



# Staff Devotions

## Devotion 1 The Beginning of Life

*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Genesis 1:1*

*In the beginning, the land was not like it is today. It was free from life and empty. During the Dreamtime, the Spirits made the land and people. They made rivers, hills, rocks, plants, and animals. They made laws about how people were to behave.*

Sound vaguely familiar? This brief retelling of an Aboriginal creation story bears some similarities to the true creation account found in the biblical book of Genesis. At one point in the not-too-distant past, the ancient Aboriginal people knew the true account, as well. After the rebellion and dispersion from Babel (c. 2200 BC), descendants of Noah settled in Australia. As time passed and their descendants multiplied, the various Aboriginal tribes developed.

Noah, the keeper of the books of Adam and Seth, knew the true Creator God. If he did his fatherly duty and passed on that information to his sons and grandsons, then his descendants knew about the biblical God who created everything. Sadly, the information was corrupted over time, as Noah's descendants turned their backs on the truth and instead sought to develop their own view of history.

Today, many myths about the past exist. One of the more insidious and bizarre is the myth that we share an ancestor with the apes. Sadly, this idea reduces the all-powerful God to an ape-like creature in whose image humans were made. It forces mankind to become just another animal without responsibility for their actions and without the need of a Savior from their sins. (When is the last time you've tried to preach the gospel to a monkey?)

Yet, we have the truth about life in our hands. The Creator of all life has given us the true account of how things came to be in his book, the Bible. When we teach our children, as the Bible commands us to, the truth about

where they came from and where they're going, there are no "missing links." We need to be vigilantly watching what the world teaches so that we're prepared to tear down every false argument that sets itself against the knowledge of God (2 Corinthians 10:4-5) and build up a biblical worldview in those the Lord has entrusted to our care. Let's diligently impart the truth to our children and grandchildren.

As you go throughout your day today, think about how you can encourage a desire for true wisdom, that which is found in Christ (Colossians 3:16), in the hearts of the kids you're working with.

My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee;  
So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding;  
Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding;  
If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures;  
Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.  
For the Lord giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding.  
He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous: he is a buckler to them that walk uprightly.  
He keepeth the paths of judgment, and preserveth the way of his saints.  
Then shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path.  
When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul;  
Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee:

Proverbs 2:1-11



## Devotion 2 The Wonder of Life

*Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered. Psalm 40:5*

Ngangkari are traditional Aboriginal healers. They pull from a vast body of knowledge about the body that has been gathered over time. They have devised treatments for many diseases. Although they've fallen away from knowledge of the one Creator God, enough memory of the truth has remained so that they attribute the wonder of life to spirits, rather than to purely natural, mindless processes working over countless eons of time. How is it today that many have digressed so far from the truth that they are willing to accept that no God has been involved in bringing about life—human or otherwise?

Consider the ramifications of teaching a young child that he is nothing more than the product of random mutations rather than a special creation bearing the image of God. If we're nothing more than evolved animals, then our thoughts are merely a collection of atoms bouncing around in our head. There is no Creator to whom we are accountable, and thus, there is no logical basis for morality or reason to declare one action "right" and another action "wrong." Moral relativism becomes the rule of the day. Is it any wonder, then, that children are murdering and behaving as if they are accountable to no one?

Now consider the opposite—we teach that the Bible provides our true history and we are special creations, accountable to our Creator who has given us a standard of behavior to abide by. Suddenly, right and wrong are clearly defined, and there are penalties for our actions.

Does it matter what we teach our children about where they come from and in whose image they are created? Absolutely. For without the Bible, there are no absolutes, and no reason for us to teach that hitting a sibling is wrong, while sharing our toys is right. Ultimately, if molecules-to-man evolution is correct and the Bible is

incorrect, there is no reason for us to be saved from sin, and thus Jesus died on the cross for no reason.

As we teach our children about the wonder of life and their special place as image-bearers of the Creator of the universe, let's remember that this allows us to instill a basis for morality in their hearts and plead with them to seek wisdom, as Solomon did with his sons.

My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments:

For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil.

It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones. Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine.

My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction:

For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding.

Proverbs 3:1–13



## Devotion 3 The Value of Life

*Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. Matthew 10:29–31*

In traditional Aboriginal culture, elders were honored and respected for their wisdom and experience. Indigenous people have an elaborate system of kinship, an understanding that every person in their family group is interrelated and responsible for each other.

Today, with the increasing acceptance of molecules-to-man evolution and denial of biblical authority, human life has been relegated to the level of animals. Unborn babies are treated the same as spare cats—they're gotten rid of when they're unwanted. The elderly and the infirm are treated as decrepit dogs—put down when their "quality of life" declines. Babies with disabilities are eliminated before they are born so they aren't a burden to their parents or society.

The Bible provides a different view of life—one in which people are created in God's image and are precious in his sight from the moment of fertilization until the moment we pass into eternity. The two greatest commandments are to love God and love others. We are exhorted to help the weak, the orphans, the widows, the poor, the hungry, the tired, those with disabilities—our neighbors. Within the biblical framework, helping others makes logical sense.

Is the value we place on life based on how convenient that life is to us, or do we hold to the Creator's view? Which view of human life are we teaching our children by example? As we interact with the children today, let's meditate on the Proverbs that provide many insights into ways we can love God and love others.

A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches,  
and loving favour rather than silver and gold.  
The rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the maker  
of them all.

A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself:  
but the simple pass on, and are punished.

By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches, and  
honour, and life.

He that oppresseth the poor to increase his riches, and  
he that giveth to the rich, shall surely come to want.

Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise,  
and apply thine heart unto my knowledge.

For it is a pleasant thing if thou keep them within thee;  
they shall withal be fitted in thy lips.

That thy trust may be in the Lord, I have made known to  
thee this day, even to thee.

Have not I written to thee excellent things in counsels  
and knowledge,

That I might make thee know the certainty of the words  
of truth; that thou mightest answer the words of truth  
to them that send unto thee?

Rob not the poor, because he is poor: neither oppress  
the afflicted in the gate:

For the Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of  
those that spoiled them.

Proverbs 22:1–4, 16–23



## Devotion 4 Eternal Life

*Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. John 6:68*

Traditional Aboriginal belief teaches that a person's soul will continue on after physical death. Their spirit will return to the Dreamtime and experience rebirth as a plant, rock, animal, or human.

Most ancient cultures had some idea of an afterlife and devised their own way to get there. Each had forgotten the truth that their ancestors, descendants of Adam through Noah, once knew. The first gospel was preached in the garden, after the first people disobeyed their Creator, bringing on the promised punishment for sin: death (Genesis 3). God promised to one day send a Savior (Genesis 3:15), providing hope for mankind.

The fact is that in our world death is a very real part of life. And we all deal with death's accompaniments: sickness, sorrow, disease, suffering. We can ask the "why?" questions: "If there is a loving God, why would he allow so much death and suffering?" or "Why would God let this innocent child suffer?" But we must be willing to answer the question with a firm look at our own sin. Sin—my sin, your sin, our sin—is the cause of what ails us, not God. If we're honest with ourselves, no one is totally innocent before our holy God. We are descendants of Adam, born "in Adam." All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). Nothing good dwells in our flesh (Romans 7:18). We are all dead in trespasses and sin (Romans 7:24). Without Christ, our heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; there's none righteous, no not one (Jeremiah 7:9).

There are no innocent people anywhere in the world. That's why all people will die. That's why we need to think beyond the grave. When it comes to death, it's not really a matter of "why," and it's certainly not a matter of "if." What matters is that death is imminent . . . and left to ourselves, we stand condemned before a holy God.

The Aboriginal people were right to look beyond this life to the next one, but they need to know the truth. We who are children of God have hope—free from magic

rituals and ceremonies, free from the desperate wish that I've been good enough to make it on my own. We hold the key to eternal life in our hands—the Bible gives us the truth about what happens when we die and how we can ensure that we will spend eternity with our Creator. It's our responsibility to pass on that hope and truth to the children in our care so that they know how to receive the free gift of eternal life.

Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding.

For I give you good doctrine, forsake ye not my law.

For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved in the sight of my mother.

He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.

Forsake her not, and she shall preserve thee: love her, and she shall keep thee.

Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.

Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her.

She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many.

My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings.

Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.

For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh.

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.

Proverbs 4:1–10, 20–23



## Devotion 5 Using Your Life

*And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, . . . there was no more spirit in her. And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. . . . Blessed be the Lord thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the Lord loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice. 1 Kings 10:4–9*

In Aboriginal culture, laws about marriage, family, which foods could be eaten, how to share foods, caring for the land, and sacred rituals were provided from the Dreamtime. It's clear that they have retained some knowledge of a lawgiver and how to live according to those laws.

In fact, one of their distant relatives had also retained some knowledge from Babel and had implemented it into Egyptian society. In the revised Egyptian chronology proposed by some archaeologists, the Queen of Sheba who visited Solomon was Queen Hatshepsut of Egypt (1 Kings 10:1–13; 2 Chronicles 9:1–12). At the same time that Hatshepsut was ruling the powerful, advanced kingdom of Egypt, Solomon was ruling Israel and writing proverbs.

One nation, descended from Noah through Ham, ignored the true Creator and sought to worship multiple gods instead. Another nation, descended from Noah through Shem, acknowledged the Creator and sought to live by his laws—the laws given to Moses after he led his people out of Egypt.

One ruler spent her life building a temple that would house her dead body; another ruler spent his life and resources building a temple in which to worship the one true living God.

One queen had an encounter with a godly king and acknowledged his God; another king had an encounter with a pagan queen and surely imparted the truth of Scripture to her.

One woman used her life to further her own interests and that of her kingdom; another man used his life to righteously rule a nation and impart wisdom to the next generation.

This short comparison of two rulers can serve as an encouragement to us to examine our own lives. How are we living—to please ourselves or to please our God? Are we thinking about how we can further the kingdom of

God with our life or about how we can further our own kingdom? Do we realize, as Solomon did, that we need to train the next generation to seek for wisdom?

Although we may not be rulers of great civilizations, we are no less children of the King than Solomon was. And our position in his kingdom is no less important. We were all created by God for a purpose and called into his family to do good works. How will you use your life?

For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it.

I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.

The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate.

Counsel is mine, and sound wisdom: I am understanding; I have strength.

By me kings reign, and princes decree justice.

By me princes rule, and nobles, even all the judges of the earth.

I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me.

Riches and honour are with me; yea, durable riches and righteousness.

My fruit is better than gold, yea, than fine gold; and my revenue than choice silver.

I lead in the way of righteousness, in the midst of the paths of judgment:

That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance; and I will fill their treasures.

Blessed is the man that heareth me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors.

For whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord.

But he that sinneth against me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate me love death.

Proverbs 8:11–21, 34–36