

# Growing God's People

a journal for teachers and other learners

## Planning for the Inevitable

It's always this way when I'm heading out of the country and traveling light. When my mind is in neutral for a moment my thoughts go to the trip at hand and itinerary, weather, parasites in the water, lessons and sermons, meetings and so forth.

My goal is to take only what I will need, use what I take repeatedly, and be tired of it by the time I come home. No extra belt, no extra pair of shoes, only three pairs of socks, shirts that dry overnight, and a small bag of chocolate-covered espresso beans just in case there's no coffee.

There's something delightfully fun about being a wandering North American with only a 20-pound backpack for luggage. "That's all you got?" proving in small doses to the rest of the

world that we're not quite as bad as our stereotyped image. The same joy of simplicity is found when we carefully prepare for two nights in the Smokies, with lightweight gear and dehydrated food.

It's a given fact that the *planning* of a journey is an enormously important part of the journey itself—no more removed from the basic requirements of a trip than the airfare or passport.

Our journey with Christ—if we are to be like those of Hebrews 11 who showed that they belonged to a land beyond any country on Earth—requires careful planning. This issue of *GGP* is written to encourage you to become more mindful of the planning that is required and to lead you into active planning for your growth in

## Planning for Growth in Grace

### In this issue.. page #

Discipline of grace: 1-2  
*Planning for Growth*

Theology of Teaching 2  
*A Framework for Educational Planning*

Poetry 3  
*Carl Sandburg*

Book Review: 3  
*Venite: A Book of Daily Prayer*

Biblical Studies 4  
*Luke 14:28-30*

*When we practice the spiritual disciplines, we stand against the basic principles of this world. Through participation in these "disciplines of grace" we come to know more deeply the intimate love of God and the sufficiency of His grace.*

**By Robert Hodge**

"That house looks great!" said the couple. "Wonder how much they're asking?" she said. Getting off the phone with the realtor, he replied: "They want 158. Wow, I wonder what that will *really* cost us?"

It's at that point they go home and find a web page with mortgage calculators and see that a 30-year loan with *x* as down payment results in a total of *yikes!* with monthly payments of *no way Jose!*

More seasoned homebuyers talk about their lifestyle to see what is honoring to God, decide in advance what a monthly payment should be and then back that payment into a price range of a home. Or they save and pay cash.

It's the latter and wiser kind of planning that Jesus talks about when he asks, "For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able

to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, "This man began to build and was not able to finish.""

### GOD'S EXAMPLE

As we look to our growth in Christ, we need to remember that our salvation was *planned* by God.

Acts records Peter's sermon at Pentecost when he says, "...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men" (*ESV*). Peter is at pains for them to understand that their actions were taken only because God had planned it out well in advance.

In Ephesians, Paul reassures the citychurch of Ephesus that redemption, forgiveness, and the riches of God's glorious grace have come to them "... according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth."

If God "spent time" planning we probably should, too.

### THE PRACTICE OF PLANNING

Consider the commands of 2 Peter 15-11 and the obvious need for planning if we are to accomplish this fortification of our faith. The Weather Channel's coverage of recent hurricanes has included a repeated three words: Plan, Prepare, Protect. As those living within



**Planning for Growth in Grace, continued.**

and before the rule of Christ (God's ever-expanding kingdom), we are at war against a swirling and destructive storm whose demonic winds demand that we plan our day, our weeks, our months and years, so that we would be effective in our struggle and counted among those who do not fall away but endure to the end.

*Does your year include plans for Scripture memory?* We adults would be wise in joining the children in putting the Word in our hearts that we might not sin and that it serve as a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths (Ps. 119).

*Does your year include plans for Scripture study and reading?* As John Wood preaches through Deuteronomy, your personal reading and study should be aimed at strengthening your understanding of the OT and also at reinforcing the gospel as seen in the life of Christ and experienced under the blood of New Covenant shed for the forgiveness of the sins of his wandering

People past and present.

*Does your year include plans for equipping to ministry within the church and community?* Have you purchased weighty books by Willard, Boa, Packer and the likes? Are you scheduling time for a counseling course or a biblical studies course with the Center for Christian Studies? Do you have a mentor who is teaching you to lead a Bible study or small group?

Expanding your outlook, does your planning include the spiritual growth of your Sunday school class, your children, your small group...? For all these things, we will be held accountable—may grace be given to plan and to plan well.



**TEACHING AND LEARNING  
GOD'S WAY**

**A Framework for Educational  
Planning**  
*By T.M. Moore*

While it is true, as Robbie Burns reminded us, that the best of our plans are always only tentative, still, we will be much more likely to achieve real and lasting results in the work of Christian education

if we plan our work well and work our plan diligently. We understand this when it comes to planning a lesson. But what about planning for the kind of *learning* we hope our students will realize?

God was careful with Jacob to mark out for him the broad parameters of His divine plan for Israel (Gen. 35.9-15). He made sure that the patriarch knew He intended to bring a great and influential people into being from his offspring, and that He would bless that people as they occupied the land He had given to them. In the light of this, Jacob taught his children and grandchildren what to expect from God, how to arrange their lives and affairs before Him, what pleased Him and what would bring His discipline against them. His "teaching plan" included a "learning plan" that was broadly defined by the covenant promises and expectations of God.

Those same covenant promises remain for us today (Rom. 4.9-12; 2 Pt. 1.3, 4). As teaching servants in the Lord's Church we are called to prepare our lessons in the light of what God has revealed in His Word. But

we are also called to guide our learners in the covenant path illuminated by the promises of God. For this we must be careful to plan what we want them to *learn* as well as what we intend to *teach*. As our learners grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord we expect them to show the signs of His blessing – a deep and growing spirituality, love for the Lord and for one another, concern for the lost, and so forth. And we expect them to take up the challenge of living in God's covenant as they allow His truth to pervade every aspect of the their lives.

God in Christ Jesus is making all things new; this means that everything about the learners we teach – all their relationships, roles, and responsibilities – must be redefined according to the promises of God's Word and reconciled back to God so that His beauty, goodness, and truth can show through them. The more we *plan* for such learning outcomes, and point our teaching specifically at them, the greater will be the likelihood that our learners will grow up to claim God's precious and very great promises for themselves.

It's not enough in the work of Christian education merely to plan the *content* of our instruction. We must also plan for the *outcomes* we hope to see, in our own lives as well as our learners. Then we must pray and encourage and admonish and counsel and exemplify the way of God's covenant with consistent love, so that those we teach will grow up to realize the blessings of God's covenant as fully as possible. God has shown us the framework for teaching and learning; we who are His teaching servants must keep that pathway clearly illuminated for those we teach.



Again returning to the theme of creational theology, we find reminders from our culture that God commonly calls us to remember his acts of creation and turn our heads heavenward in songs of thanksgiving.

Carl Sandburg lived the latter part of his life in Hendersonville, NC where the home, forest, farm, goats, and flowers are maintained by the National Park Service. With fresh apples for sale in town, it's a good time for a road trip and some quiet meditation.

### **Prairie**

Look at six eggs  
in a mockingbird's nest.

Listen to six mockingbirds  
Flinging follies of O-be-joyful  
Over the marshes and uplands.

Look at songs  
hidden in eggs.

—Carl Sandburg

## Featured Book

+

VENITE

*Venite: A Book of Daily Prayer*, by Robert Benson  
*A Diary of Private Prayer*, by John Baillie  
*A Method for Prayer*, by Matthew Henry

*Reviewed by West Breedlove*

The chief occupation of a Christian is worship, and a Christian is not fulfilling his proper role in the world if he is not ceaselessly praying. As Matthew Henry said in the introduction to his *A Method for Prayer*, “it is certain those that *live without prayer, live without God in the world.*” Now we all know someone who can *really* pray. We hear them in prayer and immediately realize that they are on a different plane than we. In my case (and I think it is probably universal) these people are always women.

Years ago I went looking for something to help this ‘poor, lispng tongue’ in prayer, and I immediately found Matthew Henry’s *A Method for Prayer* (edited by J. Ligon Duncan III). Henry’s *Method* (published 1710) guides the Christian through a veritable liturgy of prayer, with a thorough, Scripture-laden system that covers all of the branches of prayer: Address to God and Adoration of Him, Confession of Sin and Declaration of Repentance, Petition and Supplication, Thanksgiving for the Mercies of God, Intercession and Supplication to God for others, and the Conclusion of our prayers. Using Henry’s *Method*, the Christian will harness God’s Word as a foundation for all of his prayers.

Henry’s *Method* can be intimidating though, because it is so complete. The other misfortune is the unfamiliarity of modern ears and tongues to the King James language, which Henry’s *Method* uses. The Christian using Henry’s helpful guide will have to make it just that, a guide. Another book that is much more accessible is John Baillie’s *A Diary of Private Prayer*. This small book provides the Christian with beautifully written prayers for morning and evening. These often-poetic prayers are based on sound doctrine and are sometimes direct

quotes of Scripture. The King James language may be harder for the younger Christian to pray, but nonetheless provides a beautiful model for prayer.

Finally, a recent book by Robert Benson is available to Christians who desire to pray without ceasing. His *Venite: A Book of Daily Prayer* finds its roots in the ancient monastic tradition of the Prayer Office. Praying the Office provides a rhythm of prayer for Christians. *Venite* (“Come to prayer”) supplies seven Offices – Morning (Lauds), Midday (None), Evening (Vespers), Night (Compline), Table Office (Gratia), Communion, and Commemoration.

Each daily Office follows the same pattern of a call to worship, an invitation to prayer (via a Psalm reading), followed by the *Collects* for the Season, the Day, and the specific Office. The Collect is followed by the *Canticle*, which is a hymn or song of praise taken from the Scriptures, or the *Nicene Creed*, the *Te Deum*, or the *Litany of Penitence*. After the Canticle the *Lessons for the Day* are read from the Psalter and/or the Gospel, then the *Prayers of the People* are said. The Prayers of the People allow for private intercession and petition for family, friends, pastors, those whom you have committed to pray for with regularity (i.e., accountability partners), etc.

*Venite*’s two main shortcomings are this: the Psalms are paraphrased, and the Gospel readings include some extra-Biblical material from the first Century which are not cited. *Venite* (as well as Henry’s *Method* and Baillie’s *Diary*) is not meant to take the place of vigorous Bible study and memorization, but they all provide the Christian with a needed path toward ceaseless prayer.



# Preparing to Teach

## *Biblical Interpretation*

### Luke 14:28-30

*For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'*"



1

#### WORD STUDY

Using a Bible dictionary for *tower* and a good concordance or word dictionary for *count the cost* and *mock*, learn what you can about these important components of the text.

*tower*

*count the cost*

*mock*



#### local ears

*THEN: How important was it to have a tower on your house or vineyard? What is the significance of the imagery as Christ teaches the crowd?*

*NOW: How important is it to have a tower on the courthouse of a small town? What would people say of their leaders if a collection were taken to compensate for poor budgeting?*

2



#### the cost of your tower

*Assuming the eventual onset of financial difficulties, a long battle with cancer, or great struggles with family or children....what costs are likely in your remaining years of life?*

3



#### the mocking

*Most of the mocking in the New Testament is inflicted upon Christ. That we might not be mocked for failure to faithfully follow our Lord, what changes in lifestyle and/or practices of the faith need to occur to ensure that the race is run with endurance and completed?*

4



text



word study



commentaries



meditation



outline



presentation