

Grass or Grace

David H. Roper



Lot chose for himself the whole plain of the Jordan. [Genesis 13:11](#)

Read: [Genesis 13:1–18](#)

Bible in a Year: [Numbers 34–36](#); [Mark 9:30–50](#)

My friend Archie came home from vacation to find his neighbor had erected a wooden fence five feet inside his property line. Several weeks went by during which Archie tried to work with his neighbor to remove the fence. He offered to help and to split the cost of the work, but to no avail. Archie could have appealed to civil authorities, but he chose to forgo that right in this instance and allow the fence to stand—to show his neighbor something of the grace of God.

“Archie is a wimp!” you say. No, he was man of towering strength, but he chose grace over a patch of grass.

I think of Abraham and Lot, who fell into conflict because their flocks and herds overwhelmed the land. “Quarreling arose between Abram’s herders and Lot’s. The Canaanites and the Perizzites [the unbelieving community] were also living in the land at that time” (Genesis 13:7). Lot chose the best of the land and lost everything in the end. Abraham took what was left over and gained the promised land (vv. 12–17).

We *do* have rights and we *can* claim them, especially when other’s rights are involved. And sometimes we *should* insist on them. Paul did when the Sanhedrin acted unlawfully (see Acts 23:1–3). But we can choose to set them aside to show the world a better way. This is what the Bible calls “meekness”—not weakness. Strength under God’s control.

Dear Lord, I am prone to look out for myself. Give me wisdom to know when giving up my rights would best demonstrate Your love and grace to others.

My life helps paint my neighbor’s picture of God.

Like a Little Child

Alyson Kieda



*Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them. **Mark 10:14***

Read: **Mark 10:13–16**

Bible in a Year: **Deuteronomy 1–2; Mark 10:1–31**

The little girl moved joyfully and gracefully to the music of praise. She was the only one in the aisle but that didn't keep her from spinning and waving her arms and lifting her feet to the music. Her mother, a smile on her lips, didn't try to stop her.

My heart lifted as I watched, and I longed to join her—but didn't. I'd long ago lost the unselfconscious expression of joy and wonder of my childhood. Even though we are meant to grow and mature and put *childish* ways behind us, we were never meant to lose the joy and wonder, especially in our relationship with God.

When Jesus lived on Earth, He welcomed little children to Him and often referred to them in His teaching (Matthew 11:25; 18:3; 21:16). On one occasion, He rebuked His disciples for attempting to keep parents from bringing their children to Him for a blessing, saying, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these" (Mark 10:14). Jesus was referring to the *childlike* characteristics that ready us to receive Christ—joy and wonder, but also simplicity, dependence, trust, and humility.

Childlike wonder and joy (and more) open our hearts to be more receptive to Him. He is waiting for us to run into His arms.

Abba (Daddy), Father, help us to be more childlike in our relationship with You. We long to be filled with wonder at all You have done.

Faith shines brightest in a childlike heart.

Goodbye for Now

Cindy Hess Kasper



*You do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. **1 Thessalonians 4:13***

Read: 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

Bible in a Year: Deuteronomy 3–4; Mark 10:32–52

My granddaughter Allyssa and I have a regular routine we go through when we say goodbye. We wrap our arms around each other and begin to loudly wail with dramatic sobs for about twenty seconds. Then we step back and casually say, “See ya,” and turn away. Despite our silly practice, we always expect that we will see each other again—*soon*.

But sometimes the pain of separation from those we care about can be difficult. When the apostle Paul said farewell to the elders from Ephesus, “They all wept as they embraced him What grieved them most was [Paul’s] statement that they would never see his face again” (Acts 20:37–38).

The deepest sorrow, however, comes when we are parted by death and say goodbye for the last time in this life. That separation seems unthinkable. We mourn. We weep. How can we face the heartbreak of never again embracing the ones we have loved?

Still . . . we do not grieve like those who have no hope. Paul writes of a future reunion for those who “believe that Jesus died and rose again” (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18). He declares: “The Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel,” and those who have died, along with those who are still alive, will be united with our Lord. What a reunion!

And—best of all—we will be *forever* with Jesus. That’s an eternal hope.

Thank You, Lord, for the assurance that this world is not all we have but that a blessed eternity awaits all who trust in You.

At death, God’s people don’t say “goodbye,” but “we’ll see you later.”

Age-Old Wisdom

Poh Fang Chia



Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?

Job 12:12

Read: 1 Kings 12:1–7, 12–17

Bible in a Year: Deuteronomy 5–7; Mark 11:1–18

In 2010, a newspaper in Singapore published a special report that contained life lessons gleaned from eight senior citizens. It opened with these words: “While aging brings challenges to mind and body, it can also lead to an expansion in other realms. There is an abundance of emotional and social knowledge; qualities which scientists are beginning to define as wisdom . . . the wisdom of elders.”

Indeed, wise older people have much to teach us about life. But in the Bible, we meet a newly crowned king who failed to recognize this.

King Solomon had just died, and in 1 Kings 12:3, we read that “the whole assembly of Israel went to Rehoboam” with a petition. They asked the new king to lighten the harsh labor and heavy taxes his father Solomon had demanded of them. In return, they would loyally serve Rehoboam.

At first the young king consulted the elders (v. 6). But he rejected their advice and accepted the foolish counsel of the young men who had grown up with him (v. 8). He made the burden on the people even greater! His rashness cost him most of his kingdom.

All of us need the counsel that comes with years of experience, especially from those who have walked with God and listened well to His counsel. Think of the accumulated wisdom God has given them! They have much to share with us about the Lord. Let’s seek them out and give a listening ear to their wisdom.

To avoid the mistakes of youth, draw from the wisdom of age.



Direct Instructions

Kirsten Holmberg



"I have been told by the word of the Lord." 1 Kings 13:17

Read: 1 Kings 13:11–22

Bible in a Year: Deuteronomy 8–10; Mark 11:19–33

My second child was eager to sleep in a “big-girl bed” in her sister’s room. Each night I tucked Britta under the covers, issuing strict instructions to stay in bed, warning her I’d return her to the crib if she didn’t. Night after night, I found her in the hallway and had to escort my discouraged darling back to her crib. Years later I learned her customarily-sweet older sister wasn’t excited about having a roommate and repeatedly told Britta that she’d heard me calling for her. Britta heeded her sister’s words, went to look for me, and thus landed herself back in the crib.

Listening to the wrong voice can have consequences for us all. When God sent a man to Bethel to speak on His behalf, He gave explicit instructions for him to not eat or drink while there, nor return home by the same route (1 Kings 13:9). When King Jeroboam invited him to share a meal, the prophet declined, following God’s command. When an older prophet extended an invitation to dine, the man initially declined, but relented and ate when his elder deceived him, saying an angel told him it was okay. Just as I wanted Britta to enjoy her “big-girl bed,” I imagine God was saddened the man didn’t heed His instructions.

We can trust God completely. His words are our path to life; we are wise to listen and obey.

Thank You, Lord, for speaking to me through Your Word. Help me to tune my ears to Your voice and obey.

God’s words are the ones that matter most.
