and by our faithfulness to law and duty ... The Christian way is quite different. We do not climb to Him and meet Him at the top rung: He comes down the ladder to us and meets us on the lowest rung—He receives us as sinners ... God is not at the top of the ladder - He is at the bottom ... Breathtaking.

E. Stanley Jones, *Christian Maturity*

When the bar is impossibly high, few will aspire, and when there is no glory, few will be inspired.

Bernd Heinrich, *Why We Run: A Natural History*, p. 197

I find it most true, that the greatest temptation out of hell, is to live without temptations; if my waters should stand, they would rot. Faith is the better of free air, and of the sharp winter storm in its face. Grace withereth without adversity. The devil is but God's master fencer, to teach us to handle our weapons.

Samuel Rutherford

The Christian Life

Preach the Gospel all the time; if necessary use words.

Francis of Assisi

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture or by clear reason ... I am bound by the Scripture I quoted, and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to violate one's conscience. I cannot do otherwise.

Martin Luther

Do not call a wolf to help you against the dogs.

Alexandr Solzhenitsyn

Our hatred of someone does not affect his peace of mind, but it certainly can ruin ours.

W. A. "Dub" Nance

When something goes wrong, it is important to talk not about who is to blame, but about who is going to fix it.

Anonymous

Grace grows best in the winter.

Samuel Rutherford

Grace will save a man but it will not save him and his idol.

A. W. Tozer, *Man: The Dwelling Place of God*

Remember that just as diamonds are formed from carbon under the tremendous pressure of tons of earth, so God is allowing character to be formed under the pressure of your circumstances.

Leighton Ford

The best things in life are appreciated most after they have been lost.

Roy L. Smith

Knowing truth is not accepting a theory but plugging into the activity of practicing the truth.

Malcolm Smith

Truth that is not experienced is no better than error, and may be fully as dangerous. The scribes who sat in Moses' seat were not the victims of error; they were the victims of their failure to experience the truth they taught.

A. W. Tozer, *The Root of the Righteous*

The Lord cannot fully bless a man until He has first conquered him.

A. W. Tozer, *The Divine Conquest*

To believe actively that our Heavenly Father constantly spreads around us providential circumstances that work for our present good and our everlasting well-being brings to the soul a veritable benediction.

A. W. Tozer, *The Knowledge of the Holy*

Wherever man may stand, whatever he may do, to whatever he may apply his hand, in agriculture, in commerce, and in industry, or his mind, in the world of art, and science he is, in whatsoever it may be, constantly standing before the face of God, he is employed in the service of his God, he has strictly to obey his God, and above all, he has to aim at the glory of his God.

Abraham Kuyper

It is a serious thing to live in a society of possible gods and goddesses to remember that the dullest and most uninteresting person you may talk to may one day be a creature which, if you saw it now, you would be strongly tempted to worship, or else a horror and corruption such as you now meet if at all

The Christian Life

only in a nightmare. All day long we are in some degree helping each other to one or the other of these destinations. It is in light of these overwhelming possibilities it is with awe and the circumspection proper to them, that we should conduct all our dealings with one another, all friendships, all loves, all play, all politics. There are no ordinary people. You have never met a mere mortal, Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations, these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit - immortal horrors or everlasting splendors.

C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

The great thing is to be found at one's post as a child of God, living each day as though it were our last, but planning as though our world might last a hundred years.

C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock*

Unless the gospel is preached with contemporary relevance it has not been preached.

Martin Luther

Miracles are great substitutes for discipline and hard work.

Curtis Crenshaw

It is a splendid rule to refrain from making decisions when we are discouraged.

A. W. Tozer, *Of God and Men*

Silence is the greatest persecution.

Blaise Pascal