

Sweeter than Honey: the Alphabet of Grace  
Psalm 119:97-104  
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Have you noticed? These days, there's a lot of push-back against Judeo-Christian values and the Bible. Let's imagine then, that the Bible has disappeared; not only is the book gone, but everything it has influenced is nowhere to be found. There is no record to show that it ever existed- none at all.

A strange thing would become apparent everywhere. At the art galleries, most of the golden frames would be empty, because many of the great artists were inspired by the Bible. At libraries, writings of noble inspiration would be missing. Books of poetry, drama and all literature would be almost unintelligible, since all references inspired by or contained in the Bible will have vanished. Documents and statements of human rights and liberty would become virtually unreadable. Law books would be stripped of meaning as they try to seek their footing on the shifting sand of public opinion...no bedrock, no foundation, no Ten Commandments.

As people try to deeply express themselves, they would stutter and become dumb. Many schools, hospitals and institutions of mercy would be closed; no more Jewish Hospital, St. Luke's, Good Sam or Bethesda. Churches and missions would no longer exist. Human conscience would have no boundaries, there would be no commonly understood rules for human interaction, and life could quickly become cheap... no "Thou shalt not kill."

Thankfully, this is still only a bad dream... yet without the wisdom found in the scriptures, it might become a reality. If you and I forget to read our Bibles, and if writers, artists and national leaders ignore biblical principles, it could happen here. Much of what we take for granted, and hold dear to our hearts, will become buried unless we help biblical truth live on into each generation.

You and I have each have that responsibility; school teacher-turned-rock-star Sting, the former leader of the British rock band The Police said, "One of the most important jobs in the planet is to teach children. Our entire future depends on the children being educated." What are we teaching our children? What is being poured into their bodies, minds and souls these days?

I'm intrigued by the attention being paid to what our children are eating in school; finally, there seems to be a concentrated effort to reverse the epidemic of obesity found in every school in America. The last list I saw of the top ten selling products in the grocery stores of America included Marlboro cigarettes, Coke, Pepsi, Kraft cheese products, Campbell's Soups, Folgers Coffee, Winston cigarettes and Tropicana Orange Juice. If it is true that we are what we eat- it's no wonder we're becoming such an obese nation!

I wonder what a list would look like that measured our top ten thoughts? With what do we nourish our minds? The Book of Proverbs suggests, "As man thinketh in his heart, so he is." If you and I live on a steady diet of radio talk shows, American Idol and Dancing With the Stars, newspapers and Yahoo websites, sports pages, Wall Street reports and fashion magazines... we're going to find that what we're consuming leaves us deficient in hope, peace, joy and abiding wisdom.

In a recent article, philosopher Christina Hoff Sommers observed, “Increasingly, today’s young people know little or nothing about the western moral tradition.” In other words- they don’t know the Bible. To illustrate this, she referred to one of Jay Leno’s man-in-the-street interviews. “Can you name one of the Ten Commandments?” he asked two college age women. “Freedom of speech?” guessed one. To the other, Leno said, “Complete this sentence: `Let he who is without sin...’” She replied, “... have a good time?”

“As with other humorous anecdotes, the underlying reality is not funny at all.” Sommers writes, “There young people who are morally confused.” Given this state of moral confusion, we can grow up wonderful golfers with the morals of an alley cat; produce scholars capable of building a terrorist bomb that would slaughters hundreds of innocents in Times Square; create financial genius capable of emptying out everyone’s retirement fund and bringing our economy to its knees for the sake of personal gain, and we saw this past week, send top-drawer kids to sororities at one of our region’s top colleges to engage in drunken and repulsive behavior. These are important things we’re talking about, and we’re reaping the harvest of what is too often a moral and ethical wasteland.

I’d like to suggest to you that if our children are going to be able to discern right from wrong- much less choose right from wrong- parents must raise children in an environment that nourishes them with great literature, elevate art and music in their lives, and insist on taking in the knowledge of our moral tradition- beginning with the Bible, our great source of Western moral tradition.

There's an old computer programming cliché that says, "Garbage in, garbage out." We must teach our children to feast on the truth found in scripture- not trite bumper sticker clichés we plaster like so much gangster graffiti on the walls of our society. We've got to teach respect for the Word of God, and the laws that still undergird all of reality; there is the self-evident truth given to us by nature itself... as the Psalmist said in opening Psalm 19: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands." Six verses later, he goes on to declare the life-nurturing effects of God's revealed law ([Psalm 19:7-11](#)):

<sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect,  
reviving the soul.  
The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple.

<sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right,  
giving joy to the heart.  
The commands of the LORD are radiant,  
giving light to the eyes.

<sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD is pure,  
enduring forever.  
The ordinances of the LORD are sure  
and altogether righteous.

<sup>10</sup> They are more precious than gold,  
than much pure gold;  
they are sweeter than honey,  
than honey from the comb.

<sup>11</sup> By them is your servant warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.

"... in keeping them, there is great reward." We reap what we sow, and in God's truth we discover great profit. Noble ideas and noble thoughts can produce noble actions. Loving, hopeful thinking can produce loving, hopeful people. Beauty begets beauty. The Apostle Paul puts it this way: ([Phil 4:8](#)) "...whatever is true, whatever is noble,

whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

But then Paul goes on to say this: (add Phil 4:9) “Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.” Can you say that to those around you? We can preach at the kids all we want- but if we’re not reading the Bible, we just a bunch of hypocritical windbags...and the kids know it. If you’re not in Bible study yourself, you better keep your mouth shut about the morality issues of our day- your kids will see right through you. If you’re not regularly dining on the alphabet of grace, and tasting what the Psalmist called the ordinances of God that are sweeter than honey... what right do you have to call into question the beer and cheetos diet of today’s kids?

That’s why Debbie prepared this little guide for the parents of our third graders; I urge you- use it. If you didn’t get a copy and would like one, speak with Debbie or call the church office. But, that’s not all... this summer, we’re going to do Bible study around here based on twelve all-time favorite Bible passages... passages like Psalm 23, John 3:16, the parable of the Good Samaritan, and the like. We’ll be forming small groups all over the church; find one, and join it. Click away from one of your reality TV shows, or push back from your web-browsing, and spend some time in scripture... and let God nurture your soul. As the summer heats up... as life heats up... nourish yourself beside streams of living water... and you’ll bear much fruit.