



REFLECTIONS

Grace OPC

What's Going on with Adult Sunday School?

By Pastor Brian De Jong

Growing up in the Christian Reformed Church, Sunday School was never a component of my experience. Although some of our churches did offer Sunday School classes, the emphasis was on mid-week Catechism classes. Sunday School was a non-entity in my young world.

Even more pronounced was the absence of any sort of Adult Sunday School program. After the worship service, the adults drank coffee and chatted with their friends. Then they hopped in their cars and headed home for Sunday Dinner. I never even heard of an Adult Sunday School class until I was 20 years old.

When I began attending a PCA church in Carbondale, Illinois, I was invited and encouraged to participate in Adult Sunday School. The class was taught by the elders of the church, and they offered some in-depth Bible teaching. I recall a class taught by one of our elders on the Sermon on the Mount that set me ablaze. I couldn't wait for Adult Sunday School to come around each week – I was so eager to learn all I could.

Over my years of ministry, I have observed the value of an Adult Sunday School class. It provides a type of teaching that is different from, and complementary to the preaching of the Word during the worship services. It also has the capacity of being more dialogical, or interactive. There can be give-and-take, questions-and-answers, and back-and-forth discussion. While

that would not be appropriate during a worship service, it is entirely fitting in an Adult Sunday School format.

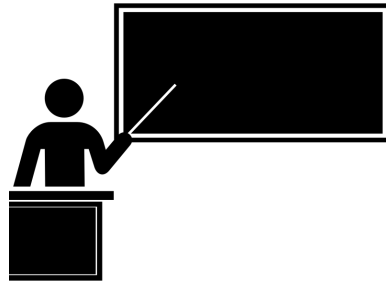
Here at Grace Church, we have a pattern that we like to keep that provides some variety. Once per year, I teach for a 3-4 month stretch. I try to choose topics that would be valuable for the class, and of interest to myself as teacher.

Then we also do video series and book studies. The video series allow us to benefit from teachers like Dr. Godfrey, Dr. Ferguson and others. We have covered church history and books of the Bible in these video series. The videos are user-friendly, and provide an opportunity for our elders and some of our younger men to lead discussions and get teaching experience.

Book studies have also been quite profitable for our class. We've studied evangelism, homosexuality, holiness, Calvin's Golden Booklet, the biography of Calvin and John Murray's Redemption Accomplished and Applied, to name a few. Book studies allow the class members to read the material and answer questions beforehand, and then discuss during the class period. This requires a bit more work from both students and teachers, but has proven stimulating.

Part of the genius of this concept is that it gives our adults an

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Mnemonics...

- *Reformation Conference, November 2-3*
- *Harvest Home, November 16th*
- *Men and Boy's Breakfast, November 23rd*
- *Thanksgiving Football Game, November 28th*

Reformation Conference 2019

Saturday, November 2nd

9:00 - Charles Hodge of Princeton: Another Theologian of the Holy Spirit

10:30 - Recovering the Spirituality of the Church, with Reference to Charles Hodge

Sunday, November 3rd

9:00am - "Pressing On in the Race" (Hebrews 12:1-3)

5:00pm - "Uzziah and Knowing One's Place" (2 Chronicles 26:1-23)

A Bit About Our Guest Speaker...



Our Speaker is Dr. Alan Strange, Professor of Church History at Mid America Reformed Seminary in Dyer, Indiana. He is also an Associate Pastor at New Covenant Community OPC in Joliet, Illinois, frequently preaching there or speaking in other church and conference settings. Professor Strange has done extensive youth and college student work over the course of his ministry and has published historical works for use in Christian education and home schooling. He has also published several articles on colonial American intellectual history and the history of American Presbyterianism.



Some Questions about Thanksgiving

By Erik Raymond

Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays. I like the occasion of unhurried time with family, friends, and food. This late autumn feast is another reminder of the many good gifts of God. But I also like the name of the holiday. *Thanksgiving*. What an old but wonderfully curious word. Thanksgiving just sits there ripe for all sorts of questions. What are we giving thanks for? Who are we giving thanks to? How do we give thanks? At my first few Thanksgivings after conversion, these were the questions that occupied my mind.

Like stuffing, cranberries, potatoes and pumpkin pie—answering these questions makes Thanksgiving a time to remember.

WHAT ARE WE THANKFUL FOR?

In the simplest sense we are thankful for life. We are alive and enjoy, just by virtue of being human, myriad benefits. Some of these benefits include the ability to smile, anticipate, laugh, comfort, remember, and love. Life is full of good gifts. Even amid many struggles there are reasons to be thankful for life. I think of a dear friend who has recently died. Though afflicted with many physical challenges he still was a characteristically thankful person for the sweetness of life. He loved being alive and spending time with people.

WHO ARE WE THANKFUL TO?

This question sharpens things up a bit. The Bible teaches us that we are thankful to God and for God. This means that we are not simply thankful for the gifts of life but rather to and for the giver of life. This distinction is a big one. We learn in the Scriptures that people's natural reflex is not to give thanks to God (neither for him nor his gifts) but to skip right over him and worship his stuff. We read of one of the chief indictments in [Romans 1:21](#): "they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him." This failure to understand and appreciate the contrast between the Giver and the gift led to a truncated worldview and false worship. Making this crucial error we "exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen" ([Rom. 1:25](#)).

At the heart of what it means to be human is to properly understand that we are to be thankful to God for all that we have. When we are thinking biblically we are not content to simply be thankful for our blessings but rather to be thankful for the Blesser himself.

HOW DO WE GIVE THANKS?

Since it does not come naturally for us it would seem that most of us would have some difficulty being grateful to God. If we are honest we know this is true. But here is the beauty of what we find in the gospel: God actually makes us grateful. He makes us to see what we are thankful for and who we are thankful to.

Think about this. One of the chief ways that we demonstrate an unhealthy relationship with God is our lack of gratitude to God and for God. When we are born-again we are made to see that our sin has dishonored God. Becoming aware of this brings guilt, shame, and regret. But Christ brings pardon, righteousness, and renewal. Our sin is removed, and we are given new life. The joy comes through being fully known and loved.

Is it any wonder then that Christians are to be a thankful people? In [Colossians 3](#) we read in consecutive verses

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that we are to cultivate this gratitude ([Col. 3:15-17](#)). Those who follow Christ are to be cultivating and increasing in gratitude because they have come to know who they really are while also finding out who God really is. This combined with the gracious forgiveness we have in Christ compels us to thanksgiving.

As Christians we are not simply thankful in some generic sense; we are thankful to and for God in a particular, gospel sense.

Taken from The Gospel Coalition. November 16th, 2016. Erik Raymond.

John Ploughman Chapter 4: On Good Nature and Firmness

Do not be all sugar, or the world will suck you down; but do not be all vinegar or the world will spit you out. There is a medium in all things, only blockheads go to extremes. We need not be all rock or all sand, all iron or all wax. We should neither fawn upon everybody like silly lapdogs, nor fly at all persons like surly mastiffs. Blacks and whites go together to make up a world. Hence on the point of temper, we have all sorts of people to deal with. Some are as easy as an old shoe, but they are hardly ever worth more than the other one of the pair; others take fire as fast as tinder at the smallest offense and are as dangerous as gunpowder. To have a fellow going about the farm as cross with everybody as a bear with a sore head, with a temper as sour as spoiled milk and as sharp as a razor, looking as surly as a butcher's dog, is a great nuisance; yet there may be some good points about the man, so that he may be a man for all that. But poor soft Tommy, as green as grass, and as ready to bend as a willow, is nobody's money and everybody's scorn. A man must have a backbone, or how is he to hold his head up? But that backbone must bend, or he will knock his brow against the beam.

There is a time to do as others wish, and a time to refuse. If we make ourselves asses, then everybody will ride us, but if we would be respected, we must be our own masters and not let others saddle us as they think fit. If we try to please everybody, we shall be like a toad under a harrow and never have peace; and if we play lackey to all our neighbors, whether good or bad, we shall be thanked by no one, for we shall soon do as much harm as good. He that makes himself a sheep will find that the wolves are not all dead. He who lies on the ground must expect to be trodden on. He who makes himself a mouse the eats will eat. If you let your neighbors put the calf on your shoulder, they will, they will soon clap on the cow. We are to please our neighbor for his good to edification, but this is quite another matter. There are old foxes about whose mouths are always watering for young geese, and if they can coax them to do just what they wish, they soon make their market out of them. What a Jolly good fellow you will be called if you will make yourself a hack for your friends, and what a mess will they soon bring you into!

Out of that mess you will have to get all alone, for your friends will be sure to say to you, Good-bye, basket, I've carried all my apples or they will give you their good wishes and nothing more, and you will find out that fair words won't feed a cat, nor butter your bread, nor fill your pocket. Those who make so very much of you either mean to cheat you, or else are in need of you: when they have sucked the orange they will throw the peel away. Be wise, then, and look before you leap, lest a friend's advice should do you more mischief than an enemy's slander. "The simple believeth every word; but the prudent man looketh well to his going." Go with your neighbor as far as good conscience will go with you, but part company where the shoe of conscience begins to pinch your foot. Begin with your friend as you mean to go on, and let him know very early that you are not a man made of putty, but one who has a judgment of his own and means to use it. Pull up the moment

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Ploughman Continued...

you find you are out of the road, and take the nearest way back at once. The way to avoid great faults is to beware of small ones. Therefore, pull up in time if you would not be dragged into the ditch by your friend. Better offend your acquaintance than lose your character and hazard your soul. Don't be ashamed to walk down Turnagain Lane. Never mind being called a turncoat when you turn from bad courses: better to turn in time than to burn in eternity. Do not be persuaded to ruin yourself—it is buying gold too dear to throw oneself away to please our company. Put your foot down where you mean to stand, and let no man move you from the right. Learn to say, "No," and it will be of more use to you than to be able to read Latin.

A friend to everybody is often a friend to nobody; or else in his simplicity, he robs his family to help strangers and becomes brother to a beggar. There is wisdom in generosity as in everything else, and some had need go to school to learn it. A kind-hearted soul may be very cruel to his own children, while he takes the bread out of their mouths to give to those who call him a generous fellow but laugh at his folly. Very often he that lends his money loses both his gold and his friends, and he who is surety is never sure. Take John Ploughman's advice, and never be security for more than you are quite willing to lose. Remember the word of God says, "He that is surety for a stranger shall smart for it: and he that hateth suretyship is sure."

When we are injured, we are bound as Christians to bear it without malice; but we are not to pretend that we do not feel it, for this will but encourage our enemies to kick us again. He who is cheated twice by the same man is half as bad as the rogue; and it is very much so in other injuries. Unless we claim our rights, we are ourselves to blame if we do not get them. Paul was willing to bear stripes for his Master's sake, but he did not forget to tell the magistrates that he was a Roman; and when those gentlemen wished to put him out of prison privately, he said, "Nay, verily, let them come themselves and fetch us out". A Christian is the gentlest of men, but then he is a man. A good many people don't need to be told this, for they are up in a moment if they think anybody is likely to ill treat them. Long before they know whether it is a thief in the farmyard or the old mare got loose, they are up with the window and firing off the old blunderbuss. Dangerous neighbors these; a man might as well make a seat out of a bull's forehead, as expect to find comfort in their neighborhood.

Make no friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man thou shalt not go. "He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly." Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? There is more hope of a fool than of him."

In my day I have seen a few downright obstinate men, whom neither sense nor reason could alter. There's a queer chap in our village who keeps a bulldog, and he tells me that when the creature once gives a bite at anything, he never lets go again, and if you want to get it out of his mouth, you must cut his head off. That's the sort of man that has fretted me many a time and almost made me mad. You might sooner argue a pitchfork into a threshing machine, or persuade a brickbat to turn into marble, than to get the fellow to hear common sense. Getting spots out of leopards is nothing at all compared with trying to lead a downright obstinate man. Right or wrong, you might as easily make a hill walk to London as turn him when his mind is made up. When a man is right, this sticking to his text is a grand thing (our minister says, "it is the stuff that martyrs are made of"), but when an ignorant, wrong-headed fellow gets this hard grit into him, he makes martyrs of those who have to put up with him. old Master Pighead swore he would drive a nail into an oak board with his fist and so lamed his hand for life; he could not sell his corn at his own price, and so he let the rats eat up the ricks. You cannot ride by his fields without noticing his obstinacy, for he vows, "He won't have none of these ever newfangled notions," and so he grows the worst crops in the parish. Worst of all, his daughter went among the Methodists, and in a towering rage, he turned her out of doors. Though I believe he is very sorry for it, he will not yield an inch, but stands to it that he will never speak to her so long as he lives. Meanwhile, the dear girl is dying through his unkindness. Rash vows are much better broken than kept. He who never changes, never mends; he who never yields, never conquers.

With children, you must mix gentleness with firmness; they must not always have their own way, but they must not always be thwarted. Give to a pig when it grunts, and to a child when it cries, and you will have a fine pig and a spoiled child. A man who is learning to play on a trumpet and a petted child are two very disagreeable companions even as next-door neighbors; but unless we look well to it, our children will be a nuisance to others and a torment to ourselves. "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." If we never have headaches through rebuking our little children, we shall have

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plenty of heartaches when they grow up. Strict truthfulness must rule all our dealings with the young; our yea must be yea, and our nay be nay," and that always. Never promise a child and then fail to perform whether you promise him a bun or a beating. Be obeyed at all costs—disobedient children are unhappy children; for their own sakes, make them mind you. If you yield up your authority once, you will hardly ever get it again, for he who says A must say B. and so on. We must not provoke our children to anger, lest they be discouraged; but we must rule our household in the fear of the Lord, and in so doing we may expect a blessing.

Since John Ploughman has taken to writing, he has had a fine chance of showing his firmness and his gentleness too, for he has received bushels of advice for which he begs to present his compliments, as the squire's lady says. He does not mind either returning the advice or some of his own instead, by way of showing his gratitude; for he is sure it is very kind of so many people to tell him so many different ways in which he might make an idiot of himself. He means to glean as many good hints as he can from the acres of his friends' stubble; and while sticking to his own style, because it suits his hand, he will touch himself up a bit if he can. Perhaps if the minister will lend him Cowper or Milton, he may even stick a sprig of poetry into his nosegay, and come out as fine as the flowers in May. But he cannot promise, for the harvest is just on and reaping leaves no time for rhyming. The worst of it is, the kind friends who are setting John to rights contradict one another: one says it is very poor stuff and all in an assumed name, for the style is not rough enough for a plowman; another says the matter is very well, but the expressions are so coarse that he is amazed the editor put it in the magazine. John means to pay his advisers all the attention which they deserve, and as some of the mice have been bold enough to make a nest in the cats ear, he means to be after them and write a paper upon giving advice gratis, in which they will be likely to get a flea in their ear in return for their instructions.

The Help You Need to Understand the Bible

By Jairo Namnun



You've probably heard the saying, "The Bible is the only book whose author is always there when you're reading it." If you are yourself an author, then you know it's not always true. But there's a lot of truth in this saying. Christians have the privilege of always having the Person who wrote the text be with us as we approach it. Jesus promised a Helper that will aid us in understanding and keeping His commandments (John 14:15-18), who "...remains in [us] and will be in [us]" (John 14:17).

Here's the thing: having the Holy Spirit, the true author of Scripture (1 Peter 1:21), with us as we approach the Bible is absolutely necessary. In fact, it is the only way we can understand the Bible correctly. The Apostle Paul explains:

But the unbeliever does not welcome what comes from God's Spirit, because it is foolishness to him; he is not able to understand it since it is evaluated spiritually. The spiritual person, however, can evaluate everything, yet he himself cannot be evaluated by anyone. For who has known the Lord's mind, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:14-16)

Did you catch that in the middle? Paul says that those without the Spirit of God *cannot* understand spiritual things. Is there anything more spiritual than Holy Scripture? So we can say with confidence that without

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God's Spirit, it is impossible to understand (and to correctly apply) the Word of God. We need help!

THREE REASONS WHY WE NEED THE HOLY SPIRIT

Allow me to emphasize this point of our dependence on the Holy Spirit before I give some practical advice on how to approach the Bible with the Holy Spirit's help.

We need the Holy Spirit because the Bible is a supernatural book.

We already hinted at this when we saw Paul's instruction to the Corinthians. Given that the Bible is the "Lord's mind"—thoughts and deeds—it is essentially and immutably higher than us. So, while the Bible is a book (so the rules of reading a book apply), it is a Supernatural one (so there's a whole other set of rules that transcend us.) Thankfully, the Holy Spirit knows them.

We need the Holy Spirit because Satan is on the prowl.

This is something we don't usually talk or write about, but Satan and his hosts are opposed to everything God says and does, particularly the Bible. Have you noticed that the two times that we see Satan personally tempting someone (Genesis and the Gospels), he is taking God's words and twisting them? Satan is the father of lies (John 8:43-44), so we need the Spirit of Truth (John 15:26) to understand the things of God.

We need the Holy Spirit because we are insufficient.

The Bible is a mountain high enough that it would take all of the best climber's strength to get to the middle of it. But we're not the world's best climber. We are sinners, who fall short of God's glory. We are self-centered, always thinking about ourselves and our desires. And we are also affected by the sins (and sinful teachings) of others. We need God's help!

HOW THEN SHALL WE READ?

The good news is that we already have everything we need! "All those led by God's Spirit are God's sons" (Romans 8:14). Because of that, let me close by giving four points of practical advice in order to truly depend on the Holy Spirit in our Bible reading.

Read constantly.

We may not "feel it" as we're reading every day. And yet, because we know that the Author is right there with us, let's do it confidently, and constantly. Reading God's Word will never be in vain.

Read prayerfully.

How many times have we gone before the Bible without going before God in prayer? Our prayer doesn't need

Understand the Bible Continued....

to be long, but it needs to be true, from our heart to God's. "Lord, help me see you as I read your truth. Help me be honest with myself, and see Christ's love for His glory and His people. I need you."

Read quietly.

Don't cave to the rush of day-to-day, and don't go immediately for the easy answers (or get frustrated if you don't find them.) God is not in a hurry. Set aside more time to spend in smaller chunks of text, quietly looking at the Book in prayer.

Evaluate your spiritual life.

You might know all the tricks, and done the chronological plan through the Bible 100 times. But if you truly want to be edified and energized, you need to evaluate your life before the Lord. Me too. We need to come clean and ask for His forgiveness, and make whatever change the Holy Spirit might be prompting us to. One thing is for sure: God is not playing hide and seek. If we seek him, we shall find him.

Thank Offering 2019

The theme of the 2019 Thank Offering for the Worldwide Outreach ministries of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church is "Rescue the Perishing" from Psalm 126. The goal this year is to raise \$1,200,000 through the Thank Offering for the ministries of Foreign Missions, Home Missions, and Christian Education. The Thank Offering will begin November 3rd and will run through November 24th.



November Birthdays

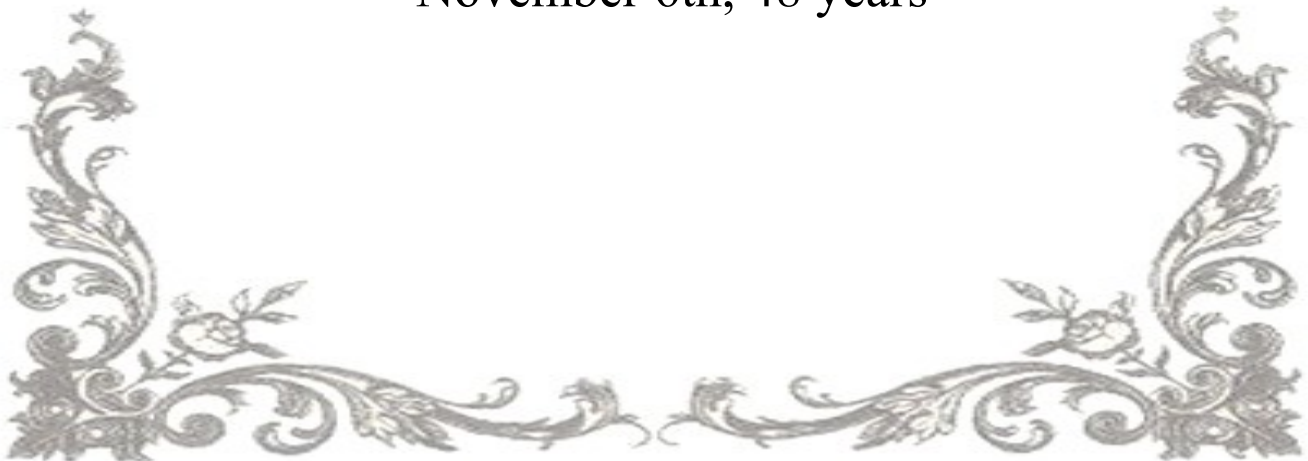
Becca Oliver 14th

Gabe Froh 30th



November Anniversaries

Jay & Gail Buyze
~November 6th, 48 years~





Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

November 2019

Grace OPC



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Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
3 Reformation Conference and Luncheon ↑	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12 Session Meeting	13	14	15	16 Harvest Home
17	18	19	20	21	22	23 Men and Boy's Leadership Breakfast
24	25	26	27	28 Thanksgiving Football Game	29	30

Twice Baked Potato Casserole with Bacon

Ingredients:

- 2 large baking potatoes
- 1/2 pound lean bacon
- 3/4 cup shredded mild Cheddar cheese
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1/4 cup milk
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted
- 1 teaspoon dried chives
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- 3/4 cup shredded mild Cheddar cheese

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees F (200 degrees C). Grease a 9x13-inch casserole dish.

Poke a few holes into each potato using a toothpick.

Bake potatoes in the preheated oven until fully cooked, about 1 hour. Cool for about 15 minutes.

Place the bacon in a large skillet and cook over medium-high heat, turning occasionally, until evenly browned, about 10 minutes. Drain the bacon slices on paper towels and crumble.

Cut a thin slice from one side of each potato; carefully scoop out the flesh and transfer to a bowl. Discard skins. Mix 3/4 cup Cheddar cheese, sour cream, milk, butter, chives, salt, black pepper, and garlic powder with potatoes. Spread potato mixture into the prepared casserole dish; top with 3/4 cup Cheddar cheese and crumbled bacon.

Bake in the preheated oven until just bubbling, 10 to 15 minutes. Cool for at least 5 minutes before serving.



*“For He
has satisfied
the thirsty
soul,
and the
hungry soul
He has filled
with what
is good.”*

Harvest Home Supper





Showing forth the excellencies of Jesus Christ

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Spurgeon Corner

“Their prayer came up to His holy dwelling place, even unto heaven.”

2 Chronicles 30:27

Prayer is the never-failing resort of the Christian in any case, in every plight. When you cannot use your sword you may take to the weapon of all-prayer. Your powder may be damp, your bow-string may be relaxed, but the weapon of all-prayer need never be out of order. Leviathan laughs at the javelin, but he trembles at prayer. Sword and spear need furbishing, but prayer never rusts, and when we think it most blunt it cuts the best. Prayer is an open door which none can shut. Devils may surround you on all sides, but the way upward is always open, and as long as that road is

unobstructed, you will not fall into the enemy's hand. We can never be taken by blockade, escalade, mine, or storm, so long as heavenly succours can come down to us by Jacob's ladder to relieve us in the time of our necessities. Prayer is never out of season: in summer and in winter its merchandise is precious. Prayer gains audience with heaven in the dead of night, in the midst of business, in the heat of noonday, in the shades of evening. In every condition, whether of poverty, or sickness, or obscurity, or slander, or doubt, your covenant God will welcome your prayer and answer it from His holy place. Nor is prayer ever *futile*. True prayer is evermore true power. You may not always get what you ask, but you shall always have your real wants supplied. When God does not answer His children according to the letter, He does so according to the spirit. If thou askest for coarse meal, wilt thou be angered because He gives thee the finest flour? If thou seekest bodily health, shouldst thou complain if instead thereof He makes thy sickness turn to the healing of spiritual maladies? Is it not better to have the cross sanctified than removed? This evening, my soul, forget not to offer thy petition and request, for the Lord is ready to grant thee thy desires.

Evening, November 3rd C.H. Spurgeon

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Front Page Concluded...

opportunity to learn and grow in their faith. In our society today, it is sometimes assumed that once you've finished your formal education, or your vocational training, then you must know all you ever need to know. Adults often hit an intellectual plateau, and they simply stop learning. They live off of the intellectual capital that they've accumulated over a lifetime, and nothing new is ever introduced.

That is a recipe for stagnation, in my opinion. None of us know as much as we think we know, and certainly no one knows all they could and should know. There is a need for “continuing education” among the people of God – particularly among busy adults.

It is also the case that certain topics are much better handled in an Adult Class than in a sermon series during worship. An excellent example is the book we studied, What the Bible Really Teach About Homosexuality, by Kevin DeYoung. I can't ever see myself preaching sermons on those themes in worship, but it would fully appropriate in Adult Sunday School.

Let me close with a gentle encouragement, especially to those who do not presently participate in our Adult class. Give it a try. See if this might be beneficial and stimulating to your spiritual growth. You may come to value it as much as I did some 30 years ago in Carbondale!