

CHRISTIAN WORKER

"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Corinthians 6:1)

VOLUME 112, NUMBER 9

HOW TO CONTEND EARNESTLY FOR THE FAITH

Johnie Scaggs, Jr.

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

The book of Jude contains only twenty-five verses, yet it delivers one of the strongest warnings in the New Testament concerning false teaching. Jude originally desired to write about "the common salvation," but circumstances demanded that he address a more urgent danger. False teachers had entered among God's people, and Christians needed to defend the truth. That need remains today. Religious error, moral compromise, human traditions, and worldly philosophies threaten the purity of the church. Christians must therefore know how to "earnestly contend for the faith."

We must understand the faith. Jude did not tell Christians to contend for personal opinions, family traditions, denominational doctrines, or human creeds. He told them to contend for "the faith." In this passage, the faith refers to the complete system of truth revealed through Jesus Christ and His inspired apostles. It includes the gospel, the doctrine of Christ, the plan of salvation, acceptable worship, Christian living, and the organization and work of the church.

We must recognize that the faith has been delivered. Jude said that the faith "was once delivered unto the saints." The word "once" means once for all time. God did

not deliver part of His will in the first century and leave later generations to complete it. The apostles received all the truth necessary to guide the church. Jesus promised them: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). Peter declared that God had given them "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3). The Scriptures therefore provide a complete and sufficient revelation of God's will. We do not need latter-day revelations, modern prophets, church

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FROM THE EDITOR:

How to Avoid Hypocrisy

Ross Haffner

No one wants to be a hypocrite. The word itself carries a sting of pretension and inconsistency that most of us instinctively reject. Yet Jesus' extended confrontation with the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23 shows how easily religious people can slide into hypocrisy when their hearts and practices drift from God. How can I avoid hypocrisy?

Make sure your service is about Jesus instead of self (Matt. 23:1-12). Jesus begins by telling the crowds to listen to the Pharisees' teaching but not to imitate their lives (v.1-3). Their concept of righteousness was fundamentally flawed. Outward conformity to the law is never enough. Keeping up appearances of godliness for ourselves or our families does not satisfy God. Their concept of service was equally distorted. They laid heavy burdens on others while refusing to lift a finger themselves (v.4). They commanded but did not serve. Philippians 2:3-4 calls us to esteem others better than ourselves and to look out for their interests. The Pharisees performed their works to be seen as great (v.5-12). They broadened their phylacteries—small boxes containing Scripture worn on the hand and forehead in obedience to Deuteronomy 6:8 and 11:18—and lengthened the tassels on their garments (Num. 15:38-39; Deut. 22:12). They sought the places of honor, respectful greetings, and flattering titles. Jesus is always deserving of this reverence, and it should be obvious to me that I am not. If we treat the church primarily as a place that exists to meet our needs, we have inverted the gospel.

Make sure your service is about people (Matt. 23:13-22). Hypocrisy in me harms others just as well as myself. The Pharisees shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces (v.13). Those who wanted to enter were hindered by misleading teaching and example. Our attitudes and actions can either open or close doors for those under our influence—children who notice when parents do not prioritize the Lord, or friends who recognize part-time Christianity. The Pharisees also

"devoured widows' houses" while making long prayers for show (v.14). Worse, their converts became "twice as much a son of hell" as themselves (v.15). They were recruiting people to their system rather than to God.

Their blind guidance on oaths further revealed greed (v.16-22). By inventing distinctions between the temple and the gold, or the altar and the gift, they created loopholes that violated God's commands to honor parents and care for the needy (Mark 7:11-13). They claimed to be helping others, but they only made it more difficult for them to go to heaven.

Make sure your service has the right priority (Matt. 23:23-24). Pharisees strained out a gnat while swallowing a camel (v.23-24). They were sticklers for details while missing the big picture. They meticulously tithed herbs but neglected the weightier matters of justice, mercy, and faithfulness. Details matter, yet perfect can become the enemy of the good. Those we seek to win to Christ will not have perfect lives; we may need to overlook lesser issues temporarily while helping them with greater ones.

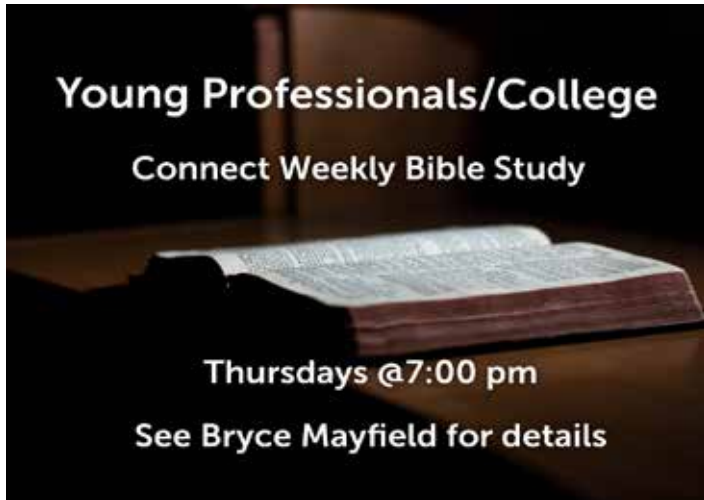
Make sure you serve from a pure heart (Matt. 23:25-28). Jesus then compares them to cups clean on the outside but filthy within, and to whitewashed tombs that appear beautiful yet contain death (v. 25-28). We must ask what we are truly trying to accomplish in doing good—encouraging others or seeking the praise of others. God can tell the difference.

Make sure your service puts you in the right company (Matt. 23:29-36). Finally, Jesus warns that the same generation that built monuments for the prophets their fathers rejected would continue the pattern of rejecting God's messengers. Claiming to be on the right side is not the same as standing there. Avoiding hypocrisy means aligning with those who pursue peace and unity among God's people, defending rather than persecuting faithful servants. Our words must match

our actions and values.

Even hypocrites can find forgiveness—complete and total. Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem reveals a heart still longing to gather the unwilling under His wings. The invitation remains open (Matt. 23:37-39). By making our service about Jesus, about people, about the right priorities, from a pure heart, and in the right company, we can walk free from the trap of hypocrisy and into the blessing of discipleship.

CW



HOW TO TEACH OUR CHILDREN TO LOVE GOD

Jordan Moore

Teaching our children to love God is not so much a formulaic process that guarantees their faithfulness, as much as it is a way of life that *we ourselves embody*. They must see God reflected in our lives, hear His truth taught consistently from our mouths, see us worship Him outside the building, hear us attribute our blessings to Him, and see us turning to Him in prayer. Our children need to see that our faith is not confined to a church building or a scheduled Bible study, but is woven into every part of our lives. **As parents, we must...**

...strive to be like God. The way children view God is in many ways tied to how they view their parents. When a parent is harsh, critical, absent, unloving, or coarse, a child can begin to see God in the same way. We are the light of the

world, and if our children never see good works from their parents, they will struggle to find reason to glorify their heavenly Father (Matt. 5:16). Do you tell your children that you love them? Are you a peacemaker in family conflict? Are you longsuffering when your children fail? Are you kind, gentle, faithful, and self-controlled? This is the fruit of God’s Spirit that we are called to possess (Gal. 5:22-23).

... actively teach our children about God. This cannot be done by proxy. Bible classes, youth programs, and church camps are not enough. They need it daily and consistently: “when you sit down in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deut. 6:7). Are we as eager to teach our children about God as we are to teach them how to throw a ball? Are we as eager to introduce them to the love of Jesus as we are to introduce them to the love of style or Disney? Furthermore, how often do we teach our children *that* God exists, yet fail to teach them *how we can know that* He exists? Our children need faith rooted in critical thinking, not simply, “I believe this because Mom and Dad do.”

... worship God in our homes with our family. The corporate worship assembly should be an essential part of a family’s routine. Families should not forsake the assembly (Heb. 10:25), communicating that God is the family’s number one priority. However, if the only time we worship with our family is within the walls of a church building, we are shortchanging our children. Family worship means the whole family sitting down together regularly to worship God. In our home, our children are often much more engaged in songs, prayers, and reading God’s word than when sitting on a pew in the building. When our children see us take the initiative to worship God in our own homes or beside a campfire with no one else around, it leaves an indelible mark.

... speak of the everyday blessings that come from God. If God’s name is only used when teaching about Him or worshipping Him, we may unintentionally suggest that God is only thought about during routine worship. Do we remind our children of how God has blessed us in the past? Part of the purpose of the Passover was to enable parents to explain to their children what the Lord had done in Egypt (Exod. 12:26-27). After crossing the Jordan, Joshua commanded twelve stones to be gathered so parents could tell their children of God’s protection. Do we speak of our conversion to Christ and the difference He has made in our lives? Do we communicate to our children that we see them as a blessing from God, not a hindrance to our plans (Ps. 127:5)? And do we speak with earnest anticipation of

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Second Quarter Class Schedule/October 2026- Jan 2027

Southwest School of Bible Studies

Chapel @ 8:30 AM / Lunch @ 11:50-1:00



Time	First Year	Time	Second Year
Monday			
9:00-9:50	English Grammar II – Matt Gibson	9:00-9:50	Greek III – Trent Kennedy
10:00-10:50	Hermeneutics II – Steve Lloyd	10:00-10:50	Matthew II – Matt Gibson
11:00-11:50	Congregational Dev II – Steve Lloyd/Trent Kennedy	11:00-11:50	Congregational Dev III-Steve Lloyd/Trent Kennedy
1:00-2:20	Numbers – Clay Bond	1:00-2:20	GSP
2:30-3:50	Introduction to Preaching-Matt Gibson	2:30-3:50	Jeremiah/Lamentations – Clay Bond
Tuesday			
9:00-11:50	Luke – Trent Kennedy	9:00-10:20	1 Corinthians – Matt Gibson
10:30-11:50	GSP	10:30-11:50	Isaiah II – Trent Kennedy
1:00-3:50	Godhead – Steve Lloyd	1:00-3:50	Psalms 2 – Clay Bond
Wednesday			
9:00-9:50	English Grammar II – Matt Gibson	9:00-9:50	Greek III – Trent Kennedy
10:00-10:50	Hermeneutics II – Steve Lloyd	10:00-10:50	Matthew II – Matt Gibson
11:00-11:50	Congregational Dev II – Steve Lloyd/Trent Kennedy	11:00-11:50	Congregational Dev III-Steve Lloyd/Trent Kennedy
1:00-2:20	Numbers – Clay Bond	1:00-2:20	GSP
2:30-3:50	Introduction to Preaching-Matt Gibson	2:30-3:50	Jeremiah/Lamentations – Clay Bond
Thursday			
9:00-11:50	Luke – Trent Kennedy	9:00-10:20	1 Corinthians – Matt Gibson
10:30-11:50	GSP	10:30-11:50	Isaiah II – Trent Kennedy
1:00-3:50	Deuteronomy – Mel Hutzler	1:00-3:50	Church History – Steve Lloyd
Friday			
9:00-9:50	English Grammar II – Matt Gibson	9:00-9:50	Greek III – Trent Kennedy
10:00-10:50	Hermeneutics II – Steve Lloyd	10:00-10:50	Matthew II – Matt Gibson
11:00-11:50	Congregational Dev II – Steve Lloyd/Trent Kennedy	11:00-11:50	Congregational Dev III-Steve Lloyd/Trent Kennedy
1:00-3:50	Leviticus – Jim Lloyd	1:00-3:50	Rhetoric – Justin Guess

See Academic Calendar for Special Events

the promised blessings of a heavenly future?

... **talk to God in the presence of our families.** It is forever burned in my mind when I walked in on my father on his knees, face nearly on the ground, agonizingly praying out loud to God on behalf of his sister who was unexpectedly near death. Even children understand that you don't do something unless you truly believe in it. Have your children witnessed you praying? Not only in front of the congregation, but because they unexpectedly found you on your knees? Perhaps the greatest evidence to our children of our faith in God is whether we will proactively go to God in prayer when no one else is looking (Matt. 6:5-7).

CW

HOW TO PRAY DEEPLY

Chris Willcut

A preacher once said that when a Christian comes to him for counsel, he would always ask them the same two questions. "How often do you read your Bible," and "How often do you pray?" Typically, the answer to one of those would begin to identify some deficiency of a struggling Christian. Our growth and maturity as a Christian is directly linked to our prayer life. Therefore, if we want to grow and mature, we must make deepening our prayers a priority. In our desire to pray deeply, let's note some lessons we can identify within Scripture.

First, we must make time to pray alone. Consider the example of our Lord Jesus Christ and His prayers. Yes, Jesus prayed with His disciples for the meal (John 6:11), but we also find Jesus often removing Himself to a solitary place to pray. Jesus would rise early in the morning before the sun rose to pray alone (Mark 1:35). Jesus would send His disciples ahead of Him so He could pray alone on a mountain (Matt. 14:22, 23). It is a wonderful thing to pray communally with fellow Christians, but if we want our prayers to become deeper, we must make time to pray in our closets as well (Matt. 6:6). Praying alone gives us the opportunity to pray about specific needs in our lives, bring our sins before God in confession, and truly pour out our soul to God (1 Sam. 1:15).

Second, our prayers will deepen by praying through Scripture. We might read through the Psalms and take

note of how often the author is praying to God. We find moments when David cries out in distress, "How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?" (Ps. 13:1) in addition to praising God for hearing His prayers (Ps. 28:6). We might look to the prayers of men like Daniel or Paul and see how they can shape our prayers. As we read through the Bible and learn what God is teaching us, we can use what we are reading to help guide our thoughts in prayer. Praying through Scripture gives us the ability to confess the truth of God's Word as it is applied to our lives.

Third, in order to deepen our prayers, we must deepen our relationship with God. Praying deeply does not mean praying elaborately or simply knowing the right things to say. Praying deeply is a result of a growing and deepening relationship with the one to whom we address. As we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18), what we pray and how we pray should grow as well. The more we set our mind on things above (Col. 3:2), the more spiritual our prayers should become. The more we understand the love shown in Jesus' death on the cross (Rom. 5:8), the more we might pray like the tax collector who said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (Luke 18:13). As our relationship with God deepens, our prayer life will deepen and flourish accordingly.

If we are to grow and mature as Christians, we must be growing in prayer. We cannot afford to neglect such an important aspect of our spiritual walk with God. When we dedicate time to pray personally with God, use Scripture to guide our prayers, and make the growth of our relationship with God a priority, our prayers to God will deepen as a result. As we strive to imitate Christ in all areas of our lives, let's consider every day how we can pray more deeply like our Lord.

CW

HOW TO GROW SPIRITUALLY

Justin Guess

In a society obsessed with the next miracle pill or quick-fix shot, we have lost the ability to focus and build healthy habits for longer-term, beneficial growth. Our current habits have caused our society to become chronically diseased and sick. People constantly look for the next health kick because they know something is wrong, but they don't know how to fix it, or they don't want to work

to fix it. Ezra found a community just like this, except they were suffering spiritually. After King Artaxerxes I released them to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their lives, city, and worship, Ezra found a city plagued by serious spiritual sickness. His goal to restore Jerusalem's spiritual health is laid out in Ezra 7:10: "For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do *it*, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel." In this verse, we find four points that will help us develop proper habits to grow spiritually in a healthy way.

We must prepare our hearts. Spiritual growth begins with the proper preparation. When a person is building a new deck, they must prepare it for the Texas sun and heat. If they do not apply the proper coating, the wood will begin to warp and splinter in the tough summer conditions. Jesus makes a similar comparison when discussing the parable of the Sower in Matthew 13. He states that the seed will be received and will produce when it falls on "good soil" (Matt. 13:8, 23). Likewise, Proverbs 4 teaches us the importance of guarding and directing our hearts. If we want to grow spiritually, we must begin by developing a heart that is willing to listen to God, accept His instruction, and change according to His will.

We must seek the law of the Lord. After preparing his heart, Ezra sought the law of the Lord. Spiritual growth requires a diligent pursuit of God's word. Faith comes by (is developed by) the word of God (Rom. 10:17). Hebrews 11:6 teaches us that to be pleasing to God, we must believe that He is, and that He rewards those who diligently seek Him (Heb. 11:6). Jesus also taught that if we want to be citizens of the Kingdom, we must seek first His righteousness (Matt. 6:33). Seeking God requires a diligent effort and desire to know and understand what He says.

We must do it. Simply knowing God's word does not produce spiritual growth. Ezra did not stop at seeking the law of the Lord, but he worked to do it as well. God's word must become action in our lives. James addresses this subject in Chapters 1 and 2. One cannot merely hear the word without obedience (Jas. 1:22-27). Faith requires action (Jas. 2:14-26). Jesus is not the author of eternal salvation for those who only know, but for those who obey (Heb. 5:9). The goal of studying is not to know more facts, but to apply the Word so that we can produce better choices, attitudes, relationships, and conduct for the glory of the Father.

We must teach others. Part of doing is helping others grow as well. Ezra sought, learned, did, and taught others how to do the same. Spiritual growth naturally develops a desire to help others grow. Jesus commanded His disciples to make disciples and to teach them to observe all that He

had commanded (Matt. 28:19-20). Paul instructed Timothy with a similar responsibility. "Commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). God's plan for spiritual growth is a constant process.

Spiritual growth does not come from a quick-fix plan or a miracle pill. Instead, it comes by developing the right focus and habits outlined in Ezra 7:10. It takes time, effort, and hard work. Prepare your heart. Seek God's word. Do it yourself. Teach others the same process. Not only will we grow when we follow this pattern, but we will help restore those in the sick and dying generation.

CW

How To Handle Temptation

Cody Kilgore

Fish don't bite the hook because they want the hook; they bite because they want what hides the hook. That is temptation. Like the fisherman, Satan doesn't drop his line without bait, advertising the hook; otherwise, temptation wouldn't work. Instead, our adversary advertises the bait: pleasure, not consequence; desire, not death.

We have a level of discernment which is not matched by the fish. We can, if we choose, identify the hook hidden within the bait. James writes to us, encouraging this very thing; he urges us to understand what is happening. He reminds us: there is a reward (Jas. 1:12), the crown of life; there is an enemy (Jas. 1:13), it is not God enticing us to fail; there is a pattern (Jas. 1:14-15), desire leads to enticement leads to sin leads to death.

James reminds us what temptation does—Jesus shows us what we should do about it.

Know The Word. Jesus was tempted in three points (Matt. 4:3, 6, 9). Each temptation was to make it about Him, rather than His Father. Satisfy *your* hunger; prove who *you* are; receive *your* glory apart from the Father's plan. In each case, Jesus responded to temptation with the quotation, "It is written..." We would do ourselves a disservice by minimizing the power that comes simply from knowing Scripture. Long ago, the question was asked and answered, "How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word" (Ps. 119:9).

Trust The Word. Knowing the Word alone is not a sufficient defense. Even the enemy says, "It is written..." (Matt. 4:6). The difference between Jesus and Satan is

trust—Jesus maintained complete confidence in what God has spoken. That is what lies at the heart of temptation, because temptation challenges us to go against what God has said. When we know what God says, we know what is right; when we trust what God says, we are convinced that His way is best. The same psalmist who knew that the Word needed to guard the way knew that it needed to be hidden, stored within the heart (Ps. 119:11).

Choose The Word. Jesus knew Scripture, trusted Scripture, and then obeyed Scripture. Temptation requires a decision; will we follow what God has settled? Will we hold fast to what He has spoken? Will His commandments serve as the foundation of our life? The worst time to try to make that decision is in the throes of battle. Decide ahead of time! Before anger, decide how you speak; before lust, decide what you allow your eyes to see; before compromise, decide who you serve. Our plea should always be, “With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments! (Ps. 119:10).

The fish sees the bait; the fisherman knows there is a hook. God sees what is hidden as well, and He brings it into our view. All that is in the world (1 John 2:16-17) ... resist. Not because God wishes to withhold pleasure, but because God is committed to our ultimate good. We ought to be committed to the same. Commit to our God. Commit to His Word. In doing so, we receive the highest blessing: eternal life and eternal residence in God’s presence. Hold fast. Hold to truth.

CW

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councils, denominational creeds, or the traditions of men. The gospel does not change with society. What was truth in the first century remains truth today. Paul warned: “*But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed*” (Gal. 1:8). To contend for the faith is to stand upon the final authority of God’s written word.

We must use the word of God. Human wisdom cannot defeat spiritual error. Christians must use the weapon “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17). When Jesus was tempted, He answered Satan by saying, “It is written” (Matt. 4:4, 7, 10). He relied upon the Scriptures. We must do the same. Our feelings are not the standard.

Popular opinion is not the standard. What our families have always believed is not the standard. The only reliable standard is the inspired word of God. Peter commanded Christians: “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). Before accepting any doctrine, we should ask: Where is it taught in the New Testament? Is it authorized by Jesus Christ? Can it be supported by a command, an approved apostolic example, or a necessary conclusion from Scripture? If a religious practice cannot be authorized by God’s word, Christians must reject it.

We must live the faith. It is not enough to defend the truth with our words. We must also defend it through our manner of life. A Christian whose conduct contradicts his teaching weakens his influence and gives others an opportunity to criticize the gospel. Paul instructed the Philippians: “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ” (Phil. 1:27). Christians contend for the faith when they worship according to truth, maintain moral purity, show kindness, remain faithful in marriage, care for those in need, teach the lost, and refuse to compromise with sin.

We must be courageous. Contending for the faith requires courage. The truth is not always popular. Faithful Christians may be ridiculed, rejected, or falsely accused. Nevertheless, we must not be ashamed of the gospel. Paul declared: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom. 1:16). We must never compromise the truth merely to avoid controversy. Peace is desirable, but peace cannot be purchased by surrendering the doctrine of Christ. Christians are commanded to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). Courage does not mean harshness. We must combine the boldness of Elijah with the compassion of Christ. We should be firm without being cruel and confident without being arrogant.

The faith has been completely revealed, and it must be faithfully defended. Christians contend earnestly for it by knowing the Scriptures, recognizing their authority, exposing error, teaching the truth in love, living holy lives, and courageously refusing to compromise. The church does not need a new message for a new generation. It needs renewed devotion to the ancient gospel of Jesus Christ. May we possess the courage of Paul, the love of Christ, and the conviction of Jude. Let us stand firmly upon God’s word and “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

CW



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"To Know Jesus and...make Him known"

From the Director's Desk



Trent Kennedy
Director
SWSBS

Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with outstretched necks and wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet..." (Isa. 3:16).

Goals, priorities, and norms are often reflected in the women who make up the various strata within a given society. In Isaiah's day, the daughters of Zion were proud, immodest, covetous, seductive, shameless, immoral, and presumptuous. Isaiah's condemnation was only of those wanton women; instead, he showed how they highlighted the failures of civic and spiritual leadership and the nation as a whole. Men and women were contributors to the sinful condition of Judah and Jerusalem.

Even a causal observation of our society shows that we do not embody piety, morality, modesty, humility, or righteousness. And this can be observed in the women of our society. Like Jerusalem of old, their walking and talking, their dress and dignity, their attitudes and actions reflect a sensual society that prioritizes the things of the flesh over things of the spirit. This is no surprise. This is not new.

On the other side, women often also reflect the best of society. Their attentiveness and kindness are inclusive. Their strength and beauty are quiet. Godly women are to be praised. Wise women are worth their weight in gold. Women of faith are examples that echo across ages.

Women are very important to God. They have a place in society (Acts 17:12), a place in marriage (Eph. 5:22-33), a place in child rearing (1 Tim. 5:14), a place in teaching (Tit. 2:3-4), a place in the church (Rom. 16:1-4), a place in God's promise (Gal. 3:16-29), a place in Jesus' heart (Luke 7:13), and a place in eternity (1 Pet. 3:7).

SWSBS is unique among preaching schools. While some schools remain committed to training faithful men to preach, they only allow male students. Since its inception, the SW elders have wanted the school to be open to women. Female students will go through the same rigorous academic training as males. Of course, ladies will not preach in front of a mixed audience. They will not have authority over men in teaching capacities. There is no desire to "re-study women's roles" or "push the envelope." Relevant Scriptures that we find in 1 Timothy 2 & 3 and 1 Corinthians 14 have not and will not change. Instead, the invitation to women to study the full program at SWSBS is because we recognize that women will train their own children and others, they will participate in church works, they will speak at ladies' days, they will teach ladies' Bible classes, they will evangelize, and they will make up the bulk of our children Bible class teachers. What a great opportunity to invest in the church and in society by helping Christian women be rooted firmly in the Word of God. Women have a place at SWSBS.

www.swcofc.org