



# YPS

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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.

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## EUTHANASIA

The word 'euthanasia' means 'dying well'. When mentioned these days, it usually refers to the grounds upon which others should be permitted to speed up or ease the death of another person. Following on from the principles established in a previous article on abortion, which is the taking of human life in its infancy, we turn to euthanasia, which is the taking of human life in its dependency. Two instances are usually given. On the one hand we are often told it is good for us to hasten the death of the elderly because they have no quality of life, and are a burden to themselves and to others; on the other hand, we are encouraged to think that any life which has lost its quality is better ended; and that those of any age who are disabled, have incurable diseases, or face intolerable suffering, should either be encouraged to take steps to end their own lives (assisted suicide) or should have the decision made for them (mercy-killing).



It would be good to re-iterate what the Bible teaches. 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

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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 are 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;

Lk. 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', see Lev. 24. 17-21.

Human life, therefore, is special. One often hears the argument, when others see people facing intense suffering, 'It's such a shame. We would not let a dog die like that'. But people are not dogs. We may put down injured animals, but that is because they are animals. Human beings have souls that will never die and it is surely only God's right to send a soul into eternity to face its Maker, not ours.

The growing trend of governments today is to push further and further the boundaries and to make it legal to terminate life under certain circumstances. The growing human rights lobby, which has as part of its agenda the right to 'die with dignity', is a powerful one and often crystallizes its arguments around emotive cases; a couple who are devoted to each other yet one pleads for the right to end the other's life because of extreme suffering; children with incurable and painful disease that make headline news; instances where it is obvious that 'quality of life' is no longer present. Yet we ought to remember the saying that 'hard cases make bad laws'. In certain circumstances, governments are increasingly saying, doctors should be given the right to, and legal protection to, assist or facilitate death. Yet large numbers of doctors in the UK recently signed a statement in which they said they did not want to be given this right. For them, the most important thing is to alleviate human suffering, rather than to facilitate human death.

The ethical basis of euthanasia, assisted suicide, mercy killing, or



whatever other term is used, should be assessed in the light of the following non-emotive arguments:

## God has nowhere in the Bible given man the right to end a person's life

In the matter of the taking of life it is God who gives and God who takes away. Even though governments may change the law of the land to make it legal to intervene and take another person's life, making something legal does not make it either ethical or moral. Any intervention that leads to human beings taking human life on any grounds other than those God has laid down (capital punishment and a just war, for instance) is, in the eyes of God, unlawful killing and therefore murder.

## No one has the right to evaluate the quality of life of another

We need to ask ourselves, what right does anyone else have to decide whether the quality of life of another is good enough for them to stay alive. Just because someone is severely disabled, or in excruciating pain, or facing an incurable illness that may lead to prolonged suffering, or has become a burden to themselves and to others, does not entitle us to decide to end things for them. BRIAN EDWARDS has written, 'The value of life is not based upon the ability to feel pain or to communicate but on the fact that every human being is created in the likeness of God and He alone controls both life and death', *The Ten Commandments For Today*, Day One Publications, 1996, p.194.

There are a number of other **issues related to illness** in which many find themselves and a number of related

complexities arise in our modern society.

## Have we gone too far with our medical skills?

As a result of amazing medical and technical skill, doctors are able to keep patients 'alive' on life support machines for years and years. The great debate to which this eventually gives rise is this, Is it right to switch off a life-support machine and if so, when? Perhaps we ought to be asking ourselves whether it is right to keep people 'alive' in such artificial circumstances. We have all heard of stories where life-support machines were switched off and the patient continued to live. No doubt it was God's will in the end that they should do so, just as it is God's will if they don't. This is not to take away the hope of families whose loved ones may be being sustained by such medical expertise, but none-the-less we need to ask how right this is.

## Are 'living wills' ethical?

Some patients facing terminal illness often make it known to doctors or loved ones that if they go into a coma or into cardiac arrest, they do not wish to be resuscitated to face a life of increasing pain and debility. These 'living wills' are now legal – are they ethical?

There are also a number of **issues related to the elderly**.

The next area of great debate is the quality of life, not just for the terminally ill, but for the elderly. Western society is going further and further down the route that assesses



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the elderly to be a burden on society, on its funds, its resources and its time. What does the Bible say about old age?

### The Bible affirms the dignity of old age

Unlike standards in Western society today, we are constantly taught in the Bible to show honour to the elderly, to respect them, provide for them and dignify them. 'Thou shalt rise up before the hoary [white] head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord'. Lev. 19. 32; 'The hoary [white] head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness', Prov. 16. 31. African society honours the elderly and sits at their feet to learn their wisdom; Western society casts them to one side and thus dishonours God.

### Families are expected to look after their own.

The Bible reminds us of two seemingly conflicting responsibilities. In Second Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 14 we read, 'The children ought not to lay up for the parents, but the parents for

the children'. That teaches us that parents are responsible to look after their children when the children are dependent upon them. Yet, on the other hand, we are told in First Timothy 5 and verse 4, 'But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God'. In other

words, destitute widows should become the responsibility of the local assembly, but if they have family the family is responsible to look after the parents. This 'is good and acceptable before God'. As children grow and become independent, so parents will age and become dependent. Then the balance of responsibility changes. Children should look after their aged parents, respect them, honour them and care for them. The aged should not be a burden and any society that seeks to hasten them into their graves, and any children that neglect their parents, are sinning before God.

### Conclusion

Someone has well written, 'Obedience to the fifth commandment implies that we must learn to support the elderly, the sick, and the disabled too, so that their burden is lighter and our society becomes caring and not careless. The tragedy of post-modernism lies in its passion for 'quick-fix' solutions. We dispense with unwanted children by fast abortions, inconvenient marriages by fast divorce, and we would like to off-load unwanted parents and sufferers by a fast exit, all with the casualness with which we satisfy our appetites by fast food'. None of this is God-honouring. Let us, as believers, follow the standards of the Bible.

**'But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their parents: for that is good and acceptable before God'**





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the Q&A menu and ask.

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**Book Reviews:** Here you will find advice and comment on various books that are in print. These reviews will help you to decide whether to buy the book or not.

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## Is anybody out there?

John Blanchard

Paperback, 40pp. Published by Evangelical Press, Faverdale North Ind. Est. Darlington. DL3 0PH.

Price £1.50, ISBN 0-85234-616-6

Do you have difficulties knowing how to challenge the sceptic or to reach the cynic with the gospel? Have you ever thought through the implications of atheism or agnosticism? John Blanchard's pamphlets are excellent starting points in tackling many people's thinking on 'religious' issues.

Apart from a slightly misleading title (he starts from the point of the search for extraterrestrial intelligence) this pamphlet tackles the essential nature of faith. He deals with agnosticism as nothing more than a 'blind alley'. He

tackles atheism as 'a vast desert... with no life-giving water to be found anywhere'. Looking at common world religions, he shows the absurdity of suggesting 'that all religions are saying essentially the same thing'. Christianity and the Bible are shown to be unique and the God of the Bible to be the Creator and Sustainer of all things. That same God is the only one to provide an answer to the human plague of sin in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ.

This book is not light reading but, if you want to present a Christian challenge to any thoughtful mind, this pamphlet will undoubtedly help. Buy it; read it; share it!



BY JOHN BENNETT

# THE LORD'S PRAYER

## (1) Introduction

### A Familiar Prayer

The 'Lord's Prayer' is probably the most familiar passage of the Bible to millions of people. Memories of it for older generations of people are inevitably linked with school assemblies where it was taught and recited every week, though younger generations will not be so familiar with it now that schools are dropping the Christian emphasis of school assemblies. In church circles it is the one prayer that is used by most Christian traditions as part of their formal collective worship and is often recited by many in the home every evening before they go to sleep. It is undoubtedly a much-loved and familiar passage of the Bible.

Yet, though it is a familiar prayer, the question remains as to how much of the Prayer is actually understood by those who recite it. It is ironic that our Lord, in giving the Prayer to His disciples, did so in order to prevent them from doing what many now proceed to do – recite the prayer by heart while their minds are occupied with other things. 'When ye pray,' our Lord said, 'use not vain repetition as the

heathen do'. Are we not guilty of doing just that if we use the prayer mindlessly, unthinkingly and repeatedly? Surely our Lord was teaching us that it is not the use of endless repetitions or incantations that draws a response from Him. It is not the 'much speaking' that draws His attention, but the thoughtful, sincere expression in our own words of the thoughts and desires of our hearts. Prayer is talking to God, not merely reciting

to Him. The mis-use of the Lord's Prayer should be as much a matter of concern to us as its use.

### A Family Prayer

Our Lord began the Prayer with the words, 'Our Father'. The Lord's Prayer is essentially a family prayer, which only those who know God as Father can pray. In this regard, the early church was probably right to refuse to let unbelievers recite it, just as they refused to let unbelievers remember the Lord in the breaking of bread. The right to call God 'Father' and the right to take communion are rights that belong only to God's true children.

There are some that would say it is a prayer that was given to Jewish disciples and is for Jews to use in a coming day of tribulation. That may be so, but its principles can still be used by believers today. 'Although the prayer pattern was primarily for subjects of the kingdom, it can scarcely be regarded as entirely irrelevant to the present day for those who are already members of the kingdom of God,' wrote FRED. TATFORD.

### A Pattern Prayer

As there is no evidence that the Lord Jesus ever used it Himself, but rather said to His disciples, 'After this manner pray ye,' it would be better to call it the Disciples' Prayer, rather than the Lord's Prayer. That our Lord gave two versions of the Prayer on two different occasions, one recorded in the Gospel of Matthew and one in the Gospel of Luke, makes us think that He did not intend us to learn it by heart, either, and to repeat it without thought. Because the two versions are different, yet the layout is similar, the Prayer is more likely to show us how to formulate our own prayers rather than to give us phrases to use. The purpose of the Prayer is to give us a pattern for prayer rather than



a ritual; it is to give us a skeleton of 'bones' that we are to clothe with our own words. This is borne out by the way in which our Lord said in Matthew, 'After this manner pray ye', or, as one version has it, 'This, then, is how you should pray'. Note it is not *what* we are to pray, but *how* we are to pray. Often, when people are encouraged to pray they say, 'But I don't know what to say'. This pattern shows us the priorities and subjects of prayer.

The Pattern Prayer then works like this:

### **Invocation**

Our Father which art in heaven  
*Calling upon God by name*  
*Reminding us of our relationship*  
*with Him*

### **God's concerns**

Hallowed be thy name  
 Thy kingdom come  
 Thy will be done  
*Expressing concern for God's glory*  
*First three requests*

### **Man's concerns**

Give us this day our daily bread,  
 Forgive us our trespasses  
 Lead us not into temptation  
 but deliver us from evil  
*Expressing dependence upon God's*  
*grace*  
*Second three requests*

### **Conclusion**

Thine is the kingdom  
 The power and the glory forever and  
 ever, Amen  
*Declaring God's authority*  
*Reminding us of His ability to do His*  
*will*

First of all, then, this pattern prayer of the disciples shows us that we should address our prayer to someone. We should 'call upon his name'. Our Lord tells us that, if we are God's children, we can address Him as our Father. What a wonderful privilege that is – to call the great Creator 'Father'. He then tells us

that our priorities in prayer should not be our own needs, but His. Too often when we pray we come to the Lord with a glorified shopping list, a long line of things that we want. Our Lord shows us in this pattern prayer that we ought to make God's concerns a priority with us, not our own, however legitimate and urgent our needs may be. He Himself once said to His disciples, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God . . . and all these things shall be added unto you'. In praying for God's concerns first, we should pray that His name should be revered, His kingdom should be furthered and His will should be done, and that not just by others but by ourselves too. Having then given God and His interests pride of place in our lives and prayers, we can legitimately raise our own concerns. We can then ask God to supply our needs, though not our greed, we can ask for His provision, His pardon and His protection. All can then be concluded by a stimulus to worship and faith, as we remind ourselves of the power and the position of the One we call Father.

'The Lord's Prayer covers everything; and all we do is to take these principles and employ and expand them and base our every petition upon them. That is the way in which it is to be approached', MARTYN LLOYD JONES, *Sermon on the Mount*. Do you not know how to pray or what to pray? 'After this manner pray ye', says the Lord. Were we to pray *like this*, rather than to pray *this*, we would find our prayers properly addressed, our priorities correctly ordered, our requests humbly presented to God, and our faith that He can do anything according to His will stimulated so that we can conclude all with the word, 'Amen', 'so let it be'. The Lord often prayed and seemed to pray with such ease and power that it is no wonder the disciples asked him one day, 'Lord, teach us to pray'. Let us also learn from Him.

# Books & Parchments

## Building a good library



BY IAN REES

### ONE-VOLUME COMMENTARIES

**What is a 'commentary' and why should I have one? Isn't the Bible its own commentary?**

There are some believers who think the only way to understand the Bible and to interpret it correctly is to read and study it for oneself, with no help from anyone else. After all, they say, even though we may not know everything, the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth. Whilst there is no substitute for consistent reading of the Bible for ourselves, and whilst it is true that we ought to think about what we read and interpret it as best we can, constantly praying for the Spirit's help, it seems a little arrogant to think we can properly interpret it for ourselves, given our limited knowledge of the original languages in which the Bible was written. It is also extremely time-wasting to ignore the wealth of teaching, help and instruction which others have made available to us. Do we all really need to re-invent the wheel?

A commentary is a book in which others 'comment' on the Bible. There are large, many-volumed sets of commentaries that are both exhaustive and exhausting. If you have no commentary, however, the best place to start is by buying a one-volume commentary. This is a book that attempts to cover all the books of the Bible, making brief comments about each passage, and giving a general overall idea of what the Bible teaches. One of the better and more popular one-volume commentaries is *The New Bible Commentary*. For forty years this has been a standard commentary for Bible students. It is now available in its 21st Century Edition, is edited by Wenham, Motyer, Carson and France, (D. Guthrie and others) and was published by IVP in 1994. This commentary has contributions written by a vast array of evangelical writers from all denominations. It is, therefore, authoritative and wide-ranging. Like all volumes that have a variety of contributors, however, it has its strong points and its weaknesses. An excellent, though much older, one-volume commentary is the abridged version of *Matthew Henry*, written by who was a Puritan writer and

wrote a devotional commentary that was so popular in its day that Spurgeon recommended people read the commentary through once a year, as well as the Bible! It is a little dated and it is more of a devotional commentary than an expositional one. A third option is the *Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, edited by Pfeiffer and Harrison, and published by Moody in 1962. This commentary is more expositional than Matthew Henry, is evangelical, and easy for the average student to read.

An essential book for any young believers' library today is the one-volume commentary written, in the main, by William MacDonald. It is entitled *The Believers' Bible Commentary*, and was published by Nelson in 1995. The author writes, in his preface, 'The purpose of [this volume] is to give the average Christian reader a basic knowledge of what the Holy Bible is all about. [It] is also intended to stimulate such a love and taste for the Bible that the believer will want to delve more deeply into their inexhaustible treasures.' There are times when the book gives very sparse comments on a passage, and one could wish for more depth. There are other times when what is said is just sufficient and right. In addition to comments on Bible passages, MacDonald occasionally gives us an in-depth comment on a doctrine or point about which there is much debate. Comment on each book of the Bible starts with a general introduction, and there are maps, charts and illustrations all the way through. His commentary is one of the few that gives a balanced interpretation of 1 Corinthians 11 and does not dismiss Paul's comments as out of line (Paul's opinion, not God's) or out of date (merely cultural teaching for Paul's day and not for ours). If you want a single-volume commentary to which you will turn again and again, the *Believer's Bible Commentary* is the one for you.

*The New Bible Commentary*  
*Matthew Henry*  
*Wycliffe Bible Commentary*  
*Believers' Bible Commentary*

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