

WHEATON

CROSS † CONNECTIONS

But Then This...

By Pastor John

The little book of Obadiah, the shortest book in the Old Testament, is very interesting. When King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon was finally fed up with Judah and her repeated rebellions, he came against Jerusalem one last time in 586BC and utterly destroyed the temple and the wall and nearly all of the suitable dwelling places. He dragged nearly all of what was remaining of the sons and daughters of Jacob to slavery in Babylon.

The prophecy of Obadiah is about one of the very painful things that happened next. It is the account of someone who should have been compassionate to the victims, and who should have been doing what they could to relieve suffering and be a help. Obadiah is the story of the people of Edom (Israel's cousins -- the children of Jacob's brother Esau), who did exactly opposite of that. Instead of compassion, they gloated. Instead of helping the victims, they helped the marauders. Instead of standing with the refugees, they folded their arms and sneered contemptuously.

You see, the children of Esau and the children of Jacob were family! The fact that the fathers had not gotten on well with each other, was not an excuse for their children and their children's children to despise each other. But these cousins of the children of Judah felt secure in their homes and in their wealth in the mountains and cliffs of Edom. They felt that their place of privilege was their God-given right and that they would never be moved and had no need to act with kindness and generosity.

Obadiah comes to them however and says: "The pride of your heart has deceived you, you who live in the clefts of the rocks and make your home on the heights, you who say to yourself. "who can bring me down to the ground?" "Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down." declares the Lord. (vv. 3-4)

"Because of the violence against your brother Jacob, you will be covered with shame; you will be destroyed forever. On the day you stood aloof while strangers carried off his [Jacob's] wealth and foreigners entered his gates and cast lots for Jerusalem, you were like one of them." (vv. 10-11)

God says that in Edom's standing by while their brother suffered and for Edom's gloating and adding to the misery of Israel over the ruins and remains of Jerusalem and their homes, Edom was just "like one of them." That is -- they were just like ones who were wielding the swords and knocking down buildings. Edom was as guilty as Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon.

This story is no mere historical curiosity. This is a call to the church today and to the people of God who, when they see brothers and sisters suffering (all now who are suffering are our brothers and sisters), see it as a call to action and a call to stand alongside them and to help them.

This is a warning to those of us who think ourselves secure, and who enjoy our place of privilege without seeing that our very privilege is a call to seek justice and to be the voice and the hands for those who at this time stand with no one to help.

Considering The Lord's Prayer

By Joseph Kok

Matthew 6:9-13 – The Lord's Prayer
Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we have also forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

In early fall, I happened to come across the book *Praying Like Jesus* by James Mulholland. In this book--written in response to the popular book, *The Prayer of Jabez*, Mulholland sought to refute the Prayer of Jabez and enable and promote the "gospel" of the Lord's Prayer.

The prayer of Jabez is found in 1 Chronicles 4:10. In it, Jabez prayed, "*Bless me and enlarge my territory. Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so I will be free from pain.*" This prayer seeks to benefit the self, be self-righteous and solely self-interested.

To respond to this, Mulholland goes into depth on the proper attitude of prayer, and what prayer should mean in our relationship with God. He says that the proper attitude of prayer is not to gain or change our posture, or be something elegant, it is a matter of humility and trust in God.

Among his points:

- Do we recognize our utter dependence on God?
- Do we trust God to faithfully meet our needs – especially when we are woefully down and out?
- Prayer is us humbly seeking ways to establish God's kingdom and do his will, here where we are as it is in heaven
- Prayer is an opportunity for us to learn from God how to love and live unselfishly

- We are/will be blessed in order to further be a blessing for God and to others

Throughout the book, Mulholland heads his chapters with one line at a time of the Lord's Prayer. I will touch on some of these correlations. I'd also like to share some biblical references to detail the idea and the mindset of considering others and the bringing of Christ's kingdom.

God the Father is a parent. He is intimate, loving and committed to us. Whenever we claim God as our Father, we must also seek to live as him. Jesus taught the disciples to pray with intimacy, responsibility, and community.

Mulholland explains that praying to "Our Father" for the needs of our brothers and sister should create a desire to be part of the answer. Too often we may offer our prayers instead of our actions to actually do something about the problem we are praying for. James admonished the church with these words:

"What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, 'Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,' but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it?"

James 2:14-16

Self-denial and generosity are evidence that we know God, we recognize our responsibility to be like him, and we seek every opportunity to care for our brothers and sisters. A selfless mind is constantly thinking about the eternal lives of others and not the temporal life of one's self.

In praying "*thy kingdom come*," Jesus taught his disciples to seek God's kingdom and his will before personally asking for things. "*Thy kingdom come and thy will be done*" comes before "*Give us today our daily bread.*" Beyond this, Jesus told his disciples to focus on God's kingdom before they focused on God's will.

In petitioning God to "*give us today our daily bread*," Jesus was making clear the first priority

in establishing the kingdom of God was that basic human needs must be met.

"I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

Matthew 25:35-36

"Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

Matthew 25:40

Our proper response to prosperity, even modest prosperity, should be compassion. *"Give us this day our daily bread"* should be a call to generosity. To pray *"Give us"* must be a commitment to meeting the basic needs of every person in the world. When we say *"us"*, it should mean all of us.

"Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us" is a call to mercy. Forgiveness is the basis of a healthy relationship with God and with others. To love mercy is to be like God and to love others as God loves them. Grace never begins in us. It is always a response to the one who has delivered us from the evil of this world and, more important, from the evil within ourselves.

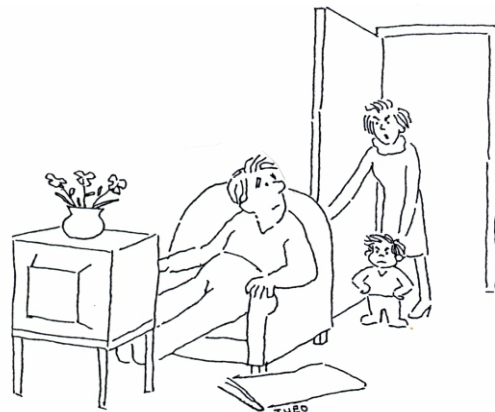
As Americans, one of our greatest temptations is to want more, earn more, to look for bigger and better things, to emphasize the material at the expense of the spiritual, and to protect our image of prosperity.

Yet God offers us far more than prosperity. God offers us a kingdom rich in blessings, blessings that cannot be measured in dollars. We must decide what we treasure most: the things of man or the things of God. Jesus refused to be satisfied with anything less than God's kingdom. Each of his responses reminds us of the priorities of God.

"Lead us not into temptation" is a cry for the strength to resist the seductiveness of wealth. When coupled with the plea *"Deliver us from evil,"* it is the commitment to challenge the kingdoms of this world, even those we have been born into and that entice us each day.

Theo's View

Editor's Note: This is the sixth in a series of insights on our spiritual journey that Theo left us.



Too Much of This "Spare the Rod" Stuff

Missions

By Tom Sytsma

The missions committee would like to thank everyone for their generosity in meeting their Faith Promise pledges of last year. We met as a committee on Sunday evening and were pleasantly surprised that the giving was over the pledged amount!

This enabled us to meet all the obligations to our missionaries that we support and in addition help some other needy organizations.

When looking at this year's pledges we will be able to continue to support all the missionaries and organizations that we supported last year as well as add some additional support members.

The organizations and missions we support are:

Lawndale Christian reformed Church
Outreach Community Ministries
Christian Reformed World Missions – Larry

VanderAa Family
 Back to God Hour
 Canaan Peace Prayer Mission -- Reg and Audrey
 Ebenezer
 Roseland Christian Ministries
 Wycliffe – Ena VanderMolen
 Vietnamese New Hope Christian Reformed
 Church
 Koinonia National Ministries
 Christian Reformed World Missions – Evy Smith
 Horizon Community Church
 Jurie Goosen Family
 Crossroad Bible Institute
 Christian Reformed World Missions – Mike
 VanderDyke Family
 Christian Reformed World Missions – Wayne Ten
 Harnsel Family
 Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
 Christian Reformed World Missions – Ben and
 Brenda Michelson
 Gwaimen Centre – Dr. Beatrice Kadangs
 The Magi – Anne Marie Kool
 Teaching Overseas Org.—Jack and Cindy Ippel
 Pioneers – Lisa Riihimaki

Look for new and awesome ways the committee will be working to keep the idea of Missions in the front of our Church. We hope and pray that you will continue to support missions in our church.

*Come and see what God has done,
 how awesome his works in man's behalf!*
Ps 66:5

Gweimen Centre

By Mike Richardson

His name is Nuhu Fada, pastor of the 150 year old 1st ECWA Church of Kwoi (Evangelical Church of West Africa). Reverend Fada, soft spoken, with elegant English skills peppered throughout with a heavy Nigerian accent, seemed rather young to pastor such a historically rich church. The congregation numbers well over 1500 people. Each Sunday a very special front row of pews is filled with the King of the Jaba people, HRH Kpop Ham Maude and his family.

Pastor Fada maneuvered Nancy and me throughout the expansive church compound, stopping purposefully at each building and the many gravesites of all the past ministers. He provided us detailed glimpses of how our Lord became so intricately intertwined in the lives of Nigerian Christians.

The last stop found us on the front steps of the sanctuary looking across the compound toward a lean-to structure. Beneath the pole and corrugated roof sat fifteen or so very old men. They were sitting shoulder to shoulder on wooden benches arranged in a “U” shape. The young preacher looked at both of us, smiled and said, “Those men are all retired ECWA pastors and elders. They come here every Friday to spend the day in bible study and prayer for all the people of the world. They want to meet you.”

After an extended time of pumping handshakes and traditional ever-so extended Nigerian greetings, we were matter-of-factly confronted with a request, “The pastors ask that you bless them.” I was a bit taken aback. I am not in the habit of “blessing” groups of pastors. Perhaps sensing my confusion, Pastor Fada began to tell a story.

Drawing from past history, he told about the first missionaries, one from the US and two from Canada. They brought with them the Lord Jesus. Jesus came through three white men and through them he gave his words and his love. They crossed dangerous and uncharted savannahs to bring new hope and the promise of salvation to his Jaba children, a lost people. Pastor Nuhu closed his story by saying, “Now we are his in joy and happiness. We are filled with his blessing. All of this through the teaching and love the white people brought to us through his grace.”

Then he warmly added, “We will never forget. That is why you are always called ‘Mama’ and ‘Papa’, a greeting of respect, gratitude and love.” Somehow, with an overwhelming sense of the deepest humility, I mustered forth a prayer of blessing for these brothers and sisters in Christ.

After many more embraces and hand shaking,

we departed realizing that we can never know what God will ask of us or where he has the mind to place us. I do know that after this experience, we will never be the same.

Remembering is such an integral part of our lives. Remembering brings forth such a cache of experiences. We have been commanded to put and keep to memory all the words and teaching of our Lord God in order that our lives may be lived to his glory. Jesus came to this group of Christians through three of his obedient servants who had been given the truth. They, in turn, went out and shared that same truth in West Africa.

You, too, have given expression to his love. Through your generosity, over three hundred pounds of medicines, underwear and hygienic supplies were carried to Kwoi in December. Dollars given during 2009 have been placed in the Gweimen Centre bank account. All this, by the 'Mamas' and the 'Papas' at Wheaton Christian Reformed Church. The Gweimen Board of Directors want to express their gratitude for your generosity. We will always remember your response to our call for help. Also, you can be absolute in the assurance that those living in Kwoi and Ankung, Nigeria will remember.

Mark 9:37 Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me, but the one who sent me.

Insights and Encounters

By Rachel Nyenhuis

Last week, my husband Jim and I were helping my grandparents out by driving their car and their 2-year-old Sheltie down to their winter home in Florida. The first leg of the journey was amazingly smooth- the little dog, Bonny, slept

the whole way and didn't make a peep. So, when Jim and I checked into our hotel, we were hoping to leave her sleeping and go out for a sit-down dinner, getting a well-deserved break from the last two days of car-food.

But Bonny wouldn't have it! As soon as we shut the door on her, that little dog, who had ignored us for two whole days, suddenly missed us so much that she set up yapping and just wouldn't stop. It was 9:00 at night! We couldn't let her go on like that! We had to give up our dinner plans and take her with us to eat car-food again.

I am able now to laugh about that silly dog. And reflecting on it, I imagine that God gets this same treatment from us – when things are driving along smoothly, we sort of take a nap and don't pay him mind. But as soon things are new and strange, we get worked up and think he might be leaving us!

I am grateful that God is more patient with us than we were with Bonny, but now I wonder if our behavior not only grieves him, but may also sound a note of amusement amidst His holy exasperation? "Oh! Those silly little humans, won't they ever learn that I never leave them, not for a minute!"

Library News

By Eleanor De Jong

Our thanks to those who donated the following materials.

Non-fiction

The Elder's Handbook

Louis M. Tamminga

A Reader's Guide to Calvin's Institutes

Anthony N. S. Lane

Holding Fast: the untold story of the Mount Hood tragedy

Karen James

Hidden Joy in a Dark Corner: the transforming power of God's story

Wendy Bright

Fiction

Though Waters Roar

Jane Austin

Halos

Kristen Heitzmann

Between Sundays

Every Now and Then

Halfway to Forever

This Side of Heaven

All four titles by Karen Kingsbury

DVD

John Calvin: His Life and Legacy

Sunday Night Small Group

By Mary Sikkenga

This year in October our group under the leadership of Vern Geurkink began reading and discussing "The Screwtape Letters" by C.S. Lewis. This book is a series of 31 letters about the infernal senior devil Screwtape who instructs his nephew and future successor Wormwood in the arts of temptation. Screwtape presides over a highly organized, high-tech Hell, and he trains Wormwood to lead Christians away from God's path gradually through ordinary temptations, rather than sins. C. S. Lewis's most famous work is outwardly funny as well as provocative, as the devil's perspective helps us gain insight into our own morality and temptations.

Our group consists of 16 to 20 people. We meet in the Fellowship Hall on the 2nd and 4th

Sunday's of the month after the evening worship service. We begin our time together with prayer followed by a meal which consists of sandwiches, salad, dessert and beverage. After our meal we spend about an hour discussing the letters we have read (usually 3 letters per evening). We conclude our time sharing with each other our concerns and praises and then spend time in prayer

Men's Life

By Bob Gerritsen

The Men's Life small group has existed for many years now. It began as a men's outreach ministry formatted into 7 or 8 week Bible studies. It has evolved into a weekly Bible study generally having the summers off.

We have always met at a local restaurant for pie and coffee. The rationale for meeting outside of a church setting was to make it less threatening for those outside of the church to attend. We began at the Round the Clock restaurant in downtown Wheaton. When that closed, we moved to the Oakfield Restaurant in Winfield at the corner of Geneva and County Farm roads.

We gather at the restaurant at 8 PM every Thursday evening. We spend about 15 minutes catching up on things while we order something to eat. Our Bible study follows for about 45 minutes. At 9 PM we begin a 15 minute prayer time.

We are currently studying the book of Acts – in the middle of Paul's missionary journeys. We are using the Discover your Bible study guide to lead us. One of the founding goals for Men's Life was to require no advanced study. Over the years, the group has studied all of the material produced specifically for Men's Life; and the production of new material has ceased several years ago.

Over the years attendance has fluctuated as people have come and gone. One of our members has been in the group almost from its

inception. We currently have 5 faithful attendees (and would welcome more). Ed Bossenga and I provide the leadership. We always manage to have good discussions. It is a rare session that someone doesn't come up with some insight that brings a response of, "I never thought of that before."

Bible League International

By Carolyn Bommelje

February is the month when thoughts turn to President's birthdays and, of course, Valentine's Day, when Love is expressed in many ways. It is also the time of the year when I choose to send out the Bible League *Love Letters*. I think it is a rather fitting time to do that. The Love Letters campaign is one of the ways in which the Bible League Volunteers raise money for this important arm of mission work.

We are in our second year of raising money for the country of Africa and in August of 2010 we will complete our 2 year campaign. The money raised is used to provide Bibles, Project Phillip Bible studies, and training for church planters. Africa's people live on the earth's second largest continent and are in great need of the Holy Scriptures. The Volunteers will continue to work to provide as many Bibles as possible in as many languages as possible.

The following is the story of one young man in Zimbabwe. "I was praying and doing street witnessing, but progress was slow. The church grew to five members. The turning point for us was when Bible League International's training for church planters came to our town in 2007. I eagerly became a student. This training opened my spiritual eyes and deepened my understanding of the work of ministry. Today our church has seven Bible study groups, and people are coming to Christ through them. Men are coming with their families. We now have 120 church members. This is the hand of the

Lord. I thank the Bible League International for providing Bibles and training for our people." What joy it is to be a part of this work.

Our goal is to raise \$610,000.00 by August of 2010, and as of November 30, 2009 we have collected \$144,390.12. We have a long way to go in order to make our goal. Along with many other agencies the Bible League is feeling the results of the slow economic situation world wide. But the Bible League Volunteers pray that generous people will make possible an abundant supply of Bibles to transform lives in the neediest places in Africa. There are 200 million African Christians without Bibles. Providing God's Word for the common African person who struggles daily to survive is our goal. The need is great.

There is one more thing I would like to bring to your attention. The number of volunteers has been dwindling over the past few years and the Chicago West suburban group is in danger of disbanding. Many of the volunteers have been doing this work for many years, sometimes in excess of 20 years. The need for new workers is great. If you feel the desire to be of help we would greatly appreciate hearing from you. The commitments are not too time consuming: there are 2 meetings a year, and 2 fundraising projects. Please prayerfully consider whether or not this would be something you might be interested in doing. The pay is negligible, but the pension lasts for all eternity.

This week you will find in your mail boxes a Love Letter and envelope asking you to support the work of the Chicago West Suburban Volunteers for Bible League International. Please consider a generous gift today and be part of changing African people's lives for all eternity.

Humor Me

Marginally Useless Information

'Stewardesses' is the longest word typed with only the left hand.

And 'lollipop' is the longest word typed with the right hand.

No word in the English language rhymes with month, orange, silver, or purple.

'Dreamt' is the only English word that ends in the letters 'mt'.

Our eyes are always the same size from birth, but our nose and ears never stop growing.

The sentence: 'The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog' uses every letter of the alphabet. (Now, you KNOW you're going to try this out, right?)

The words 'racecar,' 'kayak' and 'level' are palindromes. They are the same whether they are read left to right or right to left.

There are only four words in the English language which end in 'dous': tremendous, horrendous, stupendous, and hazardous.

There are two words in the English language that have all five vowels in order: 'abstemious' and 'facetious.' (OK, let's all do it together – A E I O U).

'Typewriter' is the longest word that can be made using the letters only on one row of the keyboard. (All you typists are going to test this out)

A cat has 32 muscles in each ear.

A goldfish has a memory span of three seconds. (Some days my wife is convinced that's about what my memory span is.)

A 'jiffy' is an actual unit of time for 1/100th of a second.

A shark is the only fish that can blink with both eyes.

A snail can sleep for three years. (I know some people that could do this too!)

Almonds are a member of the peach family.

An ostrich's eye is bigger than its brain. (I know some people like this. Actually I know A LOT of people like this!)

Babies are born without kneecaps. They don't appear until the child reaches 2 to 6 years of age.

February 1865 is the only month in recorded history not to have a full moon.

In the last 4,000 years, no new animals have been domesticated.

If the population of China walked past you, eight abreast, the line would never end because of their rate of reproduction.

Leonardo Da Vinci invented the scissors

Peanuts are one of the ingredients of dynamite!

Rubber bands last longer when refrigerated.

The average person's left hand does 56% of the typing.

The cruise liner, QE 2, moves only six inches for each gallon of diesel that it burns.

The microwave was invented after a researcher walked by a radar tube and a chocolate bar melted in his pocket.

The winter of 1932 was so cold that Niagara Falls froze completely solid.

There are more chickens than people in the world.

Winston Churchill was born in a ladies' room during a dance.

Women blink nearly twice as much as men.

Caveat: These facts have not been checked out, but most of them are plausible. - Editor

Kids Korner

1. How many times did Joseph and Mary run for their lives with Jesus?
2. How many days did God give people of Nineveh to turn from their sin or they would be destroyed?
3. How long did the rain stop after Elijah prayed?
4. How many people did King Nebuchadnezzar see walking in the furnace?
5. How many brothers did Jesus have?
6. God inflicted Egypt with 10 plagues. What was the number of the plague that involved Hail and Fire?
7. Who was Jacob's first son?
8. How many sons did Terah have?
9. What was Nimrod known as?
10. What was the name of Samuel's firstborn son?
11. How did Peter escape from prison?
12. Name one of the four living creatures described by John in his vision of Heaven.

Look It Up

1. Matthew 2:14-21
2. Jonah 3:4
3. Luke 4:25
4. Daniel 3:25
5. Mark 6:3
6. Exodus 9:22-25
7. Genesis 46:8
8. Genesis 11:26
9. Genesis 10:9
10. I Samuel 8:2
11. Acts 12:7-10
12. Revelation 4:7

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Note: If you are between the ages of 7 and 12, any time during 2010, sign your name and put your answers in my mail box (Gabrielse) by March 14. If you have answered all of them correctly without the help of your mom or dad, watch for your name in next month's Cross Connections.

Running Totals

William Fan	12
Martin Vanderschoot	12

Once again, we have a contest for a \$25 gift certificate to be awarded in the January, 2011 issue. Don't miss any issue.