

Letters to our girls...

Leaving a spiritual heritage to our children



ANDREW AUCAMP WITH KERRY AUCAMP

For our two girls, Jamie and Laurie...

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Foreword

We have decided to publish these letters in the hope that they will stir other parents to think about the legacy they are leaving their children. So often the focus of parents is on providing a good home and education for their children. Or they focus on leaving them a business or some form of financial inheritance. There is nothing wrong with these desires. However, they pale into insignificance when compared to the responsibility of leaving a spiritual legacy for our children.

There are other ways to leave a spiritual legacy with our children other than writing a series of letters to them. One of the main ways to do this is by regularly having times of prayer, bible teaching and reading with them as they grow up. We have tried to do this with our children. We felt, however, that something more concrete was required. We wanted to put down in writing some of the key lessons we had learnt in our spiritual walk, and address some of the key weaknesses we see in contemporary Christianity. We would not want to see our children fall into serious error, or be part of ministries that “major on minors” and end up hurting rather than healing.

Our prayer is that these letters may stir you up to do something similar, and also help you as parents to understand some of the key issues that need to be addressed with your children. These letters do not exhaustively cover every important issue that we encounter in the world today. They are intended to cover several key lessons that will be of benefit to our children.

Letter One: Why we are writing these letters to you...

To our dearest Jamie and Laurie

What are these letters all about? Well, Mom and Dad love you more than anything in this world. You are so precious to us, and we are so grateful that God has given you to us. We don't know when we will die and go to be with the Lord. We are not sure whether we will be here to see you growing up, get married and have children of your own. Our very days are numbered by God, and in His hands. We do not know if we will even be here tomorrow.

Because of this, we want to be able to leave you with those truths that are most dear to us. These truths have guided us and helped us in our lives. They have stood the test of time, and helped us through the ups and downs of life. These letters do not contain all that we believe. Rather, these letters are a selection of important truths that we believe are, and will be, challenged by the world and contemporary Christianity as you grow up and find your own way in life. We wanted to therefore leave you with our understanding of the word of God on these matters. We pray you will consider carefully what we have to say, and that these letters will be able to guide you as you grow up and start a life of your own. Some of the things we mention you are perhaps a little young to understand fully now. But hopefully as you re-read these letters when you are older, they will be of help to you.

These letters represent some of the most important Christian truths that we want to leave you with, just in case we are unable to be with you when you are older. We also see that these truths are becoming less and less popular in the church. While we know that the Lord Jesus will preserve His church and the truth, sound doctrine might be scarce in a few years time. The Apostle Paul told Timothy to expect that in the last times there would be many false teachers (2 Tim. 3:1). We have therefore written these letters to you on various topics. Some topics will take a few minutes to address, others will take a bit longer. These letters represent our heritage to you. It is the most important thing we can give to you. We do hope that when we die we will leave you with some money – but that is nothing compared to the spiritual truth that we have tried to instruct you in.

God bless you and watch over you. Teach your children these truths, so that they may teach their children...

With much love
Mom and Dad

Letter two: What it means to be a Christian...

Dearest Jamie and Laurie

The most important decision you are faced with in life is whether to become a Christian or not. Everything else (and we mean everything) is secondary. How much money you have, what work you do, who you marry, are all important, but not as important as your eternity. Heaven and hell are real, and they are eternal. Heaven is a wonderful place, where God dwells and reveals His glory. Hell is a place of eternal suffering, and a holy God punishes sinners there. Many today deny the existence of hell, or deny that it is eternal. Yet the Bible is clear that hell is real (read Matt. 25:41 and 46; Mark 9:42-44). The Bible describes hell as a place of suffering, using word pictures of fire (indicating a suffering similar to burning – read Luke 16:19-31) and darkness (describing people in a chaotic state of confusion, turmoil and loneliness – read Matt. 22:13). Lastly, the Bible indicates that hell is eternal – it will never end (Read Rev. 14:9-12; Matt. 25:41, 47; Mark 9:42-47). The Lord Jesus spoke much about God's judgment and hell to warn us of the dangers we face as sinners, and our urgent need to turn to the Lord Jesus to find forgiveness. So, whether to become a Christian or not is the most important decision you need to make, and an urgent one.

The first thing we want to say is that *sin* is the main issue that the Lord Jesus came to earth to deal with. He is not primarily concerned about your earthly, short-term happiness, or your health, or your wealth. He is concerned about your eternal soul. He died on the cross to save us from God's judgment and hell. Never forget that God is *holy*, and He cannot tolerate sin (Isa. 6:3; Hab. 1:13). He is most terrible in His judgements, and to be feared (Mark 8:35-37). And the Lord Jesus is the only one who can save us from God's anger. Acts 4:11-12 says that there is no other name under heaven or earth given through which sins can be forgiven. Jesus is the only way to the Father (John 14:6). Mohammed, Buddha, Mormonism and Jehovah's Witnesses all represent false religions, and do not provide a real solution for our sin. Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, so that we can be freed from eternal condemnation (Isa 53:4-6).

So, you must be very careful of the "health and wealth" teaching today, that says that God wants you to be rich and healthy, and if you are not, there is something wrong with your faith. This is a terrible lie. The Lord Jesus did not own a chariot, or a house. The Apostle Paul was poor, and had to work at night to earn enough money to support himself (2 Thess. 3:8). The Bible warns about the love of money being the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10). While it is not sinful in itself to be rich if God does give you money, the Bible has many warnings about trusting in money, and also that it is difficult for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. Please, please don't listen to our modern false teachers who are so preoccupied with money, as if it was poverty that the Lord Jesus came to save us from. We have not quoted many Scriptures here, because you can simply go to a concordance and look up the word "rich" or "money" and see for yourself what the Bible says.

The second issue we want to speak about is what it means to be a Christian. Some people today say it is possible to become a Christian but not a disciple of the Lord Jesus. They say that to become a disciple is a further

commitment after becoming a Christian. This is not true. Read Matthew 28:18-20 (remember this is one of our family memory verses) with Acts 11:26. You must realise that you cannot look at the church today to see what it means to be a Christian. Many today who attend church may not be Christians. Many have not been born again, nor have they given their lives to Christ. They are still attached to the world, but have merely added a bit of religion into their lifestyles. They are not true disciples of Christ, nor really committed to Him. A true, biblical Christian is someone who has become a new creation by the powerful work of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 5:17; John 3:3-7). His or her heart has been changed.

When the Lord Jesus calls us to become a Christian (or a disciple), He tells us that there will be hardship and persecution – not health, wealth and popularity (Matt. 16:24). You must be prepared for this. You must count the cost, and realize that the decision to become a Christian is a serious one. Otherwise you will be like those in the parable of the sower, who hear the word, receive it with joy, but then fall away because of persecution or the cares of this world (Matt. 13:20-22). These people in the parable were not true disciples, and had not committed themselves to Christ. You must be prepared to be rejected by the world and by your friends for Christ. It may at this point seem like an unpleasant prospect to become a Christian, but we can tell you that it is only in the Lord that you will find rest for your souls (Matt. 11:28-30), and everlasting joy and peace that is wonderful beyond description.

Remember the story of Little Christian (see H.L. Taylor's adaptation of Pilgrim's Progress for children, entitled *Little Pilgrims Progress* by Moody Publishers) that we have read to you¹. Little Christian was aware of his burden of sin that needed to be dealt with, and he faced many hardships before reaching the heavenly city. So it is with every Christian.

Our daily, earnest prayer for both of you is that God would save you, and that you would become Christians. We want to see you in heaven one day with both of us.

With much love
Mom and Dad

¹ See *A devotional guide to Little Pilgrims Progress* by Andrew and Kerry Aucamp. Available for free from <http://www.searchandtrace.net/>

Letter three: Cherish the Scriptures as the word of God...

Dearest Jamie and Laurie

We hope you will still remember one of our family memory verses: “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path” (Ps. 119:105).

The Bible is the most important and precious book in all the world, because it is the very word of God. What a privilege to own and read God’s very thoughts and words. It is a precious treasure.

We can only encourage you to study the Bible. You remember how your Dad studied the Bible, very often till late at night. Many Christians today don’t grow spiritually because they are not serious students of the word. They prefer to watch TV, or play sport, or pursue hobbies. While these pursuits are acceptable in their proper proportions in our lives, please don’t neglect God’s word. You will need to study it carefully, and this will take time and effort. But the Bible will strengthen your faith and guide you for all your life, until you reach heaven. Also remember that prayer goes with reading the word of God. Read your Bible prayerfully, and remember to be regularly praying about everything in your life. Remember how often we prayed as a family, and how wonderfully God answered our prayers!

We want to warn you about those pastors and professors of theology that say the Bible contains errors. This means that they believe that some parts of the Bible are just man’s words. But if this is the case, then we can never really know what is true and what is false in the Bible. However, the Lord Jesus trusted the Old Testament Scriptures completely. Remember that when He was tempted by Satan, he simply trusted that what was written in the Scriptures was true. He deflected each of Satan’s temptations by saying “It is written...” (see Matt. 4:1-11). You will notice that even though God used imperfect people to write the Scriptures, what they wrote down in Scripture was true. That is why second Timothy 3:15-16 teaches that all Scripture is inspired by God. It is “God-breathed,” meaning that every word in Scripture comes out of the mouth of God, as it were. It is the very word of God. It is accurate to the last jot and tittle (Matt. 5:17-18), so that even whether a word is in the singular or plural is significant (Gal. 3:16 – seed vs seeds).

Please don’t ever attend a church where the pastor teaches a low view of the Bible, or don’t study at a seminary where they don’t believe the Bible to be fully inspired and without error. Such teaching is called “liberalism.” It dishonours God, because it dishonours His word.

There is one area in particular where people say the Bible has errors or that it is just a story, and that is the first three chapters of Genesis, where the Bible speaks about creation. You will know from school that people believe that man evolved from monkeys. But remember our memory verses on the days of creation. God made everything in six days, and He made man from the dust of the earth, not from monkeys. Everything in the world belongs to God, because He made it all.

So please make sure you treasure your Bible – God speaks to you through the Bible. It can be trusted, as it is the very word of God, and carries God’s authority. You may not understand everything in the Bible all at once. But as you read and study it, you will understand more and more.

With much love

Mom and Dad

Letter four: God's sovereignty...

Dear Jamie and Laurie

The most important knowledge we can have is about who God is and what He is like. As you read the Bible, you will see that God is unique. He is all-powerful (He can do anything He pleases), and He knows all things and He sees all things.

One of the truths about God that helps us most in our Christian life is the fact that God is Sovereign. Many, many people today deny this very important truth, but it is so clearly revealed in the Bible that you are simply not being faithful to Scripture when you deny it. Let us briefly explain what God's sovereignty means.

Please read Isaiah 46:9-13. There are two concepts displayed here: God's purposes or plans (called "God's decrees" by theologians), and His ability to actually bring those plans to pass in history (called "God's providence" by theologians). God's working in providence is to bring about His decrees or purposes. God does not just act arbitrarily in time and space; His actions are purposeful to bring about His plans. In Isaiah 46 God is specifically referring to Cyrus, whom God was going to raise up to bring His people back to the Promised Land. God had a plan to bring His people back, and He was going to bring that plan to pass.

From Scripture, we see that God's plan and providence extend to all things:

- random events (Prov. 16:33; Matt. 10:29-30)
- all the events of nature (Ps. 104:14, 17, 21, 27-30)
- rulers and empires (Dan. 2:20-21; 4:35)
- evil acts of people (Acts 4: 27-28)
- even who will be saved (Acts 13:48, Eph. 1:3-6, 11)²

Everything is under God's sovereign control, from the smallest incident to the greatest calamity, also to if and when someone gets saved. Yes, men exercise their wills, and make real choices, and yet God even guides their choices in a mysterious way so that His exact purposes are accomplished.

As you know, Dad is a project manager at work. We struggle to implement even relatively simple projects. We plan and develop a project programme, and then hit the execute button. And that's when things usually go wrong. We often do not anticipate certain things, or we make mistakes. No projects work out exactly the way we plan them. And these are only relatively simple projects. Yet, as the above references show, God is able to direct the raindrop, the flight of a bird, the heart of the king, and the movements of empires and nations, all to bring about His purposes and plans exactly. Not one mistake, not one hitch. Perfectly.

² For a fuller treatment, see "The Lord our God" by CA Aucamp. Available from Search and Trace, <http://www.searchandtrace.net/>

Many today deny such a view of God's sovereignty. They prefer to think that because God has given men freedom to make choices, that God can in no way control these choices, hence many things happen that are outside of His will.

You may have some questions about God's sovereignty. Such as, how can God ordain sinful actions, and yet not be the author of sin? How can God ordain sinful actions, and yet hold people responsible for their sin? These are good questions, and as you grow in your faith, we pray you will find answers that will at least partly satisfy you. You can read some of Dad's books (and you have already listened to some of his sermons) to get some answers to these questions.

The point is that God is truly God. He does all things for His glory, and is in control of all things. He is not frustrated, but will accomplish His purposes. Anything less than this reduces God to a weak and puny being, at the mercy of people's so called free will. Denying God's sovereignty dishonours Him. This can be seen in the above mentioned passage. Note that in Isaiah 46:9 God is declaring His exclusive *deity*. In verse ten, we are given the basis of God's exclusive deity, namely, His sovereign declaration of the end from the beginning, and His sovereign ability to do all His pleasure. In other words, God is telling us that an important aspect of His deity is His sovereignty. Or, to put it differently, to deny God's sovereignty is to deny an essential aspect of His deity. A god who is not sovereign is not a god at all!

Nothing would delight our hearts more than to see you two growing up, understanding God's sovereignty, defending it and teaching it to your children. It is perhaps the most important and key doctrine that we have learned, and we are so thankful that God opened our eyes to it.

It is only this truth that will comfort you in times of trouble. Nothing happens in our lives apart from the will of God. God sends trials for our good and His glory – they don't just happen! They are not an accident of nature or fate. It is only this truth that will give you contentment in life in the different circumstances you may find yourself– whether rich or poor, healthy or sick. God loves you and has complete control over your life, and you can trust Him through good and bad times.

Good authors and preachers that we would recommend you read and listen to with regard to God's sovereignty are John Piper, John Frame, RC Sproul and John MacArthur.

With much love
Mom and Dad

Letter five: The doctrines of grace...

Dear Jamie and Laurie

These doctrines are really just an extension of God's sovereignty. They have helped us so much in our understanding of God and people. We will only deal with some of the key points briefly. Some of these things may be difficult to understand, yet they are so clearly revealed that we must embrace them.

The doctrines of grace teach that it is in fact God who chooses who will be saved – in the Bible called the “elect” of God. This may at the outset seem unfair. The key to understanding the doctrines of grace is to understand what sin has done to man.

The Bible teaches that sin has so affected man, that, if left to himself, he will never chose to follow the Lord Jesus. This is clearly taught in John 6: 44-45; 64-65. Sin has blinded man, and resulted in all people being dead in their trespasses and sins (Jn. 8:34; Eph. 2:1-3). The end result is that people are now born at enmity to God (Rom 8:6-8), and they cannot receive any spiritual truth (1 Cor. 2:14). So God must open people's eyes before they can believe and receive the gospel (Acts 16:14; Acts 13:48). Why does God open some people's eyes and not others? Because He has chosen some people to be saved (Eph. 1:4-5).

So you see that God's election of some people to be saved is in fact a blessing. Without election, no one would be saved. Therefore it is not a negative doctrine, but a positive, wonderful doctrine. That is why Paul blesses God for His election and predestinating purposes (Eph. 1:3-5).

Regarding whether the Bible teaches election and predestination is as clear as daylight. Here are a few verses (there are many more):

Ephesians 1:3-6: God chose certain people to be saved before the foundation of the world

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14: God chooses people to be saved, and calls them to salvation through the gospel

Those who are truly saved will persevere to the end and never be lost, because they are part of God's eternal decree. The key passage is Romans 8:28-30. Those whom God predestined and called will most surely be saved. Philippians 1:6 and John 10:28 also teach the fact that believers will persevere to the end and be saved. One important error to avoid regarding this doctrine of eternal security is that it does not mean people who once made a profession faith, but are now living in sin, will still go to heaven. Rather, those who are truly saved will continue to live their lives trusting in God and walking with Him (even though they may at times stumble).

There are other associated truths about the doctrines of grace that you will need to study for yourself. But we hope this gives you a framework for understanding them.

The doctrines of grace are not just theoretical points of doctrine, but very practical. For example, you must never give up on sinners – friends, your own children, and family. Even if they seem hardened to the gospel, God can yet call them and save them. Pray earnestly for God to work in their lives. If you think about it, even those who deny the doctrines of grace in reality believe them, because they pray to God to save people. Why pray to God if He cannot save them?

It also helps us not to resort to entertainment and gimmicks in evangelism. We don't need to be very smart or clever with words. We can simply tell people about the Lord Jesus, and show them verses from the Bible. God uses His word and power to draw in His elect. We don't need anything else.

With much love
Mom and Dad

Letter six: Choosing a husband...

Dear Jamie and Laurie

We mentioned earlier that the most important decision you need to make is whether to become a Christian or not. The second most important decision is who you are going to marry. This is often the area where Christian men and women do the silliest things because they don't trust in God.

We personally have a few lady friends who ended up marrying husbands who are not Christians, and they have lived to regret it deeply. The Bible is clear that we should only marry Christians (2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Cor. 7:39). We have been praying for you since you were born that God would give you godly men to marry.

There are a few questions we want you to consider carefully. You will have to submit to your husband, as Ephesians 5:22 says. In other words, your husband will be the leader in the home, and give direction to you and your children. Do you really want a non-Christian to do this? Do you want a husband who does not care to take you and your children to church? Do you want the father of your children not to want to teach them about God? Remember how often we have taught you from God's word – virtually every single day while you were children. Don't you want the same for your children? Please, don't dishonor God and bring trouble into your lives by marrying an unbeliever.

Also, don't just go for the first man (even if he is a Christian) who is interested in you or asks you to marry him. Go for a man who you can see is serious about God; about serving Him and living for Him. You will be blessed with such a husband.

The last thing we want to say is that in order for such a godly man to be interested in marrying you, it means that you must be a serious, godly woman, wanting to serve God with all your heart. A godly man will be looking for such a wife.

Please, Jamie and Laurie, don't marry a non-Christian, and make sure your husband-to-be is a serious, godly man who will be a good husband to you and a good father to your children. So many of our friends have forsaken God's instructions in this, and they regret it deeply every day. Many men may seem very nice and pleasant at first, but this can change very quickly. Rather pray and wait for the right man.

With much love
Mom and Dad

Letter seven: Being a mother...

Dear Jamie and Laurie

If God wills it, you will most likely be mothers one day. We want to remind you of the great responsibility of raising children. Our children are the most precious things that we have been given. They have eternal souls. There are a few things we want to remind you of, and we hope you will remember how we raised you, and tried to be examples to you. We see so many parents, even in the church, making sad mistakes when raising their children.

Firstly, remember that God does hold you responsible to raise your children in the discipline and admonition of the Lord. You cannot hand over this responsibility to someone else, such as a day care centre or a domestic worker. Many people will not let a domestic worker drive their new car, but they will let them raise their children while they are at work. This is neglectful. So consider carefully what career you choose, and how you pursue it. Remember that Mom stayed at home to be with you and raise you. We believe this is God's pattern for Moms.

Secondly, be firm but loving as you raise your children. Your children must know that you love them deeply. Loving discipline is a truly loving act, not cruelty (Prov. 13:24). Many today let their children do whatever they want, and don't control them. Remember that the Bible teaches when children are willfully disobedient, they should get a hiding (Prov. 22:15; 23:13-14). But remember that discipline must be done in love to correct them, not to harm them. Speak once, and then smack. Do not forget the importance of the rod of reproof (with a verbal explanation), as well as discipline. It is really pathetic to see parents begging their children to obey, or making continuously idle threats that amount to nothing. Children must not be allowed to whine, nor throw temper tantrums. The first time you girls threw temper tantrums, you got a big smack, and that was the end of the tantrums! Many in our day say that it is cruel and unloving to discipline children. Just look at how their children turn out; that will tell you the value of their views!

Also remember to teach them about exercise and diet (although not as important as salvation, this is still important). We hope again that we have been an example to you in this area. Don't let your children eat lots of unhealthy food. If they don't eat their vegetables, then certainly don't allow them sweets and chips as a replacement. Children must eat their food (unless they are sick), and finish their vegetables, before they can eat any pudding or sweets. We believe that sweets with all their preservatives and colourants are responsible for a lot of the attention or learning problems children have. Remember that they have little bodies that were designed to be nurtured by good, healthy food. But that does not mean that they should never have sweets or anything unhealthy. As you know, we let you enjoy sweets, chips and pudding in moderation, and only after you have eaten your quota of healthy food.

With much love
Mom and Dad

Letter eight: Life in the church...

Dear Jamie and Laurie

God wants us to be part of a church wherever possible (Heb. 10:24-25). He has given us elders and teachers to watch over us (Heb. 13:17), and Christian friends so we can encourage one another.

Choose a church that focuses on sound preaching, and where the people are truly converted and active disciples. Many young people go to churches where the worship is “entertaining” and there are many other young people. But these things cannot compensate for a church where there is poor preaching and ungodly, careless living, with quite frankly, non-Christian participants. Look for those things that will feed you spiritually, such as a Bible-based church with members who are truly born again.

God has also given you gifts, and he wants you to use them in the church. Be an active member in the church, always looking for an opportunity to serve. Make friends, invite them into your home. We hope that we have been an example in this. Remember how often we used to invite people from church to lunch and supper. God wants us to encourage and care for others, and to be hospitable. Let a lot of your social interaction be focused on the church.

It is also essential to be part of a home group, where much of the more personalised caring happens. In these groups we get to know each other more personally, and can pray and encourage one another specifically. We have so enjoyed being part of a home group in each of the churches we have attended.

We do also just want to remind you that as Christian women there are certain ministries that are reserved by God for men. Read 1 Timothy 2:11 – 3:7. Feminism is rampant today, even in the church. God will never call you to be a pastor, elder or teacher in the church. Yes, you can teach in Sunday school, and you can teach other ladies (Titus 2:1-5), but you should not be teaching men in church, nor holding the office of elder. This does not mean that you are inferior to men, but rather that God has ordained differing roles for men and women. You will find your happiness and contentment as you submit yourself to these roles.

With much love
Mom and Dad

Letter nine: Life is short, so make it count for God...

Dear Jamie and Laurie

This is our final message. Although you are still young, you will find that life is very short. Very soon, you will find that you are grown up, have children, and are getting old. We are astounded that we are almost fifty already. Our lives have gone by so quickly. You only have one life, and it will soon be over. Be wise, and live for God. Make every day count.

Beware of storing up treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy. Don't be content to live a self-centered life. Rather, use your energy, gifts and the money that God has given you to build His kingdom and serve Him. In this regard, we want to ask you to cultivate a generous heart. Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-11 carefully, and write it on your hearts. Be a generous giver, and God will deal generously with you. We hope we have been an example to you in giving to the poor. It is such a wonderful thing that a bit of money given to Christians in need can result in praise to God – that is truly money well spent!

Well, our daughters, whom we love so much, these letters are the most valuable thing we can leave you. You will find in them precious truths from God's word. Keep God's word in your heart, and remember the things we have taught you.

We want to close with this one, very important memory verse that you have learnt:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. (Prov. 3:5-6, NKJV)

Let this be the governing principle upon which you base your life choices.

God bless you, and keep you, our precious girls.

With much love
Mom and Dad