

A Word from Headquarters

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Published on 14 January 2012



By way of Introduction....

For some years I'd been writing a column under the above title for the edification (I hoped) of the members of my former congregation. With my departure from Yarrow I suspended the habit, but time has come, I think, for me to pick it up again. My intent is to write on bits and pieces of daily living and/or church life and/or (inter)national developments, or whatever may catch my fancy, in order to encourage Biblical thought and discussion on the issues that make up our daily lives. I'll try to have something for your mailbox every two weeks (excluding summer, of course), but please don't hold me to it; other things may squeeze too much of my time. But I'll try. And please: go right ahead and discuss its contents around your coffee table. Especially with tomorrow's parents and leaders.

A Word from Headquarters

Life is so very busy. You need to be at work at 6:30 AM, you need 13 minutes to get there, so you set the alarm at 6:09. That gives you 4 minutes to shower and jump into your clothes, a minute to collect your gear and get into the car, and 2 minutes to grab that coffee from Timmies'. Just fits, with a minute to spare.

Forget anything?

Over years and decades our fathers developed the habit to begin each day with Bible reading and prayer. Our lives today (we're convinced) are too busy and demanding to set aside time for Bible reading and prayer. Imagine: setting the alarm at 5:45 so that there's a 20 minute opportunity for devotions. I need my sleep too much for that....

Canada's Food Guide

We've been told over the years of our lives that we need to eat healthy foods, with a responsible mix from each of the different food categories. Failure to do so will result

sooner or later in health issues of some form. So we eat – because we have to. And over the course of the week we eat reasonably well-balanced meals – because we know the consequences. We see around us those who eat predominately instant microwave dishes, and we’re sure we don’t want to look like that.... So we try to eat well....

Why would looking after our bodies be essentially different from looking after our souls? But see (don’t stumble; caveat below): we begin our day with no Bible reading or time for prayer.... Instead, in the 13 minutes we’re sitting in the car to get to work, we’ve got the radio on, and the message coming out of the (average) radio isn’t in tune with what that historic Bible reading would have taught us. But we take in its message (subconsciously or not), and it affects the way we view the day before us and the decisions we need to make....

Like I say, please don’t trip over the previous paragraph. Some time ago I had a chat with a number of young people in the churches. The majority admitted to me that they did not have time (or energy) to begin the day with the Lord’s Word or with prayer. The signals I get tell me that the older generation is not really different from the younger on this point. And truth be told: if I were in Satan’s shoes, I’d do anything I could to drive a wedge between the Bible and the daily lives of God’s people.... It turns out, though, that the habit of the past isn’t as bizarre as we’d think....

Daily Life

We live on planet Earth, in a modern western culture. This culture views reality as being a one-room house. I mean: to the minds of today’s people, only what the eye can see (and so science can measure) is true or real. It’s a one-room house; folk living ‘downstairs’ (on planet earth) deny there is an ‘upstairs’ (heaven) because they can’t see or measure what’s happening ‘upstairs’. Hence folk deny that God is real, and so deny that the Holy Bible comes from God. Consequence? If the Bible doesn’t come from heaven, why bother spending precious time with it each day.... Life is too busy for that, and answers to life’s questions come not from a (non-existent) upstairs but from this very real earth....

In point of fact, though, reality has two rooms, Heaven and Earth, upstairs and downstairs. More, these two rooms are intimately connected, with the headquarters of earth positioned squarely in heaven. That, after all, is where Jesus Christ ascended after His victory on the cross. And with His ascension, the Lord God gave Him a seat at His right hand as King of kings and Lord of lords. Christ in heaven is King of Canada today! And He’s no small king; He governs completely every detail of each moment of the day. No light turns red and no cell phone drops a call without the involvement of this King.

How, now, shall I live in the downstairs room of God’s world? God in heaven has such heart for His people on planet Earth that He’s provided a light for us to use as we walk the road of life in this fallen, dark world. The light He supplied is, of course, the Bible. Of all the books and gadgets on this planet, this one book alone is “God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16), inspired. That’s why David –he was a man like you and me, who got his feet as dirty in the mud of life as we do– could say that God’s Word was a source of healing and strength for his soul (see Ps 19). Life has so many hurts and disappointments, in life one needs to

make so many hard decisions. How does one know what to do? How is one to cope with the dirt of this broken life? God (upstairs) has not left us (downstairs, on planet Earth) in the dark; He's given us His Word to lighten our path and teach us what to do. God, of course, did not have to give us a light for our path; given that we're creatures, and sinners too, He could have left us to wander in the dark, tripping over all the sticks and stones of life and getting ourselves badly hurt in the process. But such is His care that He wasn't content to leave us in the dark; in mercy He gave us on earth His Word of life. What a marvel!

What, then, shall we do with that Word? Indeed, Satan would love us to push that Word aside, ignore it, forget it. Or maybe he'd be OK with us reading it from custom or superstition, considering a bit of Bible reading to be a quaint tradition from the past that stays remote from daily questions. That'd suit the devil fine – anything, as long as heaven's Word doesn't actually determine how God's children analyze the questions of daily living....

God's will?

He gave His Word not simply for Sundays. He didn't give it either as a Gator drink for life's hard moments. Upstairs is intimately connected with Downstairs. He gave His Word so that we on earth might have actual answers to today's questions. As He had the apostle write:

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim 3:16f).

What that means? I can't afford to keep the Bible closed. Arguments like: “I'm too busy”, or “I'm running late” just don't cut it. Each day I need to make decisions, need to handle life's stresses and strains, and my Father in Jesus Christ has actually given me on earth a book to guide me in life's questions. So I need the message of the Bible far more than I need the message of the radio.

Set my alarm, then, so that I've got time to begin the day with God's Word (to say nothing of prayer)?? Absolutely, yes. And if you argue that that really can't be done, try this: get yourself an iPod or an mp3, download an audible version of Scripture, and use those 13 minutes on the road to work to listen to and reflect on the reading of God's Word. Guaranteed: listening to that reading is far more helpful to the bruises and challenges of the new day than the radio. After all, the radio is from earth, the Word is from earth's Headquarters.

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January 12, 2012