

# **A Practical Approach to Bible-based Knowledge**

**Supplement Two**

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## Teaching God's Word is Practical for Life

As Christian parents, following God through His Word, we learn, "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths (Proverbs 3:6)." But what does this mean to us? How can we make this practical in helping our children through their schooling over which we have been given stewardship? It is a curious word, this word "acknowledge." It means "to know," "to learn to know," "to perceive," "to see," "to find out," "to discern," "to distinguish," "to know by experience," "to recognize," "to admit," "to confess," "to consider," "to be acquainted in or with," "to have know-how in or be skillful in," "to have knowledge of or be wise of," "to be instructed in," "to be known in," "to make known or declare," or "to make oneself known or to reveal oneself in."

Now if we go back to this Proverbs 3:6 passage and re-read it by placing any or each of these definitions in place of the term "acknowledge," we can readily see the fuller meaning of this passage. The one thing that every Christian comes to the point of asking God, when they come to the point of wanting to do His will over their own, is, "What do you have planned for my life?" We are practical and searching people. We are taught, in this world to make plans and set goals. We pass this on to our children. But, even if the plans we make are successful for a time, they are always doomed to eventual failure when they are different from those plans God has for us. This is true for the rocket scientist as well as for you and me. You probably are saying, "Great! How are we supposed to know what God has planned for us?" Proverb 3:6 and other verses in scripture reveals the answer to this question for us.

There are a couple reasons why "our ways" often do not match "His ways". One reason is that there is sin in the world and in us that causes us not to think correctly and that only leads us down the wrong paths in life (Prov.14:12; 16:25). Psalm 48:14 tells us that "...for ever and ever: [God] will be our guide even unto death." Another reason is that our understanding is so limited and God takes His position of supreme knowledge of all things, which is more knowledge than we can have at any time or level of our education (Isaiah 55:9). Let's face it. If we knew more than God, about decisions for our life, then we would be God, Satan would be right, and God would be the deceiver. I assure you that none of these suppositions are true. In fact, this is the same mistaken idea that brought sin to all mankind (Genesis 3:5). So, let's not go that direction.

Instead of trusting what we think is the best for our children, we are commanded by God's Word to trust Him to direct their paths. I know this is uncomfortable for us, as parents, however, this is the way the Creator would have it, and if we fight this, it will be a struggle for us. Acts 5:29 shows us that the apostles grew to understand that it was more important to obey God over what men tell us. We learn in Proverbs 3:5 that we must trust Him, and not just our own understanding. We see that the Apostle Paul said, "I will put my trust in him. And again, behold I and the children, which God hath given me" (Hebrew 2:13). Paul, not having children, saw those put under his stewardship as his children. He realized that trusting God to direct him was also sufficient for those directed by him. In fact, if everything goes according to God's will in our and our children's plans, God will direct us completely. As the proverb goes, "The king's heart is in the

hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.” (Proverbs 21:1) If it is good enough for kings, in charge of an entire kingdom, then it should also be good enough for those simply subject to The King of Kings.

### ***A Foundation in the Knowledge of God***

So, if we are really concerned that our children learn what will best prepare them for that life which God has ordained them, we should be prepared to provide a foundation for their receiving knowledge from the True Source. Looking back, once more at the various definitions of the word “acknowledge,” in Proverbs 3:6, it is our responsibility to do the following:

- **Teach our children “to know” God.**

Let me just warn that, in not knowing God, your children, though you have added God in and to every subject that you teach, may essentially deny Him, be an abomination to Him, be disobedient to you and Him, and may grow to be reprobate in their thinking and their life work (Titus 1:16). I hope that is a stifling thought to you.

When it comes to teaching our children to know God, He likes to do the teaching and, therefore, sent His Spirit to do this. Hebrews 8:11 shows us this where it says, “And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord:’ for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.” Hosea 2:20 shows us how intimate this knowing is, by likening it to betrothal (a marriage). All in all, to know God is to love Him with all their heart, mind, soul and strength (Luke 10:20) and that does not leave much of these faculties for pursuit of other subjects or endeavors.

- **Teach our children “to perceive” God.**

Our children need to perceive when they are hearing words of understanding and when they are not (Proverbs 1:2). We see hints as to how they do this in the verses that follow verse 2 in Proverbs 1. They get this by receiving “instruction of wisdom, justice, and judgment, and equity” (verse 3). This sounds like study in the books of Genesis, Deuteronomy, Judges, Proverbs, Songs of Solomon, the books of the Prophets, perhaps in the Acts of the Apostles, and I am sure I must just say the whole Bible. Otherwise, the best way to learn to perceive things of this world is to observe what God has to say about these things throughout [His]tory. Since there is absolutely “nothing new under the Sun” (Ecclesiastes 1:9), then studying history through the Bible is no less significant than the study of textbooks on history. The history of Israel is the history of the world, right up until the end. However, the object is not to teach children specifics, but to teach them to perceive from historical events the nature of lessons that have occurred where people and civilizations succeeded and failed. No better text exists for this purpose than the Bible, due to the fact of the commentary on the same by the Creator.

- **Teach our children “to see” God.**

To see actually means to learn about truth through observation. An essential thing we must make our children aware of in this life is that things in this world are not always what they appear to be. Now we do not have to have them study magic to realize this is true. The Word of God clearly states that it is in “the evidence of things not seen” that our children and we must find faith, substance, and real meaning (Hebrews 11:1). 2 Corinthians 4:18 goes on to emphasize that, “...we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.” These passages not only point out that many things our children see are not reliable, but also help to accentuate the fact that the teaching of the spiritual (or unseen) side of life is more important to God than the mundane.

Of all the searching and research that man does in this world, what they hope to find out is answers about things that they do not yet know or understand. In fact, the wise men and leaders of our day, much the same as in the past, will desire “...to see those things which ye see...and to hear those things which ye hear (Luke 10:24). Yet, they will neither see nor hear them. The reason for this is that they do not, within the society in which we live, study scripture for knowledge of things. Ezekiel 12:2 points out that we “dwest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see, and see not; they have ears to hear, and hear not: for they are a rebellious house.” Those people, in this world, will always look upon those who see God as foolish and weak, however we learn in 1 Corinthians 1:27 that “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.” This should be enough for us to realize that making studies of what the world can see, without God and His Word, is a foolish act.

Another important aspect of “seeing God” is that of looking intently at Him. Through looking intently at God’s Word, with the carefulness which leads to discovery, your children will learn to be effective in analysis and their skill at this will surpass scholars in the fields of science, history, and other subjects of the day. While still at a very young age, I could tell that my daughter had a talent for drawing and perhaps painting. If there was one thing that I had learned about drawing, it was that to accurately transfer the image of an object on paper, without taking a photograph, the artist has to become a master at observation. Not only did the artist learn to observe special aspects of an object, but also the artist had to look so intently at what she was drawing that she could duplicate light and dark sections of black and white (for pencil) or color (for painting). In fact, it was not necessary to ever draw the shape of the object being drawn. All that was needed on the paper was the varying shades of light to dark that were seen. Once my daughter figured out how to do this, her drawing improved to the stage of excellence. She developed her sense of concentration through the study of the Word. In order to “see God,” you must look intently at the cross and what Christ did there.

- **Teach our children “to find out” God.**

There are many (I should say, “too many”) places today that a young person can “find out” information. There is all the world’s means, such as television, radio, the Internet, books, lectures by so-called scholars, their peers, and propaganda of all sorts. There is no doubt that they learn a bunch of things through these modes. But, most of this type of learning turns out to be learning for the sake of learning, void of concern for learning about God. Learning for the sake of learning, simply to look good to other people, just to have a tag that looks like success to the world around them, only serves to puff our children up (1 Corinthians 8:1). And, with this reasoning for learning everything that is in sight, comes a child that lives for praise, approbation, and accolades (which is truly no more than idols). The Apostle Paul tells us, in this same verse, that the result of knowledge should have fruit in charity, which edifies.

Proverb 1:5 hints to us the way our children should be taught to “find out” those useful things to know that will prosper them and be useful to them in living a life God has prepared for them, where it says, “A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels.” We are advised here, by the wisest of counselors, to teach our children to look for the answers in life from “wise counselors.” This shows why it is not wise to send our children off to college classrooms to be simply at the mercy of any so-called professor that is placed before them. The odds are that for every wise and Godly professor you will find teaching college (if in fact you do), there will be another few that are bent on teaching their own brand of subjects. Even the best group of professors will be teaching from the philosophical stance of the college by whom they are commissioned and will be limited by the textbooks available to the same.

We need to direct our children to counselors whom we have found to be tested in wisdom and good decisions in their life, teaching, and faith. Otherwise, we should not let them learn, outside the supervision of the home, at all, without our presence there. We should never allow them to be taught by television, radio, the Internet, books, lectures, or peers, without our having gone there first to discern the worth of these information sources.

Other than the saying, “The eyes are the windows to our soul,” 1 John 2:16 has wisdom for this, where it says, “...all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” But, the real advise on the concept of wise counsel comes from Proverbs 1:7-10 where it says, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction. My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother: For they shall be an ornament of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck. My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” Is it not clear here whom God put in place to teach your children? The way you get your children to listen to you is to get them first to listen to God, through His Word. Note here that one of the aspects of the Hebrew word “fear” is “fullness.” This is so as to suggest that when our children have fully exhausted

their study of the Lord, this will be only the beginning of the wisdom available to them through the Lord's Word. That puts them in "awe" and "reverence" of the Lord, which are two more meanings of the term "fear."

- **Teach our children "to discern" God.**

Hebrews 5:14 tells us that "...strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." "Strong meat" here speaks of someone who has spent the time in the knowledge of the things of God long enough to be able to stomach and digest more easily what must be done to live life to its fullest, in Christ Jesus. The analogy is about learning and to a man who begins his life being fed information, as from a bottle, drinking milk and soft food until he is able to chew on and digest harder facts. This is how a Christian grows in the Lord after being "born again."

The goal here is to be strong enough and sensitive enough to begin to discern, past the naive stage, the difference between good and evil in this world. This is not as easy as one might think, especially for someone who has, for a long time, been a child. It is an important goal for your children to become discerning and sensitive to their surroundings without having to become a part of them. They are called to be "wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). Ephesians 4:14 warns that our children must learn to "...be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive." The word "sleight" in Greek is "kubeia" (pronounced koo-bi'-ah) which means "dice playing." The Apostle Paul uses this word because dice players sometimes cheat and defraud their fellow players.

A curious meaning of the word "discern" is "to separate." We are called to be separate from those things of this world that are not thought to be God or godly or pure. 2 Corinthians 6:14 tells us, "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" We have to help our children to understand the importance of remaining separate from peer-aged individuals that are not saved, unless their intention is to lead them to the Lord. Another context of the word "discern" is "discriminate." This is not popular today, in a world that now teaches "tolerance." It is much more important for your children to discriminate than it is for them to tolerate everyone. It is much more important that they can discriminate between a good speaker and a bad speaker than it is to tolerate the words of everyone who speaks equally.

- **Teach our children "to distinguish" God.**

Many things have been mistaken for God, through the centuries and it is no different today, notwithstanding the subtlety of this age. In early Biblical times and in ancient times, people put up physical alters to known and unknown gods and blatantly worshipped idols. God repeatedly told them how He felt about this, for example "Thou shalt have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3).

In the present age, the worship of “other gods” is subtler and mostly hidden, even from the one whom is doing it. This is not usually because the one committing this error does not know or even believe this is wrong, but rather that they do not recognize the gods as gods. Otherwise, they have been desensitized to believe that these gods are something very common and acceptable in their life style. Jesus attempted to reveal this where He said, “No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Luke 16:13). The key word in this passage is “hate.” This word is often misunderstood in the Bible. This word is defined as putting something or someone lower in importance or position than another. When we understand this word “hate,” in scripture, we see other passages with greater emphasis and understanding, such as in Luke 14:26 where Jesus says, “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” The word “hate” here is positional and asks, “Where does one place these things in relationship to God in their life?”

Therefore, the “other gods” in our children’s life can be anything on which or anyone in whom they place a higher importance or priority than God or His Word. Now, if we teach our children every subject the world has to offer and every fact, and they do not understand this point, then their whole life will still be a failure during which time they will be, perhaps unknowingly, struggling against the Creator. The consequence of this lack of understanding, of not recognizing God, is shown many places in scripture where God states, “...for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me” (Deuteronomy 5:9).

Now, the gods we have, and place in more importance, are studying other materials as more important than learning His commandments and studying His Word. I have never met a man or woman that was not blessed that memorized and meditated on scripture, however, I have met many sad characters that are highly educated in the ways and skills of the world. We must teach our children to distinguish between what is important to their life, God, and to know when they are elevating other things as gods over Him. Satan is very subtle today and this is a spiritual battle for our children and us to distinguish what we cannot see. The Word of God and His Spirit can help us with this task, where textbooks cannot.

- **Teach our children “to know [God] by experience.”**

There is a popular study series called *Experiencing God* that is an intensive course in learning to abide in Him and His Will. As far as I am aware, this course does not have you to “experience God” through the study of textbooks on math, science, history, social studies, and geography. Though it is possible to see God in these subjects, it is just as possible, and probable, to arrive at the conclusion that there is no God, or at least one does not need Him as much, by the study of those books. The word Bible means “book.” The Bible (Scripture) was given to

us by the Creator to teach us about Him. Most unsaved people, and actually many Christians, do not realize that the Bible is about Jesus Christ, from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21.

It seems like the birth of Jesus Christ, spoken of in Matthew 1:1, is the first mention of Him in the Bible. However, in the first chapter of John, we see a revamp of the creation story, wherein Jesus, who is the Word of God, was there at the Creation of everything in the first chapter of Genesis. God introduced what would happen to and because of Jesus Christ, through the prophets, the most memorable being in the 53<sup>rd</sup> chapter of Isaiah. Early in the Old Testament, God reveals Jesus Christ through typology and inference. In the prophetic books, God tells what will happen to Jesus Christ and how He will fulfill His destiny and purpose according to God. In the New Testament, we get the opportunity, as no other people in history, to see how Jesus Christ has actually fulfilled nearly every prophecy that God made of Him. The Book of Revelation and the Gospels tell us of those prophecies still yet to come, pertaining to the last days or end times. There is absolutely no reason to believe that these future prophecies, as those that went before them, will not also be fulfilled in Christ.

Your children play an important part in God's prophetic plan. God created them for a specific purpose and according to this plan. It tells us a curious and mysterious thing in Luke 2:21 where we read, "...his name was called Jesus, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb." Just as God knew who Jesus was and what His purpose would be before He was in His mother's womb, so did He know the same about your children (Psalm 139:13; Jeremiah 1:5; Romans 8:29). We can see how our children can be a part of God's plan in Luke 1:17 by preparation, where it is said, "...He shall go before Him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

For this preparation to be according to God's plan, the purpose for which God created our children must be determined. It is not impossible to do this. It comes through their experiencing God. As our children experience God, they learn both what doors are opened or closed to them and what things they find joy in and what things they don't. The first one is a determination of God's will and the second is a determination of what qualities God built into them (also known as their "bent"). In Nehemiah 9:12,19, it says that God directed His children in the "way they should go" by the means of a cloud by day and a pillar of fire (a light) by night. The way they should go was the way that God had planned for them to go. God had not changed by the time He inspired the words "Train up a child in the way he should go" in Proverbs 22:6. Still here, the words "the way he should go" mean the way that God planned for him or her to go. God not only has made plans, before they were in the womb, about the ways they should go, but He also built into them the way they should go. If they do not go that way, they will struggle in life, just as the Israelites did when they did likewise.

Now we know why we might struggle to teach our children, with the plans we make for them. They are not God's plan. We are no more than tutors that must prepare the hearts of our children to seek after what God wants and plans for them. This is the best we can do for them and for God. We can glean the consequence of this preparation, or lack thereof, with God in 2 Chronicles 12:14 where it tells us that Rehoboam "...did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the Lord." We also see that other circumstances are the result of the same lack of preparedness in 2 Chronicle 20:33 where we read, "Howbeit the high places were not taken away: for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers." We must make it our aim to prepare our children's hearts to experience God's design and purpose for them (not ours).

- **Teach our children "to recognize" God.**

Can our children, or we for that matter, recognize God? The word "recognize" has an unexpected meaning here. It means to avow knowledge of or recollect having seen someone or something before. This reminds me of what happened to the Apostle Peter when he disavowed knowledge of Jesus after His arrest. Some people today refuse to be equated with Christ, when they are at work or find themselves in a social scenario (in public). We must teach our children not to be ashamed to recognize Jesus Christ and the Gospel message, in that their relationship with Him is the most important thing in the world and that the message of the Gospel is a lifesaver to those who would otherwise be destined to hell for eternity (Romans 1:16; 5:5; 2 Tim. 1:12).

- **Teach our children "to admit" God.**

To "admit" someone or something is essentially to receive it as true and allow it entrance into your mind. One of the crucial problems with using too many books with or aside from the Bible is that our children have a choice in this life. When the foundation of their education is other-book based, then they are made to choose whether the Bible is the truth based upon the conjecture of teachings and philosophies other than the Creator. However, when their foundation for information is the Bible, then our children still must make a choice. They will already be based in God's Word, but will have to decide and discern whether or not the information read in other books is the truth. What people admit nearly always coincides with the basis for their knowledge.

God shows us in Luke 6:49 how a man can admit a weak foundation, where He explains, "...he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great." There is but one solid foundation for learning and that is the Word, which is Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11).

- **Teach our children "to confess" God.**

There are several unexpected aspects to confessing God. These things cannot generally be found in a textbook. In its most primitive form, it means to use God, such as by holding out ones hand, or by begging things from Him. However, I am looking here at a different meaning, which shows a picture of one holding out both hands (extended hands) to revere or worship God intensively, and to receive Him with much thanksgiving.

There is a direct promise of Jesus Christ, in Matthew 10:32, that expresses, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.” Confessing God before men comes from loving God and His Word. We can only help our children to desire this through reading and meditating on God’s Word, wherein it expresses the totality of what God has done for them. Where else can our children glean this information and what a loss they will incur not having occasioned to study about this from the true source of His Word? In fact, the very courage to confess or tell people about God is found in studying the true lives of people who lived for that very purpose, having known Him first hand. If our children are saved, by hearing the Word, then they are required to “...confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus” (Romans 10:9). Our children are required of God to confess for their selves or acknowledge God, especially before men and in their own hearts.

- **Teach our children “to consider” God.**

To consider God has many facets. To consider Him is to fix ones mind on Him with a view toward careful examination. It means to ponder, study, and meditate on God. Since the Bible tells us in the first chapter of John, that “the Word is God” and Jesus is the Word incarnate, then doesn’t it stand to reason that pondering, studying, and meditating on the Word of God is doing this to Them? What other book can better be used, I ask you, to ponder God and Jesus than the Bible? To consider also has an equivalent meaning as to “consult.” There would be no better study for a student than the Bible, if they were preparing to be a counselor or consultant.

I used to believe that in researching the various aspects of human behavior there could be no greater source than Shakespeare. I wondered how one man could have such a vast knowledge and insight into the human makeup and character of men and women. But, having studied Shakespeare with an English degree, and having read everything that he wrote, sometime later, I was examining a reliable biography of Shakespeare. I learned one strong clue as to how he knew all these things about humans. He studied the Bible. Researchers discovered his private copy of the Bible (in the King James, of course), which showed deep study and concern with its content, from the intense notes he left in its margins.

Shakespeare had little else to study, in his time, and needed little else, in that the Creator knew His creation in much greater depth than Freud, who came much latter, could have ever hoped of gleaning. When you learn something, nothing is better than learning from a [M]aster.

- **Teach our children “to be acquainted in or with” God.**

To “acquaint” oneself with God, would mean to gain an intimate or particular knowledge of Him. This indicates knowledge of God that is more than slight or superficial. Job 22:21 tells us “Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee.” This word “acquaint” actually has the same root as the term “cunning.” The word “cunning,” in turn, has to do with “understanding” (2 Chron. 2:13). Overall it leads to the term “intelligence.” All these qualities are established in the person who spends his or her days in scripture study and becomes deeply and richly acquainted with the Word of God.

- **Teach our children “to have know-how in or be skillful in” God.**

I became familiar with this idea of becoming skillful in without having prior learning or knowledge of a task, after reading about the abilities that the so-called “skilled” men and women of David’s temple had acquired. It wasn’t so much that they were called artisans and could do such wonderful work, as the fact that they received total and almost instant knowledge of these skills from the Spirit of God (1 Chronicles 28:11-12; Ezra 1:5; Acts 2:4). This idea was brought to my attention more than once in my own experience.

For example, I had an apartment beneath my home, wherein the air conditioning unit went out. I had no clue as to what might be the cause, had no money to call an electrician, and had a brand new tenant staring at it with me in puzzlement. As I went to ponder over what I would or could do, I remembered how God had readily given Solomon wisdom, when he prayed. I needed some then, so I knelt down by my bed and told the Lord I do not have the money to fix this air conditioner and that I did not know what I could do to fix it. I prayed that He would give me wisdom about how to fix it and would provide the money miraculously, if it came to cost very much.

I got back up and grabbed some tools and went down and took off the cover and saw a small box around the switch area of the unit. I unplugged the unit and carefully unscrewed the plate behind it that covered the wiring. There were just two switchboxes. But, for some reason, I just lifted up the switch box and noticed right away that there was what appeared to be a burnt wire at the connection near the middle of the switch. I looked behind the switch where the burnt connector was and saw the wire end. Next, I drove to the hardware store, not really knowing what to buy or if I could fix it. I talked to the hardware store clerk. He told me he did not have the connector I would need, so I asked where I could find one. He said the air conditioning place down the road. I went down there and the man there looked at it and got me a connector that went on the end of the wire. He literally gave it to me. I went back to the apartment, stripped off the end of the wire, stuck it in the connector end and crimped it down on the wire end. I pushed the connector over the prong that was previously burnt, after cleaning off the burnt part. I plug the unit back in and switched it on and it worked again. Now, would you believe me if I told you that I did not know how to do what I did? God

not only gave me the know-how, but He made it so that it did not cost me anything to repair it. There are many other true stories like this and better.

- **Teach our children “to have knowledge of or be wise about” God.**

Often I have thought that it would be an interesting and useful study to research the Bible and write a book about the nature of God. It has been said that, “The Devil cannot know what you are thinking, however he can learn a great deal about your likes, dislikes, fears, feelings, and other things by just watching you.” So, I ask you, “Why isn’t it the same with what we are able to know about God?” The truth is that we have a great deal of things we can gather about the nature of God, His likes, dislikes, and so on, from the books of the Bible.

It is real important that our children learn a great deal about God. This is not only pleasing to Him, but it shows that they love Him. After all, how can they “...love the Lord [their] God with all [their] heart, and with all [their] soul, and with all [their] mind” (Matt. 22:37), if they do not know Him intimately? Our children need to be a walking encyclopedia of God and be able to witness of Him to others. The fact is, in knowing Jesus this same way we are able to know God (John 14:9). Observing Jesus through scriptures is necessary, because Christian children are called to be like Jesus. This is God’s goal.

- **Teach our children “to be instructed in” God.**

We see in Acts 18:25 where a man named Apollos “... was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.” Going back to Deuteronomy chapter 6 again, we see how it is our duty as Christians to instruct our children in the ways of the Lord at all times of the day. They must be taught (Isaiah 54:13). We have also discussed here how it is important that this study be the main thrust of their life and not just a thing done on Sundays.

It is still a curious thing to me how our children can be instructed by the Holy Spirit within them, so that, as it is stated in Hebrews 8:10-11 that “they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.” This infers that knowledge of God might even go without teaching, in the minds our children. God might just put it in their knowledge through His Spirit.

Every bit of what we have to teach our children must be filtered through knowledge of God and His Word. In fact, it is true, beyond a doubt, that every subject we teach must at least have its foundation in the absolute Bible (the Word of God).

- **Teach our children “to be known in” God.**

As I have spent a good deal of the time expressing how all the knowledge our children need will come from God and His Word, Romans 1:19 expresses from whence even knowledge of Him comes revealing “...that which may be known of

God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.” So we see that God has this special ability to put within them understanding or “knowledge of Him” whereby they may know Him. In the very next verse, God says, through the Apostle Paul that they have no excuse for not knowing Him.

Our children must come to an understanding that their life “...is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3), however, they “...are the light of the world [, and] a city that is set on an hill cannot be hid” (Matt. 5:14). It is our children’s call to be known in God. People should look upon them and see something unusual and brilliant in their countenance and example. They should be a breath of fresh air to those around them – a source of light. This happened to Moses, after he had come down from mount Sinai and had spoken with God, after he had received the Word of God, “the skin of his face shone” (Exodus 34:29). Now, this was the result of receiving God’s Word directly and could not have happened as the result of receiving any other word or book. The fact is, like no other word, God’s Word is able to live within them (Philippians 2:16; 1 John 1:1).

- **Teach our children “to make known or declare” God.**

One of the key responsibilities that we have as parents is to teach our children to testify of Christ and to witness to others. The best way to reveal the entire scope of this activity is to expose them to people in the Bible who did. This is because of the intense investment of life and sacrifice, action and results, as well as devotion and consequence of their revealing Christ.

1 Chronicles 16:24 tells us that it is God’s desire to “declare His glory among the heathen; his marvelous works among all nations.” Should we think that he does not want our children to do the same? We read in Psalm 22:30-31 that “a seed shall serve Him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare His righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that He hath done this.” This seed could very well be us, and this people that shall be born could very well be our children and theirs. Is it more important to pass on knowledge of school subjects or knowledge of God from His Word? We should think before we answer this question.

- **Teach our children “to make oneself known or to reveal oneself in” God.**

It only took Daniel’s knowledge of God to make a king say, “Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret” (Daniel 2:47). As Christians, the mind of Christ in us can reveal much of the wisdom of God (Matthew 11:27). There is no other method of acquiring such knowledge in the entire world. The Apostle Paul puts it this way, in Galatians 1:16: “To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” This is to say, he did not ask for the wise men of this world to teach him about such things. In fact, the only way we will ever be persuaded to leave what we hold that is not the truth is for God to tell us. No man knows more than what God can tell us.

1 John 2:27 tells us, "...the anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." We cannot trust any materials written merely by men or women to teach our children the absolute, live-by-it truth except the Word of God. The crux of the matter is that they must use this method so as to be able to abide in Him. The Christian life, we must prepare them for is established for this purpose and His Word speaks to them explaining, "...now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at his coming" (1 John 2:28).

Once again, I hope I have given you ample understanding through deliberating on the word "acknowledge" in Proverbs 3:6. You can at least see the need to absorb your children in His Word and how little of life's real meaningful things can be learned by other means. There are words to a popular hymn that say "Little is much when God is in it." I would like to also express the converse to this, which would be when God's Word is used in the teaching process, very much is in it. When you study a book, you read a sentence and you might get more out of it once or twice reading it, but eventually, the additional meanings come to an end. However, when you read God's Word, I do not believe that fresh meanings of the same passage ever come to an end. This is due to the fact that, unlike the words of other books, written merely by men, the Word of God is living – its words are like a well that never runs dry (John 4:10-14).

### ***A Practical Approach to Bible-based Knowledge***

So far I have attempted to explain the importance of teaching your children from the Bible. But, perhaps you find it difficult to imagine how you can teach this way and how it might differ from what they get at Sunday school and how it might lead toward the time you might feel confident they can be graduated. I don't blame you for feeling a bit uneasy about these things. I will take a few moments here to put this teaching into a practical framework for your benefit.

Please keep the original relational idea of this text in mind. God's everlasting plan was and is to "...revealeth the deep and secret things: He knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him" (Daniel 2:22). God said He "...will put [His] law into their mind and write it in their hearts" (Hebrews 8:10). Then He promised, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success." (Joshua 1:8). It is obvious, by what God tells us here, that we have been duped in believing in a false idea of how to make our children, and for that matter ourselves, successful. We must come to realize and accept the fact that (1) real education comes from God, (2) God reveals it through His living Word by the Holy Spirit, and (3) meditating on His Word and observing its meaning is the key to a real, prosperous, and successful life, in accordance with His will.

Let me assure you that I am speaking from practical experience by telling you a story about how we put these methods to work with our own children, of which we have six. So that you know from what reference point I am speaking, our children are half girls and half boys from ages three to twenty-four. The oldest two children are now twenty-four and nineteen and have graduated, for all practical purposes.

### *Our Method Explained*

Approximately twelve years ago my wife and I started realizing an important, life-giving principle about the teaching/learning process. God had become more important in our lives and we began to see a new approach to education. This approach was based upon God's principles rather than those of men. In the meantime, we came across some good curriculum based on the principles of God and His character. I could tell you which one that is, but that is not germane to this teaching.

The foundation of our home school examines two presuppositions available to families for learning about life. First, and foremost, there are God's presuppositions (based on the universal, non-optional principles of God's Word). Second, there are man's presuppositions (based on philosophy, tradition, and natural inclinations). The impact on the life of the student based on God's presuppositions is summed up in the scripture, "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and He addeth no sorrow with it" (Proverbs 10:22). The impact on the life of the student based on man's presuppositions is also summed up in the scripture, "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Proverbs 14:12).

Whereas the traditional approach focused mainly on academic subjects, such as language, grammar, vocabulary, archaeology, geography, music, art, literature, chemistry, biology, astronomy, geology, physics, mathematics, government, economics, logic, history, nutrition, health and sometimes the Bible, the Bible becomes just another academic subject to be studied or it is related to these subjects in some way. In our home school, however, we focus each month on a specific passage of Scripture. The student first gains a basic understanding of the passage. This passage is then explored through linguistics, history, law, science, mathematics, and medicine.

In this way, the emphasis of learning is put on using each subject to discover the deeper truths in the Scriptural passage. The objectives are to grow the student in Wisdom, see subjects as they come from God, and to understand how the subjects have real application to the life God truly intended for us. Our goal is to "train up sons and daughters" in such a way that they will be able to apply what they have learned to the challenges of this world while focusing fully on the next. The students must be able to acquire strength of character to "see the consequences of a decision beforehand...and make the proper choice, regardless of the pressure or personal cost."

In I Corinthians 13:11, the Apostle Paul expressed how important it is that, by the time we are adults, we are "...finished with all childish ways." We can teach our children such characteristics that demonstrate exemplary behavior in the areas of faith (by not being

affected by fads), of love (by giving freely to others' needs), of conduct (by submitting to authority and taking on responsibility), of edification (by building up others), and of purity (by saving themselves for their life partners).

We recognize five areas of responsibility in which students will need to learn to be successful. These areas are: becoming a mature man or woman, becoming a successful businessman or home manager, living a life as a loving husband or wife, becoming a wise father or mother, and learning to be a dynamic leader or teacher of good things. Each of these important areas of responsibility is examined through seven non-optional principles of God's Word. These principles encompass the principles of design, responsibility, authority, suffering, ownership, freedom, and success. The overall goals of teaching our children these things are the same goal that God has for each of our lives; namely, for us to conform to the image of Christ (Romans 12:1-2).

Man's philosophy has worked from the presupposition that the best, most useful men and women to a society are those who have been steeped in knowledge from the highest universities. However, it is pointed out in scripture that true knowledge stems from virtue, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge" (II Peter 1:5). Knowledge that is gained before gaining godly character produces pride and arrogance. The Apostle Paul instructs that, "Knowledge puffeth up..." (1 Corinthians 8:1-3). In order that we parents place the instruction in a proper order, we must understand how our God-given jurisdiction of parental authority changes as our children mature. The aim is similar to the method of tutelage God used for the instilling of the Law in His people. He purposed to begin showing them with an outward Law and judgment and aimed at slowly moving the law they followed inward. In the same way, the parents are outward authorities that are to become the child's inward authority as he or she matures taking on the responsibilities of adulthood.

Our outline of the role of parents through a child's stages of maturity is as follows:

- At ages 0-5, the parent is an instructor acting as an outward conscience and restraint. Just Like the Leviticus Law, we instruct them as to right and wrong (otherwise, the child would not know).
- At ages 6-12, the parents become teachers to prepare the child to accept the responsibilities of life. At this point, we explain why instruction is given and tell them what to do and how.
- At age 13-Marriage/or the time they leave home, the parents become a guide to give them counsel and supervision by showing them how to apply the principles of God's ways to their life. At this stage, we encourage, support, and cheer as they make the right decisions.

Lastly, after they leave home, we assume the position of an honored friend, either through their sense of duty or devotion. This honor is a command from the Lord.

A focus on which our family has concentrated has been to teach specific character traits, with the goal of character building. With this, we have followed a very specific and directed course.

### **Us Talking to God**

A very important aspect of starting each day is prayer. From prayer, we learn the character trait of "authority," becoming ever so conscious of the fact that God provides all our needs so long as we remain under His authority and ask Him "in all things." We not only use this time to pray for our family (father as he goes off to work; teaching children to honor their father), but we pray for others' needs, which teaches us to have love for our neighbors (government officials, Pastors, the poor, etc.).

Of course, one of the essential things the family prays for is forgiveness of transgressions. We feel it is imperative to have a strong relationship with our Father in heaven and that a repentant heart is what He calls for in us. This also adds a good attitude of humility to learning. Prayer is added, requesting that God will teach us His character. One can acquire many types of character traits, but none so valued as that of a godly character. You might ask, "What is the difference?" By example, "forgiveness" is defined, in the dictionary, as "ceasing to feel resentment against an offender." Whereas, godly character would also involve "learning to demonstrate Christ's love toward that offender."

Prayers are also lifted to ask God to give Mom and Dad special wisdom, knowledge and understanding in the course of the day. The student prays that God will help the whole family to be diligent in study so as not to become distracted by those worldly occurrences that like to get in the way of a productive school day. Praying against distractions can make the day more productive and much less frustrating, however, life's interruptions can sometimes be viewed as life's little blessings when visited from God's point of view. As a good friend once offered, "Life's irritations often build character in us."

### **God Talking to Us**

Beginning with Matthew 5:1, we start by gathering resources that lead us to the proper study of one key verse (passage) of scripture each month. Each morning, the children search the Psalms and Proverbs for a character trait and major concept related to the verse. They do not read all the Psalms and Proverbs. Instead, they go to Proverbs and read the Proverb for that day (for example, if school starts on Monday the 3rd, they read Proverbs 3). This provides a good month of reading, in that there are 31 Proverbs. Numbers that fall on the weekend are read within the next one or two months. At the same sitting, the students read (using the former example) Psalms 3, 33, 63, 93, 123, which is to read five chapters, skipping 30 chapters each day. It is astounding how those particular chapters are just the ones we need (for spiritual growth) on those specific days. It is beyond coincidence how they often hit right on the "major concept" of study for that day or period. Only God can do this. One character trait that began to develop strongly within our family was that of "faithfulness" (trust in God). We trust in Him to always provide for our needs (both physically and spiritually).

Another tool of our study that builds character in us is to methodically divide our key Scripture passage (2 Timothy 2:15). As I have pointed out, our major direction is to gain godly wisdom by learning as much as is humanly possible about a verse of scripture each month. We use a Scripture meditation worksheet that is divided into columns across both sides of a landscape-oriented page. In the second column, the student writes down the entire verse of scripture. The first column is narrow and allows just enough space to draw small pneumonic objects or figures that remind the students about the verse. A pneumonic device, therefore, is used for memorization (Deut. 30:14). In the third column, the student begins to jot down important questions that arise in their mind as they examine the verse. Since the scripture verses (a new one examined each month) begin in the Beatitudes, we study the original words from the New Testament Greek (using a Strong's Concordance). This exercise gives the student an opportunity to learn the Greek words used in the verse and the Greek meaning of those words. This helps to better understand the intended meaning of the verse (Acts 17:10-11). The student proceeds to jot down these key words and meanings in column four. In the next column, the student goes back and looks up cross-references to the verse and jots down what is found. Then, in the next column, the student thinks about and writes how they say the verse in the first person (Joshua 1:8). This is done to be able to personalize the verse. Personalizing the verse leads to the next part where the student writes down his or her own interpretation, based squarely on the examination of the columns previously explained, briefing what the verse means to them and how it might apply to their life (Psalm 119:15). Better still, this might show the student how their life does not conform to scripture indicating a change is needed (Psalm 119:124). This process is meant to engraft the Word of God in the student's life and help them to transform, in their spirit, to the "character" of Christ (Romans 12:2).

Part of our intent is to spark interest and thought about the Bible verse from the standpoint of questions in their life and in the world in which they live. This approach begins by introducing the key verse being examined (meditated upon), describing what the verse is about, and explaining to the student what they are about to learn. The human spirit is naturally curious, but mostly about those things that feed their lusts and desires. Another way to see this is that they have a keen interest about self and what directly affects number one. They are; therefore, most interested in things that concern them, even when it is about someone else. Introducing a subject or verse in a way that will interest the student is not easy; however, when you approach it from the standpoint of character, it affects everyone. The object of the introduction is half curiosity and half suggesting that this may affect them. A fun way to accomplish this is to "salt the oats".

A certain amount of time is spent studying the Greek words that live within the scriptural passage being studied. This provides the student with interest in the passage from a wider perspective (Psalm 119:32). Just knowing that there is more to each scriptural passage than first meets the eye, ear, and brain can often expand the way the student sees the things in the world around him. This approach builds the students' character to become more investigative about scripture and its meaning and to become good Bereans, as the

Apostle Paul once suggested. An interesting approach to understanding this idea, that I heard, was the following:

When you read, in a cursory manner, through Genesis 5, you see just a simple chapter that seems to be a genealogy of key people from Adam to Noah. There are ten notable people, to be exact, in this chapter. They are, in order, Adam, Seth, Enos, Cainan, Mahaleleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech, and Noah. Now this is interesting and most people will take it at that and move on to the next chapter. However, a closer examination of the Hebrew meaning for each of the names just listed, in the same order, only adding an article and such to make it cohesive, forms a sentence. Put together the sentence says, “Man is appointed mortal sorrow; Blessed God shall come down teaching that His death shall bring the despairing comfort (or rest).” Adam=Man, Seth=appointed, Enos=mortal, Cainan=sorrow, and so on. If that is not enough to show that there is more meaning in scripture than we would know, another interesting fact is that Enoch’s son Methuselah’s name means “his death shall bring.” God told Noah that the impending flood would not be sent until Methuselah dies. And, this is what happened. By the way, most people will tell you that Methuselah lived longer than any man, however, his father actually never died, and therefore outlived him.

### **Examining God’s Word through Subjects**

The actual subject-related resources, used in our school, are available for at least two purposes, both involving meditation on the verse for that month. One purpose is to learn about the passage from a subject point-of-view. This study looks at how science, math, geography, and many other subject categories become a microscope into the body of the verse. You might say that the subject approach gives the verse a life in the understanding of the student (1 Cor. 2:14). Another purpose is to take that living verse and show its relationship to the everyday life of the student. This is related through the life of other people whose lives witness to the Bible passage (Hebrews 12:1). The subjects begin to make the passage something more than what is just read; it becomes something that can be done and experienced and understood in today’s context and, importantly, in the life of the student (1 Corinthians 9:9). The hope, and often the experience, is that this activity will allow the student to at least vicariously go through the action of living out the scripture being examined. This activity, along with key and related projects, works to build character in the student that prepares (or rehearses) him for later experiences with which the world is bound to confront him in the future (2 Chron. 27:6). The student does not have to learn according to the hard way what is the best way to handle trials that may confront him. He can determine and prepare for them while building character and a mighty spirit that has looked at every circumstance from God’s absolute, non-optional point of view (1 Kings 8:58).

Instead of telling the student to pray about something, for example, the student can learn about praying from many perspectives. He might begin a research project to determine every aspect of the meaning and effect of prayer. This could begin with the examination of the meaning of the word prayer in either the Greek or the Hebrew or both. He might

look at prayer throughout history, by examining the lives of famous people who used prayer as a means to a result, while examining why they felt that prayer was important. He could include a look at prayer through science and might discover that college teams were able to strengthen the teamwork needed to win through prayer, or how a famous brain surgeon was able to do seemingly impossible procedures (heart surgery on a baby while it was still in its mother's womb) through prayer. Then, the student could look at both the mathematical odds of prayer working the way it does, and how mathematics plays strongly in the faith it takes to pray and trust God. He could find, through archaeology, that Noah and his ark were not myths and how prayer affected his life and experiences. He could look at geography and see how prayer was instrumental and perhaps the only reckoning that kept the Mayflower steady on its vast and awesome voyage across the Atlantic Ocean. A study of Medicine might reveal how there is a direct connection between prayer and how the body heals itself. A study of Law might show how the Law of God and God's nature are somehow are tied up in commandments to pray and operative in the success or failure of man's ability to serve His Creator. The list of subject-related studies goes on and is deeper and much richer than explained here. These subject-oriented studies of the verses of scripture help God's effort to turn truth inward and build the character of Christ and His wisdom within the student.

Now, the student is not just left to do all this study and discovery by himself. It is very important for him to learn from the authorities that God has granted to Him. One of the reasons that the students prayed for their parents, the first thing in the morning, is that they need God's wisdom to be able to guide and teach the student throughout the day. Everyone who teaches knows that learning never stops. The student is to use his God-given authorities as a sounding board for learning and a resource for advice and sound knowledge. If the parents do not feel they know an answer, they should at least be able to turn with their student to a proper and trustworthy resource (the Bible).

### **Us Talking to Each Other (Wisdom Studies)**

One thing that helps the student to gain understanding is the valuable wisdom studies that go on either in the morning or in the evening, or while eating meals, or before going to sleep or rising up, between a father and his children (Deut. 6:7). These discussions are a foundation for character building in your children. Probably, informal and unconsciously, fathers have been doing this for years. Children are naturally curious about things they do not know in life and are always after their father for the answers. The focus of study and discussion during these wisdom studies is the Bible verse for the month. The idea is that this focus will surprisingly play right in to the circumstances surrounding your family's experience that month. More times than not, this is exactly what happens. Our family has many testimonies to this effect. There is some thought that it might involve what is deemed the "reticular activating device" within a person, however, many see it as "God's miraculous way." Perhaps, one of the best benefits of the evening wisdom study is that it brings the study and teachings of the day to a full circle, with closure, of a sort.

### **Studying the Creator (Character Studies)**

Finally, three tools that aid the process of teaching and incorporating character into our home education process are a character quality worksheet, the reading and study of biographies, and providing the student with daily chores.

The character quality worksheet is made up of several areas examining various aspects of a character trait examined within the scope of our studies each month. This worksheet begins with a specific trait that exemplifies our focus and Bible verse, such as attentiveness, obedience, truthfulness, and so on. First, the student is asked to look up and write down the common dictionary definition of the character trait. This is thought to be the worldly or secular definition. Then, the student is required to write out an operational definition that is established from scripture and is believed to be God's point-of-view. This helps the student to clear up the differences in what might have been his definition, if it was different from God's and to begin looking at the difference. In scripture, God points out that, "My ways are higher than your ways, and My thoughts are higher than yours" (Isaiah 55:9). One way to gain understanding of a character trait is to write down the similarities it has to other traits and then to write down how the trait is different from or opposite to others. Having the student list antonyms and synonyms for the character trait accomplishes this exercise. Sometimes a good way to learn what something is is to discover the way(s) it is not. This also helps the student learn when people either are or are not characteristic of Christ.

Along the same track as the use of synonyms and antonyms is the use of studying about people in scripture who either showed or did not show a particular character quality in their life. Of course, it is obvious that Christ showed character traits in His life on this earth, and we can learn from His example. Thereby, we learn to be conformed in our life and character to Him in His power. The student uses the character quality worksheet to show how he either is, or is not, showing the quality in his life and how he can begin to do so or improve. Children gain a better grasp of how to show the character quality in their day-to-day lives, through this study. Finally, the student, having thought about all that was found by using the character quality worksheet, is required to write their own definition of the character quality.

Reading and studying biographies of famous people has some value, however, reading and studying the biographies of men and women who demonstrated specific character qualities has a redeeming value for the students. It is generally possible to guarantee that positive character traits will shine through the biographies of people who have, in their lifetime, conformed to the life of Christ. Even martyrs whose lives are seemingly tragic reveal admirable character traits such as obedience, boldness, virtue, self-control, endurance, faith, and loyalty. One such person of character was Joan of Arc; however, one does not have to look to martyrs only to find true character reflecting the life and example of Christ on earth. Jesus' faith and compassion were closely emulated in persons such as George Mueller and David Wilkerson. George Washington comes to mind when we are to examine the character traits of truthfulness and virtue. Mother Teresa comes to mind when I think about hospitality, availability, and love. In addition, we can always use Solomon to teach about wisdom. By looking at the lives of people who demonstrate character, it is possible for the student to better see a real-life side of each character trait.

The character traits that were a part of Jesus as a man walking the earth were forgiveness, gentleness, kindness, child-likeness (in spirit), benevolence, humility, patience, perseverance, joyfulness, love, gracefulness, meekness, compassion, helpfulness, goodness, faithfulness, and mercifulness. Additionally, He was a teacher, was zealous, was a good example, avoided anger, did not cuss, swear, or malign, and spent His life here in prayer. He was willing to do right and suffer for it. I could go on and on, and these traits were absorbed and emulated by people who wished in their lives to be just like Him. It would behoove us then to seek out the biographies of these people and have our student read and study them.

### **Learning to Live in the Garden**

One of the tools that seem to be missing today is the doing of chores. You might ask, "Can doing chores teach character to students?" The answer is "Yes!" Rather than saying it will teach them character, it is more accurate to say it will "build" character in them. Many students will not like or enjoy the idea of having to do chores, and many will expect payment of some sort (allowance). I recall having to do chores for my parents without payment, other than a roof over my head and three square meals a day. These rewards were somehow taken for granted until I had to provide them myself at which time the appreciation budded somewhat. The only so-called chores for which I received payment were when my mother dropped me at an elderly man's home to work in his vineyard, rose garden, and yard each Saturday. I worked from morning to the middle of the afternoon and earned fifty cents per hour. Today, a small crew of men demanding an exorbitant amount would do the same work.

Payment or no payment is not the issue when it comes to the true benefit of chores. The one thing I did not count as valuable, working in the elder man's garden the better part of each Saturday, was working in his garden instead of my own. Without realizing it, I was able to learn character traits such as truthfulness (facing the consequences of mistakes, when I accidentally cut a rose too short), obedience (yielding the right to have the final decision about how I spent my Saturdays), alertness (learning to foresee dangers in the equipment I was handling as a young boy), joyfulness (learning to be happy regardless of outside circumstances by doing chores I really did not want to have to do), availability (standing by the task of each chore until it was fully completed), endurance (maintaining commitment to a goal during times of pressure), reverence (learning to respect the possessions and property of others), diligence (applying energy and concentration to assigned tasks), thoroughness (learning what details are important for the success of a project), dependability (lifting pressures from those you serve by consistently fulfilling the project they assign to you), creativity (learning to complete tasks with greater efficiency and quality), resourcefulness (achieving a task with a minimum amount of outside resources), contentment (learning to enjoy times of being alone), punctuality (showing esteem for another person and his time by not keeping him waiting), tolerance (learning to accept others as unique expressions of specific character qualities in varying degrees of maturity), cautiousness (gaining adequate counsel before making decisions), responsibility (learning to assume the protection of that which is entrusted to me), determination (learning to give whatever energy is necessary to complete a project),

loyalty (adopting as my own the wishes and goals of the person I am serving), and sensitivity (knowing how to say the right words at the right time). Certainly, what I was paid by God was far greater than the price of rubies, let alone fifty cents per hour. Over the years, I have been able to use the character traits that I acquired through working in the elder man's garden. I have not even mentioned the conversations we had over the Coca-Cola he gave me at noon each Saturday. Over the years, I have discovered these and other character traits "built" into me. I would only add one thing to the advent of chores for the students and that is the important elements of awards and praise.

### **Learning From Rewards**

When parents adequately and sincerely praise their children, the children do not have to look for praise outside their family. Each month, and perhaps more often where appropriate, it is valuable and important to award good character in your children. Whereas simple complements tend to puff up the student without due cause, praising them for specific character qualities they portray during a specific period goes far. You generally begin to see more of the same character displayed by the student made to feel appreciated for a character trait attached to him. The award can be in the form of a certificate of recognition and appreciation. For some reason, one of the events I remember the most in my past is being voted as the "most talented" in my senior high school class. I was nominated and elected for this accolade by my fellow classmates. Conversely, I do not remember much about the paychecks for jobs that I did. The major objective for the character traits that we build into our children is to have them remain as an integral part of their personal makeup all of their life. If these character qualities are those demonstrated by Christ, then this will have been a worthy goal, and time well spent.