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FOREWORD

I MUST ADMIT, SOME PEOPLE THOUGHT my wife Mally and I were a little crazy. Within months after our children were born, we began to read them books and show them the pictures in the books. Although we didn't expect our babies at such a young age to understand what we were reading or showing them, we were applying a biblical principle that we believed was important for the future of our children:

Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it
(Proverbs 22:6).

This verse is not a guarantee of salvation if parents use a particular formula (after all, each must answer for his or her own sins), but it teaches that training in early years has a great influence on establishing life-long habits.

Based on this verse and many others (e.g., Deuteronomy 6:6–7), we were convinced that the more we taught our children from their earliest years to acquire a taste for the things of the Lord, the more likely they were to retain this taste throughout the rest of their lives.

As toddlers, our children began to like the books we read to them, and eventually they could understand what we were reading. Although they couldn't read, they could see the pictures and follow along. Then they began to read the same books themselves, eventually progressing to other books as they matured and their reading level increased. Yes, we had taught our children to acquire a taste for reading, and in doing so, to acquire a taste for the things of the Lord, because that was the main purpose for which we used these books.

In thinking about this, I'm reminded of the fact that my parents taught me to acquire a taste for a spread called Vegemite. Now, most Americans basically gag if they try to eat Vegemite—but that's understandable. You see, they weren't taught to acquire a taste for Vegemite at a young age as I was. The taste I have for Vegemite was acquired as a child and will be with me for the rest of my life.

That is why I sometimes say that Christian parents need to train up “Vegemite children.” In other words, we need to train children from a young age to acquire the right tastes—and the most important taste is for the Word of the Lord and the gospel.

Thinking back to my own childhood, I don't remember most of the books my parents provided for me, except for one book that stands out—*Pilgrim's Progress*. There is something very special about this book—the greatest allegory ever written. It's still in print and a best-seller over 300 years after it was originally published. Most books today last only a few years in print. If a book lasts 10 years it's considered out of the norm.

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

There is no doubt the Lord has specially blessed *Pilgrim's Progress*. I believe this is because it is a publication for the whole family so all ages can identify with our earthly struggles and understand the blessed message of the gospel.

As our children grew up, we used *Pilgrim's Progress* as a special devotion series. (Our devotion times as a family involved studying books of the Bible, reading apologetics works or studying special books like *Pilgrim's Progress*.) As I look at the wonderful teaching curriculum that goes with this edition of *Pilgrim's Progress*, I think of what an asset this would have been to us as a family had it been available 20 years or so ago. This new curriculum for one of the greatest books ever written (other than the Bible itself, of course) is available in this twenty-first century so that parents can use it in their devotional or other special family time to teach about and call to remembrance the greatest message ever given to man—the saving message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Even if you've read *Pilgrim's Progress* before, read it again—make it a yearly (or every other year) event. We should never tire of being reminded of the greatest message ever that never changes and is for all ages. As the words of that great hymn state:

*Tell me the old, old story of unseen things above,
Of Jesus and His glory, of Jesus and His love.
Tell me the story simply, as to a little child,
For I am weak and weary, and helpless and defiled.*

*Tell me the story slowly, that I may take it in,
That wonderful redemption, God's remedy for sin.
Tell me the story often, for I forget so soon;
The early dew of morning has passed away at noon.*

*Tell me the same old story when you have cause to fear
That this world's empty glory is costing me too dear.
Tell me the story always, if you would really be,
In any time of trouble a comforter to me.*

*Tell me the old, old story,
Tell me the old, old story,
Tell me the old, old story of Jesus and His love.*

As you make your pilgrimage through this life, I can't implore you enough to ensure that your family studies God's Word diligently, and also that you use this great classic called *Pilgrim's Progress* as part of your own training and equipping process so your family, friends and others will indeed hear and understand the greatest and most important message ever.

Ken Ham
President, *Answers in Genesis*