

## PROFITING FROM THESE INTRODUCTIONS

Being blessed ourselves by applied doctrine is why these biographies are so important. Having authentic Christian experiences that warm our hearts and correct our lives and lead to knowing God personally and loving Him more is one reason for becoming acquainted with these pastors. Authentic Christian experiences, like repentance and praise, leading to loving God more is of inestimable value. These introductions were all about helping us along that path.

Another way to profit from these introductions is to know it when you see it---to recognize this Puritan Reformed tradition. That way you can sit under this kind of preaching and teaching either in person or on the internet or through your own reading. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, you can learn from each of these pastors how to recognize those who preach Reformed doctrine with passion and apply it with kindness to current pressures. And not to just accumulate more facts, but to grow in grace and the knowledge of God.

There is another way to profit from meeting these "old evangelicals.' *It is to sharpen our own teaching. That is my chief reason for writing this book. It is my ultimate purpose to sharpen the teaching skills of Sunday School and Bible study and small groups and parents. I want to impact children's ministries, youth work, and women's ministries in the local church through this kind of warm-hearted, Calvinist teaching.*

"I'm no teacher!" you say. Do you have children? Grandchildren? A desire to make a difference? A desire for

evangelism? Remember Matthew Henry began honing his teaching skills as a child leading his sisters in catechism studies and then went on to family devotions. After his heart was stirred in a Methodist revival, William Jay went home to lead his parents in prayer and Bible study. Ernest Reisinger started out leading Bible study with his Navy buddies in the Pacific. Not everyone springs into a position of influence or has the ear of citizens in a great city. But you can do what you can the best you can. You can sharpen your own skills by learning from the masters of experiential teaching.

It would be wonderful to have an easy formula for teaching that warms the heart and corrects the life and balances intricate doctrinal points while promoting real spiritual experiences. A 1,2,3 outline in which you fill in the blanks...Teaching that is bolstered by a humble holiness strengthened by compassion and concern for others cannot be reduced to a formula. Instead, like Roger Ellsworth, immerse yourself in the writings of these 'old evangelicals' to develop your own style.

These biographies were designed to whet your appetite and get you started. Maybe you will pick one of these seven to be your mentor. Or perhaps you will read some writings from each to compare and contrast their styles, their ways of dealing with their own personal problems and those of the times in which they lived. Whatever your method, always remember each of these teachers relied on the Holy Spirit to make their teaching lasting and effective in promoting real spiritual experiences. And each believed their practice of spiritual disciplines was the means used by the Holy Spirit to promote holiness and humility in themselves. None of them believed in teaching or preaching devoid of compassion and concern for others. In addition, they all continued to see their your own sin

contrasted with the wonders of God's redemptive work. That is very different from a quick fix; it all takes time.

As you get started, keep these points in mind:

- All these men applied the Doctrines of Grace to their own lives.

Each was a Calvinist; they believed these five points summarized the Bible's message. Since you are not trying to use the Bible as a grab-bag of psychological solutions, you need to bring firm doctrinal understanding to your teaching. Not perfect understanding since so much is mystery, but you need a handle on systematic theology or a source to look things up. Choose your sources carefully. Understanding the doctrines, thinking about the Bible's themes, and approaching the context with a Puritan eye to apply it to yourself makes a big difference in *you*. And, of course, this doctrinal understanding is also related to need.

When teaching pre-schoolers you need a lot less understanding of the details and conflicts of views. But, even here, you need to understand enough of the general doctrines to put them in simple language. Matthew Henry believed doctrine must be blended with practical wisdom and balanced by exalting God's characteristics. That is why his teaching warmed John Wesley's heart even though they differed on election. Most importantly, these "old evangelicals" believed doctrine must be tied to holiness, humility, compassion, and concern for others. They kept an eye on themselves. Ernie Reisinger's final regret was that he had not been more patient with others. But, none of these 'old evangelicals' joined the ecumenical movement or returned to Catholic teaching by abandoning the Reformation distinctives or were known for their harsh words or lashing out at those who opposed them (See Iain H. Murray, *EVANGELICALISM DIVIDED*, (The Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburgh, 2000).

- You must learn how to approach the scriptures--to ask the right questions.

As Roger Ellsworth shows us, we must learn to look at the context of a passage within a framework of overriding biblical themes, especially redemption. (For that reason, he rejects any brand of Dispensationalism because he sees Christ and redemption in each passage and does not restrict Christ to the prophets or the New Testament.) Ernest Reisinger also learned to ask the right questions: What is the theme? What are the foundational principles? How do I apply them? Where is the majesty of God and the glory of redemption in this passage? Where is the "But, God?" It is all about thinking, using the mind as both men learned from Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

This does not mean you have to be a genius or a theologian. But, suppose your class of four year olds is studying Samuel. You should communicate something of the grandeur of God when telling of His calling to the little boy. And what about lessons of providence in those passages? Doesn't a four year old need to hear that God is the same today and will take care of him with that same compassion and care? Hannah certainly knew about the hope found in "But, God..." She was distraught, but God intervened and gave her children out of His mere kindness and His plan for His people. Think how excited a four year old boy would be to learn about the sacrifices Samuel witnessed daily. They would love to pretend being the priest or killing the lambs or bulls. Then you can tell them how death and blood pictured salvation secured through the blood of Christ (if you have maintained control of your class!). Cute songs are good teaching tools, but even a child can see his need of a Savior if you have asked the right questions as you prepared the lesson.

- Exposition of a passage is not enough if it does not lead to understanding foundational principles.

This is the great contribution of Martyn Lloyd-Jones. He is credited by many for the return of expositional preaching. He always searched the passage for foundational principles. That meant the context was never isolated from the Bible's themes. He might teach verse by verse but the meaning of each verse was always within the framework of those themes of sovereignty, sin, salvation, redemption, judgment, or grace. You must train yourself to think like this. Read his sermons and watch for it. You will soon find yourself seeing those principles. For instance, suppose you are teaching the first few chapters of I Samuel to fourteen year old girls. Instead of using it as a psychology lesson on getting comforted whether you are barren, pregnant, or recovering from an abortion, you could show how Hannah's comfort and joy came from seeing the holiness and justice of God combined with His compassion and concern for His people (I Samuel: 2-10). Simply covering those verses in detail, defining words, explaining Israel's history, without their coming away understanding something of the holiness, justice, and compassion of God leaves them clamoring for psychology and a quick comfort. No true spirituality results without those first principles about God being communicated. William Jay would encourage you to cross reference verses to explain the principle, such as Psalm 75:1, 9-10, or use examples from other biblical characters who shared this kind of providence. Perhaps you have a life experience you can share that illustrates all of this--a time when you learned about God's compassion and concern?

- Practical application of first principles to the lives of your hearers must include:
  - a) Pointed, direct exposure of the sin they are into--both attitudes and

actions. You can not pull punches here or cloak it in language from another era. Say it like it is. William Jay's devotions do this warmly, affectionately, but clearly. And remember Ernie Reisinger's warnings not to lash out or be inconsiderate or a know-it-all. Those fourteen year old girls today need to be confronted with sexual sin blocking their peace with God. Without vulgarity, you need to say that, but it would be inconsiderate to slip into gossip or reveal confidences. Application requires you to know the times, as Lloyd-Jones was prone to point out. A teacher must get his/her head out of the sand.

- b) Use the Ten Commandments as the standard of how to please God. The Reformed interpretation of scripture still holds to the ultimate unity of the Old and New Testaments. How else did Jesus fulfill the law and the prophets? Ernie Reisinger's books, LORD AND CHRIST, and WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, will help you with this. Make sure those young married's in their late twenties know what "Do not commit adultery" means. Use the Confessions and the Catechisms. Use cross referenced scriptures. Apply it to the temptation of the internet. You are working for real spiritual experiences like repentance and praise. William Jay spells it out for us: this is to be done warmly and with affection. Ernest Reisinger epitomizes that kind of warm affection in his personal relationships with those who listened to him. He urged pastors to be specific about exposing sin from the pulpit. He did not hesitate to pose a question to me that required self-examination, but I never questioned his genuine care for me because he always welcomed my call even though he was busy and guarded his time.
- Rely on the Holy Spirit to convict, warm hearts, and promote spirituality. This is a big part of all of these men's ministries. It keeps you humble because it is not *your* work. It works against discouragement because you are forced to acknowledge your

limitations. It prompts you to pray, pray, pray.

- Exalt God by extolling His characteristics. Look at the passage and ask, "What does this show about God?" Is it His sovereignty, mercy, justice, self sufficiency? Glory in His love for sinners, contrast His mercy with their sin. Talk about His sovereign actions in salvation. Do the same thing as with first principles: use cross referenced Bible verses to explain and illustrate. From Matthew Henry to Roger Ellsworth, each man holds up the majesty of God to stimulate our affections and warm our heart and promote love for our Savior and reverence for a holy, sovereign, merciful God. It takes balance here. For instance, do not just talk about love and leave out justice and holiness.
- Back up your teaching with recommended reading, web sites, multiple ministries, songs and hymns, biographies, visual images, and illustrations, Confessions of Faith, etc. Charles Spurgeon hired men to distribute pamphlets and Bibles--to talk with people on their cottage steps. More than 600 Sunday School teachers spread across London on Sunday afternoons! Ernest Reisinger gave away books like crazy. Roger Ellsworth rises early to write Bible studies.
- Communicate carefully but with spontaneity, familiarity, and compassion. Be considerate. Do not impose your opinions on others. Do not let secondary issues hinder the gospel, don't lash out, using your doctrine as a whip--to beat people into line with your arbitrariness. But, don't compromise the truth or be whipped into line by someone else to teach something against your own conscience. It is not about pleasing others and keeping everyone happy with you. As you study these biographies, you will see this kind of approach to teaching time after time. When you find yourself being Hothead, Know-It-All, or Inconsiderate, jerk yourself

hard and pray for patience. You might need to read PILGRIM'S PROGRESS again.

- Your own pursuit of holiness, spiritual experiences, joy, and praise adorn the gospel. Remember how Martyn Lloyd-Jones said that at the end of his life that was what mattered the most. Knowing God himself was what it was all about. Studying and teaching others is just one route to that. Practicing spiritual disciplines yourself is essential. Read Don Whitney's books to help you know what disciplines you might need ([www.spiritualdisciplines.org](http://www.spiritualdisciplines.org)).
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- Follow the example of warm-hearted Calvinists in their sense of urgency for the salvation and comfort of those they influence. Picture Matthew Henry sitting at his desk in London, writing with a quill, urgently trying to finish his Commentary. Think of John Newton taking time to visit and pray for his niece when she "lost her mind." Remember William Jay's sixty years of ministry. Emulate Charles Spurgeon's defying custom when it interfered with evangelism. Copy Martyn Lloyd-Jones' fight of faith; secondary issues can be divisive. But know what is secondary. He did not consider any of the Doctrines of Grace a secondary issue--even limited atonement or total inability. Don't forget Ernest Reisinger's little neighbor telling his funeral attendees of his letting her swim in his pool. He was showing her he cared about her. Put on your gospel spectacles like Roger Ellsworth and see the gospel in the Psalms and Old Testament.
- "Grace, Grace, Marvelous Grace" must be your theme. Grace must undergird everything you do, understand, apply, experience. Avoid falling in the ditches of legalism and antinomianism by keeping your eyes on the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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If we do these things and abound, we might become

warm-hearted Calvinists ourselves. We might become known as "old evangelicals," even if we are "only" Sunday School teachers! It will not happen overnight but getting to know these men will help. God might choose to establish the work of our hands and the next generation might experience revival. In the end, our eyes will not be on the rewards in His hand or even on our new wedding garments but on our bridegroom's face. It will be all about our loving and enjoying God forever. As Anne Ross Cousin wrote in her hymn of 1857, *The Sands of Time are Sinking*,

"The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel's land!"

HONE YOUR SKILLS; CULTIVATE YOUR GIFTS, FOR THE  
GLORY OF GOD.

Oh, that God would rend the heavens and bring revival again! Perhaps it will be through warm-hearted Calvinists proclaiming the Word in the pulpit, in the home, in Sunday School and Vacation Bible Schools, in small home groups, in Christian school chapels, or in the public square via internet and google.