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YPS

(Young Precious Seed)

is a supplement of *Precious Seed* designed for those young in faith. Its purpose is to restate timeless truths from the word of God for a new generation of Christians and to kindle a biblical approach to current issues in the world in which we live.

YPS is published by Precious Seed, P.O. Box 8, Neath, West Glamorgan, UK, SA11 1QB, and is also available separately from the magazine.

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ABORTION

'I don't think that infanticide (the killing of infants) is always unjustifiable. I don't think it is plausible to think that there is any moral change that occurs during the journey down the birth canal.'

Are you troubled when you read something like that? You ought to be, especially when you realize that this is the opinion of a member of the British Medical Association's ethics committee which was printed in the press recently. In what circumstances would infanticide be justifiable? And why are we even asking the question? Why does the professor talk of 'any moral change that occurs during the journey down the birth canal'?



The moral debate surrounding abortion has focussed on the point at which a 'foetus' (a fertilized egg in a woman's womb) becomes a human being. A number of positions have been taken. Some say it is from the moment of conception, some say it is at fourteen days, when the 'primitive streak' has appeared. Others go later and say it changes with each foetus, and is to be taken at the moment of 'quickening' when a mother can feel the child move or kick within the womb. The most widely accepted view is that it is only when the foetus is viable, that is to say when that foetus, were it to be born prematurely, would be able to survive. This point has been settled at twenty-four weeks. In other words, a foetus in the womb can be legally aborted in the UK before the age of twenty-four weeks. The moral justification for this, if one is needed and many don't need one, is that before that time, the foetus is not a human being with potential but a foetus with the potential to become a human being. The professor quoted above is evidently of the opinion that even

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a new-born infant is not given automatic protection from the law of murder, as he does not believe any moral change has occurred in the passage from dependant life in the womb to self dependence outside.

Now God has expressly forbidden the murder, or unjustifiable killing, of human beings when, in His seventh commandment, He said, 'Thou shalt not kill', Exod. 20. 13; Rom. 13. 9-10. The force of the word 'kill' here is 'murder', which is unlawful killing. There are instances where God recognizes some killing of humans as lawful: capital punishment, which is state-execution of a murderer, is one instance, Gen. 9. 6; Exod. 21. 12; Num 35. 31; Rom. 13. 4, as was war where God commanded it, a 'just war' in those circumstances. However, unlawful killing is prohibited by God. The killing of animals is not included in this commandment. God has never prohibited the killing of animals. In fact, He expects and commands it in cases of sacrificial offering and for food, Exod.

12. 3-8; Gen 9. 3. Human life, however, is different for the following reasons:

Its Dignity

Mankind is made 'in the image of God'. This was true of Adam and Eve, God's direct creations in the beginning, Gen. 1. 26-28, and of human beings created subsequently by the natural, yet divinely overseen, process of conception and birth, Gen. 9. 5-6. It is this creation in the image of God that sets mankind apart from all other living

creatures, giving a moral and a spiritual capacity that animals do not have. It also reflects the fact that mankind as a whole is placed on the earth as God's representatives, to 'rule' His creation. Man is, therefore, the visible representative of God on the earth. As such, human beings have great dignity in God's creation.

Its Eternity

The human soul will not come to an end, unlike other living creatures. A human soul lasts forever, and will, after this life, either take its place in heaven or in hell, Heb. 9. 12; Luke 16. 19-31. There is, for every human being, the prospect of everlasting life or of everlasting death, the latter being everlasting separation from the presence of God.

Its Sanctity

Because of this dignity and eternity, the unlawful killing of a human being was prohibited by God, with capital punishment being the sentence, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed', Gen. 9. 6. and, 'He that killeth any man shall surely be put to death', Lev. 24. 17-21.

The question therefore is, at what point does a foetus become 'human'? What does the Bible say?

God sees human life even before its conception in the womb

Some scriptures indicate that God knew and recognized human beings before conception. 'Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee; and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations', Jer. 1. 5. 'Thine eyes did see my substance yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my



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members were written . . . when as yet there was none of them', Ps. 139. 16.

God sees and blesses human life in the womb

Several scriptures indicate that God sees the foetus as human even in the womb. 'Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb', Ps. 139. 13; 'Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?', Job 31. 15; 'I formed you in the womb', Jer. 1. 5; 'Thus saith the Lord thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb', Isa. 44. 24. This would evidently undermine the argument that human life does not begin until birth.

Infants (foetuses) can be sensitive to spiritual things whilst still in the womb

Life and spiritual experiences seem to begin in the womb before birth ever takes place. 'He (John the Baptist) will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb', Luke 1. 15; 'When Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb', Luke, 1. 41.

God calls a born child and an unborn child the same thing

In Hebrew, we are given to understand, there is no word for 'foetus'. The same word, *yeleth*, is used of both children in the womb and for children just born. So in Isaiah 9. 6 the word for 'child' in 'unto us a child is born' is the word *yeleth*. In the complicated passage on injury to a pregnant woman and its resultant premature birth in Exodus 21 we read, 'If men strive and hurt a woman with child so that her fruit depart from her and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished', vv.

22-25. A closer translation of the phrase 'so that her fruit depart from her' is 'if her children come out' and the word for children here is the plural of *yeleth*. In Luke chapter 2 and verse 12 the baby Jesus is called a *brephos* or infant, 'Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger'. Yet the same word, *brephos*, infant, is used of John the Baptist in his mother's womb in Luke 1. 41. Surely this implies that God sees no difference between an unborn infant and a newborn one; each, in His eyes, is a human being. Even still-born children are called infants in God's eyes, Job 3. 16. In fact the terms 'child', 'children', 'son', 'infant' are all used of foetuses whilst still in the womb, Job 3. 16; Gen. 25. 21-22; Luke 1. 36; Acts 7. 19. There is no moral change during passage down the birth canal because the Bible sees the unborn child as as much human as the born one.

Returning to the verses in Exodus chapter 21, BRIAN EDWARDS has pointed out that the passage refers to the penalties for murder. However, the focus here is not on the woman – the same penalty for murder would apply to her killing whether she were pregnant or not. 'The focus of attention must be the child in her womb. If as a result of violence to her, the baby 'comes out' but there is no serious injury to it, then a fine will be levied, but if the child is dead or injured then the punishment is life for life. What this instructive passage teaches us is that a deliberate act that

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causes the death of an unborn child is considered to be murder', *The Ten Commandments for Today*, p193.

Are there any circumstances when abortion could be acceptable in the eyes of God?

It seems clear that the Bible teaches that a child in the womb is a human being in itself. To abort that pregnancy is, therefore, unlawful killing, or murder, in the eyes of God. Is this so in every case? Are there any circumstances in which an abortion is acceptable to God? What of situations where the child in the womb is severely disabled and will have no quality of life? What about a situation where a woman is pregnant through rape and the birth of the child will bring major psychological distress to the mother? What about where the choice is either the life of the mother or the life of the child?

It needs to be stressed that man has no right to decide what is an acceptable quality of life and what is not. To go down this route is to open the flood-

gates to all sorts of problems. What about 'quality of life' for the elderly, the infirm, the terminally ill? Have we the right to terminate the life of an adult just because we feel they do not have the right quality of life? If we cannot do so for a born human why should we arrogate the right to decide the same for an unborn human? Parents are often put under intense pressure to have an abortion where tests indicate

the baby is Downs Syndrome. Yet many Downs Syndrome sufferers are delightful people. And does not God Himself say, 'Who hath made man's mouth? or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind? have not I the Lord?'; Exod. 4. 11. And did not the Lord Jesus say that the man blind from his birth was born this way 'that the works of God should be made manifest in him?'; John 9.3. This does not lessen the sorrow and distress for the parents of such children, but their sorrow and distress do not legitimize abortion. The case of a child born of rape is more emotive, and the mother needs tremendous prayer and support in order to go through with the pregnancy, but believers have often done so for conscience sake. Many would feel that where the life of a mother is threatened and the choice is between the mother's existence and that of the child abortion is the 'lesser of two evils' and may, in those circumstances, not be deemed unlawful killing. Such is the moral maze.

What about those who have inadvisedly engaged in abortion? As with any sin, 'there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared'. But let it be clearly stated that God sees human life as beginning in the womb, and that any unlawful termination of that young human life is unacceptable to Him. 'The value of human life, and God's refusal to concede that the child in the womb is anything other than truly human, should settle the principle of whether or not it can be right to terminate the life of a child in the womb'; EDWARDS, p193.

It needs to be stressed that man has no right to decide what is an acceptable quality of life and what is not.



The Devotion of Youth

God speaks wistfully through the prophet Jeremiah to Israel, 'I remember you, the kindness of your youth, the love of your betrothal. When you went after me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord', Jer. 2. 2-3 NKJV.

God is remembering the zeal and dedication of Israel in the early days after their redemption from Egypt. Nearly 800 years had passed since then. Idolatry and the breaking of God's commandments now characterized the nation, and Jeremiah's heart is broken, as is God's. The word translated 'kindness' here is translated as 'devotion' in the New American Standard Bible. The word *chesed* can be translated as 'loyal love', 'the love of your betrothal'. There was the happiness, the joy, the excitement, the zeal of the newly married. God remembers it, but do we?

Do you remember the joy and excitement that filled your soul when first you accepted Christ as your Lord and Saviour? Do you remember how the love of God was poured out in your heart and you wanted to tell everyone about your wonderful Saviour? Do you remember your zeal in witnessing to others and your longing to see them saved? Do you remember the joy you experienced as you met with the Lord's people, sang those grand hymns and were moved to tears as you remembered the Lord's death in the breaking of bread? The Lord remembers.

It is hard to maintain the zeal and devotion of youth for the Lord. Many who were zealous for the Lord thirty or forty years ago are now complacent and apathetic toward the things of God. How sad! God still remembers the devotion of your youth –and is grieved. Is it inevitable that love for God will

burn down to a bed of dead coals? Consider Caleb's words after they had entered Canaan. 'Lo I am this day, eighty-five years old. As yet I am as strong this day as I was in the day that Moses sent me; as my strength was then, even so is my strength now for war', Josh 14. 10-12. Brave words! Caleb was an old man but was strong in faith and his devotion to God. His body may have aged somewhat but his spirit was that of a young man, the devotion and faith of youth.

What will kill our devotion and zeal for the Lord? Neglect of God's word and prayer will sap our spiritual life. Forsaking meeting with the Lord's people regularly will hasten coldness of heart. We need the exhortation and encouragement of God's family, Heb. 10. 25. 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him', 1 John 2. 15. The believer must resist the temptation to live for material things, constantly to want more, Heb. 13. 5. With sorrow Paul wrote, 'Demas hath forsaken me having loved this present world', 2 Tim. 4. 10. Beware of the pleasures of sin, the world's entertainment, the seduction of television.

So how do we respond? Have we lost the devotion to the Lord we once knew? 'Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works', Rev. 2. 5. Pour out your heart to the Lord in confession and know His forgiveness and restoration. Refuse to go on living with a heart cold to the God who loves you dearly.



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BIBLE STUDY BY MICHAEL PENFOLD, BICESTER, ENGLAND

Although it is an honour to engage in the immensely rewarding task of Bible study, make no mistake, it's hard work! The Bible calls its students labourers, 2 Tim 2. 15. With that in mind it might be helpful to list a number of benefits connected with personal Bible study:

1. It facilitates real personal spiritual growth, Heb. 5. 12-14
2. It corrects and guides in the Christian life, 2 Tim 3. 16
3. It equips for evangelism, 1 Pet. 3. 15
4. It preserves personal holiness, Ps. 119. 9
5. It ensures victory in temptation, Matt. 4. 4
6. It partly qualifies for leadership, 1 Tim. 3. 2
7. It produces spiritual discernment, Heb. 5. 14
8. It provides material for worship, Eph. 5. 19
9. It fits the believer for useful service, 2 Tim. 3. 17

Prior to engaging in this profitable discipline there are a few essentials one needs to have in place:

- A regular time set aside each morning, Ps. 63. 1; Acts 17. 11
- The determination to stick at it over the long-term, 2 Tim. 2. 15; Job 23. 12
- A prayerful teachable spirit, Ps. 86. 11
- A tidy desk in a quiet place

Once you have chosen the book you wish to study (Colossians will be used for the purposes of this article) the following three stages will help you get to grips with it:

1. The Observation Stage

Week 1

- Begin each day by praying for light and help from God

- Read right through Colossians in one sitting daily, using various sound Bible versions such as KJV, NKJV and JND (inaccurate and misleading paraphrases like The Message, the CEV and the Good News Bible should be avoided)
- On a notepad, write down anything you notice such as recurring words and phrases, themes, ideas and doctrines that link to each other both within Colossians and with other books of the Bible
- At the end of the week look up these recurring words (in a *Wigram's Concordance*, not a *Strong's Concordance*, because you want the Greek not the English) and note down the actual occurrences and try to list them under headings
- If you have a computer, a programme like Powerbible (available on CD) or E-Sword (a free download from the internet) will be very helpful and speed up your research by at least a factor of 10

Week 2

While continuing to read Colossians daily, research and write down (using commentaries and bible dictionaries):

- The setting and background (historical and cultural) of the epistle and how it relates to you
- The author of Colossians and his relationship with them
- The audience (who were the Colossians?) and how they are like you
- The date of writing (when did Paul write – and how can you prove this?)
- The place of writing (from where did Paul write?)
- The purpose for which Paul wrote the epistle
- The key theme and principles of the epistle



- Key words Paul uses in the epistle
- Divide the book up into sections and sub-sections and give them headings (alliterated if possible)

2. The Interpretation Stage

Week 3 onwards

After prayer, read just the chapter you are working in.

- Keeping your outline handy, start working down chapter 1 one a verse at a time
- Don't leave a verse until you understand all that's in it (to the best of your ability and with the Lord's help!)
- Read along as you go in two or more sound evangelical commentaries (William MacDonald's *Believer's Bible Commentary* is the best one-volume Bible commentary available)
- Have a Greek Interlinear open nearby at all times
- Look up interesting or difficult words in *Vine's Dictionary*
- Check places where these words occur elsewhere in the Bible using *Wigram's Concordance*
- Keep notes in your Bible margin, in a folder, on a computer or in a system of your own design
- At the end of each chapter write out a summary of the chapter, proving that you know and understand the flow of the argument and the context

To obtain further profit

Can you find a number of things in the book you are studying that could be linked with another book or group of books (or perhaps with items connected to the tabernacle, the offerings, the life of Christ or the prophetic plan of God). In other words:

- If you have 4 points can they be lined up with the 4 gospels?
- If you have 5 points can they be lined up with the Pentateuch, or with the 5 major offerings?
- If you have 3 linked verses can they be lined up with 3 Bible characters?

Also, as you proceed, remember to look at the passage from different angles:

- The devotional angle – how can I apply this to Christ?
- The dispensational angle – is there anything relative to God's plan for Israel, the church and the nations?
- The typical angle – is there any typology to bear in mind?
- The practical angle (see below)

3. The Application Stage

Week 3 onwards

Daily ask the following:

- What can I give to God in worship from this passage?
- What warning should I heed?
- What command must I obey?
- What truth must I believe?
- What promise can I claim?
- What attitude can I adjust?
- What priority must I change?
- What activity should I cease?
- What offence must I forgive?
- What sin must I confess?

These questions can be boiled down to two pertinent statements that reveal the true purpose of the study of God's word, 2 Tim. 3. 17.

After all, the purpose of Bible study is not just to inform me; it is also to change me. I am responsible before God for what I do with what I know.

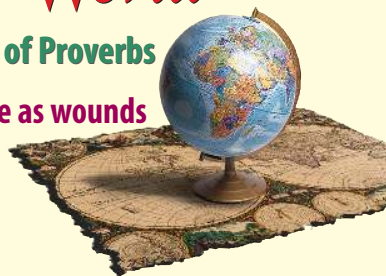


**'God I pray Thee light these idle sticks of my life,
that I may burn for Thee. Consume my life, my God,
for it is Thine. I seek not a long life, but a full one,
like Thee, Lord Jesus', Jim Elliot.**

Ancient Wisdom for a Modern World

Wise words from the book of Proverbs

**'The words of a talebearer are as wounds
[dainty morsels], and they
go down into the innermost
parts of the belly', Prov. 18. 8.**



This little proverb is so important that it is stated twice, here and in Proverbs 26. 22. It warns us of the pleasure and problem of gossip; the pleasure lies in the telling and the hearing of the gossip; the problem is in the effect it has upon us.

The word for 'talebearer' here is the same as 'whisperer' in 16. 28. This is someone who murmurs and whispers about other people behind their backs. Gossips never share their secrets in front of the person about whom they are speaking. They are always busy behind the scenes, with a brief word, a nudge, a 'Did you know?' or a 'Have you heard?' They usually speak in those whispering, low tones, as though they don't want anyone to overhear them, when really they would like everybody but their subject to hear their titbits of news. The trouble is, what gossips have to share is likened to 'dainty morsels'. The description comes from the verb to devour, swallow, gobble up. Listening to gossip, and spreading it, is as easy and as pleasurable as sucking sweets or eating pastries. And turning away from it is as hard as saying 'No' to the most gorgeous pudding one ever saw.

The problem of gossip is what it does to people. In Proverbs 16. 28 the gossip divides the best of friends. In chapter 26 and verse 20 the gossip causes strife. This is because the sweet titbit of news goes down 'to the innermost parts of the belly'. This is a phrase that means the very inner chambers of the heart of a man or woman, Prov. 20. 27. The problem with gossip is that it influences our thoughts and our opinions without us knowing it. Once accepted, it is hard to reject. We may never think so well of the person about whom the gossip speaks, even though we may do our best to do otherwise. Gossip may be delicious to hear and to mull over; but it is a powerful destroyer of relationships and opinions.

God hates gossip and gossips. It would be good if we could determine never to listen to gossip and never to engage in it or pass on anything we hear. Pleasant words and pleasant speech are life and health to the body, Prov. 4. 22. Though the exhortation 'speak not evil one of another, brethren' may refer to speech in a wider sense, it is still true of gossip too. There has been many a man, woman, reputation or life destroyed by malicious talk. Do not engage in it. If you know or hear of anything bad about a brother or sister, talk to the Lord about it, and not to anyone else.