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“What sort of people
ought you to be?”



Basic Christian ethics

Peter was a fisherman who lived in Capernaum, on the north side of the Sea of Galilee. Out of all the disciples, he is for many people the easiest to relate to! He comes across as impulsive, mixed with both fear and courage. Early in Luke's Gospel, when Peter meets Jesus it says, *"he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord."* But Jesus answered, *"Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men (Luke 5:8-10)."* Peter was changed – forgiven – restored.

Later, Peter would deny Jesus three times. Luke records that at that moment, *"the Lord turned and looked at Peter (Luke 22:61)."* We can only imagine what that moment was like! It was a time of great shame and sorrow for Peter. Yet, our Lord was gracious to Peter. Following His resurrection, He met Peter on the beach in Galilee and as painful as it was for Peter, Jesus restored and forgave him. He charged him, *"Tend my sheep (John 21:16)* and said, *"Follow me (John 21:)."*

Peter truly was changed. Many years later, he would write to Christians and speak about the coming Day of the Lord. The Lord will come like a thief in the night and all things will pass away and be laid bare. Peter asks us, since this is true, *"What sort of people ought you to be? (2 Peter 3:11)"*

In reading this booklet on ethics, I pray that you would ask yourself the same question. The following pages do not answer every question on ethics, but I hope that it will direct you to the God of the Bible, His instructions for how we are to live and in doing so, that He will be honoured.

God bless,

Graham Barnes

Ethics: “what sort of people ought you to be?”

God as our Creator has given us His law for how we are to live. God’s law is good, but like a white light on a stained garment, it shows up my sin. God is also our Redeemer, doing what we cannot do by ourselves in rescuing us from our sin and washing our sin-stained garments. He did this by the Lord Jesus’ death, which satisfied God’s righteous wrath for believing sinners. God the Holy Spirit then lives within His people, making them more and more like Christ. Since this is gospel truth, how then ought we to live?

Governments try to control people’s behavior by laws or programs. Perhaps cynically – or realistically, the ancient Roman historian Tacitus said, *“the more corrupt the state the more numerous the laws!”* Yet, whilst laws clarify expectations, they have no power to inspire the behaviour they wish to correct. The foundations for Christian living are entirely different. They are found in the gospel of Christ Jesus. Our beliefs about God, empowered by the Holy Spirit, drive how we live. Therefore, the doctrines of Christ are not abstract ideas that have no practical purpose in day-to-day life. There could be no greater lie! The doctrines of Christ are inherently practical, as my beliefs about Jesus change how I live today. Christian living/ethics is theology in action.

“If through grace the power of sin is broken in you, and you are delivered from the wrath to come... yet the very remembrance of the misery and danger you were in... should make you serious.”
– Matthew Henry

In 2 Peter 3:11, the Apostle Peter asks us, *“What sort of people ought you to be?”* Below are three points to help give a framework for how we are to live;

1. The foundation for the Christian life is God’s Word rightly understood- the Westminster Confession says the whole counsel of God (see Acts 20:27), *“is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture (WCF 1.6).”* God’s law is both written on our hearts (Acts 2:15) and expressly given in His Word. His law shows us our sin and drives us to Christ. It also teaches us how to live as God desires and helps curbs sinful behavior in society. God’s law must be rightly understood in light of *all* that the Scriptures say. For example, God’s Old Testament people were prohibited from eating shellfish (Leviticus 11:10), yet in Mark 7:19 Jesus declared all foods clean (see also Acts 15:19-21). Other Old Testament laws – the moral laws - continue for us today, such as laws concerning sexual purity (see Matthew 5:32).

2. The motivation for the Christian life is love for God and others- Jesus said the greatest commandment is: *“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 22:37-40).”* As the Holy Spirit moves within you, so that you come to know and love God, it will transform how you live. Thomas Chalmers called this *“the expulsive power of a new affection.”*

3. The goal of the Christian life is to glorify God- the Apostle Paul encouraged the Corinthians, *“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).”* Understanding that I was created to *“glorify*

God and enjoy Him forever (Shorter Catechism, q. 1)" changes my entire outlook on life. God is infinitely holy and majestic, and it is a Christian's joy to see Him glorified in every situation.

The Scriptures warn us about those who have the *"appearance of godliness, but denying its power* (2 Timothy 3:5)." Theirs is a phony godliness; *"they had the externals of religion in place... but tragically everything was appearance... because they denied the power of the gospel* (Kent Hughes)."

In contrast, the true Christian life is shown by a genuine love for the Lord and a desire for His holiness and glory. Despite battles with our sinful nature, life in Christ is the fullest and richest way of living (John 10:10).

Ethics: three traps of our society

At the time of King David, there were men from the tribe of Issachar *"who had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do (1 Chronicles 12:32)."* Christians too, pray for such understanding. Paul exhorts us *not to be, "conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Romans 12:2)."* Below are three traps of Western society in the 21st century. These may not necessarily be the most sinister traps, but they are the 'default settings' of our society and we ought to be aware of them if we are to live lives for God's glory.

1. An optimistic view of humanity- recently I heard someone complain that another person's behavior was unacceptable in the 21st century. Underlying their statement, perhaps unconsciously, seems to be the belief that humanity is progressing upwards, as though such behaviour was acceptable in earlier centuries, but not now. As much as anyone, H. G. Wells embodied this belief that humanity was improving. In 1937, he said, *"our race will more than realize our boldest imaginations... [I]t will achieve unity and peace, and... our children will live in a world made more*

"A piece of lead, while it is in the lump, can be put to no use, but melt it, and you may then cast it into any mold, and it is made useful. So a heart that is hardened into a lump of sin is good for nothing, but when it is dissolved by repentance it is useful. A melting heart is fit to pray."
– Thomas Watson

splendid and lovely than any palace or garden that we know..." World War II nearly broke his spirit and his final book in 1946 was called *"Mind at the end of its tether."* Jesus is far more realistic when he diagnoses the human condition: *"out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander (Matthew 15:19)."*

2. There is no value in suffering- ours is a therapeutic culture. But if you are a Christian, then as hard as it is to understand, suffering is meaningful before God. Paul says that having been *"justified through faith"* we have peace with God and *"we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts... (Romans 5:3-5)."* Good comes from suffering. On the 50th anniversary of the diving accident that left her a quadriplegic, Joni Ereakson said that following the accident, she thought, *"Oh God, this is now my life?! You actually expect me to do this?!"* But then she spoke about how other Christians helped her: *"Back in the early '70s when I was starting to take seriously Christ's lordship in my life, my friends didn't merely tell me biblical truth: "Here, believe this. Rejoice in your trial. It'll do you a world of good." Instead, they hooked up their spiritual veins to mine, pumping compassion into my wounded soul. Com means "with" and passion means "Christ's suffering." They literally were Christ-with-me-in-suffering... Grace softens the edges of past pains, helping to highlight the eternal... It's the hard, but beautiful, stuff of which God makes 50 years of your life."* In a therapeutic culture, suffering has little value. But for a Christian, we trust that God sovereignly works evil for good (see Genesis 50:20) and can be glorified in suffering.

3. "I can live as I like, so long as I don't hurt anyone"-

Western society values freedom and individual choice as unquestionable rights. Yet, without any moorings to say what "harm" is, such a statement becomes unworkable. In reality, it says that I am not accountable to God or to any higher sense of morality, except as I see fit. A Christian knows that freedom works best when we follow our Maker's design for life. Just as a sailboat moves most beautifully through the water when the boat's design is honoured, so too life works best when God's design is sought.

Ethics: Holiness and sin

Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-1843) is well known for saying, *"The greatest need of my people is my personal holiness."* The Apostle Paul, along similar lines, exhorted Timothy by saying, *"watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers (NIV; 1 Timothy 4:16)."* In the eyes of the world - and other Christians - nothing will so dishonor Christ as unrepentant hypocrisy or flagrant sin in our lives.

Like a crouching leopard- Sin is first mentioned in the Bible when God says to Cain, *"sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it (Genesis 4:7)."* Like a predator overpowering its prey, Cain was

overcome; so too we. In the everyday, Satan works in subtle ways to keep us from God; *"Why does he tempt to Delilah's lap, but to keep you from Abraham's bosom (Thomas*

Boston)."

Even good things, such as beauty and reason become tools in the hands of the Devil that can lead us to self-justification and away from God.

Overconfidence in ourselves- For every Christian, the moment that we think that we are beyond sin is, very often, the moment we are weakest: *"let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall (1 Corinthians 10:12)."* Whilst ever we are in this world, we cannot afford to rest our grip – or more



accurately, we must not take our eyes away from Christ Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith (see Hebrews 12:2). It is when we convince ourselves that we are strong, that we are most susceptible. Yet, there is also a great promise attached to this warning: *"God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it (1 Corinthians 10:13)."*

Public/Private divide - There is nothing more hidden than my thoughts. We are usually less guarded with our thoughts, than with our words or actions. Yet, God knows even our most private thoughts – the words and images that come into our minds. There must be no divide between our private life and public life. God's law asks searching questions of us privately: *"You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD."* So too, Jesus says, *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment (Matthew 5:21-22)."* It is uncomfortable to read, yet I recognise that it is good. Holiness is both a public and a private matter. It concerns every sphere and aspect of my life – family relationships, worship, business, care for the poor and work etc. I do not bargain with God in regards to holiness; He calls for my complete, unconditional surrender.

The way back – in one sense, what keeps us from God is not our sin, but that we don't humble ourselves, repent and trust Him. In Mark's Gospel, the first command that Jesus gives

is "*repent and believe in the gospel* (Mark 1:15)." A Christian is someone who has repented and who *does* repent. It is deep and difficult work, but God's grace comes in the midst of humility and repentance – and suddenly the death of Jesus Christ in my place becomes all the more precious.

Ethics: Secret prayer

"But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.

Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him."

- Matthew 6:6-8

At first it might seem strange that in a booklet about ethics a note on prayer should be included, but nothing gauges our spiritual temperature as much as our prayer to God. Prayer is one of the first markers that a person has become a Christian, as I begin to find that I have a desire to pray to God by myself, in private – and not selfish prayers or simply asking for God to improve my situation, but true prayer, seeking God and God alone. You see prayer mark the new life of Paul at the time of his conversion - *"look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying (Acts 9:11)."* Christ Jesus our Lord knew the importance of private prayer: *"rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed (Mark 1:35)."*

Whilst prayer is joyful - and every Christian longs for those sweet moments in prayer to God - it is also difficult. Paul says that Epaphras was *"always wrestling in prayer"* for the believers in Colossae (Colossians 4:12). It is a helpful way of thinking of prayer - a wrestle and struggle. At times we don't know how to pray. At other times we are exhausted, or emotionally drained, or not sure where to begin. As well as this, we constantly battle

our sinful desires.

Here are a few brief points that will hopefully help you pray;

Attitude - beware of empty prayer. In the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:9-14) even the Pharisee was a praying man! Yet, it was worthless prayer. It was only the humbled Tax Collector, who prayed, *"God, be merciful to me, a sinner!"* who was heard by God and justified. True prayer is always an act of faith by those who are humbled.

***"And purely purge away our dross,
And take away our tin;
And by the virtue of Thy Cross
Renew us, Lord, within."
- Amy Carmichael***

Christ Jesus, our great High Priest - we have a habit of saying, *"In Jesus' Name, Amen"* at the end of our prayers. Really, it should open our prayers! The only reason we can come before God in prayer is that Christ Jesus is our *"great High Priest"* (Hebrews 4:14) who sympathises with us. As J. C. Ryle said, *"the bank-note without a signature at the bottom is nothing but a worthless piece of paper."* If Christ was not our Saviour, then we would be helpless to come before God in prayer.

The Holy Spirit, our helper – even though we are weak in prayer, the Holy Spirit is strong. Romans 8:26 says, *"... the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words."* He intercedes between God the Father and us - carrying and strengthening our prayers to God.

Use the Bible to help you pray - the church directory, missionary prayer sheets, lists, etc. are all useful, and so too, the

Bible itself helps us to pray. Dietrich Bonhoeffer said about the Psalms that the only way to understand them was, *"on your knees, the whole congregation praying the words of the Psalms with all its strength."*

Simple, yet deep – it is not the strength of our prayers that makes us a Christian. What makes you a Christian is that you trust in Christ and there has been a genuine work of the Holy Spirit within you. Neither is it the eloquence of our prayers that impresses God. Do not be afraid to pray prayers that are simple, yet deep. Paul thanks the Christians at Philippi that through their prayers Christ would be enlarged in his life (see Philippians 1:18-20). That is a wonderful prayer.

Keep going - Jesus gives us every encouragement to pray persistently and boldly. He said, *"Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"* (Luke 11:11-14) If the lesser is true, how much more the greater!

The Puritans used to have a greeting, *"Does the day find you a praying man?"* Secret prayer is one of the marks of genuine Christianity.

"Lord, we ask in Christ's Name, please turn our hearts from anything that steals us from You and let us be men, women and children of that secret prayer that Jesus spoke about. All our trust and hope is in You and we thank You, God, for all You have done for us."

Ethics: sexuality, speaking the truth in love

It is common today for people to think of sexuality as operating on a “*spectrum from totally heterosexual to totally homosexual, with gradients between the two extremes* (SMH, letters, 24/1/15).” Sexuality is *the* issue confronting Christians more than any other at this moment in time. Yet it is helpful to realize that it was also a significant issue at the time of the New Testament (e.g. Matthew 15:19; 1 Corinthians 5:1). It takes courage and grace to swim against the tide of culture, but our prayer is always, “*Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation* (Psalm 25:5).” Below are three points to help us think about how to respond;

1. God’s Word clearly condemns *any* sexual activity outside of marriage- sexual relations between a husband and wife are part of God’s good design at creation (Genesis 2:25). Any other sexual activity is sinful. In short, “*chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage.*” Sexual immorality is more than behaviour. It begins in the mind; hence to lust is to commit adultery (2 Samuel 11:2-3; Matthew 5:27-28). Homosexuality is sinful, and in the Old Testament it was comparable to adultery or bestiality (Leviticus 18:20-23). Some heterosexual relationships can be redeemed (e.g. adultery can be repented of and the relationship redeemed), but homosexual relationships cannot; they can only be repented of and the sexual relationship discontinued. In 1 Corinthians 6:9, Paul says that to live in continued unrepentant sexual immorality excludes a person from the kingdom of God. So too, in Romans 1 homosexual sin is said to be part of a world given to idolatry

and unnatural in that it goes against God's design for us (see Romans 1:18-32).

2. Biblically, sexuality is about behavior, not identity- today people speak of sexuality as a matter of identity, almost like saying someone is French or Filipino. This is said to go back to Sigmund Freud (1856-1939)

who *"turned sex from something we do into something we are."* In 2011 Lady Gaga had a number one song, *"Born this way."* Since then, however, some leading gay activists have, at least to a degree, dropped the argument that people are born gay (e.g. SMH, *Why it's time to retire the 'born this way' argument for LGBT rights*, 24/6/2017). Biblically, our biology does not fully explain or excuse sin. So too, it doesn't make sense

to *identify* someone by their sexuality. To do so can allow a person to define themselves by what God calls sinful. The bible deals with sexuality primarily at the level of behavior and *not* identity.

**"Our faith... grows when he [God] wrestles with us. Faith is not a once-for-all gift. It begins decisively, but then it continues to grow and grow... Faith must deepen. Such deepening often occurs through trials."
- William Edgar**

3. Sexuality is a gospel issue- the gospel is concerned with morality and sexual immorality is at its core an act of unbelief and disobedience to God. Yet, the good news is that the redemption Christ Jesus won at the cross offers hope to all sinners. When Paul said that the sexually immoral will not inherit God's kingdom, he went on to say, *"And such were some of*

you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God (1 Corinthians 6:11).” Failure to repent of our sin, whatever it is, and be washed clean by Christ Jesus excludes us from the Kingdom of God. Christ Jesus must rule over sexuality.

One of the most powerful stories of recent years has been that of Rosaria Butterfield. In the late 1990s, she was a tenured English Professor, until she became a Christian. She is worth quoting at length: *“Twenty years ago, I lived as a lesbian. I delighted in my lover, our home on one of the Finger Lakes, our Golden Retrievers, and our careers. When Christ claimed me for His own... I was not converted out of homosexuality. I was converted out of unbelief... What conversion did change immediately was my heart and mind. My mind was on fire for the Bible and I could not read enough of it or enough about it. The gospel gave me a light that was ruinous. It ruined me for the life I had loved. The Lord’s light illumined my sin through the law and illumined my hope through Jesus and the gospel. The gospel destroyed me before the Lord built me back up. In saying “yes” to Jesus and “no” to the desires of my flesh, I learned that the only way to peace with my God was through the Cross—the one that Jesus died on and the one that I was called, with the help of Jesus, to carry. When the Lord entered my world, I experienced that gospel-ignited “expulsive power of a new affection” (to quote the title of Thomas Chalmers’s famous sermon). That new affection was not heterosexuality, but Jesus, my Jesus, my friend and Savior. I was not converted out of homosexuality. I was converted out of unbelief.”*

Ethics: euthanasia

There are good reasons apart from Scripture to oppose euthanasia: a diagnosis can be incorrect or inaccurate and a prognosis is difficult to determine. Dr. Kenneth Stevens, a professor emeritus and a former chair of the Department of Radiation Oncology at the Oregon Health & Sciences University in Portland, recalled meeting a patient in 2000 who had been diagnosed with inoperable colon cancer. She wanted to die under Oregon's euthanasia laws, but after receiving treatment she was still living seventeen years later (*The Australia*, 11/11/2017). People may feel pressure to end their life. In 2013, 61% of people who were killed by assisted dying in Washington State said, "*being a burden was a key reason for choosing death.*" Former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating has said that if euthanasia is legalized, "*there will be people whose lives we honour and those we believe are better off dead* (*The Age*, 19/10/2017)." Writing about the Nazi use of euthanasia Leo Alexander, an American psychiatrist involved in the Nuremburg Trials observed that, "*Whatever proportions these crimes finally assumed, it became evident to all who investigated them, that they started from small beginnings... It started with the acceptance of the attitude, basic to the euthanasia movement, that there is such a thing as a life not worthy to be lived.*"

It is inevitable that there will be deaths against a person's will. No level of safeguards will be able to stop this from occurring. Peter Comensoli in the *Sydney Morning Herald* says, "*The Canadian Medical Association Journal published a report that shows that one third of euthanasia cases in Flanders, Belgium are without explicit consent.*" And, "*Statistics Netherlands reported there were 310 euthanasia deaths without explicit consent in 2010* (19/4/2016)." Bracket creep is also

inevitable. Small changes lead to larger changes. In Belgium, children with their parent's consent and the mentally ill have been added to those who can request death. In 2012, two blind twins were allowed to take their lives even though they had no terminal illnesses. Part of their reasoning was that they dreaded the thought of ending up in an institution. Professor Theo Boer was once a supporter of Holland's 2002 euthanasia laws, but is now critical of them, saying, *"In the beginning, 98% of cases were terminally ill patients with perhaps days to live. That's now down to 70%."*

As Christians we believe that God is sovereign over life and death. Psalm 139:16 says, *"Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them."* God has given us life in His image and the right to life comes before questions about quality of life; even when life is difficult. The clearest command opposing euthanasia is the sixth commandment: *"you shall not murder (Exodus 20:13)."* This is not just a law for Christians; it is written on the hearts of all people. This doesn't necessarily mean that a person will continue treatment. Someone may, for example,

"If our prayers involve a choice between alternatives, we should not pray for what the Bible disapproves or labels as unrighteous what the does not condemn. We discern God's will by praying for him to provide us with the wisdom and courage to abide by his Word, and then we move forward with the confidence that he will rightly bless prayers offered in Jesus' name."
- Bryan Chapell

refuse cancer treatment or withdraw from treatment. So too, a doctor may administer pain relief at the end of life, but their aim must be to reduce pain, not take life.

Christians should also be involved in caring for those in the last stages of life. We seek healing – God is the LORD who heals (*Yahweh Rapha*) – and we seek compassion for all who suffer. Good quality palliative care will support a person in every part of their life from physical pain to emotional wellbeing.

In 2015, Kara Tippetts, 38, died from cancer. Despite the difficulty and pain a verse that was dear to her was Proverbs 1:33, *“Whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster.”* She said, *“That verse to me says that if you’re listening to God, He’ll take away the dread. He doesn’t take away the disaster. It’s like this litmus test for our family: If I am living in dread and anxiety, it’s a sure sign that I’m not spending time listening to God and His word... It’s not about longevity, really. It’s about Jesus.”* We uphold the sanctity of life and seek that through suffering God will be honoured.

Paul spoke of suffering in this life whilst holding onto the hope of heaven: *“our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison (2 Corinthians 4:16-17).”*

Ethics: governments and politics

How are Christians to view politics and governments? This is a difficult question to answer, but below are some simple points as a start;

1. God is sovereign over politicians and governments - the Scriptures insist that the governments of the world rise and fall under God's sovereign decree (see Daniel 4:31-32, Isaiah 40:15-23, 2 Chronicles 20:6). Even the most despicable leaders are under His sovereignty and answerable to Him. At Jesus' trial, Pilate said to Jesus, *"Do you not know that I have authority to release you and authority to crucify you?"* Jesus answered him, *"You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above (John 19:10-11)."* Trusting that God is in control of all things is, in the end, a comfort for Christians.

2. In general, Governments are to be obeyed – the leaders of our nation will always be morally sinful. Yet we are to obey them as far as possible, because God has ordained governments. Remarkably, Paul even says that, in general, our obedience to governments is a sign of our submission to God. Romans 13:1-2 says, *"Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed..."* So too, Peter, a first-century Jewish man, commands us to *"honour the*

"Crushingly hard days come, and conscious fellowship with God may be over-shadowed for a season; but the triune God is with us. He is our joy."
– Lewis Allen

Emperor (see 1 Peter 2:13-17).” Joseph, Daniel and Esther all faithfully served pagan masters at times in their lives. In a human sense, Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem, because His parents obeyed Caesar Augustus’ decree that all people should be registered by the Roman State. When Christ Jesus says, “*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s* (Matthew 22:21),” He seems to be teaching that we are to submit to the State, even though we owe everything, including our very being, to God.

As Christians, we believe that God’s moral law, summarised by the Ten Commandments, is written on the hearts of *all* people (see Romans 2:15). Therefore, although it is corrupted within us, it does nonetheless give a baseline for human law that is true for all people. This does not save us, but it does help curb injustice. The task of governments is to administer justice (see Romans 13:4). In this sense, the gospel, which speaks of pardon to sinners, cannot serve as the basis of civil society. One time during political upheaval in Nepal, the prisoners went on strike until they were all set free! In Martin Luther’s thinking that would be like placing wolves, lions, eagles and sheep in the same pen and telling them to live in peace. The sheep would do this, but not for long! Yet, in saying this, it is also true that hard justice without the tempering of mercy in some situations is crushing (see John 8:1-10).

3. There are times when we must disobey Governments

– God alone, not political parties (or churches for that matter!), deserves our final allegiance. The responsibility of Christians is to serve God above all things. The great danger currently faced by the West is coercion to accept, in the name of tolerance, what God’s word says is sinful. In Nazi Germany, 1936, some of those in the *Confessing Church* stated: “*We only know one*

thing – that the church of Christ can never stop fighting to ensure that no alien fire burns on the altar of the church and that its proclamation and its life is determined by nothing but the Word of God.” But it is not only *within* the church that we are to obey God and disobey governments at times. Shiphrah and Puah were two godly women who obeyed God by refusing to kill the newborn boys as the State had ruled (Exodus 1:15-22; also Revelation 13 and 17). So too, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego defied King Nebuchadnezzar order saying, “*be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods* (Daniel 3:18).” Psalm 94 includes a prayer for the overthrow of those who are unjust: “*Rise up, O judge of the earth; repay to the proud what they deserve! (v.2)*”. Going further, Dietrich Bonhoeffer famously spoke of our responsibility “*not just to bandage the victims under the wheel, but to put a spoke in the wheel itself.*”

There are errors on both sides to be avoided. Politics and laws in and of themselves will never bring heaven on earth. Only Christ will do that when He returns. Our hope is in Him as our Saviour, and yet we are to be involved in our world. After William Wilberforce came to faith in Christ, John Newton encouraged him to remain in politics where he could do much good. Everything from politics to his minutest words were “*considered with reference to eternity.*” Our Lord prayed for His disciples: “*I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one... Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth* (John 17:15-17).”

Ethics: children and parenting

John Chrysostom (d. 407 AD) said, *"Higher than every painter, higher than every sculptor and than all artists do I regard him who is skilled in the art of forming the soul of children."*

God's word gives us every encouragement to raise children to love, trust and obey God. Proverbs 22:6 says, *"Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it."* This not a promise, but a proverb. God Word also gives instructions on parenting, and commandments for children. For example;

- *"Honor your father and your mother (Deuteronomy 5:16)."*
- *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right (Ephesians 6:1)."*
- *"Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4)."*
- *"Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him (Proverbs 13:24)."*

J.C. Ryle encourages parents: *"We must train our children with an ongoing conviction in our minds that much depends upon us as parents."* We have examples of faith being shared down through the generations, such as Timothy, whose sincere faith first dwelt in his grandmother Lois and mother Eunice (2 Timothy 1:5). Yet, the Bible also gives no guarantees when it comes to parenting. The godly king Josiah, who did much to reform life in Jerusalem, was replaced by his son Jehoahaz who *"did evil in the eyes of the LORD (2 kings 23:32)."* So too, it was Moses' grandson, Jonathan, who led God's people into idolatry (Judges 18:30).

God's law tells us how we are to live, and it is the gospel of His grace that forms the centre of Christian parenting. That God should send His Son to redeem sinful and rebellious people is the wonderful truth that governs all else for a Christian. Kevin de Young is right in saying, *"I beg of you, don't go after the next generation with mere moralism, either on the right (don't have sex, go to church, share your faith, stay off drugs) or on the left (recycle, dig a well, feed the homeless, buy a wristband). The gospel is not a message about what we need to do for God, but about what God has done for us. So get them with the good news about who God is and what he has done for us."* God is the Father who welcomes back His prodigal son with open arms (Luke 15:20) and as the perfect Father, God disciplines those He loves (Hebrews 12:6). So too must parents.

"Look at the cross and marvel at the extent of God's love. If you are uncertain of salvation, look to the cross and find there all that he has done to redeem you. If you are discouraged, look to the cross and see there the height and the depth of his love."
– James Montgomery Boice

Beware of experts and fads. Popular parenting trends go in cycles – what is popular today will be repudiated in the next generation and then likely be popular again after that. An authoritarian approach to children will often merely cause resentment and hardening. Yet on the other side, a pandering approach is equally woeful and unrealistic – it ignores that there is such a thing as sin in a child. We must seek to walk the path of

biblical faithfulness – as God gives us grace - training up a child in His ways. To do that, we aim at the heart, because it is from the heart that behaviour flows. This is primarily the task of parents before it is the task of the church (see Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

Below are some thoughts and suggestions that are hopefully helpful;

- Try to establish a routine, just like brushing your teeth, for reading God's word, praying and singing together.
- Let your children see *you* pray. Let them see what it means to seek after God. Example means so much.
- Don't simply teach them stories from the Bible, but teach them what these stories show us about God. Leave them with a sense of God's greatness.
- When you read the Bible, beware of feeding them too much or too little.
- Try to find good Christian books to read in addition to the Bible. A good Christian book should be deep, yet simple to understand and engaging.

Above all, pray for God's blessing and grace in all that we do. We look to God for His wisdom and seek to live out the gospel of Christ before children, knowing that it is God who changes hearts.

Ethics: protecting life in the womb

*"For you formed my inward parts;
you knitted me together in my mother's womb.
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."
-Psalm 139:13-14*

It is commonly said that one of the great tests of a society is how it treats those who are most vulnerable. In Australia, it is commonly estimated that 75,000 lives are terminated in the womb annually. In the USA, the figure is closer to a million (note, however, that abortion has been declining since the mid-1990s). It is true of the millennial generation that, as Jessica Resuta says, *"One-third of my generation is gone. One-third of my peers will never experience life in the outside world as I have."*

Tragically, in many parts of the Western world, Down Syndrome children are becoming less and less common (in August 2017, CBS reported that termination rates for Down Syndrome were 98% in Denmark for 2015). Sadly too, groups such as White Ribbon (against domestic violence) also support abortion.

The bible says that God is the giver of all life and the Lord of all life, including life in the womb. The LORD said to Jeremiah, *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you"* (Jeremiah 1:5). John the Baptist leapt for joy in Elizabeth's womb (Luke 1:44). Most clearly, the sixth commandment forbids the killing of innocent life (Exodus 20:13). Elisha was moved to tears when he saw that the Syrian king would, amongst his crimes, kill children in the womb (2 Kings 8:12). The bible is



clear that life in the womb, like all life, is sacred and should be protected.

In the womb, billions of letters of coded DNA are there to “knit together” a person. Within the first trimester a child’s organs are formed and functioning – brain, heart, nervous system. A baby may suck their thumb and even has a thumbprint. Research has brought to light the fascinating way in which children learn language in the womb (see *New York Times*, 21/2/17). A child in the womb is not a *potential* human, but an *actual* human. Any attempts to place a start date on life, e.g. 12 weeks, are logically flawed and morally wrong. In the end, arguments in favour of abortion, also work for infanticide (the killing of child *after* birth). It is not surprising then, that Peter Singer (who was made a Companion of the Order of Australia in 2012) supports both abortion and selective infanticide until one month after birth (see Peter Singer, *Practical Ethics*). Biologist Jerry Coyne agrees: “*If you are allowed to abort a foetus that has a severe genetic defect, microcephaly, spina bifida, or so on, then why aren’t you able to euthanize that same foetus just after it’s born?*” When sanctity of life is rejected, such a conclusion is logical to many.

But God shows great concern for those who are vulnerable and we must do the same (Leviticus 19:14). Christians have always been opposed to taking the life of an unborn child. One of the earliest Christian writings after the New Testament, the *Didache* (“*The Teaching*”) states, “*you shall not murder a child by abortion nor kill that which is begotten.*” Even the *Hippocratic Oath* included a statement about not taking life in the womb. Intuitively, we know that this *must* be true. Norma McCorvey (1947-2017), famous for being the plaintiff, “Jane Roe,” in *Roe vs. Wade*, which led to the legalization of abortion

in the USA in 1973, later turned to oppose abortion. In 2017, the artist Eminem released a song (featuring Ed Sheeran) that seems to speak about his regret at an abortion. It includes the line, *"I really woulda' loved your smile."*

It is not enough for Christians to *merely* speak against abortion, we must pray and provide every possible support to both a mother and child. Even when pregnancy is the result of the most horrific situation, we must support the life of both mother and child in every way. We pray for opportunity and compassion.

Sin has a way of de-humanizing us and causing emotional havoc. Someone has written, *"I cried to God for days, begging him to forgive me for what I had done. Now I have given my life to Jesus, I believe I have been forgiven. Nothing, however, will ever remove the regret I feel. I can only hope that one day I will meet the souls of those little mites in heaven."* Grief and remorse are often hidden, but God's gospel is one of forgiveness and healing. Paul says that good comes from godly grief (see 2 Corinthians 7:10). Christ Jesus showed compassion on a sinful woman who came to Him: *"her sins, which are many, are forgiven – for she loved much (Luke 7:47)."* Psalm 38 is one of the Psalms of repentance that offers hope;

"I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin... Do not forsake me, O LORD! O my God, be not far from me! Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation."

Ethics: tragedy and pain

Sadly, devastation and death are a consequence, either directly or indirectly, of living in a fallen, rebellious world and are to be expected (see Romans 5:12; 8:20-21). Although tragedy will follow tragedy, nonetheless for those personally involved time seems to stand still. When C.S. Lewis' wife, Joy Davidman, died he said, *"Her absence is like the sky, spread over everything."* When King David's son was dying, he lay on the ground and refused to be comforted (2 Samuel 12:16-17).

- **Helping as we can-** Christians are called, as we have opportunity, to *"do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10)."* The New Testament churches supported one another during times of famine (see Acts 11:27-29; Romans 15:25).

- **Weep with those who weep-** tragedy must cause us to weep. Three times we are told that Christ Jesus wept or was deeply moved at the tomb of Lazarus, his friend (John 11:33; 35; 38). Although Christ's is not a helpless grief - for He will raise Lazarus to life - He is nonetheless moved by the sadness of death. Death is unnatural and it should move us. Job's three friends gave *unwise* advice (see Job 42:7-9), but they did console Job in the grief of losing his children and all he had (Job 2:11-13). People created in the image of God have died.

"The supreme matter in this life and world for all of us is to realize our relationship to God. One almost apologizes for making such a statement, and yet I suggest that the greatest cause of all our failures is that we constantly forget our relationship to God."

- Martyn Lloyd Jones

- **Cling to the truth that God is both sovereign and good-** the Scriptures give no easy answers to evil and tragedy, yet they affirm that God is both sovereign and good. When Abijah, the son of the wicked king Jeroboam, died, it was because God's favour was upon him (1 Kings 14:12-13)! This is a mystery, yet we are to hold the Psalms dear: *"The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit (Psalm 34:18)."*

- **Be humble before God and others-** victim-blaming can be common in the aftermath of a tragedy. In Luke 13, Jesus mentions two incidents; a killing and a tragedy, yet He says that the victims were not worse sinners than other people. The lesson He draws is that, *"unless you repent, you all likewise will perish (Luke 13:3-5)."* We pray for God to save; even those who commit terrible crimes. In 1888, when Jack the Ripper was terrorizing London, Charles Spurgeon prayed: *"We hear startling news of abounding sin in this great city. Oh! God, put an end to this, and grant that we may hear no more of such deeds. Let Thy Gospel permeate the city and let no monsters in human form escape Thee."*

- **Think deeply about the promises of heaven-** tragedy and death makes us long for something greater; a time when everything will be set right. Paul quotes Isaiah 64:4, *"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him (1 Corinthians 2:9)."* Christ has conquered all things: *"I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades (Revelation 1:18)."* And He promises heaven for all who trust in Him (John 3:36). That hope sustains us.

O God, we do grieve at tragedy and death. Please give comfort in sorrow and hope in Jesus Christ.

Ethics: War

Christians have always struggled with their involvement in war. Is it right for a Christian to be involved in war? It is uncomfortable hearing that during World War I the Presbyterian Church sent two of its men to war with a gift of a pistol and ammunition! For the early church, the question of a Christian's involvement in the Roman army was a real issue. Often, they concluded that they could not be involved with the Roman army, because army life involved worship of the Roman gods; idolatry. There were also those, for example Origen (AD 184-253), who were opposed to Christians participating in wars due to the nonviolent nature of Christ's teachings.

In the Bible, wars are a frequent part of life for both believers and unbelievers. In Genesis 14:13-16, Abram led his "trained men" to rescue Lot from an alliance of kings. The kings of Judah and Israel, both good and bad, led armies into frequent battles. Hebrews 11 tells of *"Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith... became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight (v.32-34)."* Christ Jesus said that, *"wars and rumours of wars"* would mark the time before His return (Matthew 24:6); and however the book of Revelation is understood, it certainly involves violence against God's people in some way (see Revelation 13:7).

Whilst war itself may not be sinful, all war is the result of rebellion against God and opposite to God's "very good" creation (Genesis 1:31). War may break out for reasons of economics, race or power, and whilst we do not ignore these reasons, the germinating cause is much deeper: the depravity of the human heart.

Christians have often held to the “just war” tradition, developed by Augustine (AD 354-430) and others, which judges that under some circumstances a Christian may participate in war for the sake of justice. Some of the principles commonly appealed to include: that a war be defensive, not aggressive; that the motivation be just; that those waging war have legitimate authority; that actions be in the right proportion and that there be a reasonable hope of success.

Those who advocate for pacifism often appeal to Jesus’ words in Matthew 5:39, *“Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.”* Yet, it must be observed that Jesus is focusing on an individual’s behavior, if we belong to His kingdom. He is not speaking about the use of force in exercising justice by governments. For a believer there is a place for turning the other cheek and there is a place, on behalf of the State, to enforce justice.

In Ecclesiastes 3:1-8, Solomon speaks of life having a design that makes opposite actions right at certain times. Someone who is wise will understand that there is *“a time to love, and a time to hate; a time for war, and a time for peace (v.8).”* Pacifism doesn’t work in a fallen world. Too easily it can result in greater harm being done by failing to reign in the wicked. As someone has said,

“The church is not perfect, but woe to the man who finds pleasure in pointing out her imperfections! Christ loved his church, and let us do the same. I have no doubt that the Lord can see more fault in his church than I can; and I have equal confidence that he sees no fault at all. Because he covers her faults with his own loves...”
- Charles Spurgeon

"Noncooperation did not liberate Dachau; General Patton did." Yet, neither is war mongering the answer. Psalm 11:5 says: *"The LORD tests the righteous, but his soul hates the wicked and the one who loves violence."* War and peace are both necessary at the right moment.

In the New Testament there are several examples of soldiers having a saving faith in Christ. Jesus marveled at a Centurion's faith, saying, *"I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith"* (Luke 7:9; see also Acts 10:1 and 44-48; Acts 16:25-34). When John the Baptist spoke about bearing fruit *"in keeping with repentance,"* he told those who were soldiers, *"Do not extort money from anyone by threats or by false accusation, and be content with your wages"* (Luke 3:8-14). In other words, they could remain as soldiers, yet God's grace to them meant that their lives were to be different.

So what, then, of a Christian's involvement in war? Perhaps the most we can say is that by examining our motives and heart before God, a Christian can rightly conclude, with sadness, that it *may* be right to fight in a war on behalf of the State. Indeed, it may be necessary. Yet, we must ask the questions: *As far as we know, is the war just? And are my motivations correct, that is, love for God and others?*

Outside the United Nations in New York there is a statue, gifted by the Soviet Union, of a man beating his sword into a plowshare. Humanity can never achieve such lasting peace. Only God will do that when Christ returns. Surely, war and its tragedy should stir within us desires for another world - heaven. A place that endures forever and where there is peace. It is God who has given us this yearning, so that we should fear Him (Ecclesiastes 3:14). The Risen Christ says, *"Surely I am coming soon."* Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! (Revelation 22:20)

Ethics: orphans and widows

God's Word gives us many instructions about caring for those who are vulnerable. Yet, above all, God's Word gives us motive to care: God is the Father of the fatherless and protector of widows and we are to reflect His character (Psalm 68:5; 146:7-9). Three passages that speak of caring for others are;

- *"Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world (James 1:27)."*

- *"... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven (Matthew 5:16)."*

- *"And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith (Galatians 6:9-10)."*

In Old Testament times, God's law protected and provided for the sojourner, orphan and widow. They were to participate in the feasts that God commanded (Deuteronomy 16:9-17) and supplied with food: *"When you reap your harvest in your field and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it. It shall be for the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, that the LORD your*

"When I was young, I was sure of many things; now there are only two things of which I am sure: one is, that I am a miserable sinner; and the other, that Christ is an all-sufficient Saviour. He is well-taught who learns these two lessons."
- John Newton

God may bless you in all the work of your hands. (Deuteronomy 24:19-20; also 14:28-29)." In Deuteronomy 10:19, God's people were commanded to *"love the sojourner,"* because they themselves had been sojourners in Egypt.

Christ Jesus is teacher and example. Against the self-righteous pride of a lawyer, Jesus taught the parable of the Good Samaritan and concludes, *"you go, and do likewise (Luke 10:42).*" He had compassion on the crowds and provided for them (Matthew 9:36; 15:32). The Apostle Paul points us to Christ Jesus, saying, *"you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).*" Elizabeth Elliot said, *"Does God ask us to do what is beneath us? This question will never trouble us again if we consider the Lord of heaven taking a towel and washing feet."*

Care is not to be abused, so that those who are able to work should seek to work (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Yet, three ways that the New Testament church showed care for others was;

- Sending aid when there was famine (e.g. Romans 15:26; 1 Corinthians 16:1-3; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Acts 11:29). In fact, Paul mentions that when he first met the leaders of the church in Jerusalem they welcomed him and, *"asked us to remember the poor. The very thing I was eager to do (Galatians 2:10).*"
- Setting apart deacons ("servants") to help care for people's needs (see Acts 6:1-6). Also, the church in Ephesus established a "widow's list" for those in need (1 Timothy 5:39).
- Not showing partiality to the rich, for *"has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith... (James 2:5)?"*

We also have many examples of believers seeking to show Christ's love by caring for those in need; Mary Slessor (1848-1915) went to Nigeria where she saved many abandoned children; especially twins who were neglected. In England, George Müller (1805-1898) established over a hundred schools and cared for thousands of orphans, trusting that God would provide. Amy Carmichael (1867-1951) saved many children in South India from temples and cared for them in families, rather than institutional-type orphanages; a good, biblical model.

Caring for others is costly in terms of money, time and emotion. Many situations are very messy and discouraging. Yet, we must pray for opportunity and that we will be generous, remembering that,

"if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth (1 John 3:17-18)."

Ethics: Work, Wealth and the Kingdom of God

Work and money take up much of our lives. How should we understand them? Below are a few thoughts that will hopefully guide us towards a biblical understanding;

Work is good – God ordained for Adam to “work and keep” the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:15). So too, God ordained rest for Adam and us (Exodus 20:8-11). Christ Jesus worked as a carpenter (Mark 6:3), Daniel worked in the service of the pagan king (Daniel 1:19), Paul worked as a tentmaker (Acts 18:3) and Lydia worked as a trader in purple cloth (Acts 16:14). At least part of the reason we are to work is so that we can provide for our needs and the needs of others (see Proverbs 12:11; Ephesians 4:28; 1 Timothy 5:8; 2 Thessalonians 3:10). The Communist thinker Karl Marx said, *“From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.”* There is a biblical understanding of this principle (see Acts 2:45 and 11:29), but devoid of any fear of God or consequences, it was quickly corrupted. The Bible says that our attitude to God is to be reflected in how we go about our work: *“Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ (Colossians 3:23-24).”* The Reformers emphasized that all lawful work is glorifying to God. Martin Luther put it memorably: *“A dairymaid can milk cows to the glory of God. If your job is shovelling manure, than do your best and shovel that manure for the glory of God.”*

Work is frustrating – God’s curse as a result of our disobedience means that all work and every workplace is frustrating, broken and marred by sin (Genesis 3:17-19). You and I have sinned against God regarding work and wealth. Solomon

searched for meaning to life in working hard, but all that he found was that it was a vexation (Ecclesiastes 2:23). The workaholic finds little satisfaction, but so too, laziness destroys a person (Ecclesiastes 4:4-8). Work may be good, but it cannot give what only God can give. As such, the best we can do is to enjoy our work as coming from God (see Ecclesiastes 3:13). With both work and wealth, we tend to think that the grass is greener on the other side, but this is not wise.

Solomon's prayer was: "... give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that is needful for me, lest I be full and deny you and say, "Who is the LORD?" Or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my

God (Proverbs 30:8-9)." It is better to have little and fear the LORD, than to have much and trouble with it (see Proverbs 15:16).

The Kingdom of God - Jesus gave many warnings when it came to work and wealth. For example, the rich man who built bigger barns for himself, saying, ""relax, eat drink, be merry." But God said to him, "Fool! This night your soul is required of you (Luke 12:19-20)."" In the Parable of the Sower, the seed choked by the thorns represents the person who hears the word, but "the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word,

"Remember that you are approaching the almighty, eternal, ever-blessed holy God. But remember also that that God, in Christ, has become your Father... Put these two things together, God in His almightiness is looking at you with a holy love and knows your every need."
- Martyn Lloyd Jones

and it proves unfruitful (Mark 4:19)." Jesus calls for loyalty to God: *"No servant can serve two master, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."*

What to do? - J. C. Ryle wrote, *"Has any one little or no money who reads these pages? Then do not envy those who are richer than yourself. Pray for them. Pity them. Be charitable to their faults..."* He goes on to ask us what will cure us from our natural self-love in regards to work and wealth? His answer is the only correct answer: *"Nothing will ever cure it but an experimental knowledge of Christ's redeeming love. You must know the misery and guilt of your own estate by nature... You must taste the sweetness of peace with God through the mediation of Jesus, and feel the love of a reconciled Father shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost."*

O God, Jesus said we are to seek treasures in heaven.
 Forgive the impure motives and thoughts of our hearts
 regarding work and wealth. Give us a right contentment and
 trust in You, whether rich or poor, in work or out of work, and so
 glorify Your Name in us. Amen.

