

those who have disciplined us ...

By Bill Johnson



I begin our January 2025 newsletter with these words from 2 Peter 1:6-21. And, warmly, follow it with an application of it from the Reformation Study Bible which we are so thankful for. This passage is such an undergirding for our lives and for this ministry that God, in truth and in deed, raised up back in 1985.

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” 2 Peter 1:16-21

Here, then, is the application referenced at the beginning from the Reformation Heritage Study Bible: *“The faithful teaching and life of those who have disciplined us will be remembered with love long after they*

have gone home (Heb. 13:7). We should all seek to leave behind a legacy of truth. Will you be remembered as one who faithfully shared with others the truths of Scripture?” (Reformation Heritage Study Bible Thoughts for Personal Family Worship, 2 Peter 1)

I have often shared my sensing of the move of God that led me to believe I was called into ministry –in the early 1970s ...but to what specific call? That call became increasingly clear. Now here I am continuing to lead and be a part of a God-appointed team that has had significant national and local victories starting back in 1985.

I am picking up on this from above: ***The faithful teaching and life of those who have disciplined us will be remembered with love long after they have gone home (Heb. 13:7).***

It is important for you and me to remember those who have gone home who have impacted us. I needed the Kleenex box as I began to share. My father-in-law Dave VanSloten, who died in 2001 but lives within my heart. He was a true “Dutchman.” So much could be said, but suffice it to say he was a positive example of what God does with a man whom, by God’s grace, has walked in the ways of the Lord.

It gets very difficult because there are many. I think of Laura who near the end of her life

came for the last time to our office so clearly wanting us to know of her love and support with a gift in hand. I think of Max who was a World War II veteran and a survivor of five major battles, who ultimately served as county clerk for many years, and was one of our volunteers, hardly ever missing a mailing. I think of Bud – a Vice-President of the Gideons in years past who was a lay preacher and a bold witness for Jesus Christ – leaving me with his old and highly used set of the Matthew Henry commentary and a large collection of his hand scrolled sermon notes. I think of the 50 plus men and women from the greatest generation who were with us from the very beginning, gathering faithfully every month to stuff thousands of newsletters. These, and so many others throughout the years, helped us through prayers, hands-on labor, encouragement and donations.

As 2024 winds down, we’re thankful for words of encouragement and gifts from a core of you. The new year promises to be one of expanding perplexities and spiritual wickedness in high places as there will be entrenched opposition to efforts to close the border and to revive our separate branches of government, which are so desperately in need of judicious attention. We also intend to give increased attention to the ever-increasing plague of pornography and to the call to pursue holiness.

To God be the Glory!

Hope for Tomorrow

By Chris Johnson



This time last year, I was dreading election season. The non-stop ads, the lying, the hypocrisy, the inescapable question of whether a corrupt voting process made all the emotional energy poured into it a waste of time – I thought that the previous elections I’ve closely observed informed what we could expect. I came of voting age just in time to vote against Barack Obama the first time. I’ve seen my preferred candidate drug by the media, intentionally misunderstood, and portrayed as a comic book villain in every election I’ve been a part of.

If, by some miracle, Biden wasn’t reelected, I thought in January 2023, there will surely be riots in the streets, cities on fire, calls for suspension of political norms to prevent Donald Trump from being inaugurated. After all, Trump was the next Hitler, according to the left, and what couldn’t be justified to stop the rise of Hitler?

Instead, as we approach the inauguration of Donald Trump for a second time, I’ve experienced something new as a conservative voter coming of age after the ‘80s: winning.

When Trump won in 2016, we didn’t know what we were getting. With no record of political service or activism, which positions he was taking because he actually held them and which he was claiming for the sake of winning an election was a gamble for voters. When he won, we knew we didn’t have Hillary, but there was no clear picture of which campaign promises the newly inaugurated president would actually act on and which he would ditch.

Heading into 2024, both from his previous term and from the notoriety of many of his appointments, we have a pretty good idea of what Donald Trump will do in the next 4 years. And for those who’ve rallied for the uprooting of the DEI weed from the military and federal agencies, against the flood of il-

legal immigrants and unaccompanied children across our borders, and in support of officials who uphold Biblical morality, the future looks brighter than it has in decades.

Donald Trump’s reelection has given us lots of reasons for hope. Hope for justice for the January 6 political prisoners and for pro-life activists who’ve been targeted by the FBI under Biden, hope for more efficient government spending, including cutting federal funding for Planned Parenthood, hope for ending foreign wars, hope for a stronger economy, more jobs, cheaper fuel, cheaper food, and cheaper medicine, if the new administration lives up to its promises. There is even hope for a stronger pro-life stance in our government as Senator Josh Hawley recently posted to X that he had met with Trump’s proposed Director of Health and Human Services, Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. who had stated his intentions to reinstate pro-life policies and conscience protections at HHS, committed to appointing pro-life deputies in the department, and recognized that there are far too many abortions in this country “and that we cannot be the moral leader of the free world with abortion rates so high.”

As Victor Davis Hanson wrote at American Greatness, *“The global public believes that the United States will again become lawful, have a secure border, return as a beacon of free-market economics, protect its allies, deter its enemies, win over its neutrals, return to the rule of law, restore the professionalism and prestige of its government agencies, check predatory nations abroad with a new deterrent military, and prepare to lead the world in energy production, exploration of space, and scientific and technology development.”*

“Summed up, the welcomed counterrevolution is one of restoration—to dream again that nothing is impossible, and the dreary age of stasis, envy, cynicism, and nihilism is ending, replaced again by a world without limits. No one knows quite what is ahead, but all know that it is at least better already than the current nightmare.”

But, here’s something to think about. How many of these reasons for hope would there be if Donald Trump hadn’t turned his head

at exactly the right angle at exactly the right instant to avoid his head being blown off last July? And, we don’t know exactly what happened behind the scenes of the Biden administration and the Democrat party leading up to Kamala Harris taking over at the top of the Democrat presidential ticket. Would he have run a stronger race? It’s hard to imagine he could have done worse.

In these two major instances, and countless others, it’s plain to see that there’s a much greater Source of hope for the future. Here we can easily see the Hand of God shaping outcomes that we think we are in control of.

As Lisa Van Houten, writes in these pages, Bible sales are up across the country. It’s hard to imagine that this wouldn’t have anything to do with the growing right-wing movement which brought Trump to power, many of the voices of which are unembarrassed about their faith: Tucker Carlson, Dan Bongino, Shawn Ryan, Russell Brand, Jordan Peterson to some extent, even Joe Rogan has said we should follow Jesus in an offhanded way. Most shocking of all to me, was the clip of the uncouth entertainer Kid Rock offering to tell Joe Rogan more about Jesus. These represent some of the most influential voices in the lives of young men on the right at a time when young men are increasingly right wing, and what they are voicing is a curiosity about the things of the Lord.

Many of us have said for years that the only way America could ever be great again was if there was a movement of the Holy Spirit and a time of national revival – that God is our only hope. I’m not saying that there’s a revival going on in the United States right now, but conditions seem ripe for one.

Alistair Begg, in his Advent devotional, made this poetic statement: “Hope turns on the fulcrum of Truth.” It’s written in the context of Christmas, but it’s no less true in a national, political context. As the truth is recognized in our nation and by our people, and specifically the Truth of the gospel of Christ, that is what lifts our hopes for the future.

May God continue to open Americans’ eyes to Truth.

Holiness for a New Year

By Steve Huston



This past year reveals to a greater degree what we've witnessed nearly every preceding year: The term "decency" is constantly having its definition changed by society and that same society is looking down on and actively demeaning the old definition; the same is being done to the term "holiness" by those in the organized church. Though there are some sections of society and the church that hold steadfastly to what was once known as "decency" and "holiness," these changes affect – to some degree – all those who are a part of that society and the church. While it's impossible to "turn the clock back," we can "set the clock aright." I'm not advocating for a worship of tradition; I'm not looking back to the "good old days;" I'm urging us to get back to biblical basics and living as God has called us to live – **a life which glorifies God through obedience to His Word and His call to personal holiness.**

While there are many who balk at true holiness, stating, "I don't want anyone living or dead telling me how to live my life," this call to personal holiness is found in both the Old and New Testaments (Lev. 20:7; 1 Pet. 1:15-16). It's a call for every area of our lives (personal, family, work, public, church life – body, spirit, and soul) because the God of the Bible is our God and He is holy. As Joel Beeke and Michael Barrett write in their introduction to A Radical, Comprehensive Call to Holiness: "*The divine call to holiness is a daily task involving the core of religious faith and practice. Calvin said, 'The whole life of Christians ought to be a sort of practice of godliness, for we have been called to sanctification.' Holiness is the commitment of the whole life to live Godward – to be set apart to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.*"

This "sanctification" or "holiness" is not a list of dos and don'ts that we strongly ad-

here to so that we'll be accepted; it's a life to be lived because we've been transformed by Christ. In other words, it's not simply a theology; it's a daily experience of loving God with all that we are and loving our neighbor as ourselves, because of God's grace working in us and through us.

I never heard my godly grandmother say a negative word about anyone or complain about the hardships she endured. Why? Because that's who Grandma was IN CHRIST; there was a trust that God knew best. My mother exuded positive and encouraging words. Regardless the situation – in her life or another's – she would have something to say that would point others to her loving Saviour. Why? Because that's who Mom was IN CHRIST; even though she was misdiagnosed which brought her to an "early" death, she believed Romans 8:28 and every other promise or command in God's holy Word. Space does not permit me to give the details of my father or a Max Jordan, Jim Blackburn, or other men and women who exemplified godly, daily living in younger and older years alike because they had experienced the transforming power of Christ and lived out personal lives of holiness before a watching world. I am so blessed to have been a part of that watching world.

The Scriptures we read and the hymns we sing are more than just mere words that describe a theology our minds agree with; they are words to live by and songs to be encouraged by, all to God's glory because of His grace and His Spirit living in us, moving us, perfecting us. As Oswald Chambers reminds us, we are not to be merely imitators of God's holiness but we are to BE HOLY as God is holy; it's God's holiness working through us. Chambers repeats: "*When Jesus saves us, He destroys the personality of sin and gives us a personality of holiness.*"

I have attempted to pass on a life of holiness to my children (many of our readers have surely done likewise). I have devotions with them; to the best of my ability monitor what they read, watch, or listen to; give guidance in extra-curricular activities and friendships – all the while giving them more liberties and responsibilities as they grow. I tell them my expectations; during those times and

their times of questioning, we look to the Bible and ask, "What does the Bible say about that?"

I want my children to be used of the Lord, so I take my responsibility to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" seriously (Eph. 6:4). Yet, they, like all of us, grow up and choose for themselves if they will follow a Biblical standard of holiness or a standard of their own.

In dealing with both our adult children and our neighbors/community, a life of holiness includes holding up the banner of Light and urging all men to live as rightful "image-bearers" of God, that He may receive the greater glory. In John Wesley's message *The Wilderness State*, he warns regarding sins of omission: "*Now, if we hate our brother in our heart, or do not rebuke him when we see him in a fault, poverty will soon seep into our own soul, and we become partakers of his sin. By neglecting to reprove our neighbor, we make his sin our own. We become accountable for it to God. We saw his danger and gave him no warning...*" **Could this be the cause of the ineffectiveness of the church today?** This is one of the reasons that the American Decency Association does what we do: warn, educate, stir. **We desire to hold the Lamp of Holiness high, that men would be directed to our Heavenly Father, our Saviour, the guiding influence and leadership of the Holy Spirit.**

I leave you with a New Year's challenge taken from John Wesley's message "Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount": "*Today, do and accept His will. Today, give up yourself – your body, soul, and spirit – to God through Jesus. Desire nothing but that God may be glorified in all that you are, all you do, and all that you suffer. Seek nothing but to know God and His Son Jesus through the eternal Holy Spirit. Pursue nothing other than to love Him, to serve Him, and to enjoy Him in this hour and all eternity.*"

This is a challenge to personal holy living. Lived out, this will change our families, our communities, our state, and, eventually, our nation.

Yes, That's the Book for Me!

By Lisa Van Houten



We just celebrated the **“Good News of great joy that will be for all the people”** - the coming of Immanuel, God with us!

There's also some good news recently reported by the Wall Street Journal: **Bible sales increased 22% this year, many of which are first-time buyers.** This far exceeds sales of other books, which were up less than 1% during that same period. This interest in the Bible was attributed to worries about the economy, the election, etc; as one book seller stated: **“They're looking for hope with the world the way it is, and the Bible is what they're reaching for.”**

Numerous public figures, who influence millions of Americans, are increasingly speaking out about exploring God's Word and their spiritual journey. Jordan Peterson, author of the aptly entitled book, We Who Wrestle With God, continues to show appreciation for the Bible, even as he continues to grapple with what it means to be a true believer. Tucker Carlson has been talking a lot recently about reading the Bible and what seems to be his own budding faith. Actor Tim Allen shared that he is reading through the Bible for the first time and said about his dive into Scripture, **“So far amazing and not at all what I was expecting.”** Martin Luther once said, “God can draw a straight line with a crooked stick” and He can use these flawed individuals to encourage others to also start reading the Bible. While these men may not yet be in the Kingdom, we pray that the seed of God's Word planted in their lives takes root.

God redeems and uses the most unlikely persons, as all of those first-time readers of the Bible will find out. I pray that one of the redeemed will be Cely Vazquez, who appears on the steamy reality show “Love Island.” Cely posted on TikTok that she recently bought her first Bible, stating: **“I felt**

something was missing. It's a combination of where we are in the world, general anxiety and the sense that meaning and comfort can be found in the Bible. ... And now at 28-years-old I've been finding myself having this deeper craving for really understanding what it means to walk with God and I think that definitely starts with reading and studying the Bible... And it took me a while to get here, but I'm so happy that I'm here.”

As these new readers open God's Word, pray that the Holy Spirit opens their hearts and minds to the Good News that brings great joy! One of our board members mentioned to me, regarding this news of increased interest in the Bible, that she and her family **“pray often for our state, society, and world, that people in it would seek God, and this is the beginning of the answer to our prayer. It is encouraging to keep praying, and to pray harder.”** That should be the fervent prayer of every Christian!

God's Word will not return void. The Bible is a light guiding us in this dark world. (Psalm 119:105) It corrects us and trains us in righteousness. (2 Timothy 3:16-17) And from Genesis to Revelation, it points us to Jesus, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. There are millions like Cely who have a craving that the things of this world can't satisfy – a void which can only be filled by a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

Last year more than 50,000 Americans committed suicide, the highest number ever recorded, while Gallup reported that depression rates hit new highs. Yet, numerous studies show that: “People of faith were significantly less likely to die from ‘deaths of despair’” - such as suicide, drugs, and alcohol. Yet, Psychiatric Times admits: **“Psychiatry has a long tradition of dismissing and attacking religious experience.”** However, psychology can't heal the spiritual void, which is often at the root of depression and despair. Beloved theologian, R.C. Sproul, once recounted how his friend, a psychiatrist, asked R.C. to join his practice. When Sproul said he was unqualified to work in psychology, his friend said: **‘Oh, but you are. Because the vast majority of the problems that I have to deal with as a psychiatrist are all bound up with guilt - guilt and**

its consequences. Most of the people I see don't need a psychiatrist. They need a priest.”

In other words, they intrinsically know they are sinners in need of a Savior. They need the Good News found in all those Bibles sold - Jesus paid the penalty we deserve. **But it's not enough just to buy a Bible; like St. Augustine, we must “take up and read.”** The concluding phrase of 2 Timothy 3:6-17, **“... that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work,”** reminds us that if believers neglect the study of God's Word, our lives will be incomplete.

The best way to learn a new language is to be immersed in it – thus we see schools incorporating Spanish immersion classes. The best way to learn the language of God – His Word – is also to be thoroughly immersed in it: reading the Bible daily, praying it into our hearts, incorporating it into our family, and sitting under sound preaching. Sadly, many Christians have not developed this daily practice. What better time to start than at the beginning of a new year! The link below provides numerous Bible reading plans, including one, two, or three-year plans. We also encourage you to order the *Family Worship Bible Guide* which gives a brief, insightful commentary, with personal application, for every chapter in the Bible. (See the enclosed response card.) **<https://www.ligonier.org/posts/bible-reading-plans>**

Whether exploring the Bible for the first time or the seventy-first, readers will not only find the missing piece in their lives – they'll find true peace. For, as Augustine wrote, **“You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”**

**American Decency Frontline
Vol. XXXIX, Issue I
Published monthly by
American Decency Association**

**Bill Johnson, President and Founder
bjohnson@americandecency.org**

**P.O. Box 202
Fremont MI 49412-0202
Phone: 231-924-4050**