

# EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

“...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE...” ~ EPHESIANS 4:12

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## LESSONS FROM A BIRTH

*By Andrew Dow*

On two separate occasions I have had the privilege of supporting my wife as she gave birth. Perhaps its the heightened sense of awareness that comes in adrenaline-fueled situations or maybe its the sleepless nights to follow, but the births of my sons have caused me to contemplate the spiritual truths that God reveals in these life events. Allow me to share with you three lessons we can learn from the birth of a child.

**First, sin is vicious.** The birth of a child is (and should be) viewed as a positive event. In conception and childbirth, a man and woman show at least a portion of the image of God placed upon them in creation. Think about it: in the sexual bond, man and woman become **“one flesh”** (Gen. 2:24, NASB) in the same way that **“the LORD is one”** (Deut. 6:4). As a unit, man and woman are capable of saying with God, **“Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness”** (Gen. 1:26). How amazing it is that God allows us to take some small part with Him in the creation of life. Childbirth is **“very good”** (cf. Gen. 1:31) and should always be celebrated!

However, there is no part of God’s good creation that has not been harmed in some way by the curse of sin. As a consequence for sin, God said to woman, **“I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth”** (Gen. 3:16). So, in birth,

there is a paradox. Jesus used this paradox to foretell his resurrection, **“Whenever a woman is in labor she has pain, because her hour has come; but when she gives birth to the child, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy that a child has been born into the world”** (John 16:21). The elation is evident, but the suffering cannot be ignored. This is a direct result of sin.

Therefore, the birth of a child serves as a reminder of the vicious nature and consequences of sin. Sin takes from us what is good and wholesome but returns it to us in the form of pain, suffering, and death. In addition to pain, death was (and at times still is) an ever-present danger associated with childbirth (cf. Gen. 35:16-21). Avoid sin at all costs. It is not worth the pain!

**Second, love is selfless.** Childbirth is a demonstration of the love of God: **“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall... have eternal life”** (John 3:16). Before ever meeting her “bundle of joy,” a mother endures months of discomfort followed by intense pain. Why? Does the forming child promise the mother something in return? Hardly! In fact, this same child will end up costing his parents further a great deal of time, money, and sleep! Still, the mother suffers selflessly out of pure love for her child.

This is the kind of love we are all called to have. With His own death in view, Jesus said, **“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends”** (John 15:13). Of course, you and I might be willing to suffer for someone who can offer us something in return (cf. Rom. 5:6-8), but true love is not so self-serving. Paul explained, **“love does not brag and is not arrogant... it**

**does not seek its own”** (1 Cor. 13:4-5). This is the love of God; no regard for self and total regard for the other. **“We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren”** (1 John 3:16). Love one another. It is worth the pain!

**Finally, the end is coming.** Scripture uses childbirth as an illustration of God’s judgment. This likely comes from Genesis 3:16 where pain in childbirth is given as a judgment for sin. For instance, it is used of God’s judgment against Babylon (Isa. 13:8), Judah (Isa. 37:3), Israel (Hosea 13:13), and Jerusalem (Matt. 24:8). Childbirth serves as an illustration of judgment primarily to point out its severity and unexpectedness. An expectant mother knows that pain is in her future, but there is no way (even with modern technology) to know precisely when labor will begin! The mother then must have everything ready beforehand.

This is the lesson Paul wants us to learn when we read, **“For you yourselves know full well that the day of the Lord will come just like a thief in the night. While they are saying, ‘Peace and safety!’ then destruction will come upon them suddenly like labor pains upon a woman with child, and they will not escape”** (1 Thess. 5:2-3). Get ready for the end. You’ll be glad you did!

Although you may have never given birth or been in a room offering support while someone was giving birth, there are still lessons you can learn from the experience. Sin viciously distorts all that is good; avoid it. True love has no regard for self; love more. The end will come with severity and without warning; be ready. Thanks be to God for the blessings and lessons associated with childbirth. May we be diligent to learn these lessons.

## CHURCH GROWTH

By Bill Hall

The church of the Lord experienced its greatest growth in the first century—at a time when its only organization was congregational and the local church was its largest functional unit. We fear that religious leaders of the twentieth century have organized more than they have evangelized. Funds that would have reached the evangelist in the first century are being used for society presidents, secretaries, and paperwork in the twentieth century. Big organizations can never substitute for personal zeal and dedication. The great need for today is a return to the simple organization of the churches of the New Testament and to that driving personal zeal that characterized those early disciples. When we get on fire for the Lord and go everywhere preaching the word, we will again see a great influx of souls being saved and added to the Lord’s church.

[Bill Hall, *Two Men: Articles on Practical Christian Living*, 201-202.]

**NOTES:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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**AM LESSON:**

Loving God

**PM LESSON:**

A Plea to Return  
(Galatians 4:12-20)

**“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”  
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)**