

the GATHERING

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by Andy Crouch

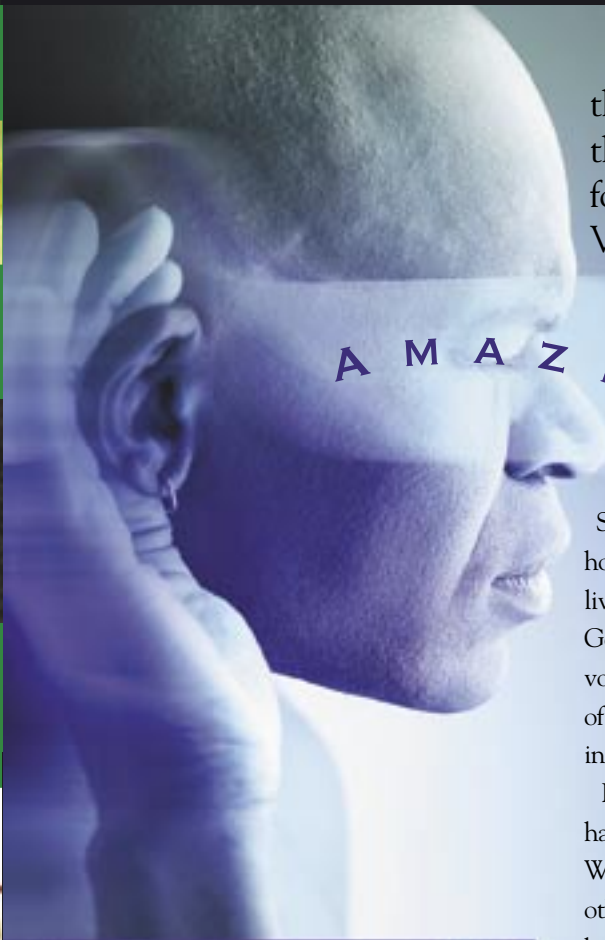


Special
Foldout
2005 Annual
Conference Photos



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Not Kill
The Family

The Gathering serves individuals, families and foundations in expanding their vision and effectiveness in giving to Christian ministries.



A M A Z I N G
G R A C E

I doubt that anyone who was in the room on Sunday morning at the conference this year will easily forget the Ex-Addicts Choir from Victory Fellowship.

Several people walked over afterwards to tell me how amazing it was for them to hear those men whose lives had been so radically changed by the Spirit of God. They were off key and off pitch, and their rough voices were anything but professional...but the power of God to change lives was never more real to us in that room.

It started me thinking about how different it might have been had they been on key and a normal choir. We would likely have begun comparing them to the other music and worship that weekend. Had they been "good" we all would have missed the Grace that we were privileged to see and hear. Grace may not always be good. Grace may not always be on key and it may even sound off pitch. But Grace is always perfectly in tune with the Spirit of God. Grace is always amazing.

I bought a small tuning fork for my desk to remind me of Grace and not mere goodness. I want to be unusually aware this next year of the importance of being in tune with the leading of God and not be caught in the trap of working to speak with the tongues of angels and sounding to God like a hollow gong or clanging cymbal.

A friend told me that in Brazil there is a moment every morning when a radio station interrupts its program to play the tone A440. It is the time when musicians throughout the entire country can tune their instruments to the universal standard. I am grateful that you have a similar standard for tuning your life.

*Blessings,
Dud*

"Grace may not
always be good.
Grace may not
always be on key.
Grace is always
amazing."

JUST DO IT: The Next Generation of Missions

It was standing room only at the conference this year to hear many of the fresh, young faces taking this world by storm. From Africa and Atlanta to inner city Seattle and the Ivy League, a new generation is on the move for missions. Their goal is perhaps similar to those who have gone before—reaching the world to effect change for Christ. But gone are the days of formulaic evangelism and traditional outreach. These energized, articulate twenty- and thirty-somethings are making all things new to a generation searching for truth...and it's catching on like wildfire. In this issue, we highlight two organizations that are ministering to a generation dubbed as the "black hole" of today's church.


SERVLIFE

Joel Vestal is founder and president of ServLife, an organization dedicated to building global community by helping multiply the church and alleviate human suffering through advancing the whole gospel to the whole person around the world. Joel says it even better: "We want to comfort the afflicted, and afflict the comfortable." A self-proclaimed global nomad, Joel is intent on making sure ServLife is NOT just another American effort, another attempt on "westernizing" the church. "ServLife has more of a holistic mission," says Joel. "We want to meet the physical and spiritual needs of the people."

ServLife is also about building relationships with local, indigenous churches in the areas of the world where they have a presence. "We are not about telling people what needs to be done, but we desire to look at all aspects of a community to see the love of Christ shared," says Joel. "Our ultimate goal is that through these different efforts and programs that we will serve, bless, and multiply the local church."

RIGHTNOW

Speaking with Joel was Marc McCartney of **rightnow**. Along with Brian Mosley, Marc leads this mobilization ministry, dedicated to helping young people use whatever talents and gifts they have for God's glory. "No one this age believes they are really qualified, so we see ourselves as brokers," says Marc. "We want to be the connecting point between our age group and the ministries out there already in place." Marc and Brian have found that to reach young people now, you have to pursue them relationally, building a relationship over time to encourage and target their strengths. They try to be "catalysts, coaches and connectors" to a generation starving for a purpose but unsure of where to look. A quick check of the **rightnow** website found almost 4,000 different service opportunities available to young people around the world.

For more information on these ministries, visit their websites at www.servlife.org and www.rightnow.org. 




Host: *Peggy Wehmeyer*
2005 Conference Speaker

About World Vision Radio

The World Vision Report is a first-of-its-kind radio newsmagazine and daily feature show produced by World Vision Radio capturing the human drama behind global issues and events affecting the world's poorest children and families. Offering fresh, engaging, NPR-style content designed

especially for the faith-based market and hosted by Peggy Wehmeyer, former ABC World News Tonight correspondent and featured speaker at The Gathering Conference this year, the World Vision Report is currently airing on Christian radio stations in the United States.

Honest reporting, compelling interviews, and in-depth analysis from international reporters highlight the challenges facing the disenfranchised around the world and illuminate solutions for tackling world poverty. Their stories do not shy away from exploring the powerful role of faith in the lives of the poor and those who are trying to help them.

www.oneplace.com/ministries/world-vision-radio 



Tim Keller
2005 Conference Bible Teacher

Our Approach to the Poor

The liberal/pragmatists tend to scorn the religion of the poor and see them as helpless victims needing expertise. This is born out of a disbelief in God's common grace or special grace to all. Ironically, the secular mindset also disbelieves in sin, and thus anyone who is poor must be oppressed, a helpless victim.

The conservative/moralists on the other hand tend to scorn the poor as failures and weaklings. They see them as somehow to blame for their situation. But the gospel leads us to be: a) humble, without moral superiority knowing you were "spiritually bankrupt" but saved by Christ's free generosity, b) gracious, not worried too much about "deservingness," since you didn't deserve Christ's grace, and c) respectful of believing poor Christians as brothers and sisters from whom to learn. The gospel alone can bring "knowledge workers" into a sense of humble respect for and solidarity with the poor.

From Tim Keller's "*The Centrality of the Gospel*"

www.redeemer.com 

By Andy Crouch
2005 Gathering Conference Moderator

WE'RE RICH BUT WHY IS IT SO HARD TO ADMIT?

Everyone's life has its moments of spiritual awakening, moments that shape our stories and divide our lives into "before" and "after." One such moment of mine came in a modest house in Kenya, last November, halfway through a cup of tea.

The awakening did not come, surprisingly enough, halfway through the glass of Pinot Blanc in business class on my way across the Atlantic. Nor did it come when I inserted my debit card into ATMs on three continents on three successive days, rewarded each time with crisp bills of unfamiliar currency. It didn't even come in the markets of Nairobi, where one shopkeeper after another angled for my business with ever more fantastic promises of special discounts and lifelong friendship.

I was in Africa courtesy of frequent flier miles and the invitation of friends. We were subletting rooms in the home of an American university professor. Like many middle-class Kenyans, she employs domestic workers for security, cleaning, and childcare. Like many Kenyan domestic workers, they are university educated, but a corrupt government and moribund economy mean that honest white-collar jobs are scarce. Instead, they stand guard and wash dishes on behalf of the fortunate few—often expatriates—who can afford to employ them. With a gracious and just employer, such a job is something more than menial labor, something less than a fair reward for years of schooling and diligence.

Mary stood in the kitchen, humming softly as she cleaned up from the children's breakfast. I sat in the study, catching up on some long-postponed reading, sipping that cup of tea. The previous afternoon my friends and I had shared tea with Mary and another household employee. We had heard enough of their stories to know that they worked hard, loved their families, and had suffered much in the political and economic upheavals that have afflicted Africa in their lifetime.

What did Mary think of me? I wondered, as I cradled the warm cup in my hands. I had appeared from nowhere, laden with my backpack, my fleece jacket, and my digital camera. I was spending a week visiting, traveling, learning, and reading. At the end of that week, I would get back on a plane and return to another continent, carrying a few Kenyan mementos. Maybe I seemed to Mary like some sort of bizarre apparition (albeit one that generated extra dishes)—my white flesh distinctly out of place in the Kenyan sun, my friendly American disposition a harmless teaspoon of optimism in an ocean of African reality. I wondered if I seemed lazy, even indolent. I hoped, I really hoped, that I didn't seem spendthrift, spoiled, and rich.

In my imagination, I found myself trying to explain to Mary why I wasn't really rich.

There are a handful of Americans who consider themselves rich. I have met a few of them, and they generally are neither spendthrift nor spoiled, especially if they are Christ-followers. They possess what a friend calls the one true advantage of wealth: the personal and irrefutable proof that wealth cannot make you happy. Consequently, they are both diffident and shrewd about their riches.

But most Americans I know think that someone else is wealthy. Most of my friends are in the top third of Americans by household income, but few of us speak of wealth. We are just getting by, with enough to pay for the car and the rent, prepare for retirement and our children's

college, and enjoy a few cups of tea in faraway places. We talk about our money the same way that Harvard students talk about their grades—in terms guarded, vague, and self-deprecating all at once. "How did you do on your paper?" "Oh, not so well—terribly, really." (One would later find that student's name on the short list for a Fulbright.) We won't say how much we have or make, but it certainly isn't ever enough.

In my imagination, I found myself trying to explain to Mary why I wasn't really rich. Somehow I'd have to help her understand the costs of daycare (although she has two children), the paradoxical costs borne by a two-income home (her husband works in a city five hours away), the price of college (in Kenya, school fees begin in first grade), the price of housing (outside the slums, Nairobi real estate is not much less expensive than that of many American cities). Somehow I'd have to explain that an American passport and fluent English aren't all they're cracked up to be.

Then again, I could just admit what God and the whole world already know is true. We are—I am—wealthy. Simply rich. Why is that so hard for us to say? Such an admission would, of course, make us responsible for the stewardship of our riches. It would put an end to both complaining and complacency. And since the Christian life starts where self-pity and self-justification end, to admit we are rich might also lead us closer to the life that is really life. ^{TC}



An Interview with Sandra Swirski, Executive Director, Alliance for Charitable Reform

The Alliance for Charitable Reform cohosted Congressional C.A.R.E Day, November 8, to encourage passage of the C.A.R.E Act.

What is the Alliance for Charitable Reform (ACR)?

The Alliance was formed early this year to advance reform of the charitable sector while protecting the freedom of organizations to operate. It was launched under the auspices of The Philanthropy Roundtable and is currently composed primarily of private found-

ations, some of them members of the Roundtable. ACR members believe it is critical to have one strong voice promoting common-sense laws and regulations that impose strict penalties on wrongdoers without trapping the innocent or wasting scarce charitable assets. And so the Alliance supports increasing the resources available for charitable activities while improving financial transparency and accountability in the charitable sector. The members of ACR are also eager to safeguard the freedom of organizations to use their best judgment in carrying out their charitable objectives. Our end goal is to expand America's leadership as the most generous and charitable nation on earth.

ACR's dedicated membership includes many well know organizations, such as the National Christian Foundation headed by David Wills. Any charitable organization or donor is invited to learn more by visiting our website, www.ACRreform.com.

What are the Alliance's main concerns?

The Alliance is most concerned with current Congressional proposals that would affect nonprofit organizations, and private foundations specifically, by interfering with their decision-making freedom and impose new, burdensome regulatory requirements. An urgent priority for the Alliance is to respond appropriately to these proposals, which we think could threaten the essential functions served by charities and foundations.

Could you summarize the Alliance's response to some of the key Congressional proposals?

Yes, as you will find on our website, the Alliance:

- Supports the call for increased penalty taxes and other punishments for wrongdoers in the charitable sector, where appropriate.
- Opposes the proposed imposition of one-size-fits-all governance mandates on foundations.
- Opposes arbitrary restrictions on compensation of foundation trustees and executives who perform valuable work for their institutions.
- Opposes making every foundation and charity file a substantial package of information every five years to justify its tax-exempt status. A better way to enhance financial transparency and accountability to the public and the IRS is through improvements to the annual Form 990 and 990 PF. The Alliance supports in concept the call for "accurate, complete, timely, consistent, and informative reporting" by foundations.
- Urges that foundation excise taxes collected from foundations be sequestered and devoted to funding the IRS's exempt-organization enforcement and guidance projects.
- Improve and expand the information reported by charities and foundations in their annual Form 990 or 990-PF tax returns, before imposing any new, costly filing burdens. In other words, make better use of the Forms 990/900-PF already being filed.

What is Congressional C.A.R.E. Day?

Congressional C.A.R.E. Day, hosted by ACR and other organizations November 8th in Washington, D.C., was to promote the passage of the C.A.R.E. Act. The C.A.R.E Act, which had wide bipartisan support last Congress with 23 Senators as cosponsors, will help people in need by encouraging giving, saving, and fairness. It provides incentives for

Americans to increase their charitable giving, as well as common-sense reforms to improve the sector and root out wrong-doers.

The C.A.R.E Act would improve the oversight of tax-exempt organizations and simplify the compliance process. Organizations would be required to disclose more information and penalties for violators would be expanded, including making Form 990s publicly available and preparers who misrepresent information on tax filings subject to monetary fines.

In addition, under the C.A.R.E. Act 83 million Americans (two-thirds of American tax filers) who do not itemize would be given the opportunity to deduct a portion of their charitable contributions. And individuals would be given incentives to give tax free contributions from their Individual Retirement accounts for charitable purposes, which would provide billions of dollars to a wide range of charities. Other incentives in the C.A.R.E. Act would encourage food donations to help those in need and provide matched savings accounts for working Americans called Individual Development Accounts.

What is the legislative outlook for charitable reform and the C.A.R.E. Act?

In the aftermath of the hurricanes and other major disasters, there is a renewed interest in passing the C.A.R.E. Act and thus Senators Santorum and Lieberman are very eager to see it passed.

Sandra Swirski is the executive director of the newly formed Alliance for Charitable Reform (ACR). In January 2005, with Congress expected to consider possible sweeping revisions to the law governing tax-exempt organizations, ACR tapped Ms. Swirski to be their executive director and spearhead a campaign in which the Alliance would be a key voice on reform within the foundation community.

Ms. Swirski is currently a principal at Venn Strategies, LLC, in Washington, D.C. She has more than 15 years of public policy and government relations experience in the private sector and on Capitol Hill.

For more information visit www.ACRreform.com or contact Chris Fox at 202.466.8700. ☐



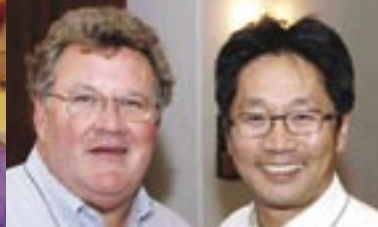
Sandra Swirski,
Executive Director,
Alliance for Charitable
Reform

"I was thrilled that so many have a heart for culture change, and I would love to see that passion cultivated. I think it's something that Christians need to focus on. So often, the solution for Christians is to leave a culturally powerful institution that has gone bad and form a new one. However, the new one won't have the influence of the first one for a generation. Christians need to make it their aim to stay in these original and powerful institutions to fight for the predominance of the Christian worldview. Secularization is not an inevitable or irreversible trend."

MATT BENNETT, FOUNDER AND PRESIDENT, THE CHRISTIAN UNION



DAVID ROGERS, MARK & DEBBIE LITTLESTAR



JIM GOLDSTON AND PAUL CHOU



JACQLYN & JEFF JOHNS AND JUSTIN ELRED



ALICE CHOU

A.C. MUSGRAVE & YOLANDA GOTTHARDT



ERIC THURMAN, CURTIS MEADOWS AND DICK WEST



NANCY HANSEN AND FRED SMITH

"The presenters you had this year were a "who's who" list of people who are truly shaping the future of the church, leadership and culture. I applaud you for being innovative and thinking ahead of many others in this space to include so many diverse voices and to platform people who are going to be around for a long time."

GABE LYONS, FOUNDER, RELEVATE



DAVE & JEANNIE STANLEY



CRAIG HAMMON & TERRY TERRY



TIM JOHNSON AND RON MCSWAIN



BARBARA & CHUCK ANDERSON AND SUSAN HUTCHISON



DAVID & SHERRY DALGLEISH



ADA FREDERICK



DICK KURTZ, TED & SACHI KURTZ, AND GLENN & EDIE KURTZ



TIM KELLER AND D.J. CHUANG



DEB JONES, DOT BECK, SUSANNA BECK, AND KATEY JONES

the
GATHERING
2005 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
THE WESTIN LA CANTERA • SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS
September 29 - October 2, 2005

"The overall event was fantastic as usual. Praise God, Fred for your heart for giving and the ministries, only next time I'm getting up and singing with the "addicts" choir. Aren't we all recovering addicts. Hallehujah. May our lives speak half as loudly as theirs." RICH CANNON



RUTH CAMPBELL, GAIL OCHS, STEVE PERRY AND GREG CAMPBELL



STEVE FRIESS AND DAVID ROBINSON



JOHN & SHARNA COORS



EX-ADDICTS CHOIR FROM VICTORY FELLOWSHIP



"SAM HILL" AND CHUCK COLSON



FREDDIE & NINFA GARCIA



JEFF & SUZANNE POPE



MIKE SHANE AND BILL BOLTHOUSE



DEANNA & DICK CREW



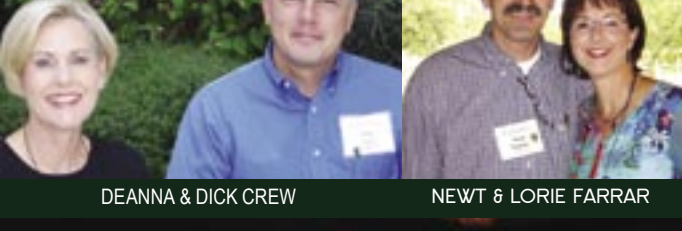
NEWT & LORIE FARRAR



FRED SMITH, HOWARD BUTT AND STEVE HAAS



ANDY CROUCH AND MATT BENNETT



DIANNE GETSCH



BOB MUZIKOWSKI, RUSS & JULIE JOHNSON, NICK JOHNSON



PEGGY WEHMEYER, FRED SMITH AND STEVEN CURTIS CHAPMAN



STEVEN CURTIS CHAPMAN



NICOLE STULL, GARY BELLIG AND CAROLYN LONG

Bible Literacy Project & Public Schools

Chuck Stetson and Richard Scurry of the Bible Literacy Project participated in The Gathering Conference to publicize the release of the student textbook, *The Bible and Its Influence*. Following are some answers to frequently asked questions concerning the project and its purpose.

What is the Bible Literacy Project? How are you funded?

The Bible Literacy Project is a non-partisan, non-profit organization dedicated to research and public education on the academic study of the Bible in public and private schools. Funding comes from individual donors and from several well-known foundations, including the John Templeton Foundation, the Bradley Foundation, and the Shelby Cullom Davis Foundation. The Advisory Board consists of prominent scholars who are Protestant, Roman Catholic and Jewish, including Dr. Jean Bethke Elshtain of the University of Chicago, Dr. Ellen Frankel of the Jewish Publication Society, and Dr. Mary Ann Glendon of Harvard University.

What is the specific curriculum you are proposing?

We are offering a new student textbook entitled *The Bible and Its Influence*, released on September 22, 2005. Online teacher training is scheduled to become available in January 2006, and a teacher's edition of the textbook is scheduled for late Spring 2006. This new textbook was created to fulfill the standards of the consensus statement *The Bible & Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide*. The textbook has been reviewed by scholars and teachers, respects faith perspectives without endorsing them, and is the first public school Bible textbook of its kind.

Our course studies the Bible in literature, the ways in which later writers have used Bible literature, language, and symbols. Students also study the Bible as literature, examining the Bible in terms of aesthetic categories, as an anthology of narratives and poetry, exploring its language, symbolism, and motifs. A primary goal of the course is basic Biblical literacy—a grasp of the language, major narratives, symbols, and characters of the Bible. The course also explores the influence of the Bible in classic and contemporary poems, plays, and novels.


Of course, the Bible is not simply literature—for a number of religious traditions it is scripture. For that reason, *The Bible and Its Influence* also includes some discussion of how various religious traditions understand the text. This requires that literature teachers be adequately prepared to address in an academic and objective manner the relevant, major religious readings of the text.

This textbook, tested in public schools in California and the state of Washington, incorporates feedback received from teachers and students.

How was the textbook created?

The Bible Literacy Project first created an outline of the Bible's content and then hired writers with experience in textbook writing, literature, religion, art, and music. The first draft was then reviewed by lawyers who specialize in First Amendment standards and was submitted to 40 reviewers, primarily eminent university literature scholars, but also some Bible scholars and public high school English teachers who teach the Bible as literature. Our general editor, Cullen Schippe, the former vice president and publisher for Music, Religion and Social Studies at Macmillan/McGraw-Hill, incorporated the reviewers' feedback into the textbook.

What do you say to people who think your ideas violate the separation between church and state?

There is a big difference between belief and knowledge. Increasing knowledge about the Bible is part of a good education; but teaching what to believe belongs in the home. We advocate providing a well-rounded, thorough education that includes the basic information students need to fully understand literature, as well as art, music, history and culture. The Bible Literacy Project believes we are raising a generation of students who have had an important element of their education unnecessarily neglected in the classroom. Ninety-eight percent of English teachers in our Bible Literacy Report believe that students benefit academically from having knowledge of the world's best selling book, the Bible. 



Soul Language on Paper

Blue Like Jazz resonates with readers who grapple with the paradoxes of faith.

Reviewed by Cindy Crosby for *Christianity Today*

Blue Like Jazz: Nonreligious Thoughts on Christian Spirituality

by Donald Miller

Think of Donald Miller as a cleaned-up, Gen X Anne Lamott with testosterone, and this fresh memoir-like collection of essays as his version of *Traveling Mercies*. Miller (*Prayer and the Art of Volkswagen Maintenance*) shares his journey from a self-described "Bible salesman on steroids" to discovering the freedom of embracing a God bigger than he can quantify.

"The more I climb outside my pat answers, the more invigorating the view, the more my heart enters into worship," he writes.

Whether he's musing over his romantic foibles or detailing his frustrations with the church, his stories are permeated with gritty authenticity and humor. Miller poignantly recounts the challenges of sharing Christ with the mostly pagan students at Reed College in Portland, Oregon, where he is active in campus ministry. His disappointment with organized Christianity is balanced by his passion for Jesus. Miller eventually finds that Christian spirituality is like jazz music, "very hard to get on paper ... a language of the soul. But it is no less real, no less meaningful, no less beautiful."

Although the book is drenched in pop culture references and clearly aimed at a Gen X audience, Miller's words will resonate with any believer who has ever grappled with the paradoxes of faith.

bibleliteracy.org

biblecurriculum.org

info@bibleliteracy.org

Year-End Giving

“One of the hallmarks of The Gathering is a deep sense of conviction about the responsibility that comes with being a steward of wealth.”

As each year draws to a close all of us experience the ritual of reflection and anticipation. In conversations with friends, colleagues and clients, it is obvious to me that the events of recent weeks have caused an acceleration of that experience. As I write this it is a beautiful afternoon and for all external signs, it's just another great day of God's provision. Yet I have this sense of tension and unsettledness that lives just below the surface. I find myself reflecting on God's purposes, His unmerited blessings and my response to His blessings.

Recently I had a conversation with a friend who is a generous donor to a ministry impacting the poor locally. He was concerned that the economic uncertainty might impact his ability to give as substantially as he has in past years. As we talked he made a very insightful comment, “It's as if I'm taking the midterm exam on the principle of God owns it all.” Continuing, he said he realized that it was a very real possibility that his giving for the remainder of this year and next year could potentially be sacrificial. Instantly I found myself at one of those excruciatingly long awkward moments of silence. As we stood I could see in his eyes that his mind was absolutely gripped by his “potentially” comment.

Then came the breakthrough. He shared how strongly he felt about “taking the midterm.” If there was ever a time for him as a follower of Christ to be an example of an alternative worldview, this was it. I saw in those few short moments a man who once again realized the sense of blessing that had first captured him as a Christ follower and a man energized by the knowledge that sacrificial giving was within his grasp. His passion for generosity had re-centered itself from financial wherewithal to the overwhelming sense of gratitude ... and he was excited!


All of us in our human emotions are wrestling with the current economic fears and uncertainty about the future. It is our natural instinct to hold tightly to wealth. In Philippians, we're encouraged with the promise that “...my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

God promises to provide for us, and He has provided abundantly throughout time. Our response to His provision is to give gratefully. This act is among the most tangible ways to acknowledge the ultimate ownership and provision of a sovereign God in our lives.

As you meet with your financial advisor to review your giving goals and plan specifics for year-end, be mindful that research shows that the nearly 90 percent of all giving comes from current income, yet our research shows that nearly 90 percent of all wealth is held in some form of appreciated asset. This is a major opportunity of which virtually all of us take advantage, yet statistics show that there is still significant opportunity.

Further, as with many things in life, timing is everything. In order to maximize year-end giving through appreciated assets, the due diligence and transfer process can take several months to complete. In addition, split interest arrangements (charitable remainder trusts, charitable lead trusts and charitable gift annuities) are often excellent year-end options to be considered, but once again they can be complex and require time and attention to complete.

Where does all this leave us? First, seize the opportunity to stand as an alternative to the prevailing worldview. Demonstrate your commitment to God's faithfulness and knowledge that God owns it all. Second, use tax strategies wisely to maximize the benefit, and finally, talk directly and candidly with your advisor about your passion and expectations for giving.

One of the hallmarks of The Gathering is a deep sense of conviction about the responsibility that comes with being a steward of wealth. The words spoken to Esther are just as applicable today, “who knows but for such a time as this you have been called.” 

THOU SHALT NOT DESTROY THE FAMILY

by Rev. Kenneth L. Gentry



Our God is a God of the family.

At the heart of God's plans for man lies the family. It is the oldest and most basic institution God has created among men.

The two laws that we will consider relate to the Fifth Commandment. But in the form in which they appear in our text, they consider the family in terms of its protection and succession.

Let us consider these family protection laws in light of their covenantal purpose. How do these laws protect the covenant family?

1. Covenantal Succession and the Godly Child.

The moral lesson we must learn is this: The family is under the headship of the father, by creational order and Biblical Law. But the father is not God. He cannot be a tyrant. He cannot autonomously determine anything he chooses in regard to his family. He is obligated to follow the pattern of God's Law. The male headship of the home is legitimate and right only if the father righteously reflects God's rule. This law insures that this is understood.

We live in an age characterized by superficiality and emotionalism. What strikes our fancy.... What makes us feel good.... Such things determine how we conduct our affairs. This is tragic. The godly father is one who acts toward his children, not in terms of emotional feeling or some such thing. He is one who governs his family in terms of God's holy law. The basic principle of this law is that the godly child cannot be disinherited. Not emotional feeling, but moral law was to determine the father's conduct toward his family. God's Law governs in the family life. God is concerned with the continuance and succession of His covenant in family generations. Man cannot interrupt them with impunity.

The ideas of covenantal succession and leaving an inheritance are very important to the Christian.

Covenantal succession ties family generations together. It stresses the labors of the past shall be sent via covenantal inheritance into the future to our children. "Children (godly children) are a heritage of the Lord (Ps. 127:3)."

2. Covenantal Cessation and the Ungodly Child.

In the second case law we have an opposite situation.

Rather than the insuring of covenantal succession, we have the call to covenantal cessation. This law is just as important as the preceding one; they logically occur together to govern against extremes.

First, this law does not apply to a young child. The text clearly presents the actions of an older child, not an adolescent.

Second, this law does not call for capital punishment for mere drunkenness. What is presented here is a complex of evil characteristics inhering in one person: He is "stubborn," "rebellious," a "drunkard," and a "glutton." These are expressive of dangerous unruliness and incorrigible criminality. This is not one act or occasional acts. It is a settled lifestyle of dangerous behavior. As a matter of fact, it is public misconduct that is provable in court: "Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place...." The parents have tried to chasten and correct him, but to no avail: "And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice (v. 20a)."

Third, the opponent of this law who alleges that it is immoral has put himself in an uncomfortable situation. Not only is it God's Law, but Jesus Christ affirms it in the New Testament. Matthew 15:1-4 has Jesus citing this law as it is recorded in Leviticus 20:9.

The fundamental teaching of this law is that the family must align itself with God and His Law, rather than with blood ties or emotional attachment, as is so often the case. God and His Law must have priority over feelings and sympathies.

Obviously our Lord is not demanding the undermining or the destruction of the home. He is calling for a recognition of a fundamental priority: The Lord must be first in life. That is the whole idea of His being "Lord!"

The godly parent is one who will cut off his child when he is in dangerous, settled rebellion against God and man.

Not blood, but faith should rule us. Not pity, but God's Law must govern our conduct toward those who have set themselves against God—even if they are our own children.

A humanistic refusal to follow such a concept as here found in God's Law has caused serious problems of national consequence in the past. How often have the monarchs in Europe been scoundrels afflicting the citizenry with barbarities and neighboring nations with unprovoked war. And the monarchies were established along family lines. Almost invariably the bad kings and queens were known to be evil before they were crowned. They could have been cut off by godly parents. They could have been disinherited and the nation would have been spared much grief.

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There are several conclusions that may be drawn from this law of our God. Some are conclusions related to the family; some are conclusions related to the government:

(1) *The family is under a moral obligation to cut off the ungodly child by disinheriting him.* If God's Law urges the parent to turn the evil child over to civil authority, clearly it would encourage the refusal to subsidize the godless child in life. Any wealth that we have comes from God. It must be used for God and His kingdom work. It must not be allowed to pass into the hands of the ungodly, even if they are our own children.

(2) *In the rare cases where parents are faced with a situation wherein one of their children has been proven to be a criminal, the parents should stand for righteousness.* This is may be hard to do emotionally, but it is proper to do in light of God's holy Law.

(3) *The law endorses a high view of the home and of parental control in the home.*

(4) *There are limits to parental authority.*

Our God loves the family. The godly parent cannot disinherit godly children. He must provide an inheritance for his godly children.

We should let our children know how much they mean to us. We should let them know that our love is governed by God's Law. They must rest assured in the knowledge that we will do all that God requires of us. ^{TC}

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PARTING SHOT

by Ed Koehler



"It's a blitz grant. We're going to try and break the record for giving away the whole foundation budget in two hours!"

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