

How to Receive a Rich Welcome in Heaven



Lessons from the Lives of Eight Christian Presidents

By Pastor Denny Johnson



II Peter 1 makes an astounding claim found nowhere else in the Bible – that you can receive a *“rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”* (vs. 11) if you *“make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.”* (vs. 5-7)

In preaching through the book of II Peter, God led me to do a “mini-series” on these eight outstanding qualities that we are to add to our lives. I have illustrated these eight qualities with the lives of eight of our finest presidents, each of whom revered and honored God as they faithfully served their term as chief executive of our nation.

Early on, my mother stimulated a life-long interest in studying the lives of our presidents through giving me a memorial plate (on back cover) following the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. As a five-year-old, I could recite all the presidents in order along with the years of their service, something my proud parents had me do repeatedly at our family gas station, whether our amused customers were interested or not.

This booklet is dedicated to my mom, Genevieve “Gen” Johnson, who has instilled in me a love for the Lord, the Scriptures, and my country – a love that is as passionate today as ever.



Denny Johnson
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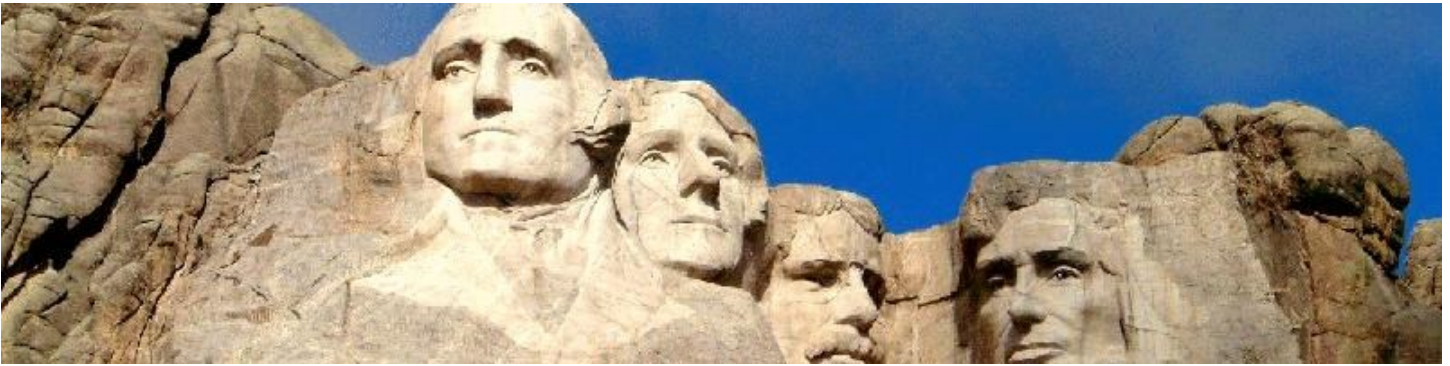
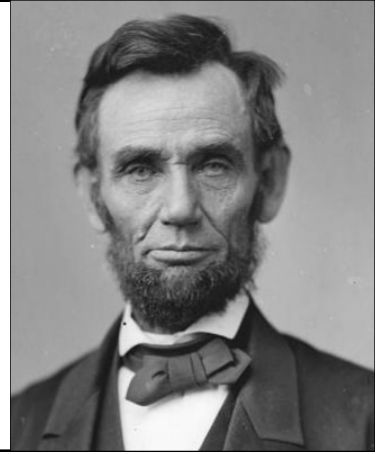


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The Foundation of Faith



President Abraham Lincoln (1861-1865) has been one of my heroes since I was knee high to a grasshopper. I had put him on such a pedestal that I was surprised to discover when I was older that Lincoln was quite a rascal in his early years.

Born into a devout Christian family, Abe kept God at arm's length for most of his life. In fact, when his parents and sister joined the Pigeon Creek Baptist Church in 1823, 15-year-old Abe refused to join. Even worse, he would mimic the preacher in front of his friends until his dad would shut him up. Always the jokester, one of Abe's favorite stories was about the preacher who had a lizard start crawling up his leg, and started stripping behind the pulpit.

When he first got into politics, he was accused of being an infidel. "Not true," said Lincoln – although he acknowledged he wasn't a member of a church, he said that he had never denied the Bible or spoken of religion disrespectfully. Clearly, Abe was choosing his words carefully. The truth was that his religious beliefs had a very low priority in his life.

So low, in fact, that his law partner, William Herndon, made it his life's mission after Abe was assassinated to prove that Lincoln was not a Christian. Herndon described him as having "strong passions" for women, though there is no proof he ever committed adultery, according to Christian author Marvin Olasky. So whom do we believe? And what is the real story? Was Lincoln a Christian, or wasn't he? The key to answering this question is having an accurate understanding of what the Bible teaches is genuine, saving faith.

In II Peter 1:5, the Bible says, "*For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness...*" If you want to "*make your calling and election sure*", as verse 10 says, if you want to "*never fall*" as verse 11 says, and if you want to "*receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom*" as verse 11 also says, you have to first start with genuine, saving faith. It's the foundation. You have to make sure you really possess this. As we are exploring whether Abraham Lincoln really possessed this faith, you can think about yourself and your family and your friends. Do I really have it? Do they have it? Did Lincoln have it? As we explore this question, I want you to understand that there are **three ingredients in genuine, saving faith**. The Reformers taught this (Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, and others), but more importantly, the Bible teaches this.

The first ingredient is knowing. The Reformers used the Latin word "notitia" for this, from which we get the English word "notice". When you print a notice, and put it in a public place, you are dispensing information and knowledge. You are saying, "Here is what you need to know about this."

Clearly, if you are going to possess genuine, saving faith, there are some things that you must know. What are those things? Well, the Scripture declares very specifically what these things are. I Corinthians 15:3-6 says, "*For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time...*"

Notice here what these things are that are of first importance. These are the essentials of the gospel. First, that Christ died for our sins. Second, that Christ was buried. Third, that Christ was raised from the dead on the third day, according to the Scriptures. Fourth, that Christ appeared, not just to Peter and his closest

friends (the disciples), but to over 500 people.

These are the essentials of the gospel that everyone must hear to possess genuine, saving faith. Abraham Lincoln heard all of these things as a young boy. In fact, he knew them so well, he could mimic the preacher. When he ran for Congress, his opponent was the great frontier evangelist Peter Cartwright. Lincoln began his career in the midst of the Second Great Awakening. This was the era of the great camp meetings and Methodist circuit-riding preachers. The fact is that Lincoln was inundated with the gospel. You'd have to have been a hermit to not know and understand the essentials of the gospel in the early 1800's on the American frontier. When the Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville visited the US during this time, he described Americans as the most religious people on the face of the earth.

That is our heritage, and it's a good one. If you grow up in America, the chances of you hearing an intelligent and winsome presentation of the gospel is very, very high. Knowing is the first ingredient.

The second ingredient in genuine, saving faith is agreeing. The Reformers used the Latin word "assensus" to describe this, from which we get the English word "assent", which means "to agree to something after thoughtful consideration." Romans 10:9-10 says, "*If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord', and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*"

If you possess genuine, saving faith, the second step along the way is that you will come to some conclusions about Jesus Christ and who he is. The first thing that you will agree with is that he is the Lord of the universe. You will agree that Christ is One with the Father, a co-Creator of heaven and earth. And you will also come to agree that Jesus Christ really died on a cross, and that he really rose from the dead, and lives today, in triumph and glory.

For Lincoln, it was a long journey coming to that conclusion. Throughout his adult life prior to the time that he was elected President, Lincoln seemed to wrestle with the claims of Jesus Christ. He did this when he was challenged by Cartwright in his run for Congress. For awhile, Lincoln's family attended the First Presbyterian Church in Springfield, Illinois, and the pastor there challenged William Hendon's claims that Lincoln was an infidel, an unbeliever. Pastor Jim Smith said that he personally presented to Lincoln arguments for the inspiration and authority of the Bible, and Lincoln gave a "most patient and searching investigation". And Lincoln concluded that the Scriptures were inspired.

But clearly he was still struggling, especially when his son Willie died about a year after they moved to the White House. A pastor from New York, Dr. Francis Vinton, stopped to visit Lincoln about two weeks after Willie died, and he said to him, "Your son is alive, in Paradise. Do you remember that passage in the Gospels: 'God is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live unto him'"?

Lincoln replied, "Alive! *Alive!* Surely you mock me."

"No, sir, believe me," Vinton said, "it is a most comforting doctrine of the church, founded upon the words of Christ himself."

The light was coming on for Lincoln, for three separate pastors told a similar story after he was assassinated. All three agreed that Lincoln stated something along these lines, "When I left my home for Washington, I was not then a Christian, though I desired the prayers of God's people; when my little son died – the heaviest affliction of my life – I was not a Christian, though I deeply felt the need of grace and comfort. But when I walked among the graves of the thousands who at Gettysburg had been swept into eternity, I resolved to give my heart to God; and since then I do love Jesus!"

What changed Lincoln's heart? He wrestled with the gravity and finality of death, and that all hit home to him in a very personal way when his son Willie died. Within a year or so of that happening, he had made the journey from darkness to light. Lincoln agreed (he assented) to the accounts of the crucifixion and resurrection. He began to believe in his heart that they were real.



Lincoln's son, Willie

This brings us to the third ingredient in genuine, saving faith - experiencing. The Reformers used the Latin word “fiducia” to describe this, from which we get the English word “fiduciary”. It’s often used as a banking term. It means to be held or founded in trust or confidence. If you have trust or confidence in something, it is by definition a deeply personal and experiential matter. It is a heart matter. It is a personal investment.

That’s the kind of step we must take to possess genuine, saving faith. After all, the demons know about God, and they agree that he is all-powerful and all-knowing. James 2:19 says, “*You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder.*” Knowing is not enough. The demons know. Agreeing is not enough. The demons agree that God is who he says he is. Those two steps are not enough. What’s lacking is experience. The demons don’t know God in that way.

Have you experienced the living Christ? Have you experienced the Christ who died for you and rose from the dead for you, and appeared alive to over 500 witnesses? Have you experienced him?

I think William Herndon, Lincoln’s law partner, was absolutely right that Lincoln was a skeptic until he moved to the White House. While Lincoln wrestled with the truth, by his own admission, he never really bought it. But when his son Willie died, he was rocked. His worldview wasn’t sufficient for this crisis. And when he walked among the graves at Gettysburg, he was simply overwhelmed by the carnage. Some 50,000 had died in battle in a three-day period of time. America had never seen that kind of devastation before or since.

Lincoln’s defenses against the gospel were teetering. His hard heart was melted. He surrendered to the truth - mind, heart, and soul. The proof is in the pudding, as they always say. His wife, Mary, noted the change. Even biographers, such as Carl Sandburg, observed that Lincoln was a different man as the war dragged on.

The circumstances surrounding his death are a powerful testimony to his change of heart. During his final years in Washington, he attended the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church led by Pastor Phinias Gurley. Even though it was the custom to sit in the pews during prayer, Lincoln stood. When someone asked him why, he said,

“When my generals visit the White House, they stand when their commander-in-chief enters the Oval Office. Isn’t it proper, then, that I stand for my commander-in-chief?”

Even more amazing is that Lincoln was planning on making a public profession of faith and joining the church on Easter Sunday, April 17, 1865. On Monday, April 11, he shared with several people in the White House a dream about his own death. On Maundy Thursday, April 14, John Wilkes Booth shot the president in the head at Ford’s Theater. He was literally shot in mid-sentence as he confided in Mary that he wanted to go on a trip to Jerusalem. He died the next day, April 15, Good Friday, following in the footsteps of his Savior. The blacks triumphantly proclaimed, “He died to set us free.”

Lincoln never made it to Jerusalem, but he did make it to the New Jerusalem. The facts are clear. If genuine, saving faith consists of knowing, agreeing, and experiencing, Abraham Lincoln possessed genuine, saving faith. How about you?



Gettysburg National Cemetery today

The Value of Virtue



President Teddy Roosevelt (1901-1909) has always been one of my favorite presidents. Ever since I saw him on Mount Rushmore as a little boy, I have wanted to learn more about Teddy. Born in 1858, his father, Theodore, Sr., was a prosperous Christian businessman. His dad taught Sunday School, distributed evangelical tracts, and founded an adoption agency to help orphaned and abandoned kids find a good home. Every Sunday evening, his dad would discuss the morning sermon with Teddy, who learned to take careful notes and memorize the preacher's main points. As an adult, Teddy had an extraordinary knowledge of the Bible, and could quote long passages word for word.

When his dad died at age 46, Teddy was devastated. In his diary, Teddy wrote, "It is lovely to think of our meeting in heaven. Nothing but my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ could have carried me through this, my terrible time of trouble and sorrow." He also wrote about asking God's help to keep a vow he had made to his dad – to abstain from sexual intercourse until married. This is a vow he kept until he married his sweetheart, Alice, at age 22, after she had turned him down repeatedly.

The next year, Teddy ran for the New York State Legislature and won. Amazingly, a year after that, he became the minority leader. Constantly quoting the Bible, his critics proclaimed, "Mr. Roosevelt keeps a pulpit concealed on his person." The press called him "The Cyclone Assemblyman" because of his fast pace. Teddy was off to a great start in what would be a very memorable life.

I can't think of a believing president who better embodies the second attribute of a faithful Christian life. In II Peter 1:5, we are told, "*Make every effort to add to your faith goodness.*" Sometimes this word 'goodness' is translated 'moral excellence' or 'virtue'. The word in the original Greek (the language the New Testament was written in) is used only five times in the New Testament. It's a word that is used of a land that accomplishes its purpose by producing crops.

In the same way, Teddy Roosevelt wasn't satisfied just to be a man of faith in Jesus Christ. He wanted to do something with his faith. He was a man of action. Teddy loved the book of James in the Bible, especially James 2:17, which says, "*Faith, by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.*"

This dovetails nicely with II Peter 1:10-11, which says, "*Be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things [adding goodness to your faith, etc.], you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom.*" Do you want to make your calling and election sure? Do you want to receive a rich welcome into heaven? Then add goodness or virtue to your faith. **How we do this can be described in three ways.**

First, if you have virtue, you will use your finest quality to the glory of God. One of the five uses of the Greek word for virtue is found in II Peter 1:3, where God is described as "*him who called us by his own glory and goodness.*" The Greek word for virtue is actually translated as "goodness" in this verse. Goodness is God's finest quality. He is always good. He always wants our best, even when he disciplines and punishes.

The finest quality of an ox is its strength. With a horse, it's his speed. With an eagle, it's his grace. In my own family, I would describe my wife's finest quality as friendship, as she is a fun-loving, lighthearted

companion. For my daughter Bethany, it's compassion, a heart for the wounded and hurting. For my daughter Anna, it's charm, a winsome personality. For my daughter Carrie, it's determination, an iron will. For my daughter Kelly, it's conscientiousness, a desire to do things right. For Theodore Roosevelt, all of his biographers talk about his boundless energy – that's why reporters called him "The Cyclone Assemblyman". Until the day he died, at 60 years of age, Teddy lived life to the fullest. He never did anything half-heartedly. What an inspiration he is to us! Think about your finest quality. Are you willing to use that finest quality for the glory of God, as Teddy did?

The second way the Bible describes virtue is that a virtuous person will strive for excellence.

I Peter 2:9 also contains one of the five uses of this word in the New Testament. *"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises [or virtues] of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."* God's virtues are everything that is praiseworthy about him. If you are living a virtuous life, you will strive to live a life that is praiseworthy – a life of excellence in everything you do.

That's how Teddy lived. He adored his parents, especially his dad, and he wanted to be the best son he could be. He was head over heels in love with his wife, and he set out to be the best husband he could be. In fact, when his first wife died after childbirth, Teddy was devastated, so he took a trip to the Badlands of North



Teddy and his family

Dakota and spent a lot of time working on a ranch and hunting. There he grieved and healed, and when he moved back permanently, he married his good friend Edith Carow, and had five more children with her. He absolutely adored them. He called them his blessed bunnies, and by all accounts, he was a great dad, even playing games with the kids in the White House.

When Teddy was a young man growing up, he was a very sickly child and had to be home-schooled. So what did he do? He did calisthenics like a madman, and took up boxing in college. He wanted to do his best whatever he did – at home, at work, or at play. He gave it his all.

Do you know why some of the great cathedrals are still standing in Europe? It's because they were built by workmen who were giving their best to God. Every brick that was laid was 'just right', and if it wasn't 'just right', they would do it again and again and again, until they got it 'just right'. Can we learn something from them? Does this inspire you to do your best?

Let's move now to the third way the Bible describes virtue. When you are living a virtuous life, you will focus on the positive. Philippians 4:8 says, *"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent [virtuous] or praiseworthy – think about such things."*

God wants our minds to rest on what is virtuous and praiseworthy – at home, at church, at leisure, in the neighborhood, in the community, and with our friends. Wherever you are, dwell on the positive. When Teddy's dad died, he meditated on heaven. When his first wife died, he went out West and did physical labor to work off his grief. When Teddy was tempted by lust, he remembered the vow he made to his dad. When he saw problems, he saw opportunities to make a difference. Teddy continually challenged men to take responsibility for their actions. He railed against rape, pornography, domestic abuse, abandonment of families, and abortion. He pointed the finger first at men. Teddy challenged men to fight the "wild beast" inside of us. He said to men, "Fear the Lord and walk in his ways."

One of my favorite stories about Teddy Roosevelt is when he got shot in the chest on his way to a campaign speech in the 1912 election. Coughing and putting a hand to his mouth to see if there was any blood, he saw no red and decided the bullet had not hit a lung. He then calmly walked to the stage, raised his hand to silence the crowd, and announced he had just been shot. He even held up his metal eyeglasses case and his folded manuscript that had slowed down the bullet on its way to his chest and had probably kept from killing him. He then went on to deliver a stem-winder of a campaign speech, and only after the speech was over did he head to the hospital.

Yes, Teddy Roosevelt was one of a kind. When he led up the charge up San Juan Hill during the Spanish-American war, news reports said he was a hundred feet in the lead (with five other soldiers) and yelling for the rest of men to catch up. When his horse was shot out from under him, he went on by foot until he reached the top.

If you wish to add virtue to our faith, you need to follow in Teddy's footsteps by first, using your finest quality for the glory of God. Second, you need to strive for excellence in everything you do. Third, you need to focus on the positive – things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, and praiseworthy.

Ironically, Teddy Roosevelt did these things throughout his life, but toward the end of his life he had some stumbles that have left us with some degree of question as to his spiritual status. In his older years, he spoke of death as "going down into darkness". He spoke about his eternal status as something "we cannot with certainty tell". On one occasion he said, "Death is always and under all circumstances a tragedy." It is because of statements like these that Christian historian Daniel Mount expressed some doubt about whether Teddy Roosevelt really possessed genuine saving faith. I surely hope so, because I want to meet him in heaven, having admired him from a distance for many years.

Pastor Chuck Swindoll is one of many who have been inspired by Teddy's life. Several years ago, Chuck was going through a very difficult time in a church he was pastoring. He was under heavy criticism and deeply discouraged. After this had dragged on for a lengthy period of time, one day his wife gave him a gift. It was a beautiful decoupage plaque, with a hand-lettered statement by none other than President Teddy Roosevelt. It was from a speech he made before the Hamilton Club in Chicago shortly before he was selected to run as vice president with President William McKinley. During this speech, Teddy said these words:

"It's not the critic that counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, and comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; who does actually try to do the deed; who knows the great enthusiasm, the great devotion and spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly. Far better it is to dare mighty things, to win glorious triumphs even though checkered by failure, than to rank with those poor spirits who neither enjoy nor suffer much because they live in the gray twilight that knows neither victory nor defeat."

I can't think of a better summary of the life of Teddy Roosevelt. How about you? Are you striving to be all that God created you to be? Are you adding virtue to your faith?



Teddy leading the charge up San Juan Hill

The Necessity of Knowledge



James A. Garfield was our 20th president (1881), and the second to be assassinated. Nobody knows what kind of president he would have been because he was shot only four months after taking office. We can surmise that he would have been outstanding because of his distinguished career before the presidency. He was a professor, a college president, a U.S. congressman for twelve years, and a Civil War general, the youngest man to ever be promoted to the rank of general. He was also a preacher, the only preacher to ever serve as president. Biographers describe him as “big, athletic, handsome, . . . and bald.” I like that.

He read widely, spoke and wrote well, and composed poetry. He occasionally would entertain friends by writing Greek with one hand while, at the same time, writing Latin with the other. He not only was a Christian, but an evangelist as well, leading forty people to Christ during one two-week revival in 1857.

Garfield was born in 1831, the last president to be born in a log cabin. His parents converted to Christ and joined a Disciples of Christ church when Garfield was only two years old. A few months later, his dad died. But his mother, a devout Christian, impressed upon her children the teachings of the Scriptures. When 18 years old, James went forward at a camp meeting and gave his heart to Christ. The next day he was baptized and he wrote in his diary, “Today I was buried with Christ in baptism and arose to walk in newness of life.”

From then until he died, he pursued knowing God with all his heart. As I have studied his life, I can’t think of a president who better embodies the teaching of II Peter 1:5 to “*Make every effort to add to your faith goodness, and to goodness, knowledge.*” James Garfield made every effort to add knowledge to his life. And praise God, because of that he made his “*calling and election sure*” as it says in II Peter 1:10. And we can be assured that he received a “*rich welcome into the eternal kingdom*”. If this is your desire, learn from the example of Mr. Garfield. As you study life, notice how he took **five steps in adding knowledge** to his daily walk with Christ.

Step one in adding knowledge: Investigate. When you study the word “knowledge” (the Greek word is *genosko*), the first way in which it is used is to investigate. If you want to know something, you start by investigating. Let me give you an example of how this word is used in the Bible to mean “investigate”.

In Matthew 16:2-3, Jesus told the Pharisees, “*When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red’, and in the morning, ‘Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast’. You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky.*” In other words, you investigate how to interpret the appearance of the sky. In fact, if you are to know anything, you have to investigate. This is especially true when it comes to the things of God.

James Garfield was torn between a career in politics or the ministry. But either way, he said in 1859, he intended to pursue a “course of study” of the Scriptures – he called it a “discipline and cultivation of the mind”. No matter what he did vocationally, he knew this would bless his life, and make him a blessing to others. The same is true with us. Knowing God starts with investigating. Dig into the Scriptures and learn!

Step two in adding knowledge to your life: Perceive. Perceiving is meditating and reflecting and drawing some conclusions about what you investigate. Let me give you an example of how this is used in the Bible. Jesus said in John 13:34, 35, *“Love one another...by this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”* Through loving one another, others will perceive that we are followers of the Lord.



Garfield as Civil War General

Knowledge, as defined by the Bible, is more than just investigating. It involves meditating and reflecting and drawing some conclusions about the information and data that you collect. James Garfield did this throughout his life. He was born with an inquisitive mind, and he was fascinated by everything. Raised in the Disciples of Christ denomination (a pacifist group) and attending Williams College, a Calvinistic college (which taught that there was a ‘just war’), Garfield searched the Scriptures as to whether to join the Union army. Finally concluding that God wished him to do so, he eventually rose to the rank of general. At the same time, his thinking about slavery developed the more he studied the Scriptures and prayed. By the end of the war he stated, *“The spirit of slavery is the soul of the rebellion and the incarnate devil.”*

When revival came to Williams College where he was attending, he wrestled with what was from God and what were the excesses that were of human or demonic origin. Yet he spoke against bringing discord because of his heart for the lost, and their need for a Savior. Only rarely did his curiosity get the best of him. For instance, a year after he was saved, the spiritualists came to town, and he found himself trying to contact his dead father. Even though he later renounced this activity, this issue demonstrates a common problem for those who want to know about everything. The Bible says in Romans 16:19 (NKJV), *“I want you to be wise as to what is good, and simple concerning evil.”* We are to be simple concerning evil.

We don’t need to become experts on what is evil. Just know what it is and stay away from it. Once in a while, Garfield had a hard time doing this, but as time went on he got stronger in the Lord.

Step three in adding knowledge to our lives: Distinguish. We need to weigh competing truth claims and learn to discern truth from error. I Corinthians 14:7 speaks of distinguishing between musical sounds, *“In the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the flute or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes?”* In the same way that we distinguish sounds, we are to distinguish what is from God, and what is not from God.

Garfield did this throughout his life. In fact, he was an outstanding debater. He publically debated the question of whether war is justifiable for the Christian. He argued the affirmative – that Christians should fight in a just war even though he wasn’t raised in this heritage. After his encounter with the spiritualists, he publically debated the issue of whether we can communicate with the dead. On another occasion, he debated the authority of the Bible, arguing for the inerrancy of Scripture. He also publically debated supporters of evolution, staunchly defending a literal interpretation of the creation accounts in Genesis 1-2.

One of the things about James Garfield is that he was an intelligent defender of the faith because he knew the difference between truth and error. He knew what he believed and he knew why he believed it and he could defend this before friend and foe. In this way, he became a tremendous champion for Christ. Imagine the impact he had as a general in the Union army, as a veteran congressman, and then as president. Do you know what you believe and why? Can you defend your beliefs when challenged?

Step four in gaining knowledge: Apply. Apply it to your life. In other words, live out what you profess to believe. Don't let there be any distance between your doctrine and your lifestyle. Practice what you preach. In Acts 22:14-15, a believer named Ananias said to the Apostle Paul, "*The God of our fathers has chosen you to know his will...you will be his witness to all of what you have seen and heard.*" This clearly goes beyond accumulating information to the next step of applying God's will. Paul wasn't just to know about God's will – he was to apply it to his life.

When 25 years old, Garfield wrote, "This work (of the Christian) will include all his duties, to God and his fellow men, which grow out of his relations to them. As a prerequisite to this work, one must find his proper sphere in life, and fill that station to which he is best adapted." Garfield wasn't just a politician who happened to be a Christian. He was a Christian who happened to be in politics.

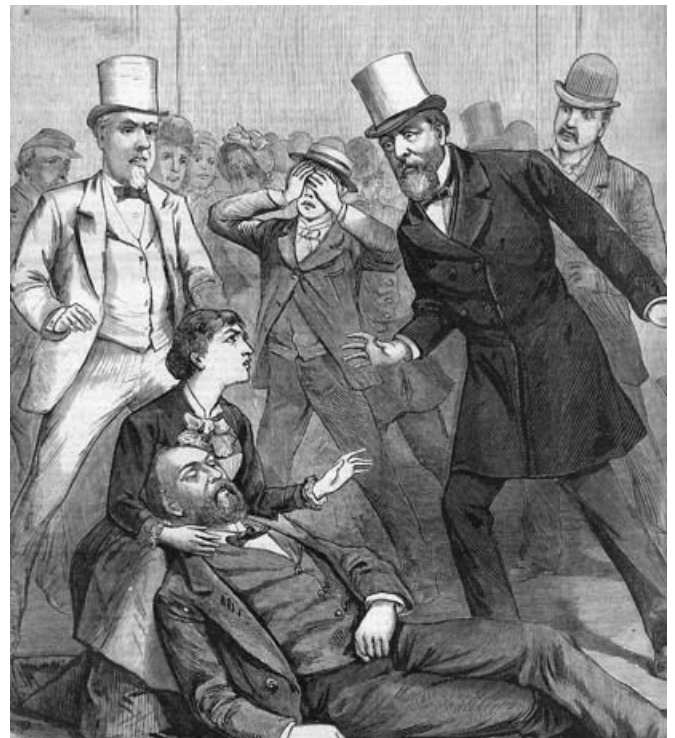
Step five in adding knowledge to our lives: Experience. In the Bible, to know means to know personally by experience. The Greek word for know goes way beyond the English word which is focused on accumulating information, which we often call 'book learning'. Let me give you an example of this usage in the Bible. In I Corinthians 13:12, the Bible compares our present life right now with our future life in heaven – it says, "*Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face, now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*" On this earth, we who are believers can know God, but it is in a veiled sort of way. When we are in heaven, we shall know him much, much more fully – we will see him face to face. We will experience him in a deep, personal, intimate way.

James Garfield knew God this way. When he first got into politics, someone asked him if political honor was the highest honor. The person who asked him, a leader in his church, said this about how he answered: "The truth, which he so well understood, and the Lord, whom he so devotedly loved, had superior claims upon him, which no earthly temptation must lead him to compromise."

Even after he was in Congress, Garfield continued to preach often at the National City Christian Church in Washington D.C. He was never ashamed of the Gospel or our Savior. In fact, he first met his assassin in church. Unknown to Garfield, Charles Guiteau, upset about not getting a government job, started stalking the president and followed him to church. During the sermon he rudely interrupted the pastor, and Garfield noted this in his diary. What Garfield didn't know was that Guiteau continued to follow him and shot him only a couple weeks later.

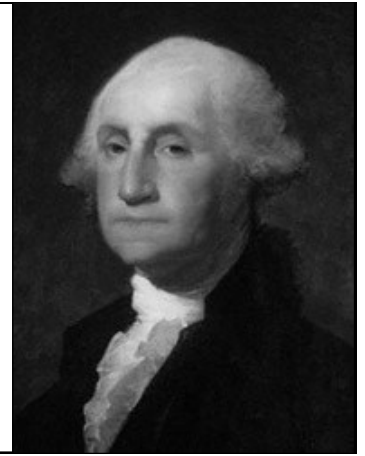
Garfield's reputation as a believer was so widely known that his assassin is quoted as saying, "I presume the president is a Christian and that he will be happier in Paradise than here." James Garfield hung on for eighty days after being shot. X-rays and modern antiseptics would have saved him, but infection set in. A bullet had lodged in his back and surgeons couldn't locate it. On September 19, 1881, the ruler of America passed into the presence of the ruler of the universe.

What a legacy he left! He directly led dozens of people to the Lord. Millions of others were inspired by his clear and consistent testimony of saving faith in Jesus Christ. How about you today? Are you pursuing knowledge like James Garfield pursued knowledge? Are you investigating the truth? Not just the truth of Scripture, but are you investigating the one who is called, "*The way, the truth, and the life*"?



Garfield after being shot

The Significance of Self Control



When I was searching for a president who best epitomized the quality of self-control, there is one president who stands in a class by himself. It's our first president, George Washington (1789-1797).

Few of Washington's neighbors would have seen him as a candidate for sainthood in his early years. He faced the same temptations that all young men faced – in fact, some of his friends called him “the stallion of the Potomac”. Perhaps providentially, his first overtures to the fairer sex were resisted – by Frances Alexander when he was sixteen, and then by Betsy Fauntleroy, to whom he proposed marriage when he was 20. He was also rejected by Mary Eliza Philipse. The one he liked the most, Sally Fairfax, was already married, but to his credit, he respected her wedding ring enough to back off. Instead he courted the recently widowed Martha Custis, five feet tall compared with his 6'2”, with biographers describing Martha as “plump”. Together they lived happily 41 years until death did them part.

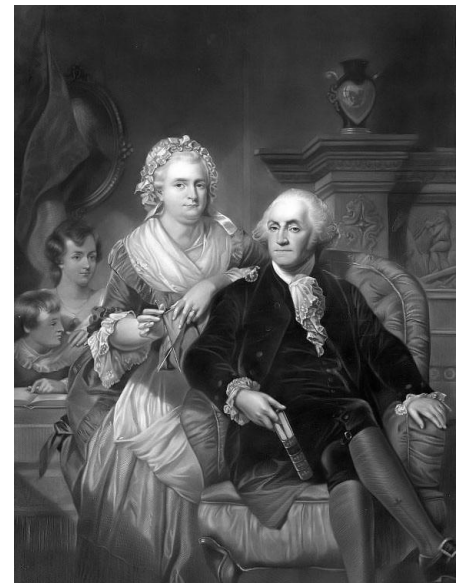
Though Martha had two children from her first marriage, she would have none with George. Other prominent men who had no children often traded in their wives for ones they thought could do better, but not George. Nor did Washington follow the British practice of taking mistresses when his wife reached middle age. Although he would have had many opportunities, George wore around his neck a miniature portrait of his wife. He wrote to her, “I retain an unalterable affection for you which neither time nor distance can change.”

The self-control he exercised in this area of his life permeated every other aspect of his life. Just as George was faithful to Martha, so was he also faithful to his country, and, as far as we know, to his God. George Washington personifies the teaching of II Peter 1:5-6, which it says, “*Make every effort to add to your faith goodness, and to goodness, knowledge, and to knowledge, self-control.*”

Why is self-control so significant for the Christian who wants to grow strong in his faith? Because II Peter 1:10 says that it will make our “*calling and election sure*” as believers. Verse 11 adds that it will also assure us that we will receive a “*rich welcome into the eternal kingdom*”. Do you want receive a rich welcome into heaven? Then add to your faith goodness, and add to your goodness, knowledge, and add to your knowledge, self-control.

The Greek word for self-control (*egkrateia*) is used ten times in the New Testament. It literally means “to hold oneself in”, and is commonly used of athletes who sought to be self-disciplined as they trained their bodies. It means to have power over oneself, and although it is most often used with respect to sexual purity, it also includes having power over food, wine, and other human cravings.

When George Washington died, a printed cotton kerchief sold in shops presenting a deathbed scene and describing Washington as dying like a Christian. The kerchief writer listed Washington's virtues as the following: “Self-command and self-denial, moderate in prosperity, undaunted amid danger, unbroken by adversity, unperverted by great and general applause.” These **four virtues** are ones we should emulate as they embody the meaning of self-control.



George & Martha

First, he was uncorrupted in prosperity. He controlled himself and disciplined himself in times of prosperity. Interestingly, this often was not true of the Israelite people in the Bible. In fact, in Deuteronomy 31:20, God describes the people of Israel like this, *“When I have brought them into the land flowing with milk and honey...when they eat their fill and thrive, they will turn to other gods.”*

Can you identify with this? Oh, how easy it is to let prosperity cause us to get lazy. That’s what happened to the British at the time of the Revolution. In contrast to Washington, the British commanders were immoral, lazy, and undisciplined. General Howe, based in New York, had his mistress, as did his commander back in England, John Montagu, the Earl of Sandwich, who was away gambling so often that his aids would bring him a hunk of meat between two slices of bread to snack on. Thus, the birth of what we know as the ‘sandwich’. Montagu was in charge of the war at sea while the officer in charge of the land war, Lord Germain, was a homosexual who had his cronies placed in high places.

I could go on and on because the British High Command was a rat’s nest. In contrast, Washington forbid what he called, “the foolish and wicked practice of profane cursing and swearing.” He said, “We can have little hope of the blessing of heaven if we insult it by our impiety and folly.” He appointed chaplains and commanded his soldiers to “attend carefully upon religious exercises.” Washington had all of his commanders crack down on “swearing, all manner of gaming, as well as every other vice and immorality among officers and soldiers under his command.” He wanted all of his men to know that their cause was a holy cause!

This discipline repeatedly scored victories for the outnumbered Americans – at Saratoga, at the Delaware River, at Trenton, and finally at Yorktown. When he won the final victory, Washington immediately noted “the surprising and particular interposition of Providence in our favor”. What an example for all of us – to be disciplined in times of prosperity.

Second, he was undaunted in danger. He controlled himself and his emotions when the heat was on, and the pressure was mounting. Oh, how easy it is to just lose it in times of stress. That’s why the Lord challenged Joshua as he prepared to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land, *“Be strong and courageous, for you will bring the Israelites into the land I promised them on oath, and I myself will be with you.” Deuteronomy 31:23.*

It takes courage to be a follower of the Lord. We need to have courage, which takes high levels of self-control. George Washington displayed as a young man during the French and Indian War, when he was fighting on the British side with General Braddock. When 1500 British soldiers were ambushed by Indians, the British regulars broke rank and ran. Not Washington. Two horses were shot from under him and four bullets riddled his uniform, but he remained uninjured. And he organized a withdrawal of the stunned survivors. How about you? When the pressure is on you, what is your first impulse? II Timothy 4:5 says, *“Keep your head in all situations, endure hardship.”* This is easy to say, but so much harder to do.

The third virtue is that he was unbroken by adversity. Washington was in control of himself and his emotions in times of great hardship. He was disciplined, and trained himself to live an ordered life.

The Israelites had their trials and tribulations just like Washington did, and yet the Lord was with them the whole time. Deuteronomy 29:5,6 says, *“During the forty years that I led you through the desert, your clothes did not wear out, nor did the sandals on your feet....I did this so that you might know that I am the Lord your God.”*



Washington praying at Valley Forge

George Washington had his desert experiences as well. During the four years after the Declaration of Independence, there were some deep trials. At Valley Forge during the harsh winter of 1777-78, few soldiers had coats, half were without blankets, and more than a third were without shoes. One in four died that winter. What is often forgotten is that two winters later, in 1779-80, the Continental Army even suffered more. For several days they were down to 1/8th rations. No money to pay the troops. Back home, their families suffered as well.

And yet, Washington would not give up. If you've ever led a group or organization when things are going downhill, you know how hard it is to keep the morale up. And yet, Washington continued to rally his troops, despite all setbacks. Amazingly, when he sent them home for furlough, to harvest their crops, they came back. Why? It was more than the cause itself. They came back for Washington, a man who still believed in the cause even when their own faith wavered.

In my office I have a picture of George Washington kneeling in the snow and praying at Valley Forge. I have the picture there for a reason. Whenever I face adversity and don't know where to turn, good old George reminds me what to do! Take it to the Lord! Washington kept telling his men that they would "ultimately succeed". And you know what? They did. A beleaguered, outnumbered, poorly equipped, poorly trained, rag-tag army defeated the most powerful army on the face of the earth at that time. How did they do it? They outlasted the British. How did they outlast them? We had Washington, and they didn't.

Finally, the fourth virtue that Washington possessed is that he was unperverted by applause. Sadly, this has not always been the case with very successful men. Take King Solomon in the Bible. The wisest man who ever lived, blessed with incomparable riches, in his early years, he lived for the Lord. But in his later years, his stunning successes started going to his head. I Kings 11:4 says, *"As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord his God."*

George Washington's stunning success at Yorktown, where the British surrendered, turned a lot of heads. One nod from him and his army would have made him King George I of America. Washington refused, emphasizing the role of statesmen who follow in the footsteps of "the Divine Author of our blessed Religion". Ironically, his modesty only magnified the esteem of the people until the time when the Constitution was written. In the minds of everyone, Washington was tailor-made to be the first president. Amazingly, he was the only one to ever be elected by a unanimous ballot, highly unusual to say the least.



The British surrender at Yorktown

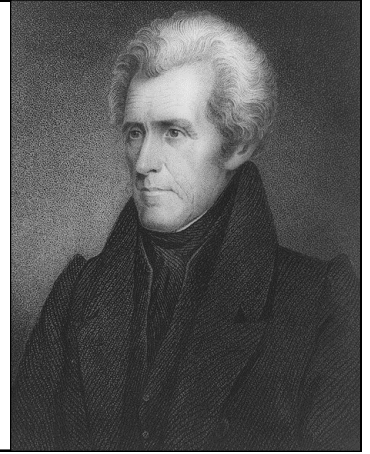
The New Hampshire Recorder said this of Washington, "He's one in Heaven's high renown; He's deify'd, exalt him high, he's next unto the Trinity. My language fails to tell his worth, unless in heaven he is the fourth." Can you imagine that? Reporters were calling him the fourth member of the Trinity. If that doesn't puff you up, I don't know what would. But amazingly, the opposite seemed to happen with Washington.

Maybe because he knew he could never live up to the hype, he started attending worship services regularly. And in every speech he made, he reminded his people of their complete dependence on God. After all, it was Washington who took his oath of office and then added the words, "So help me God". And it was Washington who spent fully one-third of his inaugural address in a discussion of God's Providence and in "fervent supplications to that Almighty Being who rules over the universe."

Was Washington a true believer? Volumes have been written about this and we cannot be dogmatic. But the facts point to the affirmative. In 1900, a prayer book was discovered in an old trunk that was attributed to Washington. If this is genuine, there is no doubt that he was saved, for he clearly stated that he was trusting in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ for his sins. The Smithsonian Institution has questioned the authenticity of this work. Even without this, his life and writings point to a sincere dependence upon the Lord and a deeply felt faith in him. The fact that he freed his slaves in his will points to a merciful and pure heart.

Undoubtedly, the greatest legacy he leaves is his example in self-control. Whether he faced prosperity or danger or adversity or applause, he kept a level head. Humility is confidence properly placed. By that definition, Washington was a most humble man, for his confidence was in the Lord, and not in himself. How about you? Are you pursuing self-control?

The Power of Perseverance



Andrew Jackson, our seventh president (1829-1837), the guy on a twenty-dollar bill, fought a lifelong battle with his temper. His father died a few days before he was born, so he learned early to fight his own battles. In school, he got into so many brawls that the teachers didn't know what to do with him. At fourteen, he joined the Revolutionary Army, and promptly got captured by the British. When he mouthed off to a British officer who wanted him to clean his boots, he narrowly escaped with his life. This happened a few more times when he fought duels to defend the honor of his wife. Rachel's previous husband had abandoned her and told her he obtained a divorce. Two years after Jackson married her, they found out that the papers weren't finalized until after they married. So technically she was an adulteress, a fact his enemies never let him forget.

During one duel with future senator Thomas Hart Benton and his brother Jesse, Jackson was left with a bullet wound beneath his left shoulder that never healed entirely. His most famous duel was fought with a man known as the finest marksman in Tennessee, Charles Dickinson. Everyone thought this time Andy was history, but the night before his duel, Jackson removed the buttons from his coat and sewed them on three inches below their normal position.

The next day Dickinson got a shot off first, as everyone knew he would, only the bullet struck exactly three inches below Jackson's heart, breaking two ribs and lodging in his chest cavity. Jackson calmly steadied himself, and fatally shot Dickinson in his stomach. Doctors were never able to remove this bullet from Jackson's chest, and suffered respiratory complications for the rest of his life.



The Battle of New Orleans

And yet it didn't slow him down on the road to becoming a famous Indian fighter, and even more famously, he led the American forces that turned back the British at New Orleans, and ended the War of 1812. The British had 700 dead and 1400 wounded. American losses were seven dead and six wounded. It was this battle, more than anything else, that rocketed him to the presidency.

And still he wrestled with his temper. Would his temper conquer him, or would he conquer his temper? That question would determine the success of his presidency. I am happy to share with you today that Jackson won the victory by turning to the Lord. II Corinthians 5:17 says, *"If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. The old has gone. The new has come."* I can't think of a better example of that than the life of Andrew Jackson. As he surrendered to the Lord, God made a new man out of him, a man

who is a role model for us today of living a life of perseverance and endurance.

The Bible says in II Peter 1:5-7, speaking to us as believers, *"Make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control perseverance..."* Verse 8 says, *"If you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective*

and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Verse 10 says, “If you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom.” Do you want to be effective and productive in your walk with God? Do you want to receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom? Then pursue perseverance!

The Greek word for perseverance (“*hupomone*”) is a very difficult term to express with one English word. It means to persevere, but it also has a forward look to it. It means to persevere because something is better coming down the road. It has hopeful connotations to it. In the Scriptures, we see **four different dimensions** of what it means to persevere, all illustrated in the life of Andrew Jackson as he surrendered his life and his temper to the Lord.

Dimension # 1 of biblical perseverance: Remain strong in the midst of hardship. Romans 5:3 says, “*We also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.*”

Andrew Jackson could very easily have slipped into a self-destruct mode many times in his life. His dad died before he was born. His mom died of smallpox when he was fourteen. And yet he studied hard and became a lawyer at age 20. He married at 24 and kept his vow of fidelity to his wife for 37 years until she died. Jackson also started, when he got married, a life-long practice of reading three chapters of the Bible every day. He told reporters, “I was raised a rigid Presbyterian, to which I have always adhered.” And yet when he was elected to the Senate at age 30, Thomas Jefferson said, “His passions are terrible.” We would say today, “He’s hot-headed.” He couldn’t control his temper, so he foolishly duelled when someone insulted him, instead of walking away.

And yet, God was at work in his life. Three chapters a day and a good wife have a way of softening a hard heart. He wouldn’t join a church even though his wife begged him, but he did promise her he would as soon as his political career was over. With God’s help, as he increasingly surrendered to the Lord, he gained control over his temper. Even in the midst of great hardships, including two bullet wounds, he grew strong in his faith. How about you today? Does suffering and hardship drive you to God or away from him?

Dimension # 2 in biblical perseverance: Remain pure in the midst of wickedness. This is not easy to do. In fact, in the end times this will be so hard to do that Jesus said in Matthew 24:12-13, “*Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm [*hupomone*] to the end will be saved.*”

Andrew Jackson’s reputation as a duelist convinced many people that he couldn’t possibly be a believer. When evangelist Peter Cartwright first saw Jackson, he said to a minister friend, “If this Jackson fellow doesn’t get his soul converted, God is going to damn him.” When Jackson got wind of what Cartwright had said, no one knew what would happen. The old Jackson would have raked him over the coals. But God was working in Andy’s heart as he approached Cartwright, “I heard what you said, and I suppose you may think I’m offended but I’m not. A minister of Christ ought to fear no mortal man. If I had a thousand officers like you, I could take England.”



Evangelist Peter Cartwright

God was working in his heart. Shortly after this Jackson was appointed as governor of Florida. When he arrived, Rachel observed in her diary, “Sabbath profanely kept...swearing in the streets.” A week later, after the new governor gave orders, she wrote, “Great order observed. Gambling houses demolished. Cursing not to be heard.”

God was working in Jackson’s life. Early in his life, when he saw wickedness, he let it draw him in. He fought with his flesh, not his spirit. Now he was learning to stay strong, and fight in the spirit, not in the flesh. After all, the Bible says, “*Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*” Ephesians 6:12. It

took Jackson a while to figure that out. How about us?

Dimension # 3 in biblical perseverance: Remain steadfast in the midst of pressure. Our example here is none other than Christ himself. Hebrews 13:1-3 says, “*Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross... Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*” In these three verses, ‘*hupomone*’ is used three times.

What’s being described here is remaining steadfast when you are under pressure. Andrew Jackson demonstrated this when he experienced his greatest crisis as president. At that time the US had a national bank which was thoroughly corrupt, and Jackson was determined to break up this monopoly. For awhile Jackson virtually stood alone, because the bank retaliated by basically shutting down the nation’s economy. The Senate even voted to censure Jackson.

Now, the old Jackson would have shot somebody. The old Jackson would have fought in the flesh. But three chapters of God’s word every day was working itself out in his life. In this battle, he fought in the spirit, and eventually prevailed. Today, historians hail his fortitude under incredible pressure. How about us? How do we handle pressure? If we are growing in our faith, we will become increasingly steadfast in doing what is right. We will become even-tempered, unflappable in doing what is right using methods that are right.



The National Bank

Dimension # 4 in biblical perseverance: Remain hopeful in the midst of despair. In II Timothy 2:11-12, the Bible says, “*Here is a trustworthy saying, “If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him.”* In the book of II Timothy, Paul is close to death. He knows that he is about to be martyred for his faith. And yet he persevered to the end, even with death bearing down on him.

The same thing was true of Andrew Jackson. My favorite part of his story is the last years of his life. Even though his physical strength was failing fast, his spiritual light shone brighter and brighter. He kept his promise to Rachel. He joined a church. Interestingly, when he was interviewed by the pastor, he clearly stated that he was trusting in Jesus for his salvation. At the end, the pastor asked him, “General, there is one more question which it is my duty to ask you. Can you forgive all your enemies?”

Jackson was silent for a long time. He had a lot of enemies. Finally, he said, “My political enemies I can forgive, but those who attacked me while I was serving my country, that is a different case.”

The pastor replied, “No it’s not. You have to forgive everyone, just as Christ forgave you.”

Another long pause. Finally, Jackson said, “Yes, I can forgive everyone.”

Shortly thereafter, Andrew Jackson got up in front of the whole church and made a public declaration of his faith. By that time, he was using his cane, and he leaned hard on the cane as he talked. But he talked on unashamed. When he finished, the congregation burst into sobs and praises. A lot of people had prayed for this day for a long time.

Shortly after he died a few years later, his will was read. It began, “First, I bequeath my body to the dust whence it comes, and my soul to God who gave it, hoping for a happy immortality through the atoning merits of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Andrew Jackson had finished well. He had persevered. Though in his early years, his friends and family often wondered about his soul, there was no doubt in his later years. His soul was the Lord’s. He had persevered. He could say with all integrity as Paul said, “*I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*” II Timothy 4:7.

How about you? Are you persevering in your faith? God changed Andrew Jackson’s life, and he can change yours. He can give you the strength and steadfastness and the hope that you need. Ask him today. Come to him for help.

The Goal of Godliness



Dwight D. Eisenhower was our 34th president, serving from 1953-1961. He served during the nostalgic 1950's, wonderfully captured in the sit-com "Happy Days". Sometimes it's really hard to believe there were days without cell phones, Internet, airport security, hard-core pornography and gay rights, but there were.

And yet there was also a soberness in our country after two decades of depression and war. Now we faced the Communist threat head-on in a new age of nuclear power. Everyone squirmed in their shoes when Russia obtained the atomic bomb in 1949, and then Korea exploded the next year. Yet, the midst of all this, a spiritual Renaissance gripped America, the likes of which we may never see again. Think about it. In the 1950's, over half of the population regularly attended church, two to three times what it is now. A good part of the credit for that is due to man who set the tone of the 1950's, President Eisenhower.

Like many Americans in this era, Eisenhower ('Ike') had grown up in a very religious home. His parents were River Brethren, and they were passionate pacifists. Well educated, both of Ike's parents could read the New Testament in the original Greek and taught their six sons to memorize Scripture. In fact, Ike's mom, Ida, had won a prize for memorizing 1325 Bible verses (roughly equivalent to Hebrews, James, I-II Peter, I-II-III, John, Jude, and Revelation).



Ike during WWII

And yet, despite all that, Dwight broke his parents' hearts by choosing a military career. Ironically, he commanded the greatest army in the history of the world. More importantly, he drifted away from his godly upbringing. He pursued an unhealthy relationship with his chauffeur during the war, Kay Summersby, though both denied a physical affair. By the time he ran for president in 1952, Billy Graham asked him, "General, do you still respect the religious teaching of your father and mother?" Ike answered, "Yes, but I've gotten a long way from it." Billy urged him to get back to church, and he did. Clearly, he made a spiritual U-turn as he assumed the mantle of the presidency. In several ways, God used him to assert a much-needed moral leadership over our country.

As we examine the attribute of godliness, we are going to look at ways in which President Eisenhower contributed to a spirit of godliness in our country. In II Peter 1:5-6, the Bible says, "*Make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness.*" Verse 10-11 add that if you want to make your calling and election sure, and if you want to never fall, and if you want to "*receive a rich welcome*

into the eternal kingdom", then you need to do these things. What things? Add godliness, among all the other qualities mentioned, to your faith.

What is godliness? Well, the Greek word is "*eusebeia*" and it means to step back from something and maintain a distance. It was used in classical Greek for their worship of gods and goddesses. It means to honor something that is majestic and full of awe. It is a word that is used 22 times in the New Testament, and as you study the various ways this word is used, there are **three common characteristics**.

The first common characteristic is a respect for God's order, which leads to a heart of obedience.

Romans 1:19-20 says, "*What may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.*"

And yet in spite of the fact that God's order is plain for all to see, the Bible says, "*The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.*" Romans 1:18.

Sometimes if you want to study what a word means, you study its opposite. The opposite of godliness is godlessness. The opposite of the Greek word "*eusebeia*" (godliness) is "*asebia*" (godlessness). In Romans 1:18-20, godlessness is described as an utter disrespect for God's order. In the verses following, godlessness is equated with various acts of depravity, including some of the big sins like sexual sins and murder and some of what we often think of as lesser sins like greed and envy and gossip and boasting. All of these are acts that go against God's order.

Godliness is like a beautiful river flowing along lovely tree-lined banks. It's peaceful, orderly, moderate, and attractive. Godlessness is like a river overflowing its banks, uprooting trees, flooding homes and parks. It's out of control, it's extreme, it's ugly. Godliness is a magnificent gift of grace. Godlessness is trampling on that grace.

Now let's apply this to the life of Dwight Eisenhower. He was a career military man, and therefore had developed many healthy habits. He was neat, trim, physically fit, with healthy patterns of sleep and work. His military lifestyle contributed to all of these things.

But there were other areas where he struggled as he absorbed some of the vices of military life, like smoking. It didn't bother him when he was young, but as he aged, he struggled with high blood pressure and other complications from smoking. Swearing was another vice that Ike hadn't grown up with, but in the Army, he was surrounded by it, and gradually succumbed. The same was true with flirtatious behavior. Immorality was rampant in the army, and gradually, Ike let his high standards start to slip, until he was dangerously close to having an affair. And then there was his attitude toward church. Most of the tough army types didn't need this "crutch", and as time went on, neither did Ike.

Amazingly, somewhere around 60 years old, God did a new work in Ike and he returned to the simple faith of his parents. For most of his adult life, he had rejected the gentle pleadings of the Spirit, but now he started to respond to these overtures of grace. You see, all of us as believers come to faith in different ways. For some, it is a dramatic conversion. For others, like Ike, the work of the Spirit is gradual. Ike began to tidy up some things in his life, and as he tasted the goodness of God's grace, it whetted his appetite for more. For instance, he gave up his female companion, and recommitted himself to his wife. And he gave up smoking, and felt the blessing of that. Perhaps most importantly, he joined a church as one of his first acts as president, and for the first time in his life, he made a public profession of his faith.

As Billy Graham later pointed out, this was no small step for Ike. He took five hours of religious instruction over five days. He became grounded in what it means to be a Christian, and he was baptized into church membership in the Presbyterian Church. That next Sunday they took communion in that church along with the rest of the church membership. This was a big step, and it was the first time in his life he took this step. How about you today? Do you have respect for God's order that leads to a lifestyle of obedience? Do you realize that every command God gives us is for our own good – for the blessing and enriching of our lives?

The second common characteristic in what it means to live a life of godliness is to have a respect for God's authority which leads to a heart of reverence. Titus 2:11-12 says, "*For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.*" We are to say "no" to godlessness, and say "yes" to godliness. When you read the context of this verse, it is referring to respect for human authority and respect for God's authority.

As a general, Mr. Eisenhower knew something about authority. In fact, someone once asked Eisenhower the difference between being a general and being president. He said, "Well, when I was a general, I gave an order and things happened. As president, I give an order and nothing happens. It goes into the bureaucracy and gets lost."

That's the way it is with us sometimes too. We can start to treat the Ten Commandments as the Ten Suggestions. Now if you've been in the military, you know it doesn't work that way. Orders are orders and you follow them whether you like it or not. One of the things that Eisenhower did when he became president is that he signaled to the country in many different ways that he too was under authority. That he respected God's authority as the highest authority.

Ike was the first president to pray himself before he began his inaugural address. And it wasn't a little prayer either – it was four paragraphs. He also started his cabinet meetings with prayer. The prayer was silent only if no cabinet member at that meeting desired to make a vocal prayer.



Pledging to the Flag

Eisenhower also went out of his way in ordering a series of stamps called "The Liberty Series" to display our national motto "In God We Trust". And perhaps most important of all, he added the words "Under God" to our pledge of allegiance. He said on Flag Day, June 14, 1954, "From this day forward, the millions of our school children will daily proclaim in every city and town, every village and rural school house, the dedication of our nation and our people to the Almighty."

Since the time of Eisenhower, politicians and court justices have done everything they can to undo the various things he did to point our people to God. Many today wish to erase any sense of our national identity with God and Christianity. Much of that was enacted under Eisenhower's watch. Over and over again, Ike signaled to our nation that he too was a man under authority, God's authority. How about you?

The third common characteristic in what it means to live a life of godliness is to have a respect for God's majesty which leads to heart of fear. We are speaking here of a healthy respect for Almighty God.

II Timothy 3:5 speaks of people "*having a form of godliness, but denying its power.*" Who are these people? Verses 1-4 describe them as people who have no fear of the Lord – they are called boastful, proud, abusive, and brutal. Sadly, these verses describe a major sector of the American populace today as we collectively have lost a healthy fear and respect for the Lord.

I find it very interesting that the man who commanded the largest army in the history of the world, the army that stormed the Normandy coast and liberated France and then Germany from the Nazi scourge, that same man had a profound and very healthy fear of the Almighty. In fact, as Ike's health deteriorated in his waning years, he had a couple of very important talks with Billy Graham that Billy describes in his book *Just As I Am*. Both conversations were about salvation. Billy describes the last one, at Walter Reed Hospital, in December of 1968, with these words: "As my



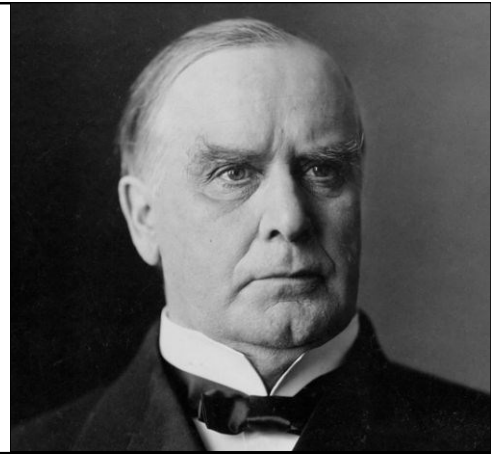
Ike & Billy

scheduled twenty minutes with him extended to thirty, he asked the doctor and nurses to leave us. Propped up on pillows amidst intravenous tubes, he took my hand and looked in my eyes. 'Billy, you've told me how to be sure my sins are forgiven and that I'm going to heaven. Would you tell me again?'"

Billy said, "I took out my New Testament and read to him again the familiar Gospel verses, the precious promises of God about eternal life. Then, my hand still in his, I prayed briefly. 'Thank you', Ike said, 'I'm ready.'" Billy said, "I knew he was."

Now that's a healthy fear of the Lord. We should never be ashamed of making absolutely sure about something that is so critically important to our eternal destiny. The Bible (James 4:14) describes our life on this planet as a vapor appearing for a moment, and then gone. Eternity, however, goes on forever. Are you, 22

The Keynote of Kindness



If the greatness of a man can be measured by how he treats his wife, William McKinley would be right at the top. Our 25th president, who served from 1897-1901, married when he was 27 years old. The next year, he and his wife Ida were blessed with a beautiful baby girl, Katherine, and the year after that with another girl who was named after her mother, Ida.

Only four months later, baby Ida died. Within a few months, Mrs. McKinley's mother also died. Worst of all, Katherine died at age 4, only two years after the other deaths. Mrs. McKinley fell apart, overwhelmed by shock and grief. For the rest of her life, she would be an invalid. Later she developed epilepsy. William McKinley took seriously to love his wife as Christ loved the church. When he served as governor of Ohio, each morning before he entered the capital, he would remove his hat and bow to his wife as she watched from the window of their hotel room across the street. Again at 3 pm, he would wave to her from his window. When he accepted the Republican nomination for President in 1896, he did so under one condition – that he could stay home with his wife during the whole campaign. And he did. The press called it a “front porch campaign”. Thousands of visitors came to see him in Canton, Ohio.

When McKinley was elected president, his wife sat beside him as he stood greeting people at the receiving line of receptions. At the dinner itself, he would seat her on his right so he could help her, even though protocol was for the president's wife to sit across the table from him and mix with guests. Even when he was shot by an assassin, he whispered to his secretary, “My wife – be careful, oh, be careful how you tell her.” If you are ever tempted to believe that all politicians are slimy, read a good biography of William McKinley, one of the most devout Christian men who ever walked the halls of the White House.

Brotherly kindness poured out of President McKinley on countless occasions, a model to us of how to incorporate this in our lives. II Peter 1:5-7 says, “*Make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness...*” Verses 10-11 add that if you want to “*receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom*”, then you need to pursue brotherly kindness along with the other godly attributes in this passage.

What is brotherly kindness? Well, the Greek word is

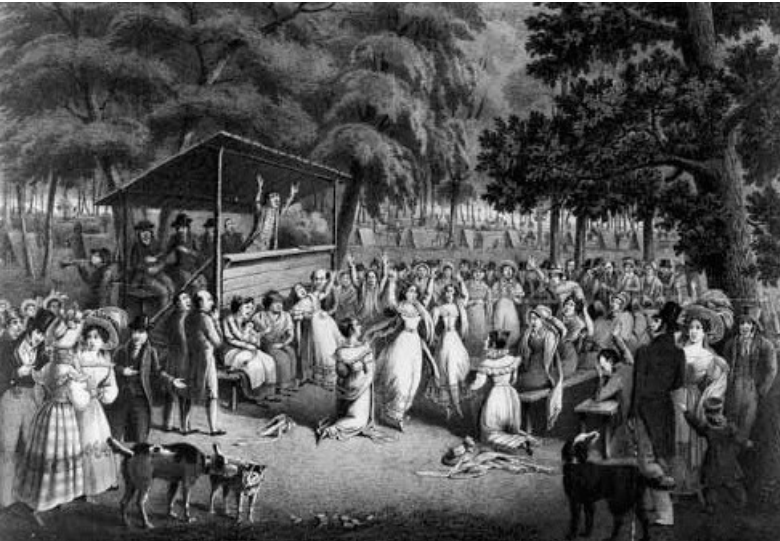


William & Ida

“*philadelphia*”, the word from which the city in Pennsylvania is named after. In fact, the city of Philadelphia is known as the city of brotherly love. The Greek word literally means to love those who are born of the same womb. The Scriptures teach that there are **three important bonds** involved in the concept of brotherly kindness.

The first important bond in brotherly kindness is a love for God as our Father. Romans 8:14-15 says, “*Those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons (and daughters) of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship.*” The bond we have as believers, the sibling bond, is due to the fact that we have a common Father, our Heavenly Father. We are bonded first with him.

This is a bond that God established with William McKinley very early in his life. In fact, he was only ten years old when he was saved at a camp-meeting revival. He became a probationary member of the Methodist church and then became a full member six years later after reaffirming his commitment to the faith. After they were married, the McKinleys joined the First Methodist Episcopal Church in Canton, Ohio. William soon became superintendent of the Sunday School, and he remained a member in this denomination the rest of his life. McKinley also was active in the Canton YMCA, which was very evangelistic in that day. Early in its existence the YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association) was primarily a religious organization, but today that is barely mentioned if at all.



Frontier Camp Meeting Revival

In his first inaugural address, McKinley stated, “Our faith teaches that there is no safer reliance than upon the God of our fathers..., who will not forsake us so long as we obey His commandments and walk humbly in His footsteps.” President McKinley intended to do just

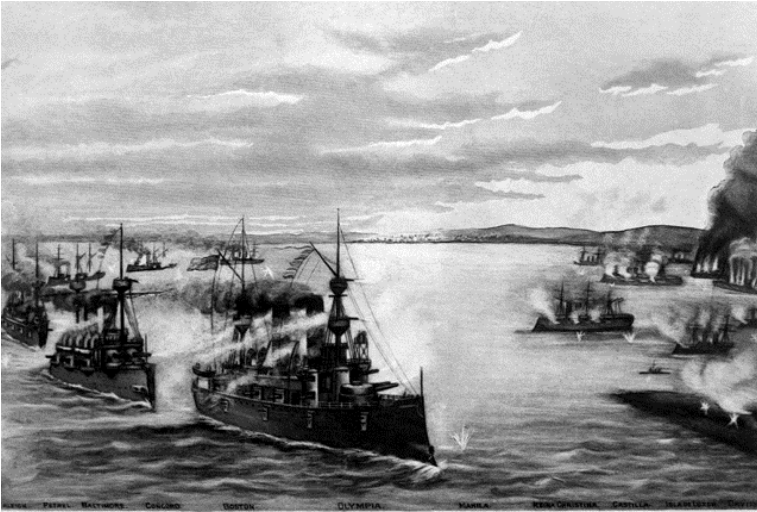
that. While president he attended the Metropolitan Methodist Church in Washington, DC. He also hosted hymn sings at the White House. One of his biographers said, “His evenings were spent with Mrs. McKinley and friends, often reading the Bible aloud, until ten.”

This was a man who, by all accounts, practiced what he preached. He professed God as His Father, and he lived that way. How about us today? Are we fully committed to God as our Heavenly Father? Do we treat him with the respect and dignity of a father?

A second key bond in brotherly kindness is a bond with Jesus as our Elder Brother. Romans 8:29 says, “*For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.*” Colossians 1:15 calls him the “*firstborn over all creation.*” Revelation 1:5 calls him the “*firstborn from the dead.*”

The Jehovah’s Witnesses commonly use these verses to teach that Christ was a created being, that he was born first chronologically, but the Scriptures use this term to refer to Christ’s preeminence in position, that he is over all other human beings. John 3:16 says that Jesus was the “*only begotten*”, not the “*first begotten*”. His sonship is different than for any other human being. Jesus is the God-man, 100% God and 100% man. He is the only One who could say, “*Before Abraham was born, I am.*” (John 8:58).

Now when it comes to studying the faith of our presidents, a very interesting question to inquire about is their view on the divinity of Christ. Both John Adams (1797-1801) and Thomas Jefferson (1801-1809), influenced by the Unitarian Church, denied the deity of Christ. John Quincy Adams (1825-1829) said, “I am not



The Battle of Manila - Philippine Islands

a Trinitarian or a Unitarian... whether Jesus is God, or only the first of human beings, is not clearly revealed to me in the Scriptures.” Thankfully, when it came to William McKinley, this question was never in doubt. On May 26, 1899, he wrote in his letter-book, “My faith embraces the Divinity of Christ.”

When the U.S. acquired the Philippine Islands as a result of the Spanish-American War, the president told several of his friends, “The truth is I did not want the Philippines and when they came to us as a gift from God, I did not know what to do with them. I walked the floor of the White House night after night, until midnight, and I am not ashamed to tell you, gentlemen, that I went down on my knees and prayed to Almighty God for light and guidance more than one

night. And one night it came to me that there was nothing left for us to do but take them all, and to educate the Filipinos and uplift and civilize and Christianize them, and by God’s grace to do the very best we could by them as our fellowmen for whom Christ also died. And then I went to bed, and went to sleep and slept soundly.”

William McKinley had a proper understanding of Christ as our Elder Brother. He affirmed that he was the God-man, fully human and fully divine. He could lustily sing the words of the great hymn “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee” where it says, “Thou our Father, Christ our Brother, all who live in love are Thine; teach us how to love each other, lift us to the joy divine.” How about us today? Do you believe that Jesus really is fully human and fully divine? He is the one and only God-man, our Elder Brother. Is he your Elder Brother?

A third key bond in brotherly kindness is the bond we have as believer to believer. As believers, we have a sibling bond with each other. I John 3:16 says, “*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*” William McKinley fully understood what this is all about, and repeatedly practiced this with his wife, placing her needs before his own. There is a hierarchy of human bonds, with the marital bond (Ephesians 5:22-33) and family bond (I Timothy 5:8) being the highest. Closely following this should be our bond as believers, which Mr. McKinley also modeled.

One of his biographers said this about William McKinley, “His devout Methodism did not lead him to concern himself with dogma or denominational differences. The loving-kindness of God was McKinley’s religion, and the source of his inner serenity. Later the biographer added this insight, “In a day of sharp sectarian prejudice, McKinley was devoid of bigotry, possessing as a grace of his nature the tolerance that is unconscious of its own virtue.”

Translation: He got along with everybody. And that is very commendable. The Bible is clear that we are to show honor and respect to all people, whether they deserve it or not (Romans 12:17-21). But when it comes to associations that more intimate, there is a cautionary note that is sounded, for the Bible also says, “*Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common?*” II Corinthians 6:14. In I Corinthians 15:33 a similar warning is sounded, “*Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’*”

Like 13 other presidents, William McKinley joined the Masonic Lodge (see *The Secret Teachings of the Masonic Lodge* by John Ankerberg



Masonic Symbol

for a thorough review of this organization). McKinley did this in spite of the fact that the Masons explicitly exclude the mention of Christ in their rites and prayers. Masons also become ‘brothers’ with members of other religions – Jews, Muslims, Hindus, etc. It is one thing to respect members of other religions, which we are to do, but it is another thing to bond with them, which we are strongly warned against.

Although McKinley may have viewed himself as a social Mason, not really buying into their ideology, his association with them is a warning to all of us. Our bond as believers extends to believers only, but all believers, regardless of denominational background or ethnic background or race or color. Those who truly accept the fatherhood of God, the divinity of Christ, and salvation through Christ’s blood atonement are our brothers and sisters. We have a unique bond with our fellow believers. To everyone else we extend kindness. We follow in the footsteps of our Lord who was the supreme example of love and grace to everyone he met. Many, like Nicodemus in John 3 and Zacchaeus in Luke 19, were brought to saving faith and became true believers.

How about us? Is there a special bond with our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ that is not found in our other relationships? Are we also reaching out with kindness to the lost, with the hope and prayer that they too will come to faith in Christ?

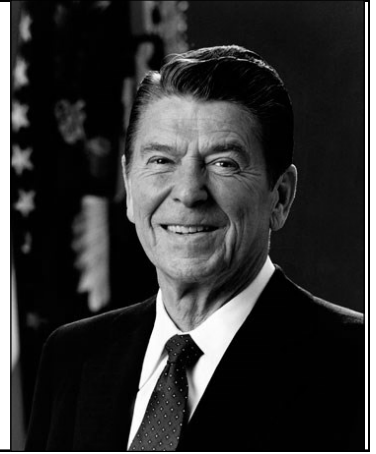
The kindness of William McKinley was never more evident than when he was shot by an assassin. When someone physically hit the assassin, one of McKinley’s biographers said, “The spirit of the Master, whom he had served all his life, came upon the stricken President, and he cried in a tone of pity, ‘Don’t let them hurt him.’” The president publicly forgave his assassin, a most supreme act of kindness. Shortly before he died, he quoted the words to the hymn “Nearer My God to Thee.” His last words were “It is God’s way. His will, not ours, be done.”

His doctor, Roswell Parks, did all he could to save the president’s life. After witnessing McKinley’s last moments, he said, “Up to this time, I’d never really believed that a man could be a good Christian and a good politician.” Have you ever thought what they will say at your funeral? Will kindness be one of the qualities that you are known for?



McKinley was shot at the Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, NY

The Legacy of Love



President Ronald Reagan (1981-1989) became a Christian at the tender age of eleven. Shortly thereafter, he was baptized in the First Christian Church in Dixon, Illinois. Right after he was elected governor of California, he wrote in a letter, “I was raised in the Christian Church which believes in baptism when the individual has made his own decision to accept Jesus. My decision was made in my early teens.” Throughout his teen years, he acted in skits and plays at the church and he would later teach Sunday School and do a little preaching. At age 15, he led his church’s Easter Sunrise service.

Even in college, one of his biographers said, “The Bible was a daily and vital part of his life.” When he moved to Hollywood, he attended Hollywood Beverly Christian Church. Although his first marriage to actress Jane Wyman ended in divorce, there were no accusations of infidelity. According to one biographer, Wyman left him because she felt “detached” from him. His world was rocked until Nancy Davis came into the picture a few years later. Jimmy Stewart once said if Nancy had been his first wife, he wouldn’t have been president, but he would have won an Oscar, because she would have seen to it that he got the best parts in movies. She was very ambitious for him, and as he had already dabbled in politics, she supported his efforts in his run for governor and then for president.

Amazingly, Reagan maintained his faith in the toxic world of entertainment and politics. If you think it’s hard to be a Christian where you live, try Hollywood or Washington DC. Yet Ronald Reagan kept the faith, a faith characterized by love of God that was demonstrated when He sent his Son to die for us on a cross.

Agape love, God’s love, is the highest, noblest, and loftiest of the eight attributes mentioned in II Peter 1:5-7. The Bible says, “*Make every effort to add to your faith goodness, and to goodness knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love.*” Verse 11 adds that if you want to “*receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom*”, then you need to pursue love, along with the seven other attributes.

In classical Greek, there was *phileo* (friendship) love, *storge* (family) love, *eros* (romantic) love, and *agape* (divine) love. What is agape love? I John 4:10-11 puts it this way, “*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*” This is the love that Ronald Reagan discovered as a young boy in Dixon, Illinois. Out of this treasure trove of God’s love, he was able to express agape love himself. The Scriptures give us **five examples of agape love** in action.

The first example of agape love is our love for God. You see, it is God who is the great initiator in our relationship with him. I John 4:19 says, “*We love because he first loved us.*”



Our 40th President

When Ronald Reagan took the oath of office as president of the United States, he used his mother’s Bible, and his hand was placed on a passage that was very precious to his mother. Right next to this verse, there were some words handwritten, very faded, but still legible. It read, “A most wonderful verse for the healing of the nations.” The passage Ronald Reagan laid his hand upon: *“If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven...and will heal their land.” II Chronicles 7:14.*

Why did that verse have such warm memories for Mr. Reagan? I think it was because it reminded him of the sincere faith of his mother and of a childhood where he had first experienced the overwhelming love of God. Based on this, he learned to love God back, according greatest commandment, *“Love the Lord your God with all of your heart and all of your soul and all of your mind.” Matthew 22:37.* This is the beginning of agape love, but it is only the beginning.

The second example of agape love is a love for Jesus, God’s Son. When Jesus came out of the water at his baptism, a dove came out of the sky and landed on him. And a voice from heaven shouted out, *“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” Matthew 3:17.* God loves his Son, and we are to love him too.

Today you may hear a lot of politicians talk about God, but very few will go the next step and talk about Jesus. Except for Ronald Reagan. He went out of his way to share his faith, as he did on his syndicated radio show on January 9, 1978. At that time, before he ran for president, he was doing a daily three-minute commentary. Much of it was political, but on that day he chose to talk about Christ’s divinity and criticized seminaries that regarded him as a mere human. When a minister wrote in to criticize him, he wrote back and said, “Is there really any ambiguity in the words of Jesus, *“I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me?” John 14:6.* On several occasions, he defended the deity of Christ and the Virgin Birth, and the divine inspiration of the Scripture.

Another time he called John 3:16 his favorite verse. When asked why he said, “It means that having accepted Jesus Christ as my Savior, I have God’s promise of eternal life.” After he was shot by John Hinckley, his pastor visited him and asked him if he would have been ready to meet God had he died. Reagan said, “I’m ready to meet God because I have a Savior.”

I want to ask you today not only if you love God, but if you love Jesus. Is he your Savior? If you would suddenly have your world rocked, like Mr. Reagan did the day he was shot, are you confident you would go to heaven? For Mr. Reagan, one bullet lodged dangerously close to his heart. He came very close to dying, though the news reports downplayed this possibility. What if that were you? Are you ready to meet the Lord?



Reagan waving before the attempted assassination

The third example of agape love is a husband’s love for his wife. This command is given in the Scriptures in a very direct way. Ephesians 5:25 says, *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”* Husbands are to take the initiative in the marital relationship

by loving their wives unconditionally and sacrificially. In our review of eight professing Christian presidents, we have seen this model of unconditional love within marriage before. Andrew Jackson and his devotion to

his wife, Rachel, is an outstanding inspiration to us. So is William McKinley and his sacrificial love for his invalid wife, Ida. And yet, I know of no greater model for us in this area than the life of Ronald Reagan and his devotion to his wife, Nancy. In fact, Nancy compiled an entire book of his love letters to her written from all over the world (see the book *I Love You, Ronnie*).

Equally touching is the letter Mr. Reagan wrote to his son Michael on the eve of Michael's wedding. His dad wrote, "Some men feel their masculinity can only be proven if they play out in their own life all the locker-room stories, smugly confident that what a wife doesn't know won't hurt her. The truth is, somehow, way down inside, without her ever finding lipstick on the collar or catching a man in the flimsy excuse of where he was till 3 am, a wife does know, and with that knowing, some of the magic of this relationship disappears. There are more men griping about marriage who kicked the whole thing away themselves than there can ever be wives deserving of blame...If you truly love a girl, you shouldn't ever want her to feel, when she sees you greet a secretary or a girl you both know, that humiliation of wondering if she was someone who caused you to be late coming home."

Good advice for a son. Good advice for all of us. Husbands, do you have this kind of unconditional, sacrificial, agape love for your wife?

The fourth example of agape love is our love for our Christian brothers and sisters. This theme is all over the book of I John, especially chapters 3 and 4. I John 3:16 says, "*This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*"

Over and over again, throughout his presidency, Ronald Reagan firmly allied himself with his Bible-believing Christian brothers and sisters. Regardless of the political cost, regardless of how his advisors counseled him, he stood with evangelical Christians. During his first campaign, he appeared before the Religious Roundtable attended mostly by evangelical pastors, and he said, "I know that you can't endorse me, but I want you to know that I endorse you and what you are doing."

He spoke to the Student Congress on Evangelism in 1988, "I believe there's been a change – a change that you young people here today are part of... Today more and more Americans are seeking His face. And, yes, He has begun to heal our land."

He declared 1983 the Year of the Bible and challenged Americans to read it.

He defended human life consistently throughout his entire political career. This was no political calculation with Mr. Reagan. It was a belief rooted in the Scriptures and his sense of justice. He said, "We cannot...turn our backs on the taking of some 4000 unborn children's lives every day. This must stop. Out constitution guarantees 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness', but an abortion is the taking of a human life."

There was a bond between the church and Reagan that hasn't existed for any other recent president. His Christian brothers and sisters loved him, and he loved them. How about us? Do we love our fellow brothers and sisters in the Lord? Is there a bond there that we don't have with everyone else? The Bible teaches that the world will know you are Christians by your love one for another (John 13:35).



Ron & Nancy

The fifth example of agape love is our love for our neighbors, which extends to every human being, even our enemies. Jesus identified this as the second greatest commandment. *“Love your neighbor as yourself.” Mark 12:31.* Jesus also said in Luke 6:27, *“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”* Ronald Reagan genuinely loved people. As opposed to many other presidents who turned vindictive, he responded to his critics with humor. Of columnist Herb Caen who repeatedly grilled him, he responded, “What’s that guy’s problem?” Of the New York Times, on those rare occasions when they were supportive, he’d say, “I don’t know what’s gotten into them. They must be having a bad day.” To his critics who accused him of napping on the job, he joked that he was going to put a plaque on his cabinet chair when he retired that said, “Ronald Reagan Slept Here.”

Amazingly, his good nature caused even political enemies like reporter Sam Donaldson, to say, “He came to Washington to change the world for the better, and for the most part, he did. I didn’t think I would say this, but I miss him.” Ronald Reagan is not a perfect example here. No one is, but he is an inspiration to all of us given that he had one of the most pressure-packed jobs in the world. And yet he kept a cool head and a kind demeanor.

Many have brought up alleged skeletons in Reagan’s closet, such as his interest in astrology. Early in his career this was true, but later, no, although Nancy seemed to continue to have her struggles. Yet, overall, their son, Michael, was able to write a book, *Twice Adopted*, in which he said that Christianity was the greatest gift his parents gave him. He said, “There is one gift that my parents have given me that outshines all the rest. Now, as my dad’s ninety-year journey through life has been completed, and as my mother approaches ninety, I’m more grateful than ever for the gift they’ve given me. I know where Dad is now. I know where Mom is going. And I know that I will see them again one day in eternity.”

That’s the legacy of love – the gift that just keeps on giving. The apostle Paul says, *“These three remain – faith, hope, and love. But the greatest of these is love.” I Corinthians 13:13.* Are you leaving a legacy of love?



Ronald Reagan’s son, Michael

Remember this?



Reagan & Gorbachev



Reagan speaking in Berlin

"Tear down this wall!"

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The memorial plate given to Pastor Denny by his mother after President John F. Kennedy's assassination.



Denny Johnson has served as Senior Pastor at Annandale Evangelical Free Church in Annandale, Minnesota since 1992. Prior to that he served as pastor at another Evangelical Free church near Elk River, Minnesota for nine years. Denny graduated from Bethel College in St. Paul, Minnesota in 1980 with a B.A. in Political Science Summa Cum Laude. He also has an M.Div. Magna Cum Laude from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1983. Denny and his wife, Sue, have four daughters.