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Raising Image Bearers - Children who grow up to look like God

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1) Welcome to the BrimWood Press newsletter!

This new monthly newsletter is dedicated to *Christian parents* raising children in this postmodern, secular, Gnostic culture: parents who want their families to shine.

(Matthew 5:14-16 & Philippians 2:15.)

This newsletter provides practical, relevant help for the on-going work of evangelizing our children.

My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you.

Galatians 4:19 ESV

A special thanks to all those who forwarded our newsletter and especially to those who signed up. Additionally, your kind comments back were a great encouragement. This newsletter is issued on the first Monday of every month.

2) Reflections: "Where Image Bearing Begins"

She was nine, a young nine, too young for my worldview class, but she was there. And yet, she asked the best question of my two-day workshop, where one of my main objectives is to facilitate conversations with children.

"Mrs. Brim, what does it mean to be made in the image of God?"

Jessica's question is one I've been wrestling with for thirteen years now. I needed the answer for myself, for my children, for those I teach. But her question was too big to respond to in the little time left in the class. So I write this newsletter for Jessica's mom, and for the rest of us, who need to be able to explain to a child what it means to be made in the image of God.

Some bad news for me: My children grew up before I actually understood what bearing the image of God looks like. But to my lovely surprise, this "parenting truth to impart" does not come with an expiration date. Even now, God gives me opportunities to teach this to my grown children, but I must show rather than tell. So now **the bad news for us both:** The answer to Jessica's question really isn't a definition a parent imparts as if speaking from Sinai. **Children discover what it means to be made in the image of God through the lifestyle of the parent.** Modeling is the best means of teaching children about their central purpose in life.

Not so many years ago, I remember being floored, literally brought to my knees, by Paul's statement to his children in Philippians 4:9: "**Whatever you ... see in me, put into practice...**". Imitate me. I couldn't say that. I was so busy "teaching" my children and others that I neglected the life I lived before them. Paul's idea of making disciples includes "learning by watching what the teacher does". If I want my children to live "whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable ... excellent or praiseworthy, etc.", I must practice living these things before them. Christ is the source of all these virtues. To be an image bearer is to imitate Him. **If we imitate Jesus, then those**

who naturally follow us will also be following Him.

If you're thinking anything like I was when confronted by Paul, the concept of being made in the image of God takes this parenting gig to a whole new level ... and drops us to our knees. If my goal is like Paul's, "To see Christ formed in [my children]", then as a prerequisite or at least in tandem, **I need to see Christ being formed in me.**

But here's some good news about an otherwise overwhelming truth. **Image bearing is the work of a lifetime.** We're not going to nail this while our children are small, and probably not while they are teenagers, and we'll still be working on it when we have grandbabies. But it is my constant prayer that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, I will be able to share with my grandchildren the fruit of years of striving to be like Christ. Such a grandparent could be a huge generational boon. Children need to see God in the faces of those who love them and help them grow up. **It's His image we were made to reflect and His image we want to replicate in our offspring.** This is a noble calling. A calling for heroes.

The Hero's Life

Every hero's journey is fraught with struggle. **To be like God is a quest that demands nothing short of death,** daily death to self, on crosses that come in innumerable shapes and sizes. Families fashion all sorts of them. But these trials produce the very environment in which character is forged. Those willing to be trained by trials **become heroes, heroes that children can look up to.**

Cowards don't pick up crosses

But what about all those days, when we don't play the hero's part, when we chose anger over patience, when we demand our own way rather than submit, when we choose sloth over diligence, greed over contentment? And the list is just beginning. What about those days when children witness shameful things in the lives of parents, parents who were made to be like God? On those days, I remember Eden. I remember Jordan.

The Garden of Eden

In a garden, the first image bearers betrayed their Maker. **They disobeyed and experienced shame.** But that's not the end of the story. **The Maker sought them.** He called out, asking, "Where are you?", "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?", "What have you done?". These questions were not rhetorical. **Although Adam and Eve chose to respond by blaming each other and the snake, these questions were invitations to repent.**

Have you ever wondered how the story would have gone if, in response to God's questions, Adam did not lift up his eyes to his Maker, but beat his breast and said, "God, be merciful to me a sinner."? What if Eve had fallen to the ground and wept at her Maker's feet, wiping her tears with her hair? They could have lived a different story.

The River Jordan

Though you've probably paid it little note, the Genesis 2 text devotes 20% of the narrative to a river that plays absolutely no part in the story's plot. This is terribly odd in such a tight narrative. But fast-forward to another river and another Adam. **Christ begins his hero journey with the baptism of repentance, baptism in the river Jordan.** Why would a sinless man be baptized? John was equally confused. But the sins Christ's baptism confessed belonged to the man His life was patterned after (Romans 5:14). Christ was beginning again the story first told a garden, a story about image bearers. **Christ's work on Adam's behalf inaugurated a new creation, and in this creation story, image bearers repent and confess their sins.**

On shameful days, I do not look for a river to be baptized in again. **I remember the model of Christ's humble, vicarious act of repentance.** Rather than blame, or excuse, or deny the crosses I stepped over again to avoid the pain of crucifying my flesh, I kneel. Repentance, **true repentance, is the work of heroes.** It's the work of image bearers. It often demands confession to the one or ones that I refused to lay down my life for. It's humbling work, work that makes us like the one who humbled Himself on our behalf.

For Jessica's mom, this answer is only the beginning to the question, "What does it mean to be made in the image of God?" But I believe it's the place where we must all start. For parents, image bearing begins with knowing we were made to act like Jesus to our children and our spouses. When we don't, we repent. Then when our children, who were made to act like Jesus, don't, they'll know what to do. And remember, it was **Christ's vicarious repentance that brought great pleasure to the Father.** "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Every act of true repentance brings joy to the Father and makes us a little more like the Son.



3) A Free Tool for Teaching Children about Image Bearing

While repentance is where learning this biblical truth begins for adults, children need to be taught the purpose of their creation. To help you introduce this concept to them, this newsletter gives you access to a free slideshow. It provides pictures and discussion questions to spark lots of valuable conversation about what it means to be made in the image of God. It's what I would have used to answer Jessica's question if there was time. Now she can do this with her mom.

You will find the link in the section below. It's available to all subscribers to this newsletter. If this was forwarded to you, please subscribe. Your email is safe with us. We don't share or sell them to others, and the only thing you'll get from us is this monthly newsletter. You can unsubscribe whenever you wish.

Before getting started

Here's a couple of comments that introduce the discussion material on the slideshow. You can read the following paragraph before the show begins, or you can read Genesis 1 aloud and point out the things I note below:

In the first chapter of the Bible we meet a good God who labors six days to make what is good. Deeds tell us a great deal about a character. The refrain, "and God saw that [it] was good [or very good]", is echoed seven times in Genesis 1. It's there to tell us that **the Maker is and does good**. Then God says, "Let Us make man in Our image." Male and female were fashioned in the image of a good God. Next He blesses them and commands, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth." Both **families and ruling are a part of image bearing from the beginning**. People rule the earth on God's behalf. He's the creator and owner. We are His stewards. We are to rule like the good God we represent. How does a good God rule?

So about that tool? [Image Bearer Download Link](#) takes you to a slideshow I developed several years ago for my theology workshops for children. Each picture focuses on our theme. The discussion questions below every slide will help you

guide the interaction. Discussion of all the material takes a good 45 minutes. You can break it into two parts at the point where the nativity picture begins. Please let me know if it proves helpful.

I'm sharing this with you for use with your family and/or your Sunday School class or youth group. Any other use requires written permission from me.

4) What's Marcia been up to? (more on image bearing)

I'm a fan of the Circe Institute and their annual conference. In April, I was reading one of their outstanding articles by Stratford Caldecott, entitled "**Against the Rising Tide**" It addresses **the catastrophic decline of morality in teenagers**, and looks to Genesis 1-3 and the life of Christ for answers. I especially appreciated categories of **givers and takers**. The following are my reflections on his article and truths even preadolescent children need to understand about the Fall and sex :

Givers and Takers

To be an image bearer is to reflect who the Creator is as the "Giver of all good things." The Giver ultimately embodied this truth in the Son—the visible image of the invisible God. **Christ gave Himself for us in perfect obedience to the Father.** We represent who God is when we obey Him and give ourselves to others in all kinds of ways.

Marriage is one of God's pictures that specifically reflect His nature to the world. **God designed the husband to give his body to the wife and the wife to give her body to the husband.** God creates life out of this self-giving. God established this giving as the exclusive expression of marital love.

But in the fall, man and woman chose to be takers rather than givers. We disfigured the image we were made to. The first taker was Satan, who desired worship that belongs only to God. The second taker was man, who would not submit his desires to God's will. In the garden, where fruit hung ripe on every tree, rather than being thankful for this abundant provision, man stole the one food God did not offer. (**Thankfulness is an act of worship. Obedience is an act of love.**)

Our children are growing up in a culture of takers. Westerners are characterized as consumers rather than givers. In such a world, physical desires know no bounds. We live without limits. **Men and women exist to please their own bodies rather than serve others in love.** Marriage is no longer viewed as God's design for faithful men and women. Physical union is something people use, even consume, to gratify the body's desires rather than express the life-giving nature of sacred love. **We take from others what does not belong to us and in doing so reenact the first sin of man.** In a selfish, disobedient act, we exchange the glory of God for behavior that mirrors animals or even demons.

Men and women are made to reflect the self-giving nature of God. This is our glory, a glory given to us in the beginning which we rejected, but a glory offered again by the Son who calls us to pick up our cross daily and follow him in the self-sacrificing work of loving one another and obeying our Maker.

Where I'll be: I'll be in Texas May 8-10 at the Arlington Homeschool Bookfaire. Please stop by, say hi, check out BrimWood Press products, and come to my class on **How to Teach Children Using Questions** (otherwise known as the Socratic Method). I'll be in Santa Rosa, CA, May 16,17 at the TEACHN conference where I'll be teaching three workshops; Raising Christian Thinkers, Raising Thomas (What to do when your child doubts) and Raising Young Historians.

I am currently scheduling classes for next fall. I teach 10 to 14-year -olds worldview, history and theology in one to two day workshops. Contact me if you'd like to know more.

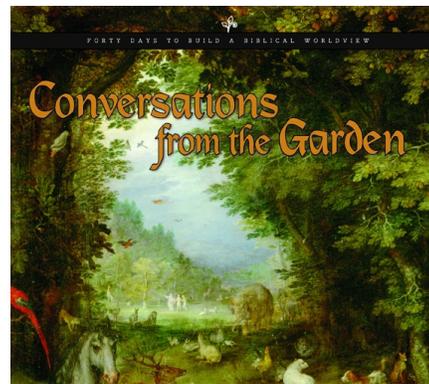
5) Teaching Your Children about Sex

I must admit: reading Caldecott's article really got me thinking. Through I have spent the last four years working on an adult book entitled: **The Story of Adam: Learning to Bear the Image**, it's still not done. This last month I set the manuscript aside and started a book for parents and children based on the narrative of Genesis 1-4, which explains the goodness and meaning of marital love and how the evil of this world twists and perverts it. The piece I wrote above responding to Caldecott's article on a similar vein gives you an idea of what this book would be like. I'd like to produce a draft of the manuscript by this summer's end. Then I'll be looking for parents who would be willing to read it, give me feedback, then read a revised version to their children, and give me feedback again. If you'd like to be on my list of potential readers, please drop me a note at Marcia@brimwoodpress.com.

6) A product Marcia recommends

This month I'd highly recommend **Conversations from the Garden**. As you've probably picked up in reading two newsletters, Genesis 1-3 has a lot to say relative to the things I write about.

Conversations will enable your family to understand how much the first three chapters of Scripture influence the entire biblical narrative, all the way to Revelation. The book



covers all the major beliefs of the Christian faith through discussion questions springing from the first three chapters of Genesis. It's an ideal tool for family devotions or as the Bible portion of a homeschool day.



Conversations in the Garden

7) Upcoming issues

1. June: Raising Thomas – What To Do When Your Child Doubts

2. July: Raising the Stay-At-Home Elder Brother

3. August: Raising Christian Thinkers and Feelers

Having spent some thirteen years in Genesis 1-3, image bearing will be a perennial topic, and of course, discussions of movies like the one addressed last month are bound to reappear too. I always love the opportunity to compare the God of the Bible with the gods of this world. So if, when venturing into theaters, you come across a movie you'd like to recommend for discussion here, please drop me a line.

8) Pass this Newsletter along

This is our second newsletter. If you know someone who could benefit from its content, please forward it and ask them to subscribe. If they don't subscribe, you'll have to forward it to them again next month. Subscribe at [Geoff where do they subscribe] Of course, if this newsletter was not helpful and you're unwilling to give me another chance, simply unsubscribe at the bottom below. I'll never know.

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Marcia Harris Brim of BrimWood Press writes a free monthly newsletter for Christian parents to provide practical, relevant help for the on-going work of evangelizing our children. Marcia's books for teaching 10 to 13 year old children Theology, History and Worldview are available at www.brimwoodpress.com



10) Supplement: "Insights for Modern Parents Raising Postmodern Children"

Truth and Postmodernism: Each newsletter will contain a segment on postmodernism, the culture our children are growing up in. The more we understand their culture in its contrast to the one we were raised in, the better we can prepare children for the unique challenges of living in this new era of human history.

As I noted last time, though Western culture began its postmodern shift in the mid-twentieth century, not until the last couple of decades has it thoroughly saturated the air we breathe. People 30 and under are typically postmodern, while those older than 30 are typically modern. Postmoderns are most easily defined by the values they have rejected from modernity (western culture of the last five hundred years). At the top of their list is Universal Truth.

I've worried most of the month about how people might respond to my brief comments about postmodernism and truth in the last newsletter. Whenever you brush a huge subject lightly, it's easy to rub people the wrong way, simply because you haven't used enough words to make yourself understood. So hopefully, this issue, with more sentences about truth, will smooth a ruffled feather or two.

Last month, I mentioned the postmodern perspective that "All truth is relative." Though our children's culture opposes claims of universal truth, understanding how moderns went about defining what is true and universal may cause us to think twice about the bright optimism and confidence that typified the modern age.

A Brief Stroll through Western History

Medieval History: Modernity grew out of the medieval era, in which the Catholic Church defined what was true and authoritative for the western world. During the late Middle Ages, a group of church scholars known as Scholastics were influenced by some rediscovered writings of the ancient Greeks and Romans. Chief among them was the author Aristotle.

Scholastics were enamored with the study of deductive logic, recognized in this example from Aristotle — “All men are mortal. Socrates is a man. Therefore, Socrates is mortal.” Logic taught people how to reason well. By developing reason, people could better understand the mysteries of God. “Reason was pressed into the service of faith.” Chief among the Scholastics was Thomas Aquinas, who built on the foundation laid by Aristotle to erect the framework of modern Christian apologetics. Aristotle’s logic served the church well for centuries, but Aristotle’s science did not.

Aquinas also adopted the Greek view of a geocentric universe, as well as ideas about the afterlife from earlier churchmen including indulgences. In the 1200s, logic rooted in Scripture and Church Tradition seemed to support both ideas. Aquinas’ teaching eventually became Church doctrine. But by the 1500s, new authorities would arise to challenge the church’s corner on truth.

Modern History: A modest monk and an intrepid astronomer stood at the center of culture change. Luther took on specific church teaching and practices, which proved unsupportable by Scripture alone, while Galileo confronted the church’s geocentric universe, which found no support when observing the heavens. These two men became icons of the Protestant Reformation and the Scientific Revolution, two of the most significant forces transforming culture from medieval to modern.

In the exchange, the notion of absolute truth was not lost. It was simply transferred to new authorities. The power of the church to define spiritual truth was handed over to the Bible. The truth resident in nature became the domain of science.

The Scientific Revolution grew: Galileo’s observations led to Francis Bacon, who formally introduced a new means for discovering truth. Bacon, the Father of the Scientific Method, saw truth as rooted in nature, rather than the logic of the mind. Through observation and experiments, nature would reveal the laws that govern both the universe and society. Bacon’s ideas led to Isaac Newton, whose discovery of the universal law of gravity seemed to verify everything Bacon aimed for.

The discovery of truth through scientific methods is known as inductive logic. For many years, inductive logic seemed to peacefully co-exist with deductive logic, because the modern era still valued reason. Nevertheless, observation as truth became so powerful that eventually the only truth viewed as reliable was scientific. We’ll return here in a moment.

The Protestant Reformation also grew: Luther’s ideas led to Zwingli and Zwingli to Calvin and countless reformers after that. Everyone agreed that the Bible was the authority, but the people who read the Bible drew various conclusions about its teachings, which led to various churches with varying practices, structures and doctrines. Ultimately, deciding what the Scriptures taught became the domain of individual believers, who choose the church that agreed with their interpretation of

the Bible.

Concurrent with the individual taking on a role that once belonged to the church, the rising influence of science impacted the study of the Bible. Scientific and rational methods were applied to the study of God's Word, so that the individual believers (or at least their pastors) might "rightly divide the word of truth." Studying the Bible became a subject as exhaustive as studying nature. Biblical truth was dissected into parts about God, man, salvation, the church, end times, etc. Deciphering the meaning of individual verses, passages, books or topics become the task of theologians in their quest for biblical truth. Inductive Bible Studies and systematic theologies (which grew out of the middle ages) are two examples of a modern approach to the Word of God.

A new field of study called archeology was added to modern Bible study methods. It would prove invaluable in providing observational evidence and historical confirmation for many of the assertions of God's Word. Finding Noah's Arc, the rubble of Jericho's walls, and chariot wheels at the bottom of the Red Sea are but a few examples of the many proofs of biblical claims derived from archeological digs or dives. Such finds gave great confidence to believers, and such evidence was liberally employed in apologetics to prove to the skeptic the truth of God's Word.

But science and the Bible were on a collision course when Darwin set sail to the Gallegos Islands. With the publication of the Origin of the Species, unbelievers thought they'd finally found a way to explain the natural world without any reference to the supernatural Beginner. The revelry between biblical and scientific camps grew until a show-down took place at the Scopes Trial in the 1920s. According to the reporting, the monkey's side won.

About the same period, reason (science's other rival for how truth is known), lost its final hold on Western society, as deductive logic courses began disappearing from the classroom. By the early half of the twentieth century, science would have been the only contender left to define universal truths, were it not for an unwilling challenger. A wild-haired mathematician and physicist set in motion the demise of science's claim as the arbiter of absolute truth.

In the 1600s, Newton's discovery of gravity as a universal law propelled the giddy self-confident days of the Scientific Revolution. In the 1800s, Darwin became science's golden boy by providing a means to explain the origin of the universe without reference to a creator. But his method of natural selection was predicated on the ancient idea of matter being eternal. Albert Einstein revered both men, but his mathematical equation foundational to his theories of general and special relativity were so countercultural that he flubbed his own formula. Following his math, his science would be led to the undeniable conclusion that matter, along with space and time, were not eternal, and in some parts of space, gravity's universal laws weren't ... well ... universal.

Once observational evidence started showing up from high-powered telescopes, Einstein conceded that his math was right. Science admitted that its truths, which were once thought certain and universal, were provisional and contingent upon future knowledge. Scientific truth became relative. When “relative” entered the Western vocabulary as an adjective for scientific truth, it wasn’t long before all of social institutions followed suit. Science with its inductive logic had won the day, but it lost the claim that it could define truth that applied to all people and all places. When truth became relative, the modern world became postmodern. Postmodernism at its core is a rejection of the hubris of modern science. But as the “observational evidence” associated with the western church during this same era doesn’t exactly bode well for modern Christianity, I fear we’re not in a place to pick up the fallen standard of truth.

Should Christians be threatened by the Postmodern reject of truth?

I don’t think so. Why must we be wedded to the modern notion of universal truth? The Bible never stakes its claim to truth on scientific or rational means. It wasn’t written as a guidebook for universal knowledge. With perhaps the exception of the first eleven chapters of Genesis, God’s Word mediated through human authors was written to a very particular group of people, a group narrowly defined in the Old Testament and for the better portion of the Gospels as the Jews. Since the cross, the Bible has been offered up to any person who, by faith, chooses to become part of another particular group of Jews and Gentiles known as the church, for whom the rest of Bible was written.

Though Jesus himself talked a great deal about the truth, He too did not have in mind the definition of truth constructed by Moderns — a definition post moderns reject. Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” But discovering Christ as Truth, with a capital T, is a much different endeavor than that which is defined by the Scientific Method or a logical syllogism.

Knowing Christ is experiential. It is a lived knowledge, nurtured in the context of years of an intimate relationship initiated by faith. This knowledge of the Truth proves itself out in relational experiences with others, especially with those of the household of the faith.

“By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Love, not logic, not science, proves the truth of Christ. And as for knowledge, Paul told us long ago, it only puffs up. Having spent the whole of my adult life studying God’s Word, I have often wondered why the disciples never asked Jesus to teach them how to study Torah. Instead, they asked him how to pray. Did they miss the greatest biblical learning moment in history, or did they know something we moderns have forgotten with our vast array of biblical understanding?

In recent years, I am discovering prayer as the intimate space between my soul and my Savior. It's where I talk to God and where I'm learning to hear his still small voice. I have so much to learn.

Raising Modern Children in a Postmodern World

When I ask children in my worldview classes how they know that God is true, the standard list of responses goes like this: satellites have taken pictures of the ark atop Mt. Ararat; they've found chariot wheels at the bottom of the Red Sea; all the copies of the Bible discovered in the Dead Sea Scrolls match the Bible we already have. These answers come from 10 to 13 year-olds trained to defend the claims of Christianity to a modern world. There is only one problem — their world is no longer modern.

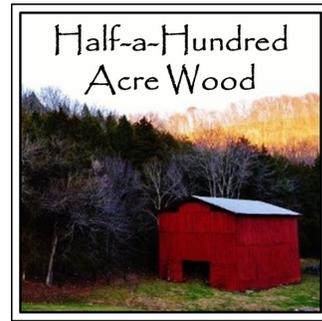
But maybe there is another problem too. Do they really believe God is real because chariot wheels tumble in the Red Sea? While no one would affirm their faith this baldly, this evidence for the reliability of the Bible is emblematic of the way moderns are taught to recognize what is true. Truth is evidential and historic. Manuscript evidence, archeological evidence, scientific evidence and logical arguments are all pieces of a truth puzzle that modern Christians use to bolster their confidence that their faith is not in vain.

While postmoderns waive a dismissive hand over just about all of these means of knowing truth, I understand why we modern Christian parents cling to this knowledge. Learning to pray is harder than studying God's word. Being deeply engaged in a church is harder than the safety of Christian seminars. Learning to love is hardest of all.

Postmodernism offers all sorts of critiques, but very few solutions. This is challenging for parents who are trained to have a ready answer for the hope that lies within us. We are raising children in an extremely difficult age. May the Way, the Truth and the Life, pour out His mercy on us.



Check out one of our great affiliates and their reviews of BrimWood Press products at [Half-a-Hundred Acre Wood](#). Brandy is a very thorough reviewer and focuses on Classical homeschooling.



*Half Hundred Acre Wood
review of Conversations in the
Garden*

The format for this newsletter was adapted from award-winning novelist Randy Ingermanson, "the Snowflake Guy," who publishes the free monthly Advanced Fiction Writing E-zine, with more than 8,000 readers. If you want to learn the craft and marketing of fiction, AND make your writing more valuable to editors, AND have FUN doing it, visit www.AdvancedFictionWriting.com.



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