

Expository Files

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Edited by Jon W. Quinn & Warren E. Berkley

The Front Page

God Is Worthy
By Jon W. Quinn

The Bible says that "God is love." (1 John 4:8). This is not only a fact so stated in these words of inspiration, but it has also been demonstrated in a powerful way; God gave His Son for the world so that we might have hope. There is a problem though.

Some have interpreted the statement "God is love" to mean that "all God is is love." In other words, God is one dimensional and has no other characteristics at all.

Because of this many feel that they can all but ignore God's will for their lives - that they can set aside whatever spiritual and moral laws He has given as it suits them. After all, God is love - He could not possibly condemn me or hold me accountable as a transgressor of His Law.

This is a dangerous attitude to have and is built on a false premise. Yes, "God is love" -

He has already proven that to us - but He is not only love. He has other characteristics as well. He demands respect and reverence from us. He does hold us accountable for our actions (Heb. 10:26-27; 31). It is a tragic mistake to treat God's will in a trivial fashion. The Scriptures say, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man sows, this he will also

reap." (Gal. 6:7). One day we will each stand before the judgment seat of Christ where we will be recompensed for the things we have done; good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10). Yes, God is love, and in Him there is eternal hope. But He will not be mocked.

Godliness - Profitable For All Things
1 Tim 4:8
By Jon W. Quinn

There are a few expressions in the Bible that are meant to arrest our attention. These are similar to expressions in our own vernacular such as "Listen up!" or "Hear what I'm sayin'?" Jesus would sometimes use "Verily verily" or "Truly, truly".

In the Revelation He used the phrase "He that has ears, let Him hear..." These statements meant that something very important was about to be said. Paul sometimes used the phrase: "It is a trustworthy statement" which means "You can take it to the bank" or "You can count on it."

Look with me at one such trustworthy statement:

8 for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

9 It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance.

10 For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers.

11 Prescribe and teach these things.

(1 Timothy 4:8-11).

The statement Paul is referring to is the one made in verse 8: "for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come."

Bodily Discipline Profits a Little

The body is temporary. Entropy takes its toll as the body wears out. It ultimately loses its capacity to grow and heal and replenish itself. But we can do something to delay these effects. We can exercise. We can become more conscious of what constitutes good nutrition and make wise application.

We can do things to increase lung capacity; improve our cardio-vascular system; strengthen our muscles; increase our endurance and enhance our mental alertness. We can perhaps slow the effects of the aging process, but we cannot stop it. To stop the effects of aging altogether would come closer to being "of great profit" but since we cannot do that, bodily discipline is said to be of only a "little profit".

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:16-18).

The body is temporary, no matter what we do. The inner man (spirit) is eternal. The loss of the body not a great loss when compared to eternal weight of glory. The greatest loss by far, is for the spirit to enter into eternity unprepared. The natural body will wear out; perish; die. Take good care of it and it may last longer, but will still finally die. The new spiritual body of the resurrection will never wear out, grow old, or die. (1 Corinthians 15:42-44).

Body: A Temple for God

Our bodies are wonderful gifts from God; intricate in design; we should be good stewards and this means to take good care of our bodies (Psalm 139:14). We are told that we should use our bodies to glorify God because our bodies are a temple of God; that He dwells in His faithful ones (1 Corinthians 6:19,20). We are told that Jesus dwells in us by faith (Ephesians 3:17).

So, taking care of our blessings and not squandering them is a good thing, and that includes taking care of our bodies. Godliness helps us live longer lives (Ephesians 6:4; 2,3).

Godliness Profitable For This Life

Like bodily discipline, godliness is also profitable for this life. God promises to give us the physical necessities if we arrange our priorities correctly.... Spiritual things first! Generally no conflict between good spiritual health and good physical health; as well as the prosperity that comes from good, honest living (Matthew 6:33).

But there are exceptions to this truism. For example, sometimes faith, because of persecution, has caused people to lose their good health, and even their physical lives (Matthew 10:28-33).

God causes "all things" to work together for our good. In context "all things" refers to the things God has done for us; giving His Son; His Word; His love: His grace ... everything God has done for us works together for our good if we love God (if we are godly) (Romans 8:28).

Godliness holds much greater value than material treasures, especially when accompanied by contentment (1 Timothy 6:6); Philippians 4:11-13). Think about the strength and power of being content in all circumstances, good or bad.

Godliness and Eternal Profit

But the thing that bodily discipline cannot do is prepare us for eternity. Ungodliness brings eternal ruin. There is no tomorrow in hell... no escape... utter ruin (Revelation 21:8). We reap eternally what we sow today; destruction or life... (Galatians 6:7,8).

But it does not have to end this way. Bodily exercise cannot change the outcome, but godliness can. Unlike physical exercise, the rewards of godliness never stop!

It is sometimes wondered, "Why are ungodly people sometimes so 'lucky' in life?" (Psalm 37:16-18). That doesn't seem fair! But don't envy the wicked nor their ways. Their gains are temporary; the gains of godliness are eternal. Peter describes it as a "never fading inheritance" (1 Peter 1:3-5)! As the hymn "Amazing Grace" suggests, when we've been there 10,000 years it will still be just as fresh and wonderful as the day it began! Now, honestly, what reward does the wicked receive in this life that compares to that?

To pamper the physical body and ignore the inner person would be to throw away the imperishable crown in order to have a crown which will last only briefly (1 Corinthians 9:25) . Many people are making that poor choice today. Do not let yourself be one of them; the crown of glory that Jesus holds for us in heaven is too precious to ignore Paul must have been a fan. He liked to use athletics as illustrations of discipleship. For example, as he neared his death, he compared his life to having run a race to victory (2 Timothy 4:7,8). I plan on one day receiving my eternal crown from the hand of my Lord. I hope to see you receive yours as well.

Solomon on Money

Proverbs

Part 3 of 3 - (see April and May issues for part 1 and 2)

By Ed Barnes

THIS IS OUR THIRD AND FINAL article on the subject of money. We have been consulting the sage advice given in the Old Testament book of Proverbs. In our first article we learned from the wisdom of Solomon concerning our THINKING about money, and the practice of BORROWING and LENDING money. Last time we looked at some problems we have in the area of SPENDING money as well as the necessity of SAVING money. Today we will conclude our study by consulting God's wisdom with regard to GIVING, ENTERPRISING (i.e. business practices), LOVING and MANAGING money.

GIVING

Giving as we should involves the two-fold responsibility of duty toward God and benevolence toward others. The Book of Proverbs addresses both areas. In Proverbs 3:9 the wise man instructs, "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of your crops. . ."

The Old Testament often speaks of tithing. The practice of giving a tenth of one's income or property as an offering to God was an ancient practice found among many nations of the ancient world. The practice extends into Hebrew history before the time of the Mosaic Law. The first recorded instance occurs in Genesis 14:17-20 with Abraham giving to Melchizedek a tithe of all the goods he had obtained in battle. The law of Moses prescribed tithing in some detail (Lev 27:30-32; Num 18:21-32; Deut 26:12-150). The

principle of giving of one's best was an important part of the Old Testament law concerning tithing. Proverbs 3:9 makes mention of the "firstfruits" of your crops, not the leftovers.

Giving to others was also commanded in the Old Law. Leviticus 19:9,10 instructs the Israelites to leave grain in their fields during harvest that the poor might gather the gleanings. Proverbs 14:21 says, ". . . blessed is he who is kind to the needy." Also in 3:27: "Do not withhold good from those who deserve it, when it is in your power to act," and in 22:9: "A generous man . . . shares his food with the poor."

A third principle of giving taught in Proverbs is that God will bless those who are benevolent. Proverbs 19:17 states: "He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and He will reward him for what he has done." Many other proverbs state the same truth that the making of money and the owning of property and material goods is not just for our own enjoyment. We must learn the virtue of sharing with God and others (see also Eph 4:28).

ENTERPRISING

The Lord has a lot to say to the business man (or woman) in the Book of Proverbs. For example, If you are in business with the public your dealings must be honest. "Differing weights and differing measures - the Lord detests them both" (20:10). Again, "A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a deadly snare" (21:6).

One must also be kind in business. "He who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth . . . comes to poverty" (22:16). There is much oppression of the poor in our society. State lottery's, gambling casinos and the like are a plague on the poor. Many in impoverished neighborhoods look to the lottery as their retirement program. Credit card companies, banks, and many high ticket product (autos, homes, etc) manufacturers lure the public into time payments which they cannot afford but foolishly take advantage of, causing many to go into debt and eventual bankruptcy. Yes, there are a lot of unscrupulous business practices that a Christian should have no part in, many of which are an accepted part of otherwise well established and legitimate businesses.

The Book of Proverbs also has something to say to the greedy individual who is obsessed with making money to the neglect of other, more important matters. Proverbs 15:16 states, "Better a little with the fear of the Lord than

great wealth with turmoil." Also, "Do not wear yourself out to get rich; have the wisdom to show restraint" (23:4).

LOVING

The Book of Proverbs speaks of many things that we should love, or at least be greatly concerned with -- money is not one of them. Righteousness is to be sought after:

"Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death" (11:4).

"Whoever trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will thrive like a green leaf" (11:28). Honest concern about the welfare of others rather than how much money is at stake in any given situation is also a matter addressed by the wise man: "Do not eat the food of a stingy man, do not crave his delicacies; for he is the kind of man who is always thinking about the cost. 'Eat and drink' he says to you, but his heart is not with you" (23:6-7). The principle of moderation in material things is an important virtue: ". . . Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread" (30:8). Finally, "a good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold" (22:1)

MANAGING

The last point in our discussion concerning Solomon's advise on the wise use of money is that we must all be wise managers of what God has given to us. We spoke earlier about the financial institutions in our land taking advantage of people's ignorance of the how the money game is played. Now is it time to issue a warning that it is our personal responsibility to learn the facts and take precautions to avoid being taken advantage of.

Note the instructions of Proverbs 5:7-10 as wisdom address us: "Listen then, my sons, listen to me; lest you give your best strength to others and your years to one who is cruel, lest strangers feast on your wealth, and your toil enrich another man's house."

Diligence is recommended in this area: "The sluggard craves and gets nothing but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied" (13:4). All of these divinely given instructions will lead us to responsible money handling habits and to the financial security that God gives as a blessing to those who follow his will in this area.

Keep Yourself Where God Will Keep You
Jude 24,25
Warren E. Berkley

“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present your faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever, Amen.” Jude 24,25

Who has the power? “God our Savior.” For me, there is the possibility of stumbling, I would even confess a probability. While I entertain no purpose or intent to stumble, I know I could and probably will. I may nourish a thought that is destructive. I may say something to someone in haste or anger. I may be tempted, and fall into sin in the use of my body. With me, I live with this awareness, this possibility of stumbling. “For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body,” (Jas. 3:2).

Thus I am not the power holder. God is. He is able to keep me from stumbling. He has that power and in His use of that power, I can be eventually presented “faultless, before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.” God has this power to save me. Proof of this is historical, documented by the cross of Christ.

My life as a Christian, therefore, doesn’t stand on my power, or my ability to correct my course and keep myself pure (though I must). God is my confidence. Christ is my Savior. Henceforth, deity is worthy of this praise: “To God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever, Amen.”

How Does This Work? There may be some temptation to think – this works through some sort of automatic process, where I remain passive. This approach would be like, you do nothing; you are acted upon; God acts upon you to keep you from stumbling, in such an overpowering way . . . You do nothing – God does it all. Entire theological systems have been built of that premise. He keeps you from stumbling, through some sort of automatic process, that excludes your will; that requires no response; it just happens.

May I take us to another passage that teaches the same truth revealed here in Jude 24.

2 Peter 1:5. Same subject – the power of God keeps us; protects us. Here is 2 Pet. 1:5 - Christians are “kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” We are “kept by the power of God,” but this is not an automatic process where we are passive. To enjoy this benefit we must be very much active; for it says, we are “kept by the power of God through faith...” God does the keeping – I must do the believing. And of course, the belief commended in the New Testament is never passive; never disobedient - - always active; always obedient (see Jas. 2:14-26).

So – back to the problem. The problem is the reality of stumbling. The solution is to believe, to depend upon God, who says He will keep us. This dependence is active trust:

As our faith continues...
As our faith grows...
As our faith responds to the
direction of God...
As our faith honors the Christ
who died for us...

We are kept by the power of God. “Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory . . .

Years ago – when pedestrian traffic was common – at busy intersections, traffic engineers would build what was called A Safety Zone. As you were walking across the intersection, if you had to stop to let oncoming traffic pass – there was a little area you can occupy called a “Safety Zone.” These zones would sometimes be built inside of heavy steel barricades or bars. The theory was, as long as you stayed in the safety zone, you would not be hit by the passing vehicles. In order to enjoy that safety, you had to stay in this zone!!

In Christ, God has provided something like – a safety zone. As long as we stay where we ought to be – maintaining the activity of our faith; growing; repenting of sin; walking in the light . . . As long as we stay where we ought

to be – in this place God, in His grace, has provided, we are kept by the power of God. But we must keep the faith; we must keep ourselves where we ought to be.

Keep yourselves in the love of God. (Jude 21)

O The Joy! God Is Our Savior
Titus 3:3-7
Jay Taylor

Restoring The Joy

Acts 8:39 contains a precise and uncluttered description of one who had just been rescued from sin and its consequences..."and he went on his way rejoicing." Joy is a natural companion of gratitude and the Ethiopian treasurer felt both. This sense of joy, however, does not end when one is raised from being baptized. Paul informed the churches of Galatia that the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, etc. (Gal. 5:22). Joy should be present in my life as a child of God.

What will help us remember the joy that we should have? The answer to the following three questions should help us here.

1. What were we?
2. What did God do?
3. What are we now as God's children?

WHAT WERE WE?

It is not a sanitized description. The Bible is straightforward about our condition before God as a result of the sins that we have committed. We were "alienated" and "enemies" because of our "evil works" (Colossians 1:21). Paul says that we were the "servants of sin" (Romans 6:20-21) and "dead through trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). A few verses later, Paul will sum up our status before God as: aliens...strangers...no hope...without God (Ephesians 2:11-12). It gets worse. Perhaps the most concise description is found in Titus 3:3. Paul says, "For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures,

living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another."

What a miserable description of what we once were because of the sins we committed! No one can claim joy by living this way before God. Shame and disgrace is all that we can declare. Our past attitudes and actions toward God and man ought to cause us to weep blinding tears.

The good news is that our shame and disgrace can be turned into joy! God entered the picture and two things appeared...kindness and love. While we were busy hating and being hateful, God was acting in the totally opposite manner.

WHAT GOD DID

Titus 3:3 describes what we once were and Titus 3:4 describes what God did. He acted! Paul says that the "kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared."

God has always been kind and His kindness has been demonstrated in various ways throughout the scripture. However, the ultimate expression of His kindness was made manifest through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:7). God has always loved His people, but the ultimate expression of His love was shown through Jesus Christ (Romans 5:8). The cross of Jesus Christ is what God's kindness and love is all about.

Here, Paul is careful to add that the kindness and love of God appeared not according to works done in righteousness which we did ourselves (Titus 3:5). We did absolutely nothing to bring about His kindness and love. This was all on God's part. It was according to His mercy that He saved us (Titus 3:5). This mercy is available through the "washing of regeneration" and "renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5) which is a reference to being born of the water and the Spirit (John 3:5).

Joy is emerging. It progresses throughout Titus 3:3-5. First is the dark picture of what we once were. Next, we see the joyful description of what God has done like a ray of sunlight bursting forth from the dark clouds. But the joy of what we are now is yet to come.

WHAT ARE WE NOW AS GOD'S CHILDREN?

Here is where our joy is realized. Through Jesus Christ, we have been "justified" and have become "heirs" according to the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:7). Here is joy...I am no longer an enemy of God...I am justified! Here is joy...I am no longer a stranger...I am an heir! The heir enjoys the blessings, privileges and fellowship of the Father. This is joy.

Joy begins when I realize what God has done for me. It continues when I respond in obedience to Him. Joy is produced when I follow the word of God. And joy continues past the grave! As a justified heir, I can look forward to spending a joyful eternity with God my Savior!

Christian friend ... go on your way rejoicing!

The Little Town of Bethlehem
Topic Page
By Jon W. Quinn

Fulfilled prophecy increases and validates our faith in the power of God. He makes things happen the way He declares they will, even in the most unlikely of circumstances. He will not be defeated in anything. He will do everything He has said

He will do, and when you read of the final hour and judgment, know that He will accomplish all. As pointed out in the Book of Job, "Were He to snatch away, who could restrain Him? Who could say to Him, 'What art Thou doing?' (Job 9:12).

Fulfilled prophecy also increases our respect for God's wisdom and knowledge, including His foreknowledge. How willing we should be to put our souls and eternal well being into His care. He knows what He is doing! (ISA 46:10)

"Declaring the end from the beginning And from ancient times things which have not been done, Saying, ' My purpose will be established, And I will accomplish all My good pleasure'" (Isaiah 46:10).

Also, when prophesy speaks of Jesus, fulfillment increases our appreciation of His love for us that led to His willingness to leave heaven and come to our world to become our Savior. The Lord said He cared

enough about us that He would send us a Redeemer who would love us enough to suffer for our guilt. The coming of Jesus declares unto us His love for us. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." (2 Corinthians 8:9). In every case, we are reminded of God's power and control, often above human comprehension (Isaiah 55:8-11).

The Man Caesar's Decree

All the world was commanded to be enrolled in a census. (Luke 2:1-3). Augustus, the Caesar who issued this decree, ruled the Roman Empire from 30 B.C. to 14 A.D. The decree required that each one return to their hometown and sign up so that Rome could collect taxes. Augustus does not know Joseph, Mary, the prophets or Jehovah. He was the first Roman emperor to claim the position of a god. He had no idea that his decree was a part of God's mechanism to fulfill prophecy and the promise of a Savior.

The few lines devoted to the telling of the journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem do not describe the rigorous nature of the trip. It was about 70 miles in length, mostly uphill. Mary is close to giving birth. Perhaps Joseph and Mary had a cart. It was about a one week trip each way.

This obscure couple would go from obscurity to fame. Certainly they had little idea that we, 20 centuries later and thousands of miles away, would know their names. But we do.

They both knew who the Child was because of the angelic messages they had each received (Matthew 1:18-25). If they recalled the prophecies (had they thought about Micah's prophecy concerning Bethlehem?) then they knew full well it was actually God, not Augustus, that was ultimately behind the decree.) Whether they knew or not, we do.

The Prophecy of God

There were many prophecies about the coming of the Messiah, including the circumstances of His birth (Isaiah 7:14; 9:6). In addition to Isaiah, the prophet Micah lived about 700 years before Christ and prophesied during the reigns of Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah of Judah. His business was to call the people to repentance. Since many reforms were

made under Hezekiah, probably most of the prophecy was made during the reigns of the first two.

Micah stressed the need for justice in the land and the putting away of immorality; and that these could only be successful when accompanied by a renewed

loyalty to God and spiritual revival. He warned that if they did not return to God, that their nation would be punished (it was) but still, there would be a final hope in the Messiah to come.

Micah pinpoints the location of the Messiah's birth which would take place seven centuries later. It would occur in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

Isaiah told that a child would be born and gave some unique circumstances so it could be recognized when it happened. Daniel told that it would happen during the days of the 4th empire from the one ruling in his day (That would make it the Roman Empire), and Micah says the birth will take place in Bethlehem.

Bethlehem, about 6 miles SW of Jerusalem, was merely a small village at this time. Jacob had buried his wife Rachel there. David, the second king of Israel was from there. Earlier, this is where Boaz and Ruth had made their home. So, the prophecy pinpointed this small village. The problem is that Joseph and Mary live nowhere near Bethlehem. They live in Nazareth. Perhaps no one on earth, except these two, were able to see the working of God in the Augustus' decree. Everyone no doubt grumbled at the inconvenience, except these two. They were privy to additional information!

The Word Made More Sure

"The Old Testament is the New Testament concealed." -attributed to Augustine (not to be confused with Augustus!) He was right about that - it well expresses the relationship between Old and New (2 Peter 1:19-21). Paul tells us that this is why familiarity with the Old Testament is still important for us living under the New (Romans 15:4). That which was written in "days past" gives patience, comfort and hope. How?

In it is the revealed mind and purpose of God (1 Corinthians 2:9-11). Its origin is of God and it equips us (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Consider how Micah's prophecy concerning Bethlehem does this.

Note the selection of a small, rather obscure village, as well as the selection of Joseph and Mary as the parents even though they live far to the north. So unlikely that Mary would give birth in Bethlehem! But God puts all these unlikely events together and that is precisely where Jesus is born! This is comforting because it tells me God is capable of doing what He intends to do; it gives patience and endurance because it shows how just because I cannot always observe God's workings and providence does not mean He's not there, and that He has our best interests at heart, and therefore my hope in Christ is reasonable (Colossians 1:27).

Bethlehem's Rising Star

The wise men followed the star to Jerusalem and inquired where the king was to be born. Herod did not know (Herod didn't care much about spiritual things) but some of his advisors knew (Matthew 2:1-8). It would occur in "the city of David" (Luke 2:4;11; see also 1 Samuel 16:1; 17:12) But David lived 900 years before and not

much had happened there since. Jesus would grow up in Galilee, but had been born in Bethlehem.

Caesar Augustus had no idea of the role he was playing in the story of redemption. Often that had been the case in history as God took difficult circumstances and worked His purpose. But you and I know. Joseph and Mary made that journey, and the Messiah came. He lives today for our hope. Do you believe in Him?

Plan of Salvation By Jon W. Quinn

Plan #1

Announced by the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to new believers in Christ who asked what they must do:

Acts 2:36-38

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:36-38).

Plan #2

On the back page of a tract, sinners were urged to pray this prayer to be saved. This prayer is not found in the Bible; nor were alien sinners commanded to pray for their forgiveness.

The Sinner's Prayer:

"O' Lord, I accept that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins. I now accept Him into my heart as Lord and Savior asking for your mercy and forgiveness in His name. Amen."

The editors of Expository Files are happy with plan #1 and thankful to the God of all grace for it. We cannot recommend Plan #2 at all, but will change our minds when this prayer can be shown to us in the Bible.

Final Page

Will You Love Me In December? Warren E. Berkley

Care giving responsibilities are learning experiences. For several years we've been taking care of my mother-in-law, who suffers with Alzheimer's. First, we cared for her in our home. Two years ago she needed a level of care that required her admission into a nursing home. We are there several times during the week, often daily. I see things that may be unpleasant but I'm learning valuable lessons.

Most nursing homes (since 2003) have paid “feeding assistants.” They may not be nurses or nurses aids, though they should be under professional supervision. A feeding assistant completes eight hours of state-approved training. The course deals with very basic things like feeding techniques, hydration, hygiene, emergency choking procedures, how to handle patients who have difficult swallowing, etc. The charge nurse may or may not oversee. The feeding assistants sit at a “feeding station,” surrounded by four to five patients, moving on swivel chair from patient to patient – feeding the residents who need help. It is a rather mechanical procedure; necessary but not best.

There is a man who comes to the nursing home every day at meal times to feed his wife, who cannot eat without assistance.

He knows his wife through many years of care. He is the most competent one to feed her, knowing exactly what she likes, the pace of her eating and the size of the bites. What’s more, he takes great delight in this task. He feeds her with quiet dignity, and perhaps an occasional sadness is felt as he remembers their younger years. He tends the wife of his youth with napkin, as she would do for him. All of this is done with such care and patience, it is tempting to stare with delight and admiration at this example of a husband’s long lasting love, “through sickness and in health.” His capacity to do this job was not learned. Unconditional love certifies him as best for the job.

It is not my purpose to imply criticism of the feeding assistants, editorialize about institutional care, or impose any rules on family members. I only wanted to say, the best caregivers are not trained in a course, but nurtured in real relationships over time. See more about this in Eph. 5:25-33. And consider this . . .

Will you love me in December as you do in May,
Will you love me in the good old fashioned way?
When my hair has all turned gray,
Will you kiss me then and say,
That you love me in December as you do in May?
~ James J. Walker