

Convention Study Guide

Practical Antithetical Living

by Rev. James Slopsema

The text for our convention this year is Ephesians 5:8, “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of the light.” Here we are taught that naturally we are darkness. We are lost in the darkness of sin and death. We are under the dominion of the devil, totally depraved so that our lives are headed away from God. But in Jesus Christ we have become light. God has graciously brought us to the light of faith and salvation in Jesus Christ. We are no longer darkness but light.

This work of God’s grace to make us light creates an antithesis or contrast between us and the world. The world is darkness. We are light in the Lord.

But now we must live this antithesis. Since we are light in the Lord, we must “walk as children of the light.” As you know from experience this is not easily done. It is only with great difficulty that we walk as the children of the light. This is surely something we can not do in our own strength. Those who attempt to walk in the light in their own strength will fail miserably. Antithetical living requires nothing less than the strength of Jesus Christ.

How do we receive the strength of Jesus Christ to live antithetically every day as children of the light? We receive that strength by diligent and faithful use of what we have come to know as the means of grace. Let’s discuss these means.

Sabbath Day Observance

The first is the Sabbath day. God in the fourth commandment instructs us to set one day aside each week as a Sabbath day, i.e., as a day of rest. In the NT this has become the first day of the week. We are charged not to work on this day of rest. The purpose of putting aside our daily work is to devote the day to spiritual things. This Sabbath is a good gift of God to us. A wise use of it will refresh and empower us to walk as children of the light during the rest of the week. In this connection we can discuss a number of questions.

Discussion questions:

1. What should we be doing on the Sabbath that empowers us to live antithetically? (See the Heidelberg Catechism, Lord’s Day 37)
2. What part should physical rest (taking a nap) have in our Sabbath keeping?
3. There are all kinds of questions about what we may or may not do on Sunday. What principle(s) should guide us in answering these questions?
4. Can you suggest worthwhile activities for us as young people to make the most out of our Sundays?
5. Do our Saturday evening activities have any impact on our ability to use the Lord’s Day profitably?

Bible Study And Prayer

Another means that Lord gives to strengthen us to live antithetically as children of the light are Bible study and prayer. Bible study and prayer go together. The Bible is the inspired Word of God to us. Prayer is our response to God’s word. A person who spends time with God’s word will be a person who prays. How important Bible study and prayer are to antithetical living! II Timothy 3:15-17 teaches us that the Bible, being God’s inspired word, is able to make us wise unto salvation. Through its instruction we become perfect (complete), thoroughly furnished (equipped) to every good work. Prayer is also important. We can live as children of the light only by the power of God’s grace and Holy Spirit.

Q&A 116 of the Heidelberg Catechism reminds us that we can receive grace and the Spirit only through prayer.

Discussion questions:

1. How much time should we spend as young people with the Bible and in prayer?
2. Is it important to have private devotions every day?
3. Can you think of examples from the Bible of God's people who received strength to live antithetically in a wicked world through prayer and meditation on God's word?
4. How important is it for us as young people to have an active part in family devotions?

Music

Another means that God uses to strengthen us to live as children of the light is music. After calling the church of Colossae to live antithetically, Paul exhorts the church to let the word of Christ dwell in them richly. If we will live as children of the light, the word of Christ must dwell in us. One way this is done is with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. (Colossians 3:16)

Discussion questions:

1. What effect does the music of the world have on our spiritual life?
2. What guidelines can we make for the kind of music we listen to and sing?

Friends

To live as children of the light is also important to have the right kind of friends. God uses the advice, encouragement and even rebukes of Christian friends to empower us to live as children of the light. This is part of the communion of saints as set forth in Q&A 55 of the Heidelberg Catechism. This principle is also taught us in Proverbs 13:20, "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise: but a companion of fools shall be destroyed."

Discussion questions:

1. What are the kind of friends we should seek?
2. What can we do to cultivate spiritual discussion with our friends?
3. Think of examples from the Bible of saints who were helped to live antithetically by good friends.
4. Think of examples from the Bible of those who were misguided by bad friends.
5. Must we limit our friends to those who are Protestant Reformed? ❖

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