

The Parable of the Teeth

When was the last time you thanked God for your teeth? Like many blessings God has given us, it seems we only consider them when they give us problems. These cutters and grinders are the ingenious design of an all-wise Creator who knew we would need them. We also should be thankful for dentists and orthodontists who keep our teeth healthy. Their training and skills benefit us during routine checkups and in times of crisis.

Teeth can also teach us spiritual lessons if we take the time to chew on them. Like our teeth, our souls need regular attention to stay healthy. Instead of brushing, we need to spend daily time reading and ruminating on God's Word.

Another lesson we can learn from our choppers relates to sanctification, or becoming more like Jesus. While a few are blessed with perfectly aligned teeth, I developed a mouthful of chaos. Although it didn't interfere with my food consumption, it was quite noticeable and one preschooler once asked me, "What happened to your teeth?"

Later, after one of my lateral incisors broke off, an orthodontist helped organize my confusion with Invisalign. Over many months, transparent plastic molds gradually pushed and pulled my teeth into position. While the first set of liners was very close to my original mess, each succeeding pair incrementally moved things nearer to the goal.

Similarly, as we study God's Word, as we worship and serve God in a church body, and as we interact with other Christians, the Holy Spirit works gradually to bring us more in line with the ideal: Jesus. This is the sanctification process and although braces and other methods require several months to a few years to achieve attractive smiles, sanctification is a lifelong progression that is only complete when we enter heaven.

Although braces or aligners use gradual processes to bring teeth into the proper arrangement, they require time and discipline. So too, spiritual growth requires effort and we must be careful not to resist the Spirit's work.

We must cooperate with Him allowing Him to shape and form us to His liking despite the pain and discomfort such correction may cause.

In addition, we must be careful to avoid regression. In Philippians 3:16, Paul advises us to, “Live up to what we have already attained.” Some who benefit from a skilled orthodontist fail to wear their retainers after treatment and their teeth gradually slip out of alignment. And some who get saved and transformed by the Holy Spirit steadily slide back into old sinful habits. Weekly church attendance and accountability through a small group combined with daily devotions and a vital prayer life can all serve as spiritual retainers. They take time and effort, but the benefits are well worth it.

As you eat your next meal, thank God for the teeth He’s put in your mouth (or the dentures that have replaced them), and consider the parable of the teeth for your spiritual well-being.

Submitted by George Bowers

Weekly Prayer Points

During the month of **April** the chilly winds of winter fade and the long nights give way to longer days. It is also a time when we begin to think of and make preparations for planting. There is a process that is followed that takes us from tilling the soil to harvest.

The ground has been turned --- the seed has been planted --- and appropriate fertilizer has been applied --- our seed, now plants growing and prayerfully thriving. WE patiently await the harvest. Of course, the harvest, however plentiful itself is not our responsibility—only the sowing. Our task is to sow the Spirit’s seed. It is always God who produces the harvest.

*“Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and then comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! **36** And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. **37** For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’ **38** I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.” (John 4:35 – 38 NKJV).*

Let us be purposeful in being, faithful, unashamed bearing witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and totally abdicated the throne of our hearts to Jesus our Sovereign King!!

Pray that in all that we do or say, others may see Jesus!

Please pray for these congregations and pastors:

- Capon Chapel Congregation in Points, WV and Pastor Chris Leatherman
- Castañer Congregation in Castañer, Puerto Rico and Pastor Jaime Diaz

CBC Prayer Committee