

HOUSE to HOUSE
HEART to HEART

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House to House Heart to Heart

VOLUME 24 NUMBER 10



THE CURSE OF Jericho

“Then Joshua charged them at that time, saying, ‘Cursed be the man before the Lord who rises up and builds this city Jericho; he shall lay its foundation with his firstborn, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates.’” —Joshua 6:26

“In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates, according to the word of the Lord, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun.” —1 Kings 16:34

There they stand in the smoking ruins of what was left of Jericho. The Israelites had marched, shouted, blown, slaughtered, and burned. What does God want them to do now? Actually, it is what He does not want them to do that is important. He commands them never to rebuild the city that He had destroyed.¹ Jericho was very pleasantly situated, and its nearness to the Jordan was an advantage that would tempt succeeding generations to build on the same spot. Nonetheless, they were warned of what would happen to

one who decided to rebuild the city. His oldest son would die when he began the work, and if he persisted, he would attend the funeral of his youngest son when he finished it.²

About five hundred and thirty years later (ca. 850 BC), during the reign of King Ahab, a man named Hiel³ of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. Just as God had said, when he laid the foundation, he lost his firstborn son (Abiram); and when he set up the gates, he lost his youngest son (Segub) (1 Kings 16:34). What a sacrifice to make for a city!

It is interesting and instructive to place ourselves mentally in the position of this man from Bethel. What possibly could have been behind Hiel’s tragic mistake?

HIEL TEACHES US THE DANGER OF IGNORANCE

Hiel could have been ignorant of this warning. He might have grown up in a family where the Scripture was not read. He could have slept during Sabbath classes and misbehaved during temple



worship services. He might have been sick the day that Joshua 6:26 was studied. Nobody may have cared enough to warn him when he started building on the old Jericho site. They might have reasoned, “Well, I don’t want to get involved. I’m sure he’s read Joshua’s curse. He’s made up his mind. It’s none of my business anyway. He can make his own mistakes.”

Spiritual ignorance is dangerous (Hosea 4:1, 6; 6:6; 2 Chronicles 15:3; Job 36:12; Proverbs 19:2; Isaiah 27:11; Matthew 15:14; 2 Corinthians 4:3–6). There are threats the Bible makes that apply to people living today, and if we do not learn of them and avoid breaking God’s laws, we, too, will be punished. We can see, therefore, the urgency of studying the Bible and learning what God has commanded (2 Timothy 2:15; Acts 17:11). How much Bible study do you and I do?

HIEL TEACHES US THE UNFAILING TRUTHFULNESS OF GOD’S WORD

Not one jot or tittle of this curse passed away. Abiram, the firstborn, and Segub, the youngest, both died, the one at the laying of the foundation, the other at the setting up of the gates of the city. “The testimony of the Lord is sure” (Psalm 19:7). The One who was called Truth said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:35; cf. John 14:6). His Father said, “My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of my lips” (Psalm 89:34). We can trust in this fact:

“God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?” (Numbers 23:19). History shows an unbroken fulfillment of the Scriptures.

HIEL TEACHES US THE STRONG INFLUENCE OF UNHOLY GOVERNMENT

It was in the days of Ahab that Hiel built Jericho (1 Kings 16:29–34; cf. Jeremiah 2:8; Malachi 2:7–8; Matthew 23:16–26). Ahab was among the worst kings Israel ever had. The Bible says that he “did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him” (1 Kings 16:30).

Hiel was also from Bethel. It was in Bethel that Jeroboam set up an idol calf, making the place a center of idolatry (1 Kings 12:28–33). The Bible teaches us to not stand “in the path of sinners” (Psalm 1:1–2) and, “Do not be deceived: ‘Evil company corrupts good habits’” (1 Corinthians 15:33; cf. Proverbs 14:34).

HIEL TEACHES US THE POWER OF UNBELIEF, ONCE IT IS SERIOUSLY ENTERTAINED

When Hiel attended the funeral of Abiram, the firstborn son, we might have expected that he would give up, yet he persisted. The curse was effective, yet he went back to work and lost his youngest child when he set up the gates (the last stage of building a city).

Jeremiah knew of the power of disbelief. He said,

“Do not be proud, for the Lord has spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God before He causes darkness, and before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and while you are looking for light, He turns it into the shadow of death and makes it dense darkness. But if you will not hear it, my soul will weep in secret for your pride; my eyes will weep bitterly and run down with tears, because the Lord’s flock has been taken captive” (Jeremiah 13:15–17).

The other thief on the cross is also a good example of the power of unbelief. He knew he was within minutes of death and still railed on the only One who could

save him (Luke 23:39). How foolish are we today if we doubt God’s Word? Some will even admit that the “Bible says that,” but they persist in doubting that it applies to them. Sadly, they are in opposition to themselves (2 Timothy 2:25).

Never doubt God.

Endnotes:

¹ Perhaps God wanted the ruins left as a “sermon written in stone.” They would be permanent proof of God’s displeasure with idolatry and His power over idol gods. A new city would erase the memory of God’s judgment. The wrecked city would also serve as a reminder that God fights for His people (Deuteronomy 3:22; cf. Romans 8:31) and that it is foolish to trust in the arm of flesh (2 Chronicles 32:8).

² There was a city of Jericho that appeared during the next seven or, at the latest, twenty-five years (Joshua 18:21; Judges 1:16; 3:13; 2 Samuel 10:4–5). This city was in the same vicinity but not built upon the same site. Josephus (a Jewish historian) distinguishes between “the old city which Joshua took first of all the cities of the land,” and an adjacent Jericho. Some say that there have been at least three Jerichos built at different places in this same general area. The new city in Joshua’s time could probably have been more easily built on a new site than the old one because of the rubble that would have had to be cleared away. After it was rebuilt, Elijah and Elisha visited a school of the prophets there (2 Kings 2:4–5, 18).

³ Interestingly, his name means, “God lives” (pronounced keh-h-ale).



Does the Bible Offer Hope for Depression?

Note: This article considers the spiritual side of a serious topic. Please note that depression sometimes necessitates medical intervention.

Depression is perhaps the most common emotional problem that we face today. Experts suggest as many as one in five Americans experiences severe depression sometime during their lives, and depression may be the most common health problem for women. Symptoms of depression include apathy, insomnia, difficulty in concentrating, and a general loss of interest in life. Severely depressed people may become suicidal, violent, or completely withdrawn. Depression has always been a problem for mankind. Bible characters such as King Saul, Elijah the prophet, Job, and others experienced depression.

Sources of depression may be physical, psychological, or spiritual. Fatigue, chemical imbalances, and other physical problems may cause it. After his defeat of the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah was physically exhausted. When Jezebel threatened his life, he fled into the wilderness and was ready to die. The angel of the Lord comforted him and strengthened him with food, telling him, "Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for you" (1 Kings 19:7). He still felt overwhelmed and alone, however. He said, "I have been very zealous for the Lord God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left;

and they seek to take my life" (1 Kings 19:10). He repeated, "I alone am left; and they seek to take my life" (1 Kings 19:14). The Lord encouraged him by letting him know that there were still seven thousand faithful persons in Israel, and by sending Elisha to help him.

Loss is a common psychological cause of depression. Job lost his possessions, family, health, and even his reputation. He cried, "The thing I greatly feared has come upon me, and what I dreaded has happened to me. I am not at ease, nor am I quiet; I have no rest, for trouble comes" (Job 3:25–26). Later he learned that God continued to control the universe: "I know that You can do everything, and that no purpose of Yours can be withheld from You" (42:2). Unfulfilled hopes and dreams and feelings of worthlessness or helplessness brought on by stress also cause depression. These feelings often come because one has lost proper perspective. Disappointments may be opportunities in disguise—times to rearrange priorities, making them in line with God's will. We can overcome feelings of helplessness and worthlessness by understanding that God is still in control. He demonstrated His love for us in the cross (Romans 5:8).

Sin has spiritual consequences, which often include depression. Obeying God is the key. "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love" (John 15:10). God does not intend for us to be depressed, and He is eager to forgive and comfort. —Bob Prichard

Things about the Church of Christ That Surprise People

People cannot "join" the church. "Joining the church" is one of the most common expressions in religious conversation. It is so much a part of most people's religious vocabulary that no one really thinks much about it. Becoming a part of the church is not like joining a social order or civic club. The Bible teaches that when people are obedient to their Lord He "adds" them to His church (Acts 2:41, 47; 5:14; 11:24). Could you imagine someone saying, "I'm going to join the football Hall of Fame," or "join the president's cabinet and be Secretary of State"?



Thou Shalt Not...

A Sunday school teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with her five- and six-year-olds. After explaining the commandment to "Honor thy father and thy mother," she asked, "Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters?" Without hesitating, one boy (the oldest in his family) answered, "Thou shalt not kill."

God's Plan for Saving Man

- Divine Love:** John 3:16
- God's Grace:** Ephesians 2:8
- Christ's Blood:** Romans 5:9
- Holy Spirit's Word:** Romans 1:16
- Sinner's Faith:** Acts 16:31
- Sinner's Repentance:** Luke 13:3
- Sinner's Confession:** Romans 10:10
- Sinner's Baptism:** Acts 22:16
- Christian's Love:** Matthew 22:37
- Christian's Work:** James 2:24
- Christian's Hope:** Romans 8:24
- Christian's Endurance:** Revelation 2:10

Pro-Choice?

After I spoke at a public high school on the pro-life position, the pro-choice instructor took me to the faculty lounge for lunch. He pointed to a table where four teachers were smoking and said, "Fortunately, this is the last week smoking will be allowed in here. We've finally gotten the district to make the teachers' lounge nonsmoking." Good-naturedly I said, "I see you're not really pro-choice." With a surprised look, he explained, "But cigarette smoke hurts other people." Many who are pro-choice on abortion support laws requiring seatbelts. They are "anti-choice" about seatbelts because seatbelts save lives. When lives are at stake, "freedom to choose" can and is legitimately restricted by society.

—Barry Sanford

"For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb."

PSALM 139:13



Words Well Used . . .

More men fail through lack of purpose than lack of talent. —Billy Sunday

Never let the fear of striking out get in your way. —George Herman (Babe) Ruth

If we all did the things we are capable of doing, we would literally astound ourselves. —Thomas A. Edison

Do a little more each day than you think you possibly can. —Lowell Thomas

For more material on the home and family, fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, grandparents, and family finances, go to www.housetohouse.com.

Some Unusual Things for Which to Be Thankful

Be thankful that you don't already have everything you desire. If you did, what would there be to look forward to?

Be thankful when you don't know; it gives you the opportunity to learn.

Be thankful for the difficult times; during those times, you grow.

Be thankful for your own limitations; they give opportunities for improvement.

Be thankful for a new challenge; it will build strength and character.

Be thankful for your mistakes; they will teach valuable lessons.

Be thankful when you're weary from work; it means you've made a difference.

Be thankful for the mess after a party; it means you have friends.

Be thankful for the income taxes you pay; it means you are employed.

Be thankful for clothes that fit a little snugly; it means you have plenty to eat.

Be thankful for a shadow while you work; it means you are out in the sunshine.

Be thankful for a lawn that needs mowing, windows that need cleaning, and gutters that need fixing; it means you have a house.

Be thankful for the spot you find at the far end of the parking lot; it means you are capable of walking.

Be thankful for all the complaining you hear about our government; it means we have freedom of speech.

Be thankful for a huge heating bill; it means you are warm.

Be thankful for the lady behind you in church service who sings off key; it means that you can hear.

Be thankful for the piles of laundry and ironing; it means your loved ones are nearby.

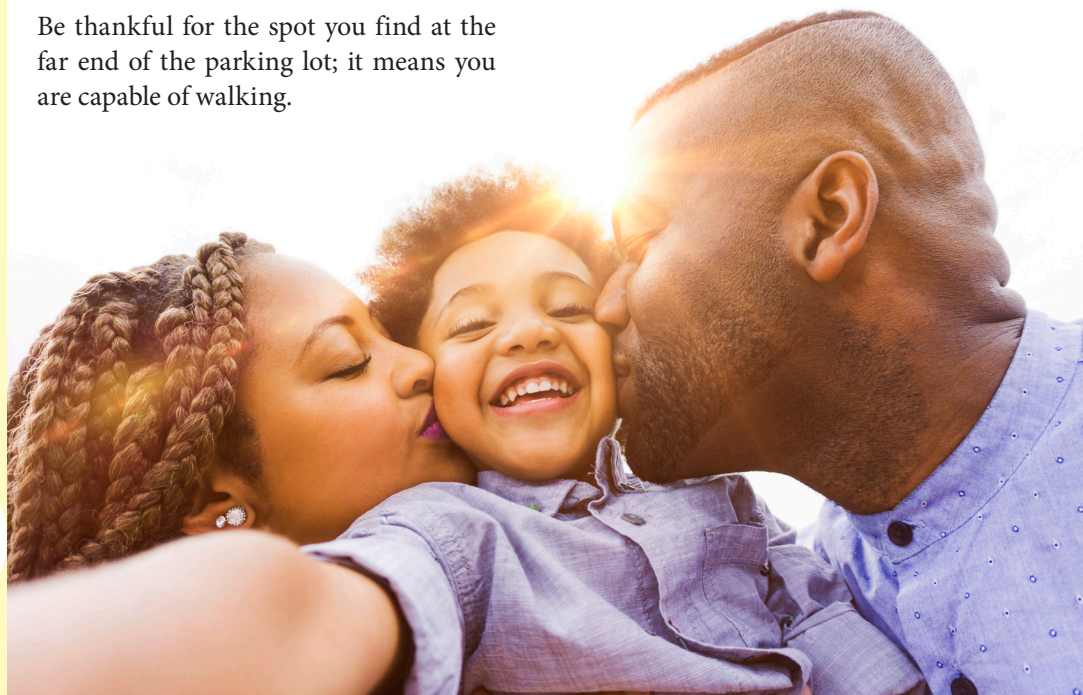
Be thankful for the alarm that goes off in the early morning hours; it means that you're alive.

Be thankful for weariness and aching muscles at the end of the day; it means you have been productive.

It's easy to be thankful for the good things. A life of rich fulfillment comes to those who are also thankful for the setbacks.

"Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ"

EPHESIANS 5:20



Take This Communication Test!

Take this test with your mate. Insert your spouse's name in the blank and answer the questions as you think your spouse sees you. (Copy this sheet if possible or keep your answers on a separate sheet.)

Does _____ think you

1. are considerate of others' feelings? Yes No
2. allow money or things to spoil human relationships? Yes No
3. share how much you need him/her? Yes No
4. read enough on the subject of husband/wife relations? Yes No
5. spend too much time on the computer? Yes No
6. talk excessively? Yes No
7. do not share enough of your inner feelings? Yes No
8. use words/phrases that are too easily misunderstood? Yes No

9. have an overly critical attitude? Yes No
10. have too much tendency to speak for the other person? Yes No
11. have a tendency to interrupt another person? Yes No
12. use too many words that belittle others? Yes No
13. change the subject when it gets too uncomfortable for you? Or won't even bring it up? Yes No
14. nag too often? Yes No
15. have trouble looking others in the eye? Yes No
16. choose "peace" over sharing honest feelings? Yes No
17. make too many excuses? Yes No
18. clam up too often? Yes No
19. watch too much TV? Yes No

20. read too much when at home? Yes No
21. are "off somewhere" (daydreaming) when he/she is talking to you? Yes No
22. are sensitive when he/she is discouraged, troubled, or hurt? Yes No
23. are complimentary often enough? Yes No
24. criticize him/her too often? Yes No
25. are sarcastic too often? Yes No
26. honestly try to see another person's point of view? Yes No
27. honestly enjoy listening to another's point of view? Yes No —From *What Every Family Needs*, Carl Brecheen and Paul Faulkner

"Dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered"

1 PETER 3:7

Cut out this section and mail it to the address on the front.



Bible Quiz

VOLUME 24:10

Send us your answers to receive a free Bible bookmark! We'll grade and return your questions and enclose the bookmark "Facing Trials" as a way of saying thanks for spending time in the Word (quantities may be limited).

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 City/State: _____
 Phone: _____

Questions are taken from the New King James Version.

Answers to Previous Quizzes

V. 24:8 Starts with the Letter "Z": 1. Zacchaeus (Luke 19:2-4) 2. Zacharias (Luke 1:13) 3. Zadok (2 Samuel 8:15-17) 4. Zamzumim (Deuteronomy 2:20) 5. Zarephath (1 Kings 17:1-9) 6. Zaretan (Joshua 3:16) 7. "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up." (John 2:16-17) 8. Zealot (Luke 6:13-15) 9. Zebedee (Matthew 4:10, 21) 10. Zebulun (Numbers 2:1-7) 11. Zechariah (Ezra 5:1) 12. Zedekiah (1 Kings 22:10-12) 13. Zelophehad (Numbers 27:1-11) 14. Zeresh (Esther 5:10-14) 15. Zerubbabel (Ezra 3:8, Zechariah 4:9) 16. Zion (2 Samuel 5:7) 17. Ziba (2 Samuel 16:1)

V. 24:9 Jesus' Crucifixion and Resurrection: 1. Golgotha (Matthew 27:33-35) 2. Sour wine mingled with gall (Matthew 27:27-34) 3. David (Psalm 22:18) 4. Greek, Latin, and Hebrew (Luke 23:38) 5. Two (Matthew 27:38) 6. down, believe (Matthew 27:42) 7. 3 (Matthew 27:45) 8. Veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, the rocks were split, the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints were raised (Matthew 27:51-53) 9. "Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54) 10. 22 (Psalm 22:7-22) 11. Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57-60) 12. the chief priests and Pharisees (Matthew 27:62-66) 13. To anoint Jesus with spices (Mark 16:1) 14. An angel (Matthew 28:5-6) 15. Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9) 16. Jesus (Matthew 28:9) 17. The eleven went to Galilee and worshipped Him; but some doubted (Matthew 28:16-17)

Who Said It?

Directions: Find answers in the following passages: Genesis 4:9; 13:8; Ruth 1:16; Esther 4:13; Matthew 22:1-21; John 3:10-16, 4:7-29, 20:24-25; Acts 2:38; Philippians 1:1-21. Questions are taken from the New King James Version.

1. "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen." _____
2. "Am I my brother's keeper?" _____
3. "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." _____
4. "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" _____
5. "For me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." _____
6. "Unless I . . . see . . . the print of the nails . . . I will not believe." _____
7. "Do not think in your heart that you will escape in the king's palace any more than all the other Jews." _____
8. "For wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God, my God." _____
9. "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." _____
10. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." _____

—<http://www.religionresourcesonline.org>

Making Sense of the Old Testament (Part 4 of 5)

One of the truly astounding features of the Bible is the fact that these sixty-six documents, written over a span of some 1,600 years (from at least 1500 BC to AD 100), all fit together in such a stunningly coordinated pattern. Every book has its place and its unique contribution to make to the body of sacred literature. Each narrative, either directly or indirectly, is Christological in its thrust. This magnificent chorus of masterpieces collectively provides evidence of our great Creator and His redemptive love for humanity.

Books of Prophecy (Major)

Prophecy is the forth-telling of a message from Jehovah. It may entail the recording of ancient events unknown by personal human experience (e.g., the creation of

the Universe). Prophecy may take the form of a survey of current events (with a view to correction), or it may be predictive in thrust; i.e., it may reveal future things that only deity could know.

The first five prophetic books are longer. The book of **Isaiah** foretells judgments to be visited upon Israel due to the nation's transgression of the law of God. Happily, however, it also previews the great spiritual deliverance to be affected ultimately by the work of the Messiah.

Jeremiah depicts the tender invitation from the Lord to the people of Judah who had buried themselves deeply in sin. It foretells the coming Babylonian captivity but also offers hope in view of the eventual era of the new covenant. **Lamentations** is really a sequel to Jeremiah, expressing po-

etical anguish over the fall of Jerusalem in connection with the Babylonian assault.

The book of **Ezekiel** was written in Babylon during the days of the captivity. It rebuts the testimony of false prophets who argued that Judah's confinement would not last the full seventy years, as Jeremiah had predicted. It also is highlighted with Messianic hope. **Daniel**, likewise written in the days of the captivity, affirms the sovereignty of the Almighty over the world's superpowers. In spite of the Hebrews' affliction, the kingdom of God would come and triumph over its foes. —adapted from Wayne Jackson

"For whatever things were written before were written for our learning."

ROMANS 15:4



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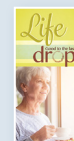
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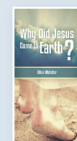
What Saul Saw When He Couldn't See



Should Christians Celebrate Christmas as a Holy Day?



Life: Good to the Last Drop



Why Did Jesus Come to Earth?



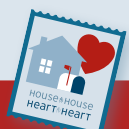
Little Town of Bethlehem



Why do People Hate Christians?

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VOLUME 24:10



Jesus Is Greater

Mankind has accomplished some amazing things—constructing the pyramids in ancient Egypt, inventing the telephone, walking on the moon, DNA analysis. On and on the list could go of mind-boggling achievements of the human race. Often these successes are labeled “great.”

There is One, though, who stands head and shoulders above everybody and everything the human race has known. Name any person, place, or thing, and Jesus the Messiah is greater. The Bible says so. Look at some ways Jesus is greater.

Jesus is greater than the temple. The Jews considered the temple as the holiest place of the holiest city (Jerusalem) in the holiest land (Canaan). Yet our Lord said about Himself, “Yet I say to you that in this place there is One greater than the temple” (Matthew 12:6).

Jesus is greater than Jonah, the prophet of God whose preaching resulted in the whole city of Nineveh turning to Jehovah. “The men of Nineveh . . . repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here” (Matthew 12:41).

Jesus is greater than Solomon. Highly esteemed for his wisdom, riches, and temple construction, Solomon simply cannot compare to the Christ (see Ecclesiastes). Jesus said of Himself, “Indeed a greater than Solomon is here” (Matthew 12:42).

Jesus is greater than Jacob. A woman of Samaria asked Jesus, “Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself?” (John 4:12). Jesus’ response was, “Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but

whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst” (4:13–14). Jacob could only draw the water out of the earth that the Lord put there. Jesus created all things, including the water in the earth, and He can also give “living water” (4:10). He is greater than Jacob, the father of the Israelite nation.

Jesus is greater than Abraham. Unbelieving Jews asked the Christ, “Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead?” (John 8:53). In His answer, Jesus told them, “Before Abraham was, I AM” (8:58). Jesus is eternal deity (John 1:1). Of course, He is greater than the father of the faithful.

What about the angels of heaven? Jesus is greater (Hebrews 1:4–14). And the priests under the Old Testament system? Jesus is greater (Hebrews 7:25–27). And what about the role models of our time? Jesus, and only Jesus, lived on the earth without sin (1 Peter 2:21–22), and thus He is the greatest, the only perfect role model to follow. Jesus is greater, hands down.

We talk about great places, great people, great ideas, and great accomplishments. Whatever it is or whoever it is—Jesus is greater. “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!” (Revelation 5:12).

—Roger Campbell

Two Builders

The builder built a temple; he wrought it with grace and skill.

Pillars, walls, and arches—fashioned to his will.

Men said as they saw its beauty, “It will never know decay.

Great is thy skill, O, builder, thy fame shall live for aye.”

The parent built a temple with loving and tender care,

Planning each arch with patience, laying each stone with prayer.

Few noticed the preparation; none knew of the wondrous plan.

The temple you built, dear teacher, was unseen by the eyes of man.

However, the builder’s temple is gone; it has crumbled into dust.

Low lies its stately pillars, food for consuming rust.

But the temple built by the parent will last while the ages roll,

For that beautiful unseen temple is a child’s immortal soul.

—adapted from Hattie Ross Hall





Exasperated Children

Paul wrote, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). What are some ways we can exasperate (provoke) our children?

- Over-parenting (smothering).
- Showing favoritism: “Why can’t you be more like your brother (sister)?” Jacob made this mistake (cf. Genesis 37).
- Forcing our unfulfilled dreams on them.
- Over-criticizing and/or withholding approval. We can focus so much on what they aren’t doing that we don’t see what they are doing. One said, “A father needs to be on his child’s team—not on his back” (cf. Romans 14:19).
- Making them feel unimportant. Some parents send this message to their children: “I need career fulfillment now. Sometimes I have to choose between my kids and my work. The children just have to understand” (cf. Titus 2:4–5). Spending time with our children is the best way to show our love (Ephesians 5:16). Spending time says more and means more than spending money. Money can buy a toy, but without Mom or Daddy to play with them, toys are no fun.



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10/19



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