

# Insight Into



May / June 2020

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# Insight Into

## General Information

**Insight Into** is the official youth periodical of the Netherlands Reformed Congregations in the United States and Canada.

As a Reformed magazine, **Insight Into** seeks to promote the knowledge of the truth and to give biblical guidance to young people in their daily lives.

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# MEDITATION

## Devotional

*“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”*

(Psalm 133:1).

Exhorter Wulfert Floor (1818-1876)

Read: Psalm 133

True love and friendship are, according to my opinion, the greatest blessings we can enjoy here upon earth.

Just picture a family that is outwardly very much blessed, where everything prospers. Money and supplies are in abundance. Their table is filled daily with all kinds of delicious foods. The house is full of beautiful things, and the inhabitants enjoy good health. But there is no love, peace, or friendship among each other. On the contrary, the day begins with quarreling, and all day long, from morning to evening, they insult and yell at each other.

Now picture another family, where the people are poor, have many cares, and often have to struggle through many concerns and worries. But love, peace, and friendship prevail in that house. There is never a quarrel, and no sharp words are heard. The one is glad when it goes well with the other, and love and friendship exist from morning to evening.

Which one of the two families enjoys the greatest blessing from above? In which house would you prefer to live? I would choose the last; for to me, nothing is more pleasant than a peaceful life, a life in love and friendship with each other. That we would aim for that, for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.



# Soul Murder

Taken from *Upon Thy Paths*

Rev. A. T. Huijser

Thomas Watson, an English minister from the seventeenth century, says the following: “They are murdering their souls who willingly and consciously yield to sin and their corrupt lusts. Secondly, they also murder their souls who avoid the use of all means unto salvation and leave them unused.”

Regarding the first, it addresses those who willingly persist in living in sin, even doing everything in their power to nourish and sustain that sinful life and that sinful relationship to their neighbour. Ask yourself before the countenance of God whether you willingly and consciously yield to sin. Then we can only conclude with Rev. Watson that such are murdering their soul.

Regarding the second, the Lord has given us means that are subservient to our salvation—the means of grace. If you neglect to use them, or use them carelessly, you are murdering your soul. Things often proceed almost imperceptibly. I won’t read my Bible this time, for it is too late. And I will pray again tomorrow. And it was so late last night that I will not go to church this morning. I will go tonight instead. It is a stealthy process, and gradually you will get used to it. You will become increasingly deaf to the voice in your conscience telling you to do otherwise. If you must conclude that your conscience speaks less and less, it proves clearly that you are in the process of murdering your soul.

To the extent that the tenderness of your soul fades away, you will become less sensitive to these things.



# God is the Reason

Rev. P. Van Ruitenburg

**D**o your best at school, get a good job, maybe start a family, keep working as long as possible, and then rest and enjoy your retirement. For many people, this is the plan for how they wish to live. People who are physically or mentally disabled must often look for an alternative way of living. Is there also another reason for this life? That reason might be interesting for everyone.

The question is why do we exist, and what is the meaning of our lives? Most people will agree that we have to make something of our lives, but how can we make the best of it? That cannot be the search for maximum pleasure for ourselves, so there must be more to this. Incidentally, for many people that is the only thing: being happy, and making a few other people happy, which also helps our self-esteem.

Especially if you believe that this world, life, and universe are coincidental, and you have accidentally entered into life, you will not get far with your objectives for your life. Then you just have to live *“deliciously”* as the Bible calls it in Revelation 18:7, to indulge your lusts and please your flesh. Thousands live civil and decent lives without worrying about why. People with a university education, doctors, lawyers, and all kinds of clever people don’t have a clue about the real reason for which they should be living. The most perfect prayer indicates it positively with the impressive salutation: *“Our Father which art in heaven, **hallowed be Thy Name**”* (Matthew 6:9). With this exemplary prayer, the Lord Jesus teaches us that our lives must in the first place be God-centered. Ultimately, everything is about God, the Maker of light, energy, gravity, matter, colour, smell, movement, morality, and so on. God created everything for **Himself**. That sounds very familiar to many, but do we understand what that means?

Everything that does not serve this purpose is sin.

*“The LORD hath made all things for Himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Proverbs 16:4).*

*“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created” (Revelation 4:11).*

*“Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter” (James 5:5).*

**“He Doeth All Things Well”:** “To be full of care, to view our situation with dark forebodings, to anticipate the morrow with sad anxiety, is to reflect upon the faithfulness of God. He who has cared for His child through all the years will not forsake him in old age. He who has heard your prayers in the past will not refuse to supply your need in the present emergency. Rest on Job 5:19, *“He shall deliver thee in six troubles: yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.”* When we trustfully resign ourselves and all our affairs into God’s hands, fully persuaded of His love and faithfulness, the sooner shall we be satisfied with His providence and realize that *“He doeth all things well”* (Mark 7:37).”

*The Sovereignty of God by Rev. A. W. Pink (1886-1952)*

“God’s law was once impressed upon our natures, and we are obliged to all that was written upon Adam’s heart.”

*~ Rev. Thomas Manton (1620-1677)*

“The consciousness of sin alone leads men to turn to the Saviour from sin, and the consciousness of sin comes only when men are brought face to face with the law of God.”

*~ J. Gresham Machen (1881-1937)*

“I cannot find a syllable in their [the Apostle’s] writings which teach that any one of the Ten Commandments is done away... I believe that the coming of Christ’s gospel did not alter the position of the Ten Commandments one hair’s breadth.”

*~ Rev. J. C. Ryle (1816-1900)*



# Good Example

*This is one of a series of letters that Rev. James W. Alexander (1804-1859) wrote to a younger brother, which were published as "My Brother's Keeper."*

My dear brother,

When I wrote to you about the dangers of evil companions, I did not wish you to suppose that you must avoid all society. This would be wrong, and would make you angry. I desire you to frequent the company of all such young friends as can do you good; and I hope there are some whose example you would do well to follow. When you find someone who is diligent, kind, respectful, and serious, you will act wisely to be as much as possible with him and to follow in his steps.

It is true, as is often said, that **example speaks louder than words**. We often think that certain things are impossible until we see them done by others, and then we begin to attempt them ourselves. There is something in our nature which leads us to imitate those around us. Now you should take care to follow none but good examples. And here you will have to be very cautious, for our evil hearts lead us more naturally to what is evil, than to what is virtuous. There is nothing base or low in copying the good example of your friends. It is in this way that some of the best and greatest men have become what they are.

I would recommend you to read about the lives of people who have been remarkable for their knowledge or their goodness. When these memoirs are well written, it is almost as if we were acquainted with the living people, seeing them act and hearing them speak. There is no reading which is more entertaining than biography, and there is none which is more instructive. In this way you may be constantly setting before your mind the brightest examples, and this will stir you up to be more active in trying to improve. I have never found any books which made me more anxious to excel than good biographical sketches. When you read of a person who has raised himself from ignorance and obscurity to learning and honour, by his own endeavours, a laudable emulation will lead you to imitate his excellence.

But the best of all biographies are those which are contained in the Holy Scriptures. Have you ever noticed how much of the Bible is filled with the memoirs of good men? The reason no doubt is that example is so much

more powerful than precept. The four gospels contain the memoirs of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are so beautifully simple, so exact, and so touching, that we seem to see the blessed Redeemer, holy and benevolent, going about doing good, healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, and raising the dead. We seem to hear Him speaking as never any man spoke, and the influence of His example is most powerful upon the mind of the serious reader.

My dear brother, read these lovely histories every day. Try to frame in your mind all the circumstances of the scenes described there. Endeavour to feel that it is Christ Himself who is speaking to you, and let His words sink into your heart. Find out how He acted under all different circumstances, and then copy His example. How did He treat his parents? How did He feel towards the afflicted? How did He act when He was reviled and persecuted? What was His manner as to prayer and devotion? **Ask yourself how the Lord Jesus would have acted under similar circumstances.**

It is an advantage for young people to keep company with those who are older and wiser; but they are too apt to think that the elderly are gloomy. However, when you find older people who enjoy giving instruction to the young, and whose example is beautiful and pure, try to spend time with them.

I have said so much about following good examples that it will not be necessary for me to explain the importance of your **setting a good example to others**. Not one of us is allowed to live for himself alone; we must all endeavour to do good to others. We are commanded to let our light shine before men. You must not suppose that because you are so young, nobody will follow your example. If you do what is wrong, your companions might be encouraged to do the same; and if you do what is right, you may be a blessing to all around you.

**You cannot go through life without having some influence upon others. This influence is either for good or for evil.** You may be either a blessing or a curse. Pray and strive that your example may do good to all around you. Endeavour to lead others in the right way, especially the way of religion. You cannot begin this too soon, and in future life, it will be very pleasing for you to look back and see that you had early begun to be useful to your fellow creatures. Ask assistance from above, that you may be enabled to live in this way. And remember that many eyes are fixed upon you, to see how you will act, and that the happiness of your friends, and especially of your affectionate parents, depends greatly upon your conduct.

Your affectionate brother,  
James



# Quietness

Rev. C. Vogelaar

A teacher sent me a song, one from the country where perhaps not you, but where some of your parents and many of the grandparents came from. It was about the quietness upon the streets, in churches, and in schools. Many feel uneasy in such quietness and would rather have some noise around them. We are so used to that. Therefore, you do not have to live in New York City, of which I saw a picture of nearly empty streets, in order to feel uncomfortable with this lack of common activity and noise-producing traffic.

Why is it so quiet? You know the answer. It is because of the coronavirus. That little virus has paralyzed countries, businesses, offices, and social life, and perhaps also you. Is the Lord speaking in this? Yes, I believe He is speaking in the quietness of life. He is speaking, as the teacher of the poem I mentioned, to old and young. He is speaking to you. How often did you dismiss His speaking, His callings in your life?

Dear young friends, there is a lot to listen to, in music, in voices that say for you to come this way and enjoy your young life. And you don't have to listen in this time to all kinds of warnings and alarming voices, not to the voice of God's Word, and not to the voice of the sickness that is going around, perhaps also in your vicinity.

You cannot go to church in most or all places, and perhaps you don't mind. David had other feelings. He longed to be there, but he could not. His own son Absalom pursued him. How much pain that must have given David. However, do you know what gave him the worst pain? That he could not go to God's house. That is what he expresses in Psalm 84, verses 1 and 2, *"How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O LORD of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God."* Why did David miss this so much?

It was because he loved the Lord and His service. In that service, although in ceremonial form, he saw the work of Christ, the blessed Person of the Mediator. He calls you also today, while there may be many fears in your heart, and urges you to turn unto Him. He takes *"no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live"* (Ezekiel 33:11). The service of God is a service of love.

May you seek a quiet place, read His Word, bow your knees, and beg Him for mercy. *"For His yoke is easy, and His burden is light"* (Matthew 11:30). He is a faithful Master who cares for and is a Refuge to those who trust in Him.



# Great Punishments for Great Sins

Rev. Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758)  
(Adapted for *Insight Into*)

## The results of mixed marriages

The days before the flood were awful days to be living. Sin was rampant and every imagination of the thoughts of man's heart in those days was only evil continually. The lines of separation had disappeared. The family of Seth was intermarrying with the daughters of Cain without seeking God's approval, and "*they took them wives of all which they chose*" (Genesis 6:2). The focus of Seth's descendants was especially towards the outward beauty of Cain's descendants, as they "*saw ... they were fair*" (Genesis 6:2). The giants (Genesis 6:4) that were born of these marriages appear (by conservative Bible scholars) to be giants of wickedness. "*Nephilim*," the Hebrew word used here, may refer to those who had fallen deeply into sin. So awful were these days that there was only one remedy, the utter destruction and overthrow of this world by a flood of catastrophic proportions. The results of this destruction can be witnessed today in the fact that three-quarters of the earth's surface is composed of flood rock (sedimentary rock) abounding with the remains of once living animals and plants (fossils).

## What great sins yield

This example and many other scriptural ones teach us that great sins yield most awful punishments. Who can withstand the everlasting burning that hell will bring? God's wrath against sin in this place will be absolute and relentless for all those who die unsaved. In the Old Testament, we find laws to judge those who sinned ignorantly and greater punishments for those who premeditated sin (Numbers 15:27-31). We also are taught in Scripture that many stripes will fall upon those who reject God's will

knowingly (Luke 12:47-48). Do we not see this in all the judgments that fell upon the Jewish nation after they had rejected and slain the Messiah? Jesus had warned them that soon the enemies would surround the city and that one stone would not be left upon another (Luke 21:6).

### **The wages of sin**

Edwards reminds us that we all are under God's wrath due to our original sin in Adam. "*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*" (Romans 5:12). We have all apostatized away from God and have now received hearts that are desperately wicked.

To add to our original sin, Edwards recalls that we all have our individual guilt for the sins **we** have committed. Every idle word and each additional sin demands further punishment. "He that commits one act of sin, suppose it is one profane or unclean word, or one unclean act, or one profanation of the Sabbath ... has merited the eternal ruin of soul and body." Our sins, however, cannot be counted on our hands and therefore eternal death and hell will be so many more times extreme. God remembers every one of our sins for they are written with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond. "The damned in hell would be ready to give worlds if they could have the number of their sins reduced by one less idle word, and one less sinful thought," because each sin adds proportionally to the torment endured. (With this thought we are reminded what a desperate need we have to be covered and hidden in the only Rock of safety from the great wrath to come.)

### **Greater light**

To add to this, Edwards stated that those under the gospel will receive even greater torment. The greater the light a person receives from God, the more accountable one is to Him and the more guilty one becomes through sin. How would we flee away from the shrieks of those who suffer in hell? If he is in danger of hell fire who calls his brother a fool, how great will be the misery of countless millions in hell. How many have been guilty of lewd and profane talk, of profaning the Sabbath, and irreverent behaviour in God's house? How many have lived long under the gospel and slighted it and lived in rejection of Jesus Christ? If the punishment of him that calls another a fool will be so dreadful, how dreadful indeed will the misery of sinners be that lived under the gospel when they enter hell.

Furthermore, the longer a wicked man lives, the greater punishment he will receive in hell. It would have been better not to have been born, than to have lived long and entered hell. Every day that wicked men live, they heap up wrath for the day of wrath. It would have been better to have died young than to die as an old sinner. To have forty or fifty or sixty years of sins to answer for is frightening to contemplate.

Edwards also has great warnings for those who lead others into sin. They promote wickedness in others and lead many to hell, and they shall have the lowest place in hell. God will require their blood upon their own head.

### **The desperate need for a covering**

Since these things are true, what an incomprehensible blessing to be covered and hidden in the day of God's wrath. Who can abide His coming? No one, for if His Son cried to be delivered from the hour of God's wrath against sin as the green tree in whom there was no guile, what will happen to the dry trees who are only evil? Therefore, "*strive to enter in at the strait gate*" (Luke 13:24). The door is still open and the house is not yet full. We still live in the day of grace.

Edwards concludes this sermon by stating that all those who have been delivered from the wrath to come should praise, love, and be thankful to God who had pity upon them. "Wherefore love God the Father, who gave Jesus Christ, and love Jesus Christ who has loved you with a dying love, and let love and praise be the business of you life."

"Oxford social anthropologist J.D. Unwin discovered that when a highly developed culture undergoes an increase in sexual freedom, a collapse of that culture follows within three generations. The historical data reveals this pattern with 'monotonous' regularity."

"The law is meant to lead the sinner to faith in Christ, by showing the impossibility of any other way."

~ Rev. C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892)

# Idolatry in the Heart

Rev. Thomas Boston (1676-1732)

**M**en commit this idolatry with created things when their mind, will, and affections are set on what is created as much as, or more than, God. So covetousness is called idolatry. We are guilty of this idolatry:

1. ***When we love anything as much as, or more than, God*** (Matthew 10:37). For that is our god that gets most of our hearts, and anything that gets more of our love than God gets must be our idol. Thus we often make idols of ourselves, the world, our lawful comforts, and relations. Oh, how disorderly does the pulse of our affections beat! How violent are they towards created things, but how weak and languishing towards God! The fire of love to God is often like a fire of straw, that makes a sudden blaze and then dies. Love to something created is like a fire of juniper that burns long and is not soon quenched. This excessive love to the creatures appears (1) in esteeming them far above God and the communications of His grace, (2) in the great eagerness that is used in the pursuit of them, more than in seeking God and His favour, (3) in the greater uneasiness when we are without them than when without the consolations of God.

2. ***When men desire anything as much as, or more than, God*** (Philippians 4:6). How extravagant are the desires of the heart! Many things are desired more than the one thing needful. Our desires after created things need to have their wings clipped, while the wings of desire towards God are far from having grown. How readily we would be filled if we knocked as eagerly at God's door as we do at that of created things! Examine then what, of all things, you desire most; that is your god.

3. ***When we delight and rejoice in anything as much as, or more than, in God*** (Luke 10:23). For whatever a man's choice is and most suits his heart, he will delight and rejoice most in it. What idolatry this will reveal! How often it is found that men will delight and rejoice more in a good bargain than in the everlasting covenant; in husband, wife, and children more than in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; in a good farm or storeroom than in the field of the gospel; in a good suit of clothes more than in the righteousness of a Mediator! Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also.

4. ***When we sorrow more, or as much, for anything as we do for offending God.*** That is a sorrow of the world, and it reveals the idolizing of the creature (2 Corinthians 7:10). It often affects the heart more to offend men than to offend God, and people will be at more pains to gain reconciliation with them than with the Lord himself. A small cross or loss in the world will draw tears, when sin will not draw a sigh from us, and ordinarily our afflictions lie more heavy on us than our sins.

5. ***When we have as much or more zeal for anything than for God and His honour.*** Thus self is idolized, men being far more sensibly touched by anything that reflects on themselves than on God. How often do men behold God's name dishonoured and remain unmoved while, if you only touch them in their reputation and honour, you will find they are not drones in their own cause, though they are so in God's! So men idolize their own conceits, for they are, as were the Pharisees, much more zealous for their own traditions than for God's commandments, for their own opinions than for moral duties.

6. ***When we fear any person or thing more than God*** (Proverbs 29:25). Because the greatest fear is due to God, if we fear any person or thing more than Him, we idolize it. Thus men make a god of man, yea, of the devil. And fear of the wrath of man will have far more influence than fear of the wrath of God. This is a special snare in a time of persecution.

7. ***When we have more, or as much, hope in anything as in God.*** Yet how often will the promises of men revive us, when all the promises of God cannot do so!

8. ***When we have more, or as much, confidence and trust in anything as in God*** (Jeremiah 17:5). Thus power, wealth, strength, gifts, and abilities--and whatever men trust more in than in God--are idolized.





# Stricken but not Grieved

C. S. L. Janse

(Translated from *De Saambinder*)

**H**ealthcare has improved for everyone, especially in the western world. There are all sorts of new medicines for serious and less serious diseases. Many radical operations that previously were impossible or dangerous are now performed without complications. Hence people on average are growing older. In the past, many babies did not survive to their first birthday. In previous centuries, people had many children, but when the surviving parent also passed away, in many cases, more than half of their children had already preceded them to the grave.

That is why during that time people lived closer to death than is the case today. The biblical message that “*as it is appointed once for men to die*” (Hebrews 9:27) found more resonance, certainly among the church people.

## **New disease**

Only a century ago the world was plagued by the Spanish flu. It caused more deaths than the whole First World War. But let's not think that such epidemics are no longer possible. We now have to deal with a massive one, the coronavirus outbreak that has since been given the name COVID-19. The outbreak began in China and therefore on the other side of the world. Centuries ago that might have meant we hardly would have noticed, but today contact with other continents has become much more intensive. The world has become a village, as a result of people travelling everywhere. This not only has advantages, however, as there are now thousands of deaths and the end of the epidemic is nowhere in sight. No treatment or solution has yet been found for this new disease. Especially in the city of Wuhan, China, where the disease originated, public life is completely disrupted. Given the important position that China has in world trade, this has major consequences for the production and the delivery of all kinds of products and their components.

## “Health and sickness”

What does all this have to say to us? Diseases and other epidemics are a result of sin. The Bible is clear about that. In the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 10, Question and Answer 27, it is confessed that all things, including “health and sickness,” are “not by chance, but by His Fatherly hand.” Then the question is not how a loving God can allow a serious illness or even a major epidemic. The poet in the psalm confessed, “*He has not dealt with us after our sins*” (Psalm 103:10). Does it mean something that this new disease has the highest number of victims in China? We must always be very careful when making such connections. “*Those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem?*” (Luke 13:4).

Given the great abandonment of the church, the profaning of the Sabbath Day, sexual immorality, and all kinds of other wickedness, is there not more reason that God gives us in Western Europe [and now throughout the world] such contagious diseases? That is a question we must certainly ask ourselves.

## Totalitarian

Yet in China there is every reason to ask this question. As an economic system, communism is changing, but the totalitarian and atheistic character of the communist regime remains. The current president, Xi Jinping, has an even stronger grip on the population. For example, camera surveillance on a large scale is used, in addition to the use of facial recognition. They are very developed in these areas. The government wants to control everything, and opposition will not be tolerated.

The relative freedom that churches have enjoyed in recent decades is now more restricted. Church buildings are being demolished and house gatherings for private worship are no longer permitted.

The Chinese government wants in the course of this century to have their country, whose population is well over one billion, to continue to grow into a global leader in scientific, economic, political, and military power, so that no one will dare to oppose them.

And now suddenly there is a mysterious viral disease that turns the country upside down, and not just undermines the prestige of the government, but also does much damage to the economy. In this we may and must see God’s righteous judgment. But the most important thing is that they in China, and elsewhere, would understand the calling as the result of this epidemic. That it should not be said what the prophet Jeremiah from the people of Israel had to say, “*Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved*” (Jeremiah 5:3).



# The Duties of Church Members to their Pastors

(As explained in the answer to the fifth commandment of the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord's Day 39, in regards to God's servants)

Rev. John Angell James (1785-1859)

*Question 104: What doth God require in the fifth commandment?*

Answer: That I show all honor, love and fidelity, to my father and mother and all in authority over me, and submit myself to their good instruction and correction, with due obedience; and also patiently bear with their weaknesses and infirmities, since it pleases God to govern us by their hand.

By the will and appointment of the Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious King and Head of His churches, church members must behave towards their pastors, as being **His** chosen servants. They come in His Name, carry His commands, and transact His business. They are ambassadors for Christ and are to be received and esteemed in a way that corresponds with the authority and glory of Him who commissions them. Those who entertain low thoughts of the pastoral office, and neglect its ministry; who speak scornfully of their ministers; who promote a spirit of resistance to their counsels, admonitions, and reproofs; who try to decrease proper reverence will surely suffer the heavy displeasure of Christ (Luke 10:16; 1Thessalonians 4:8).

The author enumerates various duties of church members towards their pastors of which we have included eight:

1) **Submission to their just and scriptural authority.** The Scripture commands, "*Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls*" (Hebrews 13:17), and "*they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints; that ye submit yourselves unto such*" (1 Corinthians 16:15-16). These are inspired rulings, and they urge obedience and submission on Christian churches to their pastors. The minister is to command, although he is not to "*lord it over God's heritage*" (1 Peter 5:3). Those persons who are anxious to strip their pastors of all due reverence cannot expect to gain much edification from their labours; for instruction and advice, like things falling to the earth, impress the mind with a momentum, in due proportion to the height from which they fall.

2) **Church members should treat their pastors with distinguishing honour, esteem, and love!** "*Know them which labour among you, and are*

*over you in the Lord ... and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake*" (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13). Love is the most inventive passion of the heart and will find or make a thousand opportunities for displaying its power. Love is practical as well as ingenious. It breathes in kind words and lives in kind deeds. Where a minister is properly esteemed and loved, there will be the greatest esteem for his opinions and guarded respect for his character. When he is in sickness, visit him; in trouble, sympathize with him; absent from home, take a kind interest in his family; when he returns, greet him with a smile; at the close of the labours of the Sabbath, let the deacons and leading members gather round him, and not permit him to retire from his scene of public labours without the reward of some tokens of their approbation, even if it be only one friendly handshake. Let him see that his prayers, and sermons and concern, render him dear to the hearts of his flock.

3) Another duty which church members owe their pastors is diligent **attendance upon their ministry**. This attendance should be constant, not occasional. Some of our members give unspeakable pain to their pastors by the irregularity of their visits to the house of God. A little unpleasantness in the weather, or the slightest discomfort of the body, is sure to render their seats vacant.

4) Another very important duty is **earnest prayer**! How often and how earnestly did the great apostle of the Gentiles repeat that sentence which contained at once the authority of a command and the tenderness of a petition—*"Brethren, pray for us"* (1 Thessalonians 5:25). In another place, he ascribes his deliverance and preservation to the prayers of the churches—*"Ye also helping together by prayer for us"* (2 Corinthians 1:11). Surely then if this eminent man was dependent upon and indebted to the prayers of Christians, how much more so the ordinary ministers of Christ! Pray then for your ministers; for the increase of their spiritual qualifications and ministerial success. Pray for them in secret at the throne of grace; pray for them at the family altar; and thus teach your children to respect and love them. Little do church members know the number and magnitude of our temptations, discouragements, difficulties, and trials. Therefore, I urge, *"Brethren, pray for us."*

5) Members should **encourage others to attend upon the ministry of their pastors**. *"Let us go into the house of the LORD"* (Psalm 122:1) is an invitation which they should often address to the people of the world, who either attend no place of worship at all or where the truth is not preached. A minister himself cannot ask people to attend his place of worship, but those who are in the habit of hearing him can, and it is astonishing to what an extent the usefulness of private Christians may be blessed in this way. To draw away the hearers of one faithful preacher to another is despicable, but

to invite those who never hear the gospel, to listen to the joyful sound, is an effort worthy of the mind of an angel. Shall sinners invite one another to iniquity—to the theatre, the tavern—and Christians not attempt to draw them to the house of God?

6) It is imperative for church members to make known to their pastors **anything of importance relating to his church and congregation.** For instance, their own spiritual embarrassments, trials, temptations; the declensions, backslidings, and sins of others, which they assume may have escaped his notice, and which they have first tried by their own personal efforts to remove. If they perceive any root of bitterness growing up, which they have not strength or skill enough to eliminate, it is then manifestly their duty to inform him of the circumstance, especially should they encourage by their own personal attention any persons in the congregation who appear to be under religious conviction. In such cases, they should put forth their most tender attention to shelter and cherish these hopeful beginnings, and introduce the people themselves to their minister, so that he can lead them further in the truth.

7) **Zealous cooperation in all strategies of usefulness proposed by the pastor,** whether for the benefit of their own local congregation in particular, or the welfare of the church and the world at large, is the duty of Christians. One strategy of benefit often contains the germs of many more. Zeal, when guided by wisdom, is a noble element of character, and the source of incalculable good. A church ought always to stand ready to support any approach which is proved to their judgment to be beneficial either to themselves or others.

8) Another essential duty is a **most delicate and tender regard for the reputation of the pastor.** I would not have bad ministers protected, nor would I have good ones maligned. While his character is blameless, his friends should preserve it with as much care against the tongue of the slanderer, as they would his life against the hand of the assassin.

Church members should therefore be tremblingly alive to the importance of defending their minister's character. They should neither expect to see him perfect, nor hunt after his imperfections. When they cannot but see his imperfections, they should not take pleasure in either magnifying or looking at them, but make all reasonable excuse for them, and endeavour to lose sight of his infirmities in his virtues, as they do the spots of the sun amidst its radiance. Let them not be the subject of conversation even between yourselves, much less before your children, workers, and the world. Do not demand from him that absolute perfection which in your own case you find to be unattainable. Beware of whispers, innuendoes, and slanderous silence.

~ Adapted with editing by the *Insight Into* editors