



Nurtured by the Word

I became a new grandfather over the summer. Our granddaughter's name is Lucia. I am amazed at how many adults it takes to watch a newborn sleep. Our whole family wrote on plain white bibs with permanent markers. My favorite is from our youngest daughter, Lauren, who wrote, "If Aunt Lauren were here right now I'd be eating chocolate chip pancakes."

At Lucia's dedication, I was struck again by the promises called for in our Book of Worship: "Will you as parents, by God's help, dedicate yourselves to the Christian nurture of your child, and bring her up in the worship and teaching of the church, that she may come to know Christ as Savior, be baptized, and follow him as Lord?"

Nurture is a powerful concept of engagement. It implies priority, proximity, and purposefulness. The nurturing of faith is not accomplished haphazardly either by downloading an mp3 file of a sermon or offloading our children to Sunday-school teachers, however vital the church and home partnership.

In the Covenant we talk about four long-standing principles that nurture both our faith as followers of Christ and our identity as a movement. These principles were first introduced 100 years ago by President C. V. Bowman at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Evangelical Covenant Church (ECC). I re-introduced them in last month's column, and this month we focus on the principle of nurturing our faith and identity through being a biblical people.

There is a truism that says the more you know the more you see. For example, when I look under the hood of a car I do not see very much because I do not know very much about cars. I can pick out the battery and the washer fluid, but that's about it. Mechanics know more and so mechanics can see the carburetor, alternator, radiator, and any other -ators.

If we want to see more of what God is doing in our lives and in the world around us, we need to know more about the heart and wisdom and design of God, all of which we learn from the Bible.

The ECC takes the Bible as the authoritative source for establishing a frame of reference for all of life. Our constitution says, "The Evangelical Covenant Church confesses that the Holy

Scripture, the Old and the New Testament, is the Word of God and the only perfect rule for faith, doctrine, and conduct." We ask, "Where is it written?" as a way of earnestly wanting to know, "What does the Bible say?"

And just how do we discern what it says? In 2008 the Annual Meeting approved a resource paper entitled "The Evangelical Covenant Church and the Bible." I encourage you to read it in its entirety, available online at covchurch.org or through the Covenant Bookstore.

In brief, we believe several important principles are necessary in genuinely wanting to hear Scripture speak. At our best we read the Bible faithfully, communally, rigorously, charitably, and holistically, with commitments to grace, transformation, and mission.

Faithfully means we let Scripture speak to our lives rather than using it to justify our lives; it is where we seek God's perspective and let God speak.

Communally means interpretation is not something we do alone. Indeed, it has been said that all heresy begins in isolation. Other voices, past and present, help us see things we would not otherwise see.

Rigorously means we recognize the original historical and cultural contexts; we seek to understand the issues being addressed at the time and from there find the timeless principles.

Charitably means we focus on the unity of the church in areas of differing interpretations on matters not central to our core beliefs.

Holistically means we read the entirety of Scripture to understand the whole of an issue; we do not pick and choose selective verses in isolation or out of context.

We also read with essential commitments—to grace because grace expresses the very character of God; to transformation, with the profound desire to be changed by our encounter with Scripture; and to mission, because valid reading leads us to join Jesus in his work in the world.

In 2 Timothy 2:15 we are admonished to rightly handle the word of truth. In that spirit these principles help us humbly search Scripture, and humbly do our best to align with its truth.

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