

Tri-M GLOBAL

J O U R N A L



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Theology in Practice



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A Note from the Director

Dear reader,

Theology is an important topic of study, but without practical application in ones life, it is simply an academic pursuit that goes nowhere. In this issue of the Tri-M Global Journal we will be looking at practical theology and some of the ways in which theology can and should be put into practice in our every day lives. If ever there was a time in the history of the church where this topic would be more practical it is right now. In light of what is going on in the world today (an election year, the global pandemic, racial tension, and restrictions that are being placed upon churches) how believers exercise what they believe is of vital importance.

As you read through the next several pages of articles, it is my prayer that each of you will be thinking through how you can practically apply the theology that you know and love. That you and I can not only be students of the Word but also practitioners of the lessons found within its pages.

James 1:22 "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves."

In HIS service,

Jonathan D. McGinnis
Tri-M Global, Director



Tri-MGlobal.org



*Tri-M is committed to assisting national pastors and other spiritual leaders to be better able to reach their own people by **TEACHING, EQUIPPING, and STRENGTHENING** them, especially in areas of limited accessibility to traditional missions and wherever there is a critical need for true biblical teaching.*



Why is accountability good for men? (The Case for Accountability)

By: Dr. Rodney Navey

From time to time, an article or section in a book seems to make a case against accountability between men. After all, it doesn't address the heart issues. It makes men feel guilty. And, it can lead to Pharisaism.

In some ways, they are right. It's hard to argue against the downside, but anything good can be misused or distorted. There are many things I've not given up on just because they can be misused (communication, finances, sex, et al).

Accountability is one way one man can sharpen another (Prov 27:17), or disciple him, encourage him, challenge him, confront him. Who among us doesn't need godly friendships like this? My guess is most men aren't struggling because they have someone asking them accountability questions. Rather, they are struggling because they are trying to do life by themselves. Men left to themselves are prime targets for the enemy.

Think through how your ecclesiology drives community and accountability (Heb 10:24-25). We meet with our church family to worship our great God together. We listen to the Word proclaimed from the Pastor. The Pastor is a gift to the church as he equips the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:11-12). And we build relationships with brothers and sisters so that we can encourage each other in our walk with God.

Let's get to the "heart" of accountability. Proverbs 4:23 says, "Keep your heart with all vigilance; for from it flow the springs of life." Behavior follows the heart. What we "say" and "see" and where we "go" and "do" overflow from the heart (Prov 4:24-27).

Since only God can see the heart (1 Samuel 16:7), accountability is a way to help another man evaluate his heart, i.e. recognize what he truly loves. If we ask about work and find out a man is working too many hours, we could help him see he may have a problem with greed or fear of man. If we ask about how he's doing with his eyes and he has viewed pornography, we can help him see his selfishness or lust. If we ask about his daily Bible reading and he is inconsistent, we can help him see his lack of love for God or idolatry.

Ultimately, men need to see God more clearly and love Him more deeply. As they spend time in the Word and with another godly man, they should be learning more of God's love, His grace, mercy, and holiness. Accountability is meant to help a man develop disciplines to lead him to know God, enjoy Him, and glorify Him.

When I meet with a man, I like to hear about how he's doing at home, work, and in general. I also have an assignment we're both responsible for: reading through a book in the Bible, a workbook, or reading from a specific book. And we do accountability. My favorite questions are:

- 1) How many days in the last 7 did you read at least one chapter in the Bible through a book at a time?
- 2) Did you pray with your wife at least once outside a mealtime?
- 3) Did you have a family night this past week which included a family devotional?

- 4) How did you do with your eyes? Level 1: in the normal patterns of level, did you struggle with thoughts and looks? Level 2: did you click on or view anything inappropriate or pornographic? Level 3: did you act on it?

Don't try to do life by yourself. Find another man who loves Jesus, wants to grow in Christlikeness, and is willing to be transparent. Invite him to a relationship of accountability. Grow together as brothers as you learn how to love God more. God already loves you perfectly as His child. Your performance in accountability (good or bad) doesn't alter His love. It's your love for Him that must increase. As it increases, your obedience to Him will increase. Accountability is about the heart, your love for God, because behavior will follow the heart.



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Theology in Practice

By: Dr. Dana Arledge

The phrase “theology in practice” can be summed up in one word: perseverance. James 1:12 says, “Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him.” Persevering in whatever state we find ourselves is theology in practice, because it drives us to live out what we know about God in every area of our lives.

Recently I have been reading through John Piper’s book, “21 Servants of Sovereign Joy”, which is a collection of short biographies of godly examples of men who have lived before us. One of those biographies is about John Owen. Even though I am slightly acquainted with his books, I never knew much about the man himself.

John Owen was born in England in 1616 and died in 1683. During his lifetime he became a writer, a theologian, a pastor, and the Vice Chancellor of Oxford University. He also was involved in politics under Oliver Cromwell. He wrote extensively. He was married to Mary Rook from 1644-1675. She gave him eleven children, all of whom died young, except one daughter, who lived until she became a young adult. Then she too died. That averages out to one child dying every 3 years of his adult life. His wife died just eight years before him.

How does a man accomplish so much in the midst of such grief? The answer is perseverance. Owen learned how to put his theology into practice during the harshest forms of suffering a man can experience.



persevering through the trials Owen faced, let alone the others discussed in Piper's book. Yet, Isaiah wrote of God:

“...I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, ¹⁰ declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose’ (Isaiah 46:9-10).

What is the purpose God will accomplish? A part of it is to conform every son or daughter of his into the image of Christ, and the tools he uses most often to accomplish that goal are trials which demand our perseverance. God places us into situations in which there is no escape if we are to remain faithful.

It is common for maturing Christians to daily desire to please God. It is equally common to daily run into obstacles seemingly blocking our path to that desire. Who hasn't pleaded with Christ to help him/her live in a way which pleased God, only to be faced with an irritating family member, boss, or coworker who pushes all the right buttons, causing our innate sinfulness to blow like Mount Vesuvius? We wonder, “why, if God loves me, do I struggle with sin so much?”

A few years ago, a missionary and I were talking about someone's situation when he said, “that sounds like a Philippians 1:29 issue.” I nodded saying, “You're right.” What I should have said was, “What does Philippians 1:29 say? In Philippians 1:29-30 the apostle Paul wrote:

For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰ engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Suffering and being engaged in the same conflict are another way of saying theology in practice is a call to perseverance.

Everyone has senior moments, or not so senior moments, when they forget the names of their grandkids, their anniversary, where they laid their car keys, and even Bible references. But when you have never learned those references in the first place, that is a different story.

Sadly, we live in a time when professing Christians spend less and less time studying the word of God and even less time memorizing, meditating on it and putting it to practice. As such our theology of God is so weak, we wonder if God really loves us when he allows us to suffer so much.

Throughout history godly men and women have persevered while suffering greatly. Some suffered through the death of a child or a spouse, or through a divorce, broken health, the loss of a job, or the abandonment of family. The ways God's children have suffered are as numerous as the stars in the sky. But each one who has persevered left a testimony that says Christ is worth it.

Putting theology into practice cannot be reduced to reading theological books or attending some conference. It is learned through walking a colicky child up and down the hall in the middle of the night, helping clean up an elderly parent, or listening to them tell the same story for the umpteenth time, yet laughing at it as if it were your first time hearing it.

Theology in practice means waking up and putting one foot in front of the other, just as you did yesterday. No angels singing (at least that you can hear), nor any overwhelming sense of God's presence. It takes what you know and uses it as you work, as you go to school, as you are cleaning toilets, as you are raking leaves and any of the other myriad tasks we do on a daily basis.

Putting theology into practice means honoring God with every breath you take, even though you falter a hundred different ways before laying your head back on your pillow at night.



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A Foreign People in a Foreign Land: How 1 Peter Helps Christians Live as Exiles Longing for Home

By: Mr. Jonathan Zavodney

Home sweet home. All people have a deep longing for what they consider home; we long for a place of safety, wholeness, and peace. We may imagine various homes on earth, perhaps in a childhood home or a log cabin in the mountains during Christmas time. These places are where our hearts and souls find rest and rejuvenation from an otherwise loud, busy, and painful world. The question stands: why do we all have a deep longing for home? We will see why we long for home and how 1 Peter helps Christians live as exiles longing for their true home, which is the very life-giving presence of God.

The Bible explains why all people long for home— a place of safety, wholeness, and peace. In Genesis 1–2, God’s life-giving presence spoke all things into creation, planting a luscious garden home for Adam and Eve. In Genesis 3, the serpent deceived Eve, and Adam willingly rebelled against God. The immediate repercussions are devastating: Adam and Eve hid themselves from the life-giving presence of God. Because of the man’s disobedience, God exiled Adam and Eve from their garden home in Eden, a home where God Himself dwelt with man. The rest of the Bible, save

Revelation 21–22, details life outside of the garden home of Eden, and this world is where we find ourselves today.

Through Adam, we have been kicked out of this garden home, and our sin separates us from the life-giving presence of God. Our labor is difficult; Our relationships, strained; Our expectations, unmet; Our sin, untamed; Our pain, multiplied; Our lives, shortened; Our world, cursed; death now reigns on this earth. As we watch all kinds of evil in our world, as we desire and do all kinds of evil, our hearts cry within us, “We were not made for this!” We long desperately for home because in our sin we have been sent away from the presence of God. Praise be to God that He has not left us without hope. All who place their faith continually in Jesus’ death and resurrection have been born again to a living hope; they will one day return home. How, moreover, do Christians live faithfully on this cursed earth full of disappointment, pain, and pestilence?

1 Peter helps us understand what it means to be a Christian exile in a foreign land. He addresses elect exiles, explaining that their stay on earth is a time of exile from their heavenly home (1:1, 17). He emphasizes their incredible identity as living stones of a spiritual house, a chosen race, a holy and royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession, and a people who have received mercy (1:1; 2:4–10). He follows with a strong charge: “Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against your soul” (2:11). As Christians living in another land, we are constantly enticed by the world to live like we belong here, enticed to think like the world, enticed to live for this world, but we must fight fiercely against these temptations with the Word of God alongside the people of God.

Two timely examples rise to the surface, threatening our identity as exiles: first, when a pandemic breaks out, fear overwhelms the world as they look to themselves for salvation, a cure, an escape, or a relief as they are confronted with death. Such confrontations are terrifying for men and women of the world. The Christian exiles, on the other hand, are confronted with a pandemic and perhaps death, and they respond differently. Christians grieve at the effects of the curse,

mourn over the loss of life, take precautions in wisdom, and submit to authority (2:13–17). We do these things without fear because we know the One who has power over death, and we know Him Who is our living hope, namely Jesus Christ (1:3–5).

The second timely example of an earthly reality threatening our Christian identity is the American election. The world may believe that America is God’s “special nation”; they view the politician as their source of hope; they understand the American dream to be the good news. The Christian exile, on the other hand, searches the Scripture to discover that America is a sin-stained nation like every other pagan nation, to discover that Jesus is our only source of hope, to discover that the gospel of Jesus’ atoning death and powerful resurrection is the good news all men desperately need to hear. The Christian who sojourns in America, moreover, senses the strong temptation to idolize this worldly country. Two helpful questions to reveal an idol are as follows: if your desired presidential candidate lost the election, would you be devastated beyond repair? Or if he won, are you filled with more joy and satisfaction at such a victory than you are to hear that a sinner repented of sinfulness, having been called out of darkness into the marvelous light of Christ? It is a sobering reality to discover our love for the land of our sojourning exceeds the love for our heavenly home, to be with God Himself. To fight against our tendency to make gods of what God created, we remind ourselves that we were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold; rather we were redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb, unblemished and spotless” (1:19). Let us, therefore, prepare our minds for action, keep sober in spirit, and fix our hope completely on the grace to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ (1:13). Christians, let us live like exiles in the time of our sojourning, longing for the home sweet home found only in the life-giving presence of God

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Godly Conversations: Theological Discussion in Everyday Life

By: Dr. Jeremy Kimble

Evangelicalism has a reputation, broadly speaking, for a strong commitment to biblical doctrine and actively serving others who are in need. They are also known for consistent meetings and gatherings that equip others toward such ends. Sundays and mid-week offer such moments, and we see many churches committed to small groups throughout the week. This, in many ways, is good and healthy for us as Christians.

However, the perceived depth of knowledge in doctrine and the amount of service we commit to can deceive one into believing that personal spiritual growth is indeed happening, when all the while the heart is not engaged. While church services, classes, small groups, and service groups exist, these entities are not always aimed at probing the depths of the heart, calling one another to repentance, and encouraging one another with the things of God in the realities of life. In other words, while these are all good activities, we have to ensure such practices are rightly aimed at being conformed to the image of Christ (Rom. 8:28-29).

A number of approaches could be taken to ensure that our learning and our serving is aimed at and springs from Christian growth. One such item is what the Puritans called “conference.” This simply meant that they were committed to asking one another certain questions on a regular basis and focusing their attention and affection on the greatness and goodness of God. The questions can vary, the main need we all have is to be drawn to God, to gaze at his glory, and to be transformed from one degree of glory to another (2 Cor. 3:18). Conversation between Christians can produce this. It entails that we are faithful to hear from God in his



Word and that we will engage others in a way that makes them think on the truth of Scripture with the aim of transformation.

Here are a few questions you could ask and answer.

First, what did you read recently in your time in the Word? This is a great chance to bask in the beauty of the Bible, to encourage one another with truth. It means that when we read our Bibles, we are never just doing it for ourselves. We are always anticipating conversations where we can share our insights and here the thoughts of others on their own Bible reading. Such conversation is edifying and be a real of means of growing in Christ alongside of others.

Second, what was the latest sermon you heard and how did it impact you? Especially if you go to the same church, this is an opportunity to really dig into the content of a message as well as how it is applying to your life. With this shared information that you both heard, allow there to be good accountability that presses each other toward growing, repenting, and pursuing righteousness.

Third, how are you seeing God working in your life? We call this the doctrine of providence. God is sovereign over all things and is constantly at work. Now, we can't know for certain all the ways that God is moving, as the Bible does not give details on our own lives. However, we can see patterns in Scripture and note that the truths, promises, and commands of Scripture hold true for us as well. This is a way to get our eyes off circumstances and complaining and realign our thinking with what God may be accomplishing in and through us, even in the hardest of times.

And finally, how can I pray for you? This is a chance to really relate to someone in an intimate way. It is also a way for us to conform our thoughts and requests to

the will of God contained in the Word of God. We ask this kind of a question and then we pray for each other, genuinely and fervently.

The point of all of these questions (and there are many more we could add) to get our conversations geared in a God-centered direction. It is really easy to talk about the weather, sports, political points of agreement or disagreement, work, the kids, and recent movies or shows you've watched. But as Christians, we have an opportunity to engage with others in a way that benefits them spiritually. We have chances all of the time to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly so that we can teach and admonish one another with all wisdom (Col. 3:16). If we as believers in Jesus Christ were to commit to this, we would have renewed minds that were not conformed to the world, but transformed, doing God's will as spiritual sacrifices, worshipping him in all of life (Rom. 12:1-2). What a vision. May we lead and teach so as to bring about godly conversations.



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How Do I Live As an Ambassador?

By: Pastor Ryan Bump

As Christians there are many things that we can spend our lives doing. During this season where we faced quarantine and saw many things cancelled it caused at least myself to focus in what really matters and what can be a distraction. As Christians we are called to be ambassadors for Christ 2 Cor. 5:20 “Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us...” So then we must ask in today’s culture and circumstances how do we do this? How can we love our neighbors and share the message we have been entrusted with for Jesus’ glory?

One of the best way to go about answering these questions is asking who is my neighbor (Luke 10:29, 37). We must look to those who God has directly put us into contact with whether they sit in the house next to ours or across the street we are given these opportunities from the Lord with the home that we live in today. In order to live as an ambassador, we can demonstrate the message through actions of care towards our neighbors. We may be able to help with outdoor activities (e.g. leaf raking, shoveling snow, etc.). We could do it through dropping off goodies (e.g. cookies, brownies, etc.). Getting to know who they are as people and learning about them and allowing them to learn about us especially befriending them and desiring to know them and be known.

As we get to know our neighbor, sharing life with them, and demonstrating a change in our lives, they can see in our conversations and hear where our hope and confidence lay as we open the door to share the gospel. I love this quote from Alister McGrath “Faith is fundamentally a relational matter; it is about trusting God. Yet part of the inner dynamic of the life of faith is a desire to understand more about who and what we trust.” As we navigate



being a good ambassador and share the message with our neighbors we help them navigate into a faith with Jesus.

When we consider all that we have gone through this year, if we don't walk away with a deeper sense of eternity and our mortality we really need to ask ourselves what has God been trying to teach us through this season of history. It is easy to become outraged by Covid restrictions, it is easy to become outrage by politics, but perhaps the greatest thing we need in our life is a deeper sense of who Jesus is and what He has called us to do. When life goes back to "normal" what will it be filled with? The distractions we once were caught by and distracted from our mission or will we walk as the ambassadors that Jesus redeemed us for in this life?

I'm praying for a renewed sense for me and for those in our community to know Jesus better and for the work of being an ambassador to be heightened. Our world is knowing chaos more and more and people are asking legitimate questions as how one can have hope in this life. This idea needs to be at the heart of who we are as Christians who are called to be ambassadors and to love those whom God has placed us into close contact. Change happens first in us and real change happens as we are concerned for our neighbors.



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Did you know?

-Tri-M is serving in over 20 countries around the world?

-Tri-M is serving in Eastern Europe, Central and South Asia, Africa and Central America

-Tri-M has been around since the early 90's and held its first module in Romania

-Tri-M has a website @ www.tri-mglobal.org

-Tri-M is always looking for new missionaries, auxiliary teachers and partners in ministry

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