

GOSPEL GUIDE

UNDERSTANDEST THOU WHAT THOU READEST?
HOW CAN I, EXCEPT SOME MAN SHOULD GUIDE ME? (ACTS 8:30,31)

In This Issue:

Good and
Wise Parents • 1

Speaking in Tongues • 3

Handwriting
on the Wall • 4

Conversion • 5

At Peace • 6

Characteristics
of Bible Faith • 7

One
Righteous Family • 8



Good and Wise Parents

IT MIGHT SEEM THAT THIS ARTICLE is only for people who are parents, but actually it involves both parents and children — and we all fall into this category.

The critical need for good parents is seen in the great number of bad children. Juvenile delinquency seems ever to be on the increase. Crimes of every description continue to be committed by the young. The grossest immorality is permitted in some schools and colleges, and is even encouraged in some of them by liberal, free-thinking teachers and administrators. The main reason for such a deplorable and worsening condition is the miserable job parents have done in failing to bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Children have been neglected, forsaken, abandoned, undisciplined, pampered, petted, obeyed.

Parents can learn to be good parents by following a perfect example. Jesus taught his disciples, “Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” (Matthew 5:48). God is a Father, a perfect Father. If we can learn how He deals with his children, we can

learn how to deal wisely with our children.

I. God loves his children. “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God” (1 John 3:1). God’s love for his children is sympathetic and understanding. He would have us come to him with all our cares and problems — “casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7). The child who is blessed with a good mother knows that she will always have a sympathetic ear for his woes. God’s love for his children is enduring. The prodigal’s friends may forsake him and leave him in the hog pen; but when he comes to himself and returns home, the Father will be moved with compassion and will receive him joyfully. God’s love for his children is a concerned love. He knows each child. He knows where each child is every moment. Being concerned about the welfare

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PARENTS

of each child, God does not neglect nor forsake any child a single moment, nor does he pamper and spoil. God's love for his children is fair and impartial. Not like Isaac and Rebekah, with their favorites, God is "no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:35).

By nature children thrive on love; and if we can have the same kind of love for our children that God has for His, then our children can grow up in an atmosphere that naturally will help produce in them the finest personality and the purest, strongest character.

II. God instructs his children. God has not left his children in the dark in regard to what is right and what is wrong. As one all-wise and "from everlasting to everlasting" (Psalm 90:2), he has revealed his infinite wisdom. His revealed will, the sacred writings, make his children "wise unto salvation," and furnish them "completely unto every good work" (2 Timothy 3:15,17). He gives his children the benefit of

his knowledge and experience, for "every word of God is tried: he is a shield unto them that take refuge in him" (Proverbs 30:5). His word has been put to the test through the ages, and it has stood. Now if we have absolute confidence in God's word, and bring up our children in his nurture and admonition, we will prove ourselves good and wise parents. We will be fortifying our children to meet any eventuality in life, to overcome any temptation of the devil, to solve any of life's problems as they should be solved.

III. God provides for his children. God provides some things unconditionally: the sunshine, the rain, life itself; but in a well regulated home each member has his responsibility. So, God expects his children to look after their "chores." His children who pray for their daily bread are not to sit down and wait for the Father to hand them bread from heaven but are to work for the necessities of life.

We are to provide for our children. "But if any provideth not for his own, and especially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8). But at the same time children are to be taught responsibility in the home. They have certain duties to perform as they grow up. In days gone by every child had his or her chore — dishes to wash, wood to cut, cows to milk; but now the dishes are automatically washed; the heat is thermostatically controlled; the milk comes in cartons; and there is little or nothing for the children to do except to

get into mischief, particularly with the high powered cars and generous supplies of money and gasoline provided by doting parents.

IV. God disciplines His children. When He speaks to his child, he means exactly what he says. He does not follow the course of "Johnny, I'm going to spank you." "Johnny, if you do that one more time, I'm going to spank you." "Johnny, if you do that one more time, I'm going to tell your daddy on you." When God punishes his children, it is always a needed punishment, and always for the good of the children. "My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art reproved of him; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father chasteneth not, But if ye are without chastening, whereof all have been made partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed good to them; but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness" (Hebrews 12:5-10). Just as the child who is loved responds to that love, the child who is properly disciplined responds to that discipline by being a happy child. The one who is given his way is invariably an unhappy child. Nothing can please him for long. If he is given one thing to satisfy his whim, soon he will want

PARENTS

something else; but the child who receives loving discipline feels secure and content in a natural recognition of parental authority

V. God sets a perfect example for his children. Moses said concerning God, “He is the Rock, His work is

perfect” (Deuteronomy 32:4). David also said, “As for God, his way is perfect” (2 Samuel 22:31). And Jesus said, “Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

And yet, though God is such a loving and wise Father, His children do not always requite his love, nor

do they submit to his righteous will. As parents we can look to God as the perfect example of fatherhood; but as children we can look to Christ as the perfect example of sonship. In recognition and appreciation of the love and wisdom of his Father He said, “Not my will, but thine be done” (Luke 22:42). — BN

Speaking in Tongues

NOT MANY YEARS AGO the practice of speaking in tongues was an attraction of Pentecostal groups only. Today, **this** is an attraction to some in most all religious groups. From the staid old Roman church, through the denominations, and into churches of Christ interest in this subject has been generated. Let us give some study to what the Bible reveals about this.

What is this speaking in tongues? In the first generation of the church we read about it in the Bible. Speaking in tongues was one of the spiritual gifts (charisma) described in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10; 28-30). This was a gift which enabled a person to speak in languages that he had never learned by natural processes (Acts 2:1-13). It seems as if many had this gift.

Why was this gift of tongue speaking given? There is much confusion about this today. It was not given for any of the purposes which people seem to think. It was not given for personal benefit. It was to be used for the benefit of all. (1 Corinthians 12:7). Those who possessed this gift suffered just as others (2 Corinthians 11:24-28).

Possessing this gift, one could not feel like he had graduated from the class of ordinary Christians. It was not given as an award. On at least one occasion this gift was given to non-Christians (Acts 10:44-46). A possession of this gift did not mean that the individual was more morally fit than others who did not possess it. Judas possessed this, but look at him (Matthew 10:1). Peter possessed this gift but had to be rebuked for his wrong long after the church was established (Galatians 2:11,12). An interesting thing about this gift of speaking in tongues is that people claiming this gift today invariably think of themselves as more spiritually minded and more mature than other religious folk. As a mat-

ter of fact, the Bible teaches that even the need for this gift indicated weakness and lack of maturity (1 Corinthians 13:9-12). This is said to indicate childishness. At best, it was an “in-part” thing.

What, then, was the purpose of this gift? This gift was given to equip some to speak in foreign languages that the gospel might be spread abroad (Acts 2:6-11; 1 Corinthians 14:22). This gift was given to some that the gospel might be preached to unbelievers — people who had never heard the gospel (1 Corinthians 14:22). The same scripture also says that it was not given for the benefit of those who already believed. This is exactly the opposite of the idea of those who claim the gift today. Speaking in tongues was forbidden in the church (assembly) unless someone was there to interpret (1 Corinthians 14:5). As a matter of fact, the Bible teaches that speaking in tongues was of no value unless someone present understood the language and could interpret (1 Corinthians 14:1). Sometimes people say that 1 Corinthians 14:2 shows that people spake in unknown tongues when

HANDWRITING ON THE WALL

Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans made a great feast for a thousand of his lords. Along with the king they drank wine from the sacred golden vessels taken from the Jewish temple in Jerusalem. They drank wine and praised the gods of gold and silver.

While they were engaged in their revelry the fingers of a man's hand appeared writing on the wall. The king was frightened to the point that the joints of his hips were loosed, and his knees knocked against each other. The king cried aloud for some one to read the writing. His wise men failed. There was only one in his great kingdom who could interpret — Daniel, the faithful servant of God.

Daniel read MENE: "God has numbered your kingdom and finished it; Tekel: You have been weighed in the balances and found wanting; PERES: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." "That very night Belshazzar king of the Chaldeans was slain, and Darius the Mede received the kingdom." (Daniel 5).

The Handwriting on the Wall is a clear message to everyone who has no place for God in his earthly life!

TONGUES

none could understand. Yes, and that is why all of this is written. It was folly to speak in tongues when no man could understand.

Who spake In tongues? The apostles (Mark 16:17; Acts 2:1-13). The household of Cornelius spake in tongues. (Acts 10:46). This had a purpose (Acts 11:15-18). All of these mentioned thus far were people who had been baptized with the Holy Spirit. Others also had this gift (1 Corinthians 12:10,28). These received this gift by the laying on of the hands of the apostles (Acts 8:14,19; Acts 19:6; 2 Timothy 1:6.) In 1 Timothy 4:14 it is said that the presbytery laid hands on Timothy. From 2 Timothy 1:6 it is apparent that this referred to Paul laying hands upon him. These two sources are the only two sources revealed as to how people received this gift. Unless there are some around somewhere who have actually been baptized with the Holy Spirit or some apostles alive who can lay hands upon others, then there are none today who are speaking in tongues. I am aware that there are those who claim both of the above things, but it is easy to see whether or not their claims are true. If their claims are true they will quickly demonstrate their authenticity and will not feel the need to rest their case on their claims.

How long was this gift to last? It was to pass (1 Corinthians 13:8). It was to pass when that which is perfect is come (1 Corinthians 13:10). What is this perfect thing? Some say that is love. However, love was then present and would

continue (1 Corinthians 13:13.) Others say the perfect thing is Christ. Christ is perfect, but is this referring to him? Another perfect thing has already come. This is the completed word of God (James 1:25). It has come! Furthermore that fits here, as this is a thing and not a person under consideration. Beyond that, the idea of the perfect word fits the comparison which is here made. The purpose of tongue speaking was to make known the will of God (1 Corinthians 12:3; 14:3,4,5, 6,12,19,22,23). Yet, with the gifts of prophecy and tongue speaking, only partial knowledge was had (1 Corinthians 13:9.) This was to be made perfect or complete by something. What? By the coming of the perfect law of liberty. Nothing else satisfied the demand of this paragraph. With the use of tongue speaking and the other gifts, it was as if one looked through a glass, darkly (1 Corinthians 13:12). With the perfect law of liberty revealed, it is like seeing face to face.

Of what value would the gift of speaking in tongues be now? We have already noticed that this had no value in making people better Christians, in making people more moral, and in such things. Thus, this would still have no value in these things. Since the real purpose was to enable people to hear the full gospel, of what value would this be today? We have the perfect thing now. We have all the truth (Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:3). The only possible value would be in doing missionary work in foreign countries, and even then it is not necessary.

Why Claim The Gift Of Speaking In Tongues? Why is it that so many

TONGUES

claim to have this gift today to the exclusion of the other gifts (charisma)? There persists a deep suspicion

that this is the only one that would be easy to fake. Any kind of unintelligent muttering seems to pass the test with some. That is some miracle! What we need most of all

is to go to the word of God, learn it, believe it, and teach it to others in words easy to be understood. That will save people. That is worthwhile.

— BN

Conversion

CONVERSION IS A BIBLE SUBJECT that merits the deep interest and concern of every responsible person. The New Testament is replete with plain simple teachings both on the necessity and the process of conversion. “Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 18:3.) “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19.) Conversion stands between the sinner and the hope of eternal life. No unconverted person can go to heaven. In the light of this truth, it is essential that we fully understand what constitutes genuine Bible conversion. God refuses to accept either a substitute or a counterfeit in his plan for man’s salvation.

So far as this writer knows every religious body that claims to believe the Bible, claims to believe in some kind of change or experience which they call “conversion.” Too, there are many religious people who think they have been converted. However, to the careful observer, it is perfectly obvious that something is wrong. There is too much diversity and conflict among religious leaders and those who claim to be converted. The

Bible teaches only one way to be converted, and certainly not many ways that are in direct conflict with each other. Because of this great conflict and confusion, many have turned away from religion in disgust and dismay, and not a few have turned to infidelity. Since the Bible clearly sets forth the nature and process of conversion, such conflict and confusion is inexcusable. Any honest soul who seeks to know the truth on conversion

can take the word of God and learn what God requires of him. This we propose to do in this article. First, let us inquire:

What Is Conversion?

Many believe that conversion is some kind of miracle or mystical experience that is “better felt than told.” Nothing could be further from the truth. Certainly, a sinner feels better when he is converted to God because he knows that he has passed from a state of condemnation to salvation from past sins. He is now a child of God. Hence, there is ample cause for rejoicing and “feeling good.” But he has not experienced a miracle. The words “convert” and “conversion” mean the same wherever found. They mean to “change.” We speak of the conversion of water into ice and the conversion of wood into paper. It is understood that in such instances a change or turning has taken place. Bible conversion means that one has been changed or turned from a life of sin and unrighteousness to a life of righteousness and holiness. Simply, the sinner has been turned from Satan to God.

Both God and the sinner are involved in the process of conversion.

AT PEACE

A young Christian married a young man of another faith. He was faithful to the doctrine which he believed.

Their union produced three children, all boys. He never remonstrated when she took them with her to worship according to her belief. As the boys grew into adulthood they all obeyed the gospel. One became a gospel preacher, another an elder, the third a faithful servant of Christ. He loved his wife, his sons, but through the years he held to a doctrine not supported by the word of God. Then one day out of the clear blue he told his wife that he wanted to be baptized. One of the sons baptized him into the death of Christ wherein He shed His blood, the blood that cleanses from all sin (Romans 6:3,4; 1John 1:7).

After his baptism he said to his family that he had never experienced such peace as since his baptism. No wonder for Christ said "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

CONVERSION

Conversion is not something that God does for the sinner without any effort on the part of the sinner. Such a view makes the sinner entirely passive in conversion. On the other hand, conversion is not something that the sinner accomplishes alone without the help of God. Left alone, and apart from God, the sinner could not bring about his own conversion. "For by grace (God's part) are ye saved, through faith (man's part) and that (salvation) not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8,9.) Man must cooperate with God if he expects to be converted. Now, let us inquire,

What Is God's Part In Conversion?

God has supplied the means by which men are converted. "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting (restoring) the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple." (Psa. 19:7.) "Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee." (Psa. 51:13.) The gospel is "God's power unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16), and the word of God is "the seed of the kingdom." (Lk. 8:11.) The sinner is exhorted to "receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls." (Jas. 1:21.) "The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men." (Tit. 2:11,12.) God's love for mankind prompted Him to make it possible for man to be converted; otherwise man would have to be without "hope, and without God" in this world and in that which is to come. Next, may we inquire,

What Changes Are Essential To Bible Conversion?

In Bible conversion there is a change in the *total* man. A partial change will not suffice. One must be completely turned to God and to His service. First, there must be a change of heart or affections. Before conversion the sinner is traveling in the wrong direction. He is going away from God and toward eternal destruction. He is in the broad way. Conversion changes his direction. He is now turned toward God and life eternal. He is in the narrow way. Faith converts or changes the heart. "And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." (Acts 15:9.) Those who cried out on Pentecost and asked what to do to be saved were believers. One becomes a believer through hearing the word of God. (Rom. 10:17.) Secondly, there must be a change of life or conduct. This change is produced by repentance, which is a change of will. A change of will leads to a change of conduct or behavior. (Matt. 21:28-31.) Next, there must be a change of allegiance. This change is brought about by publicly confessing the name of Christ. (Rom. 10:9,10; Acts 8:36,37.) Finally, there must be a change of state or relationship. This change is brought about by a burial in water. One who has a change of heart, a change of life, and a change of allegiance must now change his state or relationship. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6:3,4.) "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

CONVERSION

(Gal. 3:27.) In baptism one is translated into the kingdom or the body of Christ. (1 Cor. 12:13; Col. 1:13.) It is in baptism that his sins are

washed away. (Acts 22:16.) The believing Pentecostians were told to “Repent, and be baptized ... in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins....” (Acts 2:38.) Baptism takes away one’s sins and puts him

in Christ. God has added him to His church. (Acts 2:47.) If you, dear readers, have not been converted, it is our earnest prayer that you will do so immediately.

— Lindsey Allen

Characteristics of Bible Faith

“BUT WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.” (Hebrews 11:6.)

We know that we are saved by faith, and cannot be saved without faith. Most likely, all who are reading this article believe this; but there is great disagreement and misunderstanding of what constitutes true, saving, Bible faith.

Some feel that having faith means the abandonment of reason: the blind acceptance of that for which there is no reasonable basis. This is why religion is ridiculed by skeptics. They picture believers as superstitious and ignorant. Even some religious people seem to think that faith is to accept that which has no reason or evidence. They will teach that faith is something received miraculously when the Spirit “opens your heart,” and that, in fact, one cannot even understand the Bible until the Holy Spirit has come upon him in some mystical way.

Further confusion results in the minds of many because they will hear one preacher say that sav-

ing faith consists merely of belief in Jesus Christ, while another says that true faith requires action on the part of the believer.

What Is Bible Faith?

The Bible states: “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Heb. 11:1.) Notice that according to the Bible definition, faith is not the wish for something, but the assurance of the things hoped for. Faith is the evidence of that which is to come; thus it must have its basis on that which is reasonable and factual rather than on superstition, human feeling, or blind acceptance.

What Characterizes True Faith?

Not only do we have an inspired definition to help us identify what saving faith is, but the Lord in His inspired word also supplied us with a number of marks or characteristics that are illustrative of true, Bible faith.

1. Trust — In Hebrews 11:8-10 we read that Abraham left his home and his father’s people and “went out, not knowing whither he went.” He did this “by faith.” He was not anxious about what the outcome of his sojourn would be because he had faith in God, and trusted God to lead him to a better land and to be with him wherever he went.

Also, in verse 17 of Hebrews 11 we are told that Abraham “by faith ... offered up Isaac.” Though Isaac was Abraham’s son of promise, Abraham did not hesitate to obey the Lord, for he knew that if need be, God could raise Isaac from the dead. (v. 19.)

2. Hope — What caused Abraham to have such unreserved trust in God? One factor was the hope that Abraham had for the promises God had made to him. Again, in Hebrews 11:9-10, “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise ... for he looked for a city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God.” Through desire for a better country Abraham was given much of the strength and courage he needed to remain faithful.

3. Factual Basis — As already pointed out, true, Bible faith must

ONE RIGHTEOUS FAMILY

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.” (Genesis 6:5-7).

In that wicked world there was one who “found grace in the eyes of the LORD, who was a just man, blameless in his generations.” This man Noah, with his wife, his three sons and their wives — eight human beings were all that remained of the whole human race. All the others because of their wickedness were destroyed by a mighty flood (Genesis 6:7).

The next time God removes wicked man from the face of the earth, it will not be by water, but by fire. “But the heavens and the earth...are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” (2 Peter 3:7).

BIBLE FAITH

be based on fact rather than wishful thinking or fickle human feelings or emotions. There are religious people who seem to be very trusting, and are hopeful that they will be saved; but, sadly, they do not have a saving faith because their trust is misplaced and their hope is unfounded. For example, some put trust in their parent’s religion despite what the Bible says. Others put trust in promises God has not made. God never promised to save someone by “praying through” at an altar, but many put trust in the idea that God will save by that means. Thousands are hoping for a utopian 1,000 year reign upon earth with Christ as king. Still others are looking for everlasting life on this earth. But the Bible does not promise these things, thus those who trust in these doctrines of men and who have hope for things not promised in God’s word do not have their faith established on a factual basis.

4. Obedience — This is an essential element of Bible faith. Observe that in the cases listed in Hebrews 11 of these great men and women of faith, they were com-

mended because of what they did by faith. Their faith moved them to obedience. Yet many today preach that obedience is not necessary to a saving faith. Do not be deceived! In order to become a Christian you must act upon your faith in obedience to God’s plan of salvation. “Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.” (James 2:18.)

Do you have enough trust and faith in God’s will to obey what he says regardless of what it may be? If so, then you can say you have a saving faith.

Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” (Mark 16:16.)

Many do not have the obedient faith it takes to obey these simple commands, but reject them, believing they can be saved by faith alone or grace alone. What about you? Do you have a trusting faith, a faith based on scriptural facts, an obedient faith? Then show your faith in Jesus Christ by turning from your sins and being baptized for remission of sins and entrance into the church of the Lord. — *Tom Moody*

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