



THE BEACON BEAM

November 2025

SPIRITUAL FOOD FOR THE SAINTS OF GOD



HE IS THE FOUNTAIN OF GOODNESS AND MERCY

by John Calvin

“This self-love of ours so blinds us that we make the smallest faults in the world to be akin to heinous and unpardonable sins. We have this evil so deeply rooted in our hearts that if we are told of our duty, it only half moves us.

For this reason, St. Paul sets the example of God before us here. He has forgiven us in His only Son. And without delay He adds our Lord Jesus Christ, who spared not Himself when it was a question of our redemption and salvation.

What, then, can break down all hardness in us, what can mortify all our excessive passions, what can correct all our cruelty, bring low all our pride and loftiness and sweeten all our bitterness, is this: to contemplate

what God has done towards us. He has so loved the world that He has given up His only Son to death for us (John 3:16).

What has moved God to show Himself so merciful towards us? Nothing else but our wretchedness. Seeing then that He who is so good has nevertheless had compassion on our wretchedness in which we were plunged, what shall we do?

Ought we not to have much more compassion for one another, because we find in ourselves that which we pardon in our neighbors? God can find no infirmity in Himself, and how then can He be moved to forgive us? Even because He is the fountain of goodness and mercy.

But when I see what grieves me in

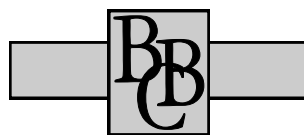
my neighbor, if I examine myself well, I shall find what is similar there, and much more so. Ought not all these things to lead me to show compassion, if I did not forget myself too much?

The way then to make it easy for us to forgive many faults and to bear with many vices that may displease us is to cast our eyes upon the inestimable love which God has borne us in the person of His Son.”

—John Calvin, **Sermons on Ephesians** (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1974), 483-485. Calvin’s sermon text is Ephesians 4:31-5:2.

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N. Hunter Strength, *Minister of Youth*

Sunday

Morning Worship...9:30 AM
Sunday School.....11:10 AM
Evening Worship.....6:00 PM

Wednesday

Prayer Meeting.....7:00 PM
IMPACT Clubs.....7:00 PM
Teen Ministry.....7:00 PM

CHURCHES WHERE THE BIBLE IS CENTRAL

by Greg Barkman

The United States is in more danger than most Americans realize, and if we are to survive as the leading nation in the world, serious spiritual renewal must occur. For that to happen, churches must discover their God intended manner of operating, and Christians must find their place of involvement within such Bible-centered churches. What do I consider the marks of a truly Biblical church? Let me suggest four non-negotiable elements.

CHURCHES ARE CENTERS FOR LEARNING SCRIPTURE.

Churches should major on teaching the Bible. The Great Commission instructs us that after people have become disciples of Christ, they should be taught “to observe whatever I have commanded you.” The church is the primary organ through which saints are taught the Bible. Christ bestows gifted pastor-teachers to His church for the equipping of saints for ministry by helping them understand God’s Word (Ephesians 4:11,12). Although learning the Bible is not the only reason saints assemble, it is one of the most important. When churches focus on becoming more appealing to the unchurched, Biblical exposition is usually the first item to go. Since unchurched people don’t “like to be preached at,” churches often reduce the sermon to a fifteen minute pep-talk about achieving human potential, or spice it up by introducing video clips, drama, props, and other elements to hold the attention of those who have little interest in Scripture. Does it ever occur to these modern gurus that you cannot feed Christ’s sheep and entertain goats at the same time? This contemporary approach betrays confusion about the purpose of the church service, which is not evangelism, but Bible training. Of course, evangelism can and does oc-

cur within the context of Bible teaching, but when evangelism becomes the driving purpose which shapes everything, Biblical sermons are discarded for the latest fad in evangelism. If we hope to see our nation changed, we must first see our pulpits become centers of Biblical proclamation.

My church family should be the most important relationship in my life, beyond my immediate family. My life should become intertwined with the lives of my fellow church members for the purpose of ministering to and receiving the personal ministry of others. This is how healthy churches function.

CHURCHES ARE SOCIETIES FOR LOVING RELATIONSHIPS.

Read the New Testament thoughtfully, and you will discover there are far more commands for Christians to minister to one another than to win the lost. Don’t misunderstand me. I do not say that Christians are not to evangelize. They are. But there is a God-given obligation which comes before evangelism, namely saints ministering to other saints. Look carefully at the premier text regarding church attendance: “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approach-

ing” (Hebrews 10:24,25). This tells us that evangelism is not the primary purpose of church meetings, but saints ministering to saints is front and center when churches assemble. If healthy church members improve the spiritual health of other members, the whole body is strengthened and evangelism will surely follow. But unhealthy churches “doing evangelism” will, at best, produce weak disciples and more often, empty professions. Church is not something “I go to,” although attendance is important. Church is where I become involved in the lives of fellow believers. My church family should be the most important relationship in my life, beyond my immediate family. My life should become intertwined with the lives of my fellow church members for the purpose of ministering to and receiving the personal ministry of others. This is how healthy churches function. Although this can never occur if I am regularly absent, simply showing up at church meetings, even if I seldom miss, falls short of what God requires. If we hope to see our nation changed, we should do what we can to develop our church into a society of saints who are lovingly ministering to one another.

CHURCHES MUST EXPOSE FALSE DOCTRINE.

Not only must churches teach God’s Word accurately, but they must also confront those who distort it. This is primarily the responsibility of pastors (Titus 1:9), but they succeed only when congregations support them in confronting and correcting heretics. Sound Christian doctrine is a treasure to be guarded. Those who teach contrary doctrine are a threat to the individual sheep, as well to the Christian Faith as a whole. If false doctrine is allowed to spread unchallenged, eventually the church will become so

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corrupt that no one will be able to discern truth from error. Sadly, this is already the case in many churches that have departed from the Bible, a condition which is called “apostasy.” Thousands of churches have drifted so far from their orthodox foundational heritage that their members have almost no concept of what the Bible teaches. Major Christian doctrines are denied or considered optional, and Biblical requirements for Christian living have long been ignored. Sexual immorality is considered acceptable, but disapproval of an immoral lifestyle is deemed unloving and un-Christian. How does this happen? By failing to confront and expose false doctrine when it first appears. It is like leaven, which if allowed to remain, quickly infects the whole lump of dough. Thus we have churches teaching contradictory assertions about the Christian Faith. One says that Jesus Christ is God, while another says He is only a prophet sent by God. One teaches that Jesus rose bodily from the tomb, but the church across the street says that the resurrection is nothing more

than the spiritual influence of Christ’s presence living in the hearts of his followers. One church teaches that homosexual practices are sinful, while another says they are acceptable. No wonder the world is confused about Christianity! If we hope to see our nation changed, churches must be committed to Bible truth and willing to defend the Christian Faith against those who call themselves Christians but teach unsound doctrine.

CHURCHES MUST DISCIPLINE UNREPENTENT REBELS.

This requirement may be the hardest of all, but Christ requires churches to deal with the flagrant sins of its members. It is scandalous to have members living in immorality, and churches fail to call them to repentance. It dishonors Christ to have professing Christians with a reputation in the community for dishonest business dealings, and their churches fail to investigate and insist upon repentance and change. Confrontation is difficult, and most Christians would rather take a beating than confront a wayward church member, but obedience to Christ and love for the Church de-

mand that we be willing to discipline those whose lives disgrace the name of Christ. Ideally, confrontation will result in repentance and restoration, but when met with resistance and rebellion, action must be taken to remove offenders from membership. Loyalty to Christ requires our humble and courageous obedience. The health of the church is at stake, as well as the churches’ reputation before the watching world. Today, the world has little respect for the church. Why should it? The church is too much like the world, more interested in being cool than faithful. If we love our nation and hope to see it changed, we must first purify our churches according to Christ’s instructions. Will you commit yourself to this task wherever God has planted you? May God help us in this battle for survival.

Revised from an article originally
published in 2012

God never calls us to fully understand him. He calls us to love him, to trust him, and to obey him. At the end of the day, when all the chips are down, this is the question. It’s the same question that Satan posed to God all those years ago: “Does Job fear God for nothing? Haven’t you placed a hedge around him, his household, and everything he owns?...But stretch out your hand and strike everything he owns, and he will surely curse you to your face” (Job 1:9-11).

We are like Peter, sifted like wheat (Luke 22:31). We are like Sarah, mystified by God’s seemingly unanswered promises (Gen. 18:12). We are like Habakkuk, perplexed at God’s lack of rescue (Hab. 1:2). We are like Naomi, emptied by loss (Ruth 1:20-21). We are like John the Baptist, growing in questions as the cost piles up (Matt. 11:3).

And yet, all of these answered their own questions with faith. They did not always understand God, his ways, or his works, but that is not the call for us as Christians. The call is to trust the God who is beyond us, allowing questions and faith to stand side by side.

—Nate Brooks, *Disrupted Journey*,

Walking with Your Loved One Through Chronic Pain and Illness

On the Feminine Side

by Marti Barkman

To the brown-thumbed among us, the excess produce of late summer gardens is a treat found in the welcome center on Wednesday nights. Sometimes it's cucumbers and peppers, but most often it's tomatoes. Recently one large box of tomatoes was paired with several dozen loaves of bread. Only thing missing was the mayo! Most of these veggies are familiar, but occasionally there's a bit of mystery involved. A couple nights ago, Greg came home with a small grocery bag in hand and gave it to me, saying nothing, but waiting for my reaction to the contents. I could see through the bag something round and yellow. Ahhh...yellow tomatoes. Lovely! Sandwiches for lunch! But when out of the bag... what was this? I'd never seen this before. Bright yellow, firm to the touch, with a pretty, somewhat scalloped shape and a sweet decorative green leaf circling the stem. A squash? Or a gourd? Nope! Persimmons! I have never actually seen a persimmon tree, but have noticed that the owners of said trees take great pride in them. For this reason I admit, quietly, and apologetically when in southern circles that I do not like persimmon pudding, though I think the fruit of your trees is beautiful to look at. But I'm left with a question: what will I do with these lovely persimmons? I assume since these little beauties are very hard that they are not ready to eat, and they look so nice on my white tile window sill over the kitchen sink, it seems a shame to eat them! (That reminds me of my favorite joke, the one about the pig with a wooden leg, but I'll save that for another day.)

It also brings to mind the first time, sometime in 1979, I looked with dismay at a pile of fresh okra on the

kitchen counter. I had eaten fried okra once at a cafeteria in South Carolina and it was quite tasty, but I had heard only uncomplimentary things about this odd-looking vegetable, lots of warnings about how NOT to cook it, boiling to be avoided at all cost. Of one thing I was sure: I would not like this vegetable. With my limited knowledge of what NOT to do and knowing nothing about the different ways to cook okra, I did what I could: I wrote about it in my first article in what became 'The Feminine Side'. No copy of the paper remains so I am unable to tell you what I wrote. But I was able to fill a half page with what I didn't know. Read a caution in those words.

Now, nearly fifty years later, okra is one of my favorite vegetables. Sliced lengthwise, tossed in olive oil, salt and pepper, and roasted in a cast iron pan at high heat, it makes not a particularly attractive dish but too yummy to resist munching. Maybe when I increase my knowledge of persimmons, I'll be adding them to my list of favorites. In the meantime, I will enjoy looking at them and start asking the advice of those who know.

Who or what have you decided, with scant knowledge, you don't like? How many times have we said to our children, 'How do you know you don't like it when you've never eaten it?' (The food in question is usually green with a name like Brussels sprouts, spinach, kale...you fill in the blank.) And how often do we make a judgment about someone based on a first impression, or one unfortunate situation long past, or worse, what others have told you. As those green veggies may be some of the best things you could eat, I wonder if

some of the friendships we opt out of might be just what we need. And one of our favorites!

We can, with time and effort, learn to prepare the foods our bodies need for good health in a way that makes them palatable. And we can, with time and effort to learn to appreciate activities that are close to the bottom of our list of preferences. I used to dread the task of emptying the dishwasher, until someone told me they loved it. I decided to stop hating and start loving emptying the dishwasher with gratitude that I have one. We live all our days making decisions to love or dislike tasks, activities, people, and circumstances. This has me thinking about that subject of contentment. Everyone of those items just mentioned speak of our reactions to God's involvement in our lives, from the critically important down to the mundane and tedious. Let me challenge you to change your mind about what God has ordained for your life. Choose to stop resenting, dreading, hating, and start being grateful and cheerful and loving. Our Coffee n' Courage study of contentment continues to challenge us to see God's hand in all our days and to submit to his plan. What if God's plan looks nothing like what we had hoped for. Memorize this short phrase from one of the wonderful hymns we sing, *Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of Creation*: "Hast thou not seen how thy desires have been granted in what He ordaineth?"

(A special thank you to Rick and Linda Zachary for contributing to my education and enjoyment in the gift of those pretty persimmons!)

SANCTIFICATION REQUIRES DOCTRINE

Some might be tempted to believe that a person needs a basic amount of doctrine to *become* a Christian, but that most of what we call “theology” or “doctrine” is unnecessary to grow as a Christian. Sure, if you have a temperament that enjoys contemplating complicated concepts and arguing with strangers online, dig deeper. But for the rest of us, we need to get about the business of living like Jesus in our communities.

But it turns out that the authors of Scripture don’t share that point of view. Time and again, the Bible anchors right actions and behaviors and attitudes for God’s people in right doctrine.

Look at these examples:

The Ten Commandments. This is the granddaddy of them all—the Big List of How to Live. Yet what comes immediately before these instructions for godly living? A piece of theology: “I am the LORD Your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Ex. 20:2). Why should the Israelites have no other gods? Because the Lord delivered them from slavery.

Love your enemies. Here’s a command that gets our gospel transfor-

mation juices flowing! But notice that Jesus grounds such active love in theology: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matt. 5:44-45). Why should we love our enemies? Because God, our Father, is an enemy-loving God!

Be holy. Christians are supposed to be holy. Why? Again, an apostle takes us to doctrine: “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct” (I Pet. 1:14-15). We don’t conform to the passions that once ruled us because of the holiness of God.

The letters of Paul. Finally, the structure of Paul’s letters grounds commands in truths. Paul wants the recipients of his letters to present their bodies as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1), to put on the new self (Eph. 4:24), and to walk in Christ Jesus (Col. 2:6). But such commands come only after lengthy discussions of doctrine. Paul gives these churches an education in things like justification and glorification, typology and federal headship (Rom. 5:12-17, 8:30),

election and predestination (Eph. 1:4-6), the depravity of man (Eph. 2:1-3), and Christology (Col. 1:15-20).

Christian obedience, including sacrificially reaching out to the needy, must be anchored in and motivated by the character and activity of God. Remove the anchor and you might stay in the same spot for a little while, but soon the wind and waves will push you away. Such sacrificial activity will soon stop.

The more we know about God, the more we will be moved to obedience. How many people have prayed a prayer in a church or mission hall but then never moved on because they weren’t taught some of the real, doctrinal meat of the faith? How many Christians are stuck in patterns of selfishness and laziness and sin because they haven’t been challenged to consider the character of God and its implications for their life?

Excerpt from:

—**Church in Hard Places**, *How the Local Church Brings Life to the Poor and Needy* by Mez McConnell & Mike McKinley

SALVATION

The way:

Now believing is nothing else but the accepting of Christ for thy Lord and Saviour as He is offered to thee in the gospel; and this accepting is principally, if not only, the act of thy will; so that if thou art sincerely and cordially willing to have Christ upon His own terms, upon gospel terms, that is, to save thee and rule thee, to redeem thee and to reign over thee, then thou art a believer.

—Thomas Brooks, *A Puritan Golden Treasury*,
The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations,
Compiled by I. D. E. Thomas

Who Makes You to Differ?

by Robert Hawker

"The justifier of the one who believes in Jesus." — Romans 3:26

And who is this, indeed who can it be, but Jehovah? "It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns?" But, my soul, take note of how each person of the Godhead is revealed in Scripture under this character, as if to convince every poor sinner seeking redemption in Israel, that God can be just and yet the justifier of the one who believes in Jesus.

God the Father justifies the believing sinner, for He shows that He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, having found a ransom in the blood of His Son, by which He is faithful to all His covenant promises in pardoning us, having received from our Lord's hand double for all our sins.

God the Son also justifies His redeemed, for it is explicitly said by the prophet, "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified, and shall glory." And that God the Holy Spirit justifies is evident as well, for it was through the eternal Spirit that the offering of the body of Jesus Christ was made, by which Christ is said to have been "justified in the Spirit." Believers are said to be justified by this virtue, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

Therefore, all persons of the Godhead are united in the act of justifying every believer in Jesus, through whom we have peace with God and fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Here then is a portion to sustain us throughout life, in death, and for all eternity.

"Who makes you different from anyone else?" — 1 Corinthians 4:7
My soul, sit down in the calm of this

***What a mercy to be born
in this land, and not in
the dark places of the
earth, where the name of
Jesus has never been
heard, nor the church bell
calls sinners to salvation!
What a mercy to have had
praying parents, who
sought blessings for us
before we could ask for
ourselves!***

beautiful evening and, in the reflection of distinguishing mercies, look up and recognize the gracious hand that "makes you different from anyone else," until your heart overflows with thanksgiving, love, and praise. If you will open the book of your own life (which, when explained by the Word of God, is the most fascinating to read), you will see countless examples in all areas of "nature, providence, and grace," that under divine teaching, will bring this question home to your heart with deep conviction: "Who makes you different from anyone else?"

Every defect of nature in others, every poor cripple, the blind, the deaf whom you encounter; the lack of intellect or understanding, or even the fact that you were not born among the lowest creatures of the earth but among those created in the image of God, should direct your heart to the contemplation of Him and His distinguishing favor, "in whose book all your members were written!"

And when, from the realm of nature,

you follow your life's path into the realms of providence and grace, and observe all the distinguishing mercies that have marked your journey, this question will arise repeatedly: "Who makes you different from anyone else?" What a mercy to be born in this land, and not in the dark places of the earth, where the name of Jesus has never been heard, nor the church bell calls sinners to salvation! What a mercy to have had praying parents, who sought blessings for us before we could ask for ourselves!

Or, on the other hand, if you came from ungodly parents who never guided you to the throne of grace, what a mercy that despite such unpromising circumstances, the Word of God and the ordinances of Jesus are dear to you! Surely the apostle's question resonates powerfully in this light, "Who makes you different from anyone else?"

And, my soul, if now, as from a higher vantage point, you look back and trace "all the way the Lord your God has led you these many years, to humble you, and to test you, to know what was in your heart," (Deuteronomy 8:2), you will see how your Lord's gracious dealings with you stand in contrast to others. How many, with whom you entered the field of life in your youth, are now gone; how many who still live do not know the Lord; how many, with far more promising opportunities, have fallen short of God's grace!

Reflections like these, and countless others connected with them, instead of filling you with pride, should humble your soul before God, and deeply

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impress the apostle's question upon your heart: "Who makes you different from anyone else?"

Jesus, my Lord, behold me at Your feet! How can I dare lift my eyes to You, while I remember Your distinguishing mercy toward me and my unworthiness toward You? Lord, is it possible that in a life where so much grace has abounded, sin has abounded so much as well? In every place where my God has erected a monument of His love, my sinful and ungrateful heart has left an inscription of my unworthiness!

I do not know what others feel, but blessed—forever blessed—be the unceasing patience and goodness of my God, that through His distinguishing grace alone, I am what I am. And while my soul desires to attribute every aspect of divine mercy in all areas of nature, providence, and grace to the Lord's own free, rich, and sovereign pleasure, I praise Him for having given me that precious testimony in my soul, which the Lord Himself said would be the result of His divine teaching in the heart: "I will establish my covenant with you, and you shall know that I am the Lord; that you may remember and be

ashamed, and never open your mouth anymore because of your shame, when I provide atonement for you for all that you have done, says the Lord God" (Ezekiel 16:62-63).

—Robert Hawker (1753-1827)

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THE BEACON BROADCAST

Monday thru Friday

WNAH 1360 AM (Nashville, TN)	2:00 p.m.
WITA 1490 AM (Knoxville, TN)	9:30 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC)	12:15 p.m.
WBAG 105.9 FM (Burlington, NC)	12:15 p.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC)	2:00 p.m.
WDZY 1290 AM (Richmond, VA)	6:15 a.m.
	10:00 a.m.
WDZY 103.3 FM (Richmond, VA)	6:15 a.m.
	10:00 a.m.
WSKY 1230 AM (Asheville, NC)	7:15 a.m.
WYYC 1250 AM (York, PA)	5:00 p.m.
WYYC 98.1 FM (York, PA)	5:00 p.m.

Monday thru Sunday

WXTH-LP 101.7 FM (Richwood, WV) 10:05 a.m.
10:05 p.m.

Sunday

WCRU 960 AM (Charlotte, NC)	9:30 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WDRU 1030 AM (Raleigh, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WLES 590 AM (Richmond, VA)	10:30 a.m.

WGNQ mixlr.com/wgng-radio (M-F)
8:45-9 a.m. & 4:45-5:00 p.m.
(Internet station based in Greenville/Washington, NC)

Saturday

WNAH 1360 AM (Nashville, TN)	2:00 p.m.
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BEACON HIGHLIGHTS FOR NOVEMBER

CALENDAR

02 Missionaries Larrie and
Carol Bunyan
ESL (English as a Second
Language)
04 Coffee n' Courage
05 MPACT Clubs
08 Fall Festival
09 Lord's Table
ESL
11 Coffee n' Courage
Elders/Deacons Meeting
12 Missionary Landon Jones/
Spain
IMPACT Clubs
16 Joel Medley, ACS
Members Meeting
ESL
18 Coffee n' Courage
19 IMPACT Club
20 Silver Saints
23 ESL
25 Annual Thanksgiving Praise
Service
26-28 Church Office Closed
27 Thanksgiving Day
30 ESL

MEMBER BIRTHDAYS

01 Carol Shaw
09 Jane Faucette
10 Duane Burns
13 Rebecca Griffin
Laura Warner
18 Mary Speight
21 Sue Vestal
22 Joey Beck
25 Debra Ingle
Ann Whittington
27 Dwayne Craig
29 Clara Driver
Todd Wilson

MISSIONARY BIRTHDAYS

07 Trisha Gudeman
09 Ruth Bixby
Melanie Webster
10 Sillas Campos
26 Becca Jensen*
30 Wanger Campos
Micah Gudeman*
 *Children of Missionaries

We express our heartfelt sympathy to the family of:

Richard Holland
 Ken Mayes
 Rev. James Moon

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