



The Branches

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Lessons Learned

In public school growing up, a friend of mine would say, “But the Bible doesn’t say anything about...,” adding in whatever subject the Bible doesn’t name in secular, junior high vocabulary. For example, it doesn’t specifically say, “Thou shalt not stick gum under the desks.” And yet, as time went by and my learning grew a bit, I found that the Bible does have something to say about breaking a rule a teacher has made.

Through experience—you guessed it, I couldn’t just take someone’s word for it—I learned that the Bible does cover every aspect of our lives that needs covering. I am repeatedly amazed at the depth of the Bible. I can read a passage twenty times and not read it with the perspective that opens a whole new thought until I’m in the right circumstances to see it. “The more we study, we the more discover our ignorance” (Shelley). Isn’t that the truth. It has something to do with the eyes of faith and the Holy Spirit leading us to see what we need to see at the right time. Faith is what should prompt us to study Scripture in the first place.

“The three foundations of learning: seeing much, suffering much, and studying much” (Catherall) is the best way I’ve found to sum up learning lessons in life. If you see someone else learn a lesson, then it sticks with you better than a theory. If you suffer it yourself, you sure won’t forget it as quickly. If you study, you are at least better prepared to deal with those lessons when they come.

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, But fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7). I don’t know any fools who diligently search the Scripture for understanding. Also, I don’t know any wise people who don’t hang on to the Word. The ones who have learned and not forsaken their lessons continue in the Word and grow in wisdom. The ones who do not value their learning become fools. Don’t take my word for it; crack open that Bible to the book of Proverbs and find lots of sound advice there.

“Apply your heart to understanding...cry out for discernment... Then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God” (Proverbs 2:2b-5). Verse 6 tells us that He gives wisdom, that out of “His mouth come knowledge and understanding.” He speaks to us through Scripture; pay attention to the Teacher.

—Abby Matzke, Crystal Falls, MI

“Cease listening to instruction, my son, and you will stray from the word of knowledge.”

—Psalm 66:1

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Good Old School Days

When you were a child, did you walk to school? It seems there were grade schools in each neighborhood and we walked to school, home for lunch, and back for the afternoon. I wonder if our mothers appreciated that?

High school was farther away with only one public high school in our small town, so we walked or rode our bicycles to school. Even though there was not a cafeteria, we took our lunch and ate in classrooms. The biology room was our least favorite.

Home Economics was a requirement. We each made an apron and an A-line dress, and believe me, I was never built for such a style. We made the basics in the cooking classes and ingredients were doled out by the teacher. When we made chili, we added all of the chili powder she gave us, which made the final creation quite inedible.

But what fun it was! We went to basketball games, football games, and walked to those events too. Even if they were at night, we could walk home to our neighborhood with friends and then on to our own street alone, without fear. In the 1940's, we put on a patriotic pageant with singing and costumes made by our mothers, who were always great supporters, with the Band Mothers providing funds from their bake sales. We had a great choir director in high school and I played the piano for some of the music while someone more talented did all the harder pieces of music. But we had robes and put on concerts. All wonderful and memorable experiences.

—Edith Haertl, Holy Cross, Phoenix, AZ

Things I've Learned

Sit Up Straight!

E—O—T!

These are lessons taught to me.

Clean Your Plate!

Make Your Bed!

In my youth my mother said.

All your work

With no play

Isn't healthy on life's way.

Never Lie.

Be Content.

All our blessings God has sent.

Serve the Lord,

Do His Will,

And with joy your heart will fill.

Share the wealth

He's bestowed

In proportion to your load.

"Seek ye first"—

This I know

For the Bible tells me so.

All these things

Add to you.

In our lives we've found this true.

All our thanks

To God giv'n

For His Son—our path to heaven.

—Jacquelyn Radichel, Grace, Fridley, MN

Lessons From a Doll

Gratitude! Did I ever really have it as a child? As I look back, I am certainly harsher on the young me than I was at the time. The lessons we learn as children are often not appreciated until we are grown. “When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me” (I Corinthians 13:11, NIV).

I was a very spoiled child, to which my older siblings would readily agree. Now we tease and even heartily laugh at those times. Back then, it must have been a real trial, not just for others around me, but especially for me. I didn’t understand, or wouldn’t!

It was customary for me to receive a new doll for Christmas. When the Penney’s or Montgomery Ward catalogues arrived, it was a special joy for a small-town kid. I’d pour over the back pages filled with toys, games, and hot new “gotta haves.” I checked and circled, folded corners and verbally enforced my requests. I wasn’t so spoiled nor my parents so rich that I got them all, but I nearly always got something specially designated.

One particular year I wanted my usual doll, but I was 10! This doll must not be a Betsy Wetsy or a Tiny Tears; it had to be a bride doll or a princess doll. (Barbie and Ken were not dating yet.) Christmas Eve arrived. I tore open the package and eagerly lifted the cover of the box I was certain contained my hoped-for doll. Then in marvelous anticipation, I slowed down, and gingerly separated just a tiny portion of the tissue paper, revealing only the doll’s face. Immediately, with absolute disgust, I shoved the box aside and cried out to my mom, “I told you I didn’t want another baby doll!”

I’m sorry to say I do not even remember my mom’s eyes or reaction. I was too busy feeling sorry for myself. Over my self-absorbed pouting, my dear older sister shouted, “You ungrateful little spoiled brat! Open the rest of the paper and look at *your doll!*” Sheepishly I did as directed. There, nestled in the tissue, was the most beautiful princess doll in a blue satin dress appliqued with pink roses. She had combed hair, blinking eyes in her “precious face,” and *high heeled shoes!* I was thrilled, and I’m sure it showed. However, I don’t recall if I ever said “thank you” or “I’m sorry.” Probably not.

The lesson of being grateful for whatever one receives wasn’t learned by a spoiled girl in one night. An incident with a wrist-watch not meeting expectations occurred a couple of years later, and I never wore it. As I recall, true thanksgiving didn’t come until I was much older, when I was haunted by my childhood actions. It was then that the Lord moved my heart to thanksgiving and repentance and I apologized to my parents.

I certainly had faithful Christian parents, pastor, and Sunday School teachers. I was expected and mostly wanted to attend Sunday School and church every week. But, one of the best things that ever happened to me was when I took the advice of my cousin Naomi to flee to Immanuel Lutheran High School in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Even though at ILC sin still clung to us all like barnacles to a ship’s hull, God’s Word was central to every part of our campus life. Christian examples were abundant. I had to fend for myself. You know—laundry, cleaning, budgeting. I was still a slow learner. Just ask my former roommates. Nevertheless, I did learn to truly appreciate my parents, to eat a piece of bread even if it had a raisin in it. ILC was just what I needed and God knew it! “For I know the plans I have for you declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you” (Jeremiah 29:11–12, NIV).

One more thing I learned from the doll. (By the way, that mangy doll still occupies space in our toy room. It’s marred baby-doll-like face with ultra close-cropped hair, missing eyelashes, one eye that won’t close, and nail polish-enhanced lips scares most kids. But I do not want to get rid of it for obvious reasons.) When I was talking to my

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husband about my memories of the unappreciated doll, we realized I got in trouble when I only looked at a part of the whole by opening just a little bit of the package. The Children of Israel did this often. The Disciples did it when they still did not understand what Jesus must do (John 12:16).

In moments of weakness, we all demonstrate the same shortsightedness. I think of my own struggles with cancer. “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known” (1 Corinthians 13:12, NIV).

Thanks be to God we are always fully known by Him; O wonder of wonders, He knows and loves us more than we know and love ourselves! And that Day will come when He will tear open the whole package for us, revealing the full glory of our eternal inheritance in heaven. We will be perfected, and our gratitude toward Him will know no end!

—Christine Fossum, Holy Trinity, Columbia, SC

August Reflections on the Fall to Come

While some flowers are still in bloom,
Bees seem to know the end is soon.

Squirrels are in a hurry
The Butternut in their mouth to bury.

Summer furnishings are all on sale
And Back-to-School ads are in the mail.

The swimmin’ hole’s all green and smelly.
Mom’s got the pantry full of jam and jelly.

Novice birds are taking wing,
They’ve finally learned their song to sing!

Fat raccoons and crying loons—
State Fair and Labor Day looms.

Geese now appear to fly with ease
While rehearsing their formation V’s.

Though I always enjoy the season at hand,
I do anticipate the Fall colors grand!

—Submitted by Corine Kirkham, Grace, Fridley, MN; written by her husband, Jack O. Kirkham. “While sorting through files after the death of my husband, I came across a bit of whimsical reflection, probably on his youth in North Dakota. It seemed strongly out of place among the collection of newspaper clippings, technical student tests, and political speeches. I’ll share it even though I know items in *The Branches* authored by men are rare!” (Nov. 12, 2006)

Pastor Appreciation Month

October is pastor appreciation month. I don't know who decided it, but I see the purpose. This month is a chance to let Pastor know he is cared for also—it is for those of us who otherwise don't know how or when to show it.

We all go about our daily lives in appreciation for Pastor. But most of us show it by being what we think is “not a nuisance.” We don't call him, don't ask questions, don't knock on the door, all because we respect him and don't want to take up his time or interrupt.

But a few minutes spent with respect of Pastor's everyday work schedule can be a great thing. Stopping by to say hello, spending a couple of minutes after church visiting, sending a card of encouragement out of the blue, letting him know you are supporting him and praying for blessings on his work and his family...these are just a few ways to let him know he has friends in the church and not just work.

For those of you more ambitious or able, here are a few more ideas. Invite him (and maybe his family) out to your home for a friendly visit or meal. Bake a little something for him. Send flowers to the church out of appreciation for his dedication. Take Pastor's hobbies into consideration (especially if he has forgotten to have a hobby). Or think in the entertainment realm: his family might appreciate tickets to a movie, a certificate to eat at your favorite place (or even better, his favorite place), or an offer to babysit so the parents can escape for awhile. (I'm willing to bet his children would like a changing of the guard occasionally!) If those things do not fit the circumstances, then think about simply providing some conversation about something other than church happenings, or a person to accompany him on a few shut-in visits.

I've noticed that many pastors don't take breaks, even when they think they do. This man, who was called by God to stand in as Christ in front of the congregation each week, takes his duties seriously. God has placed it on his heart to pour his whole being into the members placed under his care. When you are ill, in want, unhappy, or hurting in any way, he feels it as a family member feels it. When you are content, excited, celebrating, or achieving, his heart rejoices for you. Can any human turn that off at 8:30pm, when Bible Study is over? When Sunday afternoon comes and church meetings are out, the emotional drain of conducting the service hits. Monday isn't a “day off”—for many pastors, it is recovery time. Or, it is time to catch up on household work and family time. Many times, that “day off” is spent preparing for the week's work to come, visiting members that weren't visited in the past week, or taking care of other unforeseen business of the church.

If you see others in the congregation who might want to do something special for the pastor, or do something to make his workload easier, then don't be afraid to get together with them to make a plan of action. They may simply need this encouragement to get them started.

Appreciating your pastor in whatever ways you choose will show results. You'll get the smile and thank-you right away, but then you will see long-term effects also. Appreciate that each pastor has individual strengths, and God has set him in the position he holds; his specific strengths (and yes, his specific weaknesses too) are what the work needs at the time. Your pastor will appreciate you back, and you will see it in his efforts in the ministry.

Happy Pastor Appreciation Month to you all!

—Abby Matzke, Crystal Falls, MI

Book Review

Favorite Mystery Writers

Do you enjoy reading a good mystery story? I've been a fan of the mystery story since grade school and graduated to Erle Stanley Gardner in my teens. But in recent years I find the English writers more to my liking. I have a collection of paperback books (and some hard covers) written by Patricia Moyes, Elizabeth Lemarchand, Roy Hart, June Thompson, and Susannah Stacey. Since some of these date from the 1960's, you may have to check the used book stores or go online for them.

Ngaio Marsh and Dorothy Sayers are also favorites. If you look for their stories on DVD's, you will find Inspector Alleyn and Lord Peter Wimsey entertaining in this media as well.

Sara Hoskinson Frommer is an American author, as is Patricia Sprinkle, (who has written some delightful Christian children's books). Hazel Holt also writes an interesting tale with good recipes included. These three authors write in the manner of Miss Marple (Agatha Christie) and Emily Pollifax (Dorothy Gilman). Some of these titles are still available in stores that sell recent editions.

All of the authors I have mentioned fit into my category as entertaining but not offensive. Science fiction and fantasy are not in my library, so perhaps you will not agree with my taste. But the books by these authors are gentle, thoughtful, and often worth reading more than once!

—Edith Haertl, Holy Cross, Phoenix, AZ

Diakonia

The Purpose of Ladies Aid Societies

Each ladies' group should periodically reassess their purpose. Are you doing what you set out to do? Are you still constructive, or have things degenerated? Are you following your constitution, or have you been winging-it so long that you've forgotten your roots and the reasons for them? Seriously consider if your group can do the good things it set out to do without being an official group. Might more people be inclined to participate if they didn't feel "out-of-the-loop" because they miss meetings? And here are two more questions not to gloss over: Why does a Ladies Aid group meet more often than the men's groups? Are the members of the Ladies Aid really enjoying the meetings, or are the meetings burdensome and sometimes quarrelsome? Which leads to one more: is your group flexible and amiable enough to accommodate a variety of people's ideas, needs, or schedules without criticizing?

The overall point of a group of women getting together in association with church should be, in essence, to uphold and assist the work of the congregation in spreading the Word. Women are weaker vessels though, and great care should be exercised in watching for a backsliding of that purpose. When backsliding occurs, the result, if undealt with, is a withering of the group as a whole. When it is guarded against in Christian love, then the group flourishes and is a great asset to the congregation. It is fluid and effective; it is exciting to be a member of; it is encouraging to the other members of the church and to the pastor; it welcomes new members to the flock whole-heartedly and assists in seeking the lost sheep. This is a group that all women are happy to be involved in. This is what a women's group should strive for: a Christ-like attitude, ambition, and activity.

—Abby Matzke, Crystal Falls, MI

Encouragements

“...let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance...The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline.”

—Proverbs 1: 5,7 (NIV)

I'm sort of a stubborn mule. My life is lived in a room in which God stands by the door—one lit up by a huge neon light saying “exit to Heaven” over it, and He says to me “Come with me this way my child.” And I say “No, I’m going to find my own way out—I think I’ll try this window over here.” I end up getting stuck in the window, and He pulls me back into the room. “Over here, child,” He says gently again. “No, thanks,” I say, and fumble around the room, trying to find another way out—*my* way. Finally, in exhaustion, I give up. He is still patiently waiting for me to come to Him on my own—He would never force me, although through my life He may use situations to try to show me the way that is best. When I finally go to Him, He leads me easily and lovingly through the door.

This is kind of like when I am training my children to mind me. To them, their way seems best, whether they are 2 or 12. It’s my job to show them the best way, then try to be patient, loving and gentle while I teach them. I’m not really teaching them to just pick up their toys and not throw fits when they are 3 years old, although that is a definite plus, in the long run hopefully they are being taught to trust and follow their Heavenly Father, which is so much more important.

Life lessons are that way. I think that God keeps putting the same situations in my life over and over until I learn what I’m supposed to. Maybe it’s not the exact same situation, but if I look back on it later, I can see that God was trying to get my attention. He gave me all the clues that I needed the first time, but perhaps I was preoccupied, and not focusing on Him. There are times when the lesson has been difficult—and I have been humiliated, sad, or frightened. I may have, in my sinfulness, even questioned God and His motives. But a dear friend gave me this passage to chew on: “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28, NIV). So even when the lesson is hard, and seemingly useless or hurtful, we need to trust that the Lord is doing what is best for us in the long run, what will fulfill His destiny for us the best way.

The above passage says fools despise wisdom and discipline. In my NIV Bible, it says that the Hebrew word for “fools” in Proverbs, and in much of the Old Testament, denotes one who is morally deficient. Morally deficient brings all sorts of images to mind...but not me...right? Yes, me. Stubborn as a mule, and refusing to learn God’s lessons. I am a sinner, unable to conjure up any wisdom on my own. Anything worthy that I have in my stubborn head is from the Lord. He so lovingly sets before us all of the lessons and knowledge that we need. He is there to guide us, but we need to be willing. Many times I am not. I am busy trying to find my own way into or out of a situation, and don’t bother to consult the Creator of all things! Inevitably, when I cannot in the end figure things out, I will turn to Him, and He is waiting for me to ask “Which way Lord?”

One way that the Lord has taught me life lessons is with affliction. Interestingly, several times I have had friends who later faced similar afflictions, and I was able to help, or at least listen, because I could understand. I had faced it also. It didn’t occur to me then, but I needed to experience it in order to be able to help someone else later. Also, God always gives the grace needed to see the situation through.

God be with you all!

—Julie Schopp, St. Luke’s, Lemmon, SD;

Visit the Encouragements website at: www.encouragementsbyjulie.com.

Or email Julie at: encouragements@sdplainswb.com.

Easy Fall Entertaining

This month's theme, Learning Lessons in Life, brings to mind something I have been thinking about for the past year. Entertaining doesn't have to involve gleaming china, ironed linens, and elegant cuisine. If we wait until our houses are perfectly appointed, free of all dust, and our calendars are clear to entertain guests, we would probably be unlikely to extend many dinner invitations. How many fellowship opportunities have we missed because we didn't think that our food was "company ready" or our schedules were open enough? To extend ourselves to others, we need to learn to let go of the need for perfection and remember that our dear Lord dined in some very humble surroundings.

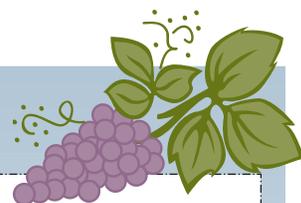
This month's recipes provide a menu for a fall supper. Use all or some of them to complete an evening's meal that would be pleasing to any guest.

—Gail Mackensen, Messiah, Hales Corners, WI

"You don't have to cook fancy or complicated masterpieces—just good food from fresh ingredients."

—Julia Child

Delicious Dishes



Squash Soup

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 Tbsp. olive oil | 3 c. chicken stock |
| 1 onion, diced | 1 1/2 c. (12 fl. oz. can) coconut milk |
| 2 shallots, chopped | 1 Tbsp. curry powder |
| 3 cloves garlic, chopped | 1/2 tsp. chili powder |
| 1 Tbsp. chopped fresh ginger | salt and pepper to taste |
| 1 c. mirin wine or sweet cooking wine | optional: wild rice and roasted, chopped pecans |
| 4 pounds winter squash, peeled and diced | |

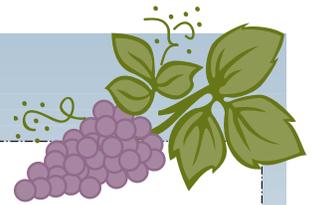
In a large saucepan over high temperature, heat the olive oil until very hot. Add the onion, shallots, garlic, and ginger and saute until they begin to give off their aroma, 2 or 3 minutes. Add the wine and cook until half the liquid has evaporated, about 3 or 4 minutes. Add the diced squash and stock. Reduce the heat and simmer until the squash is tender, about 15 minutes. Add the coconut milk and continue simmering for 5 more minutes.

While the soup is simmering, place the curry powder in a small saute pan over high heat. Dry-saute the curry until you can smell the aroma, 1 or 2 minutes. Add it to the soup when it has finished simmering.

Puree the soup in a blender or in batches in a food processor. Add the chili powder and season to taste with salt and pepper. For extra heartiness: add a spoonful of cooked wild rice to each bowl. Garnish with chopped, roasted pecans.

—Becky Rodebaugh, Messiah, Hales Corners, WI

Delicious Dishes



Glazed Carrots

1–2 lbs. carrots, sliced in 1/2 inch disks
(or 1–2 lbs. baby carrots)

1/3 c. honey

1 Tbsp. raspberry vinegar

1 Tbsp. butter

Boil or steam carrots for 10–15 minutes or until crisp tender. Drain carrots and place in serving bowl. Combine remaining ingredients in small saucepan and heat through. Pour over carrots. Combine well and serve.

—Gail Mackensen, Messiah, Hales Corners, WI

Rosemary Pork Loin

3–4 lb. pork loin roast

1 Tbsp. fresh rosemary (or 1 tsp. Dried)

1 tsp. each basil, oregano and/or thyme

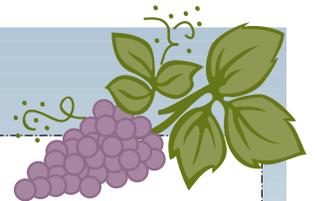
3 Tbsp. olive oil

Mix herbs with olive oil and rub mixture on surface of roast. Roast pork at 350° until meat thermometer registers at least 165°. Cover loosely with foil and let rest 10–20 minutes before slicing.

—Carol Sandeen, St. Paul, Lakewood, CO



Delicious Dishes



Roast Potatoes with Rosemary

3–4 lbs. red potatoes, cut into eighths or quarters

1/4 cup olive oil

2 Tbsp. fresh rosemary or 1 Tbsp. dried

3/4 tsp. salt

1/2 tsp. pepper

Set oven to 425°. Combine potatoes with olive oil and rosemary in large bowl. Arrange on rimmed cookie sheet in an even layer. Season with salt and pepper. Roast in prepared oven for 20–30 minutes, depending on potato size, turning halfway through baking time. Roast until light golden brown, adding more salt, pepper, or rosemary to taste. This recipe also works well with Yukon Gold potatoes.

—Gail Mackensen,
Messiah, Hales Corners, WI

Onion Bread

2 packages yeast

2 c. warm water

1 pkg. Lipton onion soup mix

1/3 c. sugar

2 Tbsp. molasses

1 tsp. salt

1 egg

1/2 c. cooking oil

6 1/2 c. flour

(can have up to 2 1/2 cups be whole wheat)

Dissolve yeast in warm water. Add soup mix and remaining ingredients. Let rise for about 1 hour. Punch down and let rise again. Form into two thick ropes and braid into one loaf.

Bake on a greased pan for 45–50 minutes at 350°.

—Mrs. Lois Mackensen,
Our Redeemer, Red Wing, MN

Honoring God in the Family with Leadership and Discipline

**“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,
and all these things shall be added to you.”**

—Matthew 6:33

What does that passage really have to do with honoring God in your family with leadership and discipline? “The kingdom of God” is God’s rule in our hearts with His Word. Many people believe that seeking God’s kingdom is a place, but it is Christ ruling us with His powerful loving mercy and grace which we see so beautifully in His suffering, death, and resurrection as recorded in His Word. To let you know how this fits, I first need to give you the background to this passage choice.

I knew before John and I were married that Matthew 6:33 was his favorite passage. How much this impacted his life became evident while we were farming. The barn we milked in had 3’x8’ beams about 18 inches apart. These beams were the ceiling of the milking part of the barn and the strong floor for the hay mow where the hay and straw was stored for the winter. About three beams in, on six 3x5 inch note cards, were the words, “Seek first the kingdom of God and HIS righteousness.” I asked John how long those had been there. He said about three months. I asked why they weren’t in a more prominent place. His response was something to the effect that those words were a reminder for him and nobody else. If he was not focusing on “up,” he was not focusing on seeking the right things in his daily activities.

Any leadership and discipline that honors God seeks to do His will. Just what is that will? There have been hundreds upon thousands of books, articles and speeches written talking about effective leadership and discipline. One looks at the volume of material available and it can be quite overwhelming. I will barely scratch the surface of the topic and its many facets. The four main ideas I wish to touch on here involve Leadership and Discipline under these headings: Service, Urgency, Compassion, and good Navigation. Leadership and discipline are not stand-alone concepts. We will look at them both together under each heading.

Honoring God in the family with leadership and discipline requires service.

When we think of a “leader,” we think of a president, a coach of a sports team, or maybe a CEO of a multi-million dollar corporation. How did each get there? Some are ruthless and shrewd. Some may have had it handed to them on a silver platter. And some did it the old fashioned way: “They earned it.” (Thank you Smith Barney.)

These leaders had something in common. They had goals. An effective leader has a good idea how he wants to achieve those goals and objectives. So, now, my question is: Did you set out on your career as wives and mothers with that game plan? Did your goals and objectives start with seeking God’s Kingdom first? Proverbs 31:13–31 does an excellent job of listing the goals and how to get them accomplished by describing a virtuous wife.

“She seeks wool and flax,
And willingly works with her hands.
She is like the merchant ships,
She brings her food from afar.
She also rises while it is yet night,
And provides food for her household,
And a portion for her maidservants.
She considers a field and buys it;
From her profits she plants a vineyard.

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She girds herself with strength,
And strengthens her arms.
She perceives that her merchandise *is* good,
And her lamp does not go out by night.
She stretches out her hands to the distaff,
And her hand holds the spindle.
She extends her hand to the poor,
Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy.
She is not afraid of snow for her household,
For all her household *is* clothed with scarlet.
She makes tapestry for herself;
Her clothing *is* fine linen and purple.
Her husband is known in the gates,
When he sits among the elders of the land.
She makes linen garments and sells *them*,
And supplies sashes for the merchants.
Strength and honor *are* her clothing;
She shall rejoice in time to come.
She opens her mouth with wisdom,
And on her tongue *is* the law of kindness.
She watches over the ways of her household,
And does not eat the bread of idleness.
Her children rise up and call her blessed;
Her husband *also*, and he praises her:
'Many daughters have done well,
But you excel them all.'
Charm *is* deceitful and beauty *is* passing,
But a woman *who* fears the LORD, she shall be praised.
Give her of the fruit of her hands,
And let her own works praise her in the gates."

A leader in the Christian home goes about the business of making a home run smoothly. She serves her household. She seeks, makes, perceives (thinks ahead), provides for them, rises early, stays up late, and does not "eat the bread of idleness." That is service. Christ himself said, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:42b-45).

My mom and grandmas were always amazing examples of this kind of service to their families. I have always appreciated the service...the countless, thankless hours of service my mom gave to us and still gives us when we visit and gives to my dad now that we are all out of the house. I still strive to be like them in that way. This is seeking first the kingdom of God, not the honor and praise of men.

Honoring God with Leadership and Discipline in the family requires urgency.

"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates." (Deuteronomy 6:6-9)

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How effective your leadership and discipline is really hits home when you send your first child away to Immanuel. As we left Becky (now a Junior in High School) behind and were driving home, John and I spent a lot of time contemplating the things we wish we would have done and said, the things we wish we wouldn't have done, and redoubled our efforts to make sure we would do better with the next four. Had we done enough? Had we given her the right tools to read the map? Had we instilled in her strongly enough that the Word is more important to follow than anything else? Rest assured, God has given her many experiences that have trained her where our training was lacking.

God does not tell us it is a good idea to raise our children in the knowledge of Him if we want, or when we feel like it. God doesn't say discipline and raising your children by seeking God's righteousness is something to do when the sun is shining, but not when the times are tough...This raising our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is not optional, it does not take a vacation and is not to be taken lightly.

Luther makes quite a point in his Large Catechism in regards to the 4th commandment:

“Therefore do not think that this is left to your pleasure and arbitrary will, but that it is a strict command and injunction of God, to whom also you must give account for it. But, here again the sad plight arises that no one perceives or heeds this, and all live on as though God gave us children for our pleasure or amusement, and servants that we should employ them like a cow or ass, only for work, or as though we were only to gratify our wantonness with our subjects, ignoring them, as though it were no concern of ours what they learn or how they live; and no one is willing to see that this is the command of the Supreme majesty, who will most strictly call us to account and punish us for it; not that there is so great need to be so seriously concerned about the young. For if we wish to have excellent and apt persons both for civil and ecclesiastical government we must spare no diligence, time or cost in teaching and educating our children, that they may serve God and the world, and we must not think only how we may amass money and possessions for them. For God can indeed without us support and make them rich, as He daily does. But, for this purpose, He has given us children, and issued this command that we should train and govern them according to His will, else He would have no need for father and mother. Let every one know therefore, that it is his duty, on peril of losing the divine favor, to bring up his children above all things in the fear and knowledge of God, and if they are talented, have them learn and study something that they may be employed for whatever need there is (to have them instructed and trained in a liberal education, that men may be able to have their aid in government and in what ever is necessary).

“If that were done, God would also richly bless us and give us grace to train men by whom land and people might be improved and likewise well educated citizens, chaste and domestic wives, who afterwards would rear godly children and servants. Here consider now that deadly injury you are doing if you be negligent and fail on your part to bring up your child to usefulness and piety, and how you bring upon yourself all sin and wrath, thus earning hell by your own children, even though you be other-wise pious and holy. And, because this is disregarded, God so fearfully punishes the world that there is not discipline, government, or peace, of which we all complain, but do not see that it is our fault; for as we train them, we have spoiled and disobedient children and subjects. Let this be sufficient exhortation; for to draw this out at length belongs to another time.”

Luther doesn't mince words with how very important it is, day in and day out, in all our words, activities, and examples, to teach our children the Word...their life depends on it, and God wants it: “(God) desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2: 4).

(To be continued in January 2008, Winter issue...Chris Gerbitz describes three more components of proper leadership and discipline and encourages by reminding what the results of these efforts bring.)

—Chris Gerbitz, *Peace Thru Christ*, Middleton, WI

Ageing and Still Serving the Lord

How come we are better at taking than thanking? How come we are so slow in saying “thank you” to those who do the most for us? Like our heavenly Father, for example; no, He does not need our thanks. He keeps on doing for us whether He receives our thanks or not. The need for thanksgiving lies not with Him, but with us, and there is joy to be found in such thanksgiving.

True thankfulness comes from the heart. It centers more on the giver than the gift. What God wants from us is not our possessions, but *us!*

My dollars and cents are not really mine, but His, and are to be used to care for my family, help the needy, support the government, and supply the means for my church to spread the real treasure. My moments and days are not really mine, but His, and are to be used in Christian love and concern toward all I meet in my life. My talents and abilities are not mine, but His, to be used in my home, my community, and my church *for Him*.

I remember what God has done for me. He showed His great love for me by sending His Son, Jesus, to come into this world to live a perfect life for me and to give His life on the cross for me; He paid for the multitude of sins I have committed and the sure hope of eternal life I now have. He has even given me the faith I have to believe these things through the work of the Holy Spirit. I surely wish to thank God in plenty and want, in green pastures or in the valley of the shadow of death.

The Lord has been so very good to all of us, giving us many talents and abilities and also special gifts and many rich possessions which He expects us to use in showing our heartfelt appreciation to Him. None of us can really, honestly say, “I can’t!” When I was teaching, sometimes children would say, “I can’t!” I would tell them that “I can’t never gets anything done, and I want to hear ‘I’ll try.’” When they tried, they usually surprised themselves as to what they could do. There is always something we can do too.

The matter of serving the Lord must be taught *by the example* of parents so that children see their parents involved in church-going and in church activities, and by involving their children in activities with them. Thankfully, I had such parents; they took my brother and me along to help them clean the church when it was their turn. We were pretty good at crawling around to take the kneelers out to dust them. I got to practice the organ and I started to play for church services after confirmation. Also, in the matter of giving a special gift to the church, we were taught by example of our parents. When we wanted to donate a gold-plated bowl for the baptismal font, we took Mentholatum jars (which were our banks) to the parsonage to give our pennies, nickels, and dimes to pay for it ourselves. So we were taught by the example of our parents at an early age what it felt like to give our own gifts to the Lord. What a wonderful influence all young parents are to bring up their children in this way! So you see, parents are observed by their growing children all the time.

Through the years, we sometimes grow slack on these special services to the Lord because of the fast pace of living or being too busy with so many other things. We forget about the Lord and His Word.

As I am growing older, I am noticing that my “can’t do” list is growing longer every day, and this is a constant concern for me. Many of our older people are experiencing this. Some will say, “I have done my thing! I am pensioned off!” I do not believe that the Lord takes everything away that we can do for the Lord and His Kingdom. We may have to give up some things that we are no longer able to do, but there is *always* something we can do for Him.

I have been visiting shut-ins every Friday afternoon with Rhoda Eserhut as our Cheer Committee. We hope to bring a little cheer and courage to some of our suffering shut-ins. So often *we* are encouraged by the wonderful faith and trust these people have in the Lord, trusting Him that everything is for their good and that the Lord will faithfully answer their prayers as He has promised. What a blessing!

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Aging and Still Serving the Lord—Continued

Some people wonder why they are still here when there is not much they can do anymore. We always assure them that they can still pray for our church and for us. They usually smile and say, “*That, I can do!*”

None of us can ever say truthfully, “There is nothing I can do because I have no talents or abilities.” We can always pray. There is no being “pensioned off” in this life. When we lose the use of some things, there is always prayer and telling others about Jesus, which is our purpose for being here.

May our fervent love for God’s Word not grow stale, but remain vibrant and alive, for then we will be moved to use *all* we have to claim others for God’s Kingdom.

When all abilities are gone, the Lord will take us home to Heaven, and then—think of it!—we will be able to serve Him joyfully and perfectly, forever and ever.

O Father, God of Love,
Hear Thou my supplication;
O Savior, Son of God,
Grant me Thy full salvation;
And Thou, O Holy Ghost,
Be Thou my faithful Guide
That I may serve Thee here
And there with Thee abide.

—TLH 417

—Dorothy Schmolesky, Luther Memorial, Fond Du Lac, WI

Assurance and Confidence

The following is excerpted from an article out of “Newsletter for Women of the CLC,” 1987; the article was under the same title and submitted by Jackie Kesterson.

Does it seem to you (as it does to me) that sometimes it’s hard to get a right perspective on your problems? What to do? It helps to remember and imitate what the Psalmists and Prophets of old used to do: First, take a step back from the immediate problem, and recall God’s wonderful Words, deeds, and promises, remembering that He controls history and cares for His own dear children. Here are some of my favorite Words of assurance and confidence.

“I remember the days of old; I meditate on all Your works;
I muse on the work of Your hands. I spread out my hands to You...”
—Psalm 143:5-6a

“Are You not from everlasting, O LORD my God, my Holy One? We shall not die.”
—Habakkuk 1:12a

“(Jesus answered) These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace.
In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”
—John 16:33

A Lesson for List-Makers

I was given a book to read about anxiety. The author, Archibald D. Hart, pointed out Christ's words, "It is finished." I had never come to the conclusion this author did. Jesus Himself did not take on everything He could have in His time here walking with us physically. He is God, and had all the power in eternity at His disposal. In one way, He set an example for those of us who try to "do it all" by *not* doing it all—a lesson in managing our human limitations. It sure makes me stop and think. He could have healed masses more than He did. Certainly there were more people, sad about deceased loved ones, who wanted to see them raised like Lazarus.

I like to accomplish. I really, really, like to see things get done. Now. Or, better yet, yesterday! I am a list-keeper. I want to cross things off my list—tick, tick, tick!—and rewrite a clean one at the end of the day for tomorrow. Some of you can relate to the satisfaction I feel when I can victoriously draw a single black line through another item on my notepad. The rest of you can just smile and nod and try to tolerate those of us who operate this way.

But for me and my fellow list-keepers, God has a way of sticking us in situations where we *cannot* accomplish as we'd like. Just watch my stress level rise when I can't get all of my ambitions done in *my* amount of time. (By the way, you can, in this attitude, train your adrenal system to stay awake 24/7. It's not something I recommend.)

So now I can ponder on Jesus' example: did *He* keep lists? Did *He* get all bent out of shape after a hard day of miracles and teaching non-stop? Did He have a literal list of people to heal that he checked off along the way? Well, now, don't I feel silly. Archie taught me that even Jesus left things undone (of course, He knew what should be left undone, where I use whatever judgment I figure best). Jesus, in all His Godly wisdom, knew this sinful world would keep turning, and that what was supposed to get done in the right amount of time would get done. Whatever is not accomplished by us is not necessarily failure. And if it happens to be a failure of ours (mixed up priorities or what-have-you), Jesus took care of that on the cross, and He takes care of our needs daily.

All of my worrying about getting enough done, getting it done quickly and correctly, getting enough done to please other people—pointless. God would've made the days longer than He did to give me more time if that was what He wanted. But the sun goes down, and we can rest, list accomplished or not.

Rest?! With so much left to do! Yes. Jesus allowed Himself, and His disciples, rest. He slept in a boat during a storm. He removed to the mountainside or to the water when He needed a break. To me, that looks like permission for us to take a breath sometimes. If He needed rest, then who are we to think we can out-pace God Almighty!

—Abby Matzke, Crystal Falls, MI



A Look Ahead

January's theme: Success and Failure

Every day and every life is filled with each. We look forward to eternal life through Christ's victory, but we must experience ups and downs while here on earth. What thoughts do you have on this topic? Share your happiest successes with us; let us know how goals are a good thing whether attained or not; remind us how failure and hard times can leave us able to joy more in the following blessings.

Failures can make us laugh too—like me using tablespoons of baking soda instead of teaspoons...remember, Mom?

Submissions should be sent to Abby Matzke (contact information on the back page).

Aim to have articles in by November 15.



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***I am the Vine,
you are the branches.
He who abides in Me,
and I in him,
bears much fruit;
for without Me
you can do nothing.***

—John 15:5

***“Thou truest friend man ever knew,
Thy constancy I’ve tried;
Where all were false I found thee true,
My counselor and guide.
The mines of earth no treasure give
That could this volume buy:
In teaching me the way to live,
It taught me how to die.”***

—George P. Morris,
from poem, “My Mother’s Bible”



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