VOLUME TEN

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

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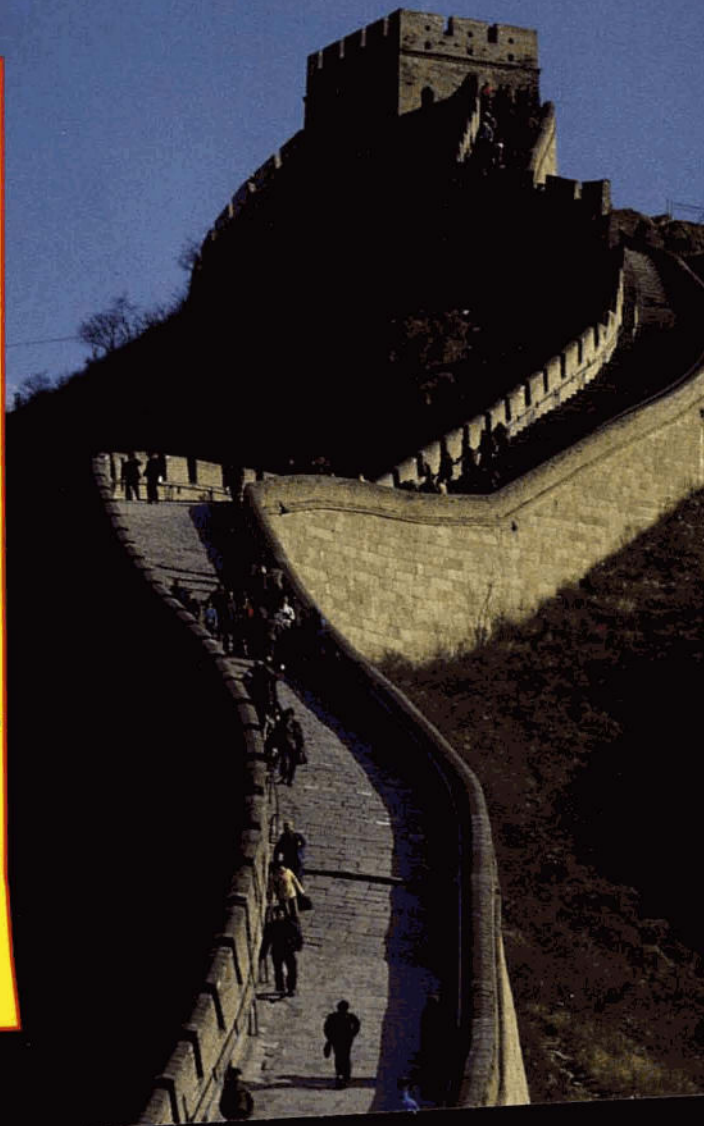

Delicate, Fragile Treasures

Have you seen them?
Those fragile,
minutely designed,
exquisitely colored,
flowers
God created?

Some are so tiny,
so thin of fabric,
so easy to be broken,
If I had made such fragility
I would have built around them
thick glass cases,
Protecting them day and night
From nature's harsh
and careless touch.

But God had different thoughts:
He planted treasures
— Delicate, fragile treasures —
In the desert's heat
and barrenness,
In the tundra's cold
and wasted wilds,
In the jungle's wet
and monstrous growth,

And everywhere
God's jewels
survive
and thrive,
and seem doubly,
triply,
precious
because they live
where fragile gems should never grow,
And in those wild and barren soils
They speak of God.

— Betty Burton Choate

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL

A WORD . . .

Parents often make the mistake of thinking that the work they are doing with their "minors" is also minor, that nothing counts much until the children are all grown up; but it is a rock-hard fact that they are *becoming* what we are talking, training, and living before them *now*, while they are still moldable material: ***Parents are in the process of rearing adults.***

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THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST SALUTE YOU (ROMANS 16:16).

WE FOLLOW CHRIST

J. C. CHOATE
EDITOR - IN - CHIEF

Today's religious world is more confused than ever. There are not only all kinds of religions, churches, and cults, but added to this is fanaticism, liberalism, and materialism. To many who consider only the surface, it seems impossible to sift through the doctrines and to determine which is true and which is false. No wonder so many give up and become unbelievers.

Most overlook the fact that we can bypass all of this confusion by going directly to the Bible to learn the real and genuine truth of God. Why listen to man, and blindly read his writings, when we can hear the Lord Himself speak through his word?

In the Scriptures God has revealed His will for one and all. It is a pattern, a set of blue prints, instructing us in all things pertaining to life and godliness. The Bible is so simple and to the point that any person can understand and follow its teachings, if he is only seeking to do God's will.

Those who go to that inspired Book will learn the beautiful truths of creation and how God has dealt with man through history. The story continues with the virgin birth of Christ who lived among men, died on the cross for the sins of the world, and arose from the grave as a resurrected Lord. The careful reader will learn of the gospel of Christ, the good news of salvation, the church that Jesus built, the kind of worship the Lord wants, the life the Christian must live, and the reward of eternal life in heaven for those who are faithful.

Why wade through all the filth, rubbish, false teachings, philosophies, and propaganda of yesterday and today when it is possible to bypass that in favor of God's word, the truth, and the one and only way that leads to heaven?

But don't all religions claim to be 'truth'? Perhaps they would make that claim, but their teachings are not supported by God's word. There is only ONE book of God, ONE truth, ONE Lord, ONE faith, ONE church, ONE gospel, ONE name, ONE worship, and ONE way. These did not originate with me, or you, or any man. It is the one and only divine way, given by God for all to follow. Whether we travel *that* way will depend on *who* we decide to follow.

As Christians we accept Christ without reservation as the Son of God, the resurrected Lord, as our Lord and Master, our Saviour who reigns in heaven as King of kings and Lord of lords, having all power and authority in heaven and earth. Because we accept Him as such, we believe in Him, in His words and His promises. We believe that one day He will return to receive us unto Himself so that where He is we will be and will abide with Him forever.

Christians choose not to reverence any man or school, or to succumb to any movement, but to follow Christ only. We are pledged not to accept any book but the Bible, not to be a member of any church but the one which belongs to the Lord, not to wear any name but the name of Christ, not to bow in worship to anyone else or anything else but the Lord, and not to live any life but the faithful Christian life.

How can anyone improve on that choice? What would be better or more rewarding?

But is this idealism possible? Certainly it is. The Christian life, as taught in the New Testament, is simple and to the point. Why? Because the Lord wants us to be saved, not burdened down with misunderstanding and confusion, wondering what His will really is.

This is our plea to all people around the world. By accepting and following the Lord only, we will be united since the Lord Himself prayed, *"that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.*

"And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one:

"I in them and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me" (John 17:21-23). ✝

TRUTH HAS NO VOICE OF ITS OWN

Byron Nichols
Managing Editor

There is great value in truth. Surely truth is one of the greatest commodities in the world. Truth is so very important that Jesus identified Himself as the personification of it. The Lord said in John 14:6, *"I am the way, and **the truth**, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me."* Solomon's wisdom led him to recognize the value of truth. He admonished, *"Buy the truth, and sell it not . . . ."* (Proverbs 23:23). In spite of its remarkable value, truth becomes of no effect if it is not made known. Truth cannot speak for itself, it cannot speak in its own behalf, it cannot tell what it wants said, it cannot make itself known — it is dependent upon us to do these things for it.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Notice that Jesus here said that freedom results from truth. Freedom is exceedingly important to every person in the whole world; thus truth is of the greatest importance.

The church has been charged with the responsibility of

revealing the truth to others. Jesus commissioned us to preach the Gospel (the Truth) to the whole creation, making disciples and baptizing people in all nations (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16). Jesus implored the Father in behalf of His disciples, *"Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth"* (John 17:17). If people are to be sanctified by the truth, God's Word, they must become aware of the truth. The truth must be given a voice, and Christians are that voice.

In Ephesians 1:13 Paul calls that word of truth *"the gospel of your salvation."* Without having heard the word of truth those Ephesian Christians would not have had an opportunity for salvation. Christians are Christians because they have learned and obeyed the truth. Those who are not Christians are not Christians because they either have not had the truth made known to them, or they have rejected the truth.

David declared that he had not selfishly hidden God's truth, but he had made that truth known (Psalm 40:7-10). Can we, as God's children today, do anything less than that? Dare we allow God's truth to lie silently hidden in our church buildings, or even in our hearts, while the world plunges headlong into eternity without a saving knowledge of that truth? We **must** become truth's voice.

There is a growing number of people who believe that there is no such thing as truth that is absolute and unchanging. It is bewildering to think that such could possibly be the case, but there are even folks within the church who have yielded to this erroneous thinking. It is astounding to think that anyone who says he believes in God and believes the Bible could also believe that truth changes, that we really cannot **know** anything. The reason that this is so astounding is the fact that the Bible uses the word "know" and its related word forms literally hundreds of times. If

truth is not absolute, if we cannot really know anything, surely we must totally reject the Bible, because it continually affirms that we can know many things, and that truth is absolute and unchanging.

Christians must stand for truth. We must be the voice of truth. We must be willing to live up to our commitment to stand with Jesus. Remember, He said that we are either **for** Him or **against** Him (Matthew 12:30). Someone has said, "He who stands for nothing will fall for anything." Surely that statement has some validity. It is our responsibility to stand with and for Jesus and truth.

While it is true that every Christian is required to stand for and speak up for truth, this is especially so in the case of those who serve as elders in the church. God's people are facing greater struggles today than ever before in the entire lifetime of nearly all in the church. Please understand very clearly — the situation is not hopeless. However, the welfare of the church depends largely upon those who are the elders, bishops, pastors, overseers. God's inspired Word has charged each of these men with the responsibility of *"holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convict those who contradict"* (Titus 1:9). Elders, please lead us by your example in standing for truth and against error. Please lead us in being the voice of truth. Please also lead us in doing these things *"in love"* (Ephesians 4:15).

As great as truth is, *it cannot speak for itself.* Truth can save, *but only if it is proclaimed by people.* As God's children, we possess tremendous power — we possess the truth of God. However, we can diminish the power of the truth by not sharing it and declaring it. What a tragedy it will be if we do not become *the voice* of truth so that souls for whom Christ died can be saved! ✞

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How Important Is This Magazine?

Never has the need for knowing and defending the truth been greater than in our present age. Atheism, humanism, paganism, and ignorance are on the rise, gaining new strength.

It is imperative that the Lord's people equip themselves with a thorough knowledge of His word, to protect themselves and their families from being led into error. That is one of the primary purposes of this magazine.

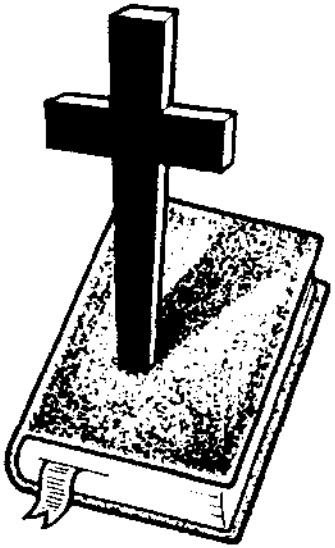
The second great purpose for *The Voice of Truth International* is that it may be used as an evangelistic tool for churches of Christ throughout the world. "Study to teach" should be our watchword. God help us to have a conscience for souls.

JCC

I AM ONE OF THE FAMILY.

It was my Brother who died,
My dearest
Sweetest
Most precious Brother,
And today
Those of us who love Him
Are having a remembrance,
A memorial
For Him.
He is worthy
Of being honored,
And I sing in happiness
Looking forward
To the time of tribute.
Some of us
Are doubly blessed today:
Ours is the privilege
Of special service
In this remembrance.
My part?
The sweetest one of all:
They have allowed me
– me! –
To prepare the Supper of His body,
And I have made the bread
With loving hands,
And into vessels sparkling clean
I've poured the wine,
The emblem of His blood.
I
– I –
Could do this special service
For my Brother
So the world will not forget
He lived and died
And lives again
For me . . .
for all of us!

– Betty Burton Choate
from *A World Apart*



In Defense of Jesus

Bill Nicks

We are told to be *"ready to give an answer* (apology, defense) *for the hope that is in us, yet with meekness and fear"* (1 Peter 3:15). Paul was *"set for the defense* (same word) *of the gospel"* (Philippians 1:17). There are three charges made against Jesus, based on John 2, which need replies: (1) that He was rude to His mother; (2) that He was an ascetic; and (3) that He encouraged social drinking.

(1) At the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, His mother said to Him, *"They have no wine"* (John 2:3). In reply, Jesus said, *"Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come."* The word "woman" as used in Matthew 15:28; Luke 22:57; and John 19:26 "is by no means disrespectful, but there is no satisfactory English equivalent for it" (**Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament**, by Gingrich). Gingrich says it "is best to omit the word in translation." However, most translators use the word "woman" in the sense of any adult female. This is not disrespectful when we use it in the sense of "lady." When Jesus was on the cross, He addressed His mother, *"Woman, behold thy son; son, behold thy mother."* The same word is used, and He was showing utmost concern for the welfare of His mother after His death.

(2) One definition of an ascetic is one who lives as a monk, or a hermit. Jesus certainly did not live that kind of life, but showed us what it means to be the *"salt of the earth and the light of the world"* by living among men and influencing them with His life and His teaching. He encouraged marriage by attending this wedding feast in Cana; thus, as God, He was in the home circle, glorifying the ordinary life of humans. He joined in the festivities, drank wine, and was not opposed to showing joy at the proper time.

(3) Jesus is often charged with encouraging social drinking of alcoholic beverages. Did He change the water into between 108 and 162 gallons of liquor for this feast? The very thought is ridiculous! The word for wine ("oinos") has a good and bad use. The good use: wine was nutritious, and when mixed with water, was non-alcoholic. It represented prosperity, as *"wine in the cluster"* (Isaiah 65:8). Its bad use is typified by the many warnings against drunkenness, as in Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35; and Ephesians 5:18. We conclude that the *"good wine,"* as the governor of the feast called it, was non-alcoholic. Would the Prohibitor oppose His own teaching, and encourage that which would lead men to drunkenness?

Bill Nicks is a former missionary to Africa and is now serving on the island of Trinidad in the West Indies.

You Cannot Say "I"

You cannot say the Lord's prayer
And even once say "I,"
You cannot pray the Lord's prayer
And even once say "My,"
Nor can you pray the Lord's prayer
And not pray for one another;
For when you ask for daily bread
You must include your brother,
For others are included in each and every plea,
From beginning to the end of it
It does not once say "Me!"

– Anonymous

Forgiveness In Christ

Hans J. Dederscheck

Forgiveness is to be defined as "to remit, to cancel, or a remission of a debt" (Psalm 32:1; Matthew 9:2; Luke 7:48). As we talk about remission of sins and forgiveness we also need to refer to the expression of *"not to impute"* (Numbers 12:11).

Thus, forgiveness is seen as the act of the Lord which puts an end to the unhappy situation created through the transgression of God's laws by disobedient men, a situation that is offensive to God Almighty and which is grievous to man. Sin destroys the real relationship between a holy God and man. Man, as such, cannot do much to obtain the forgiveness of sins. Here it is God who acts in full sovereignty. In His mercy and longsuffering He refuses to execute a judgment which is deserved, and He grants man a reprieve.

In the New Testament, emphasis is placed on the unmerited character of forgiveness. Matthew 18:23-35 gives us an excellent example of God's forgiveness of sins. Sinful human beings are unable to rehabilitate themselves before God. Man cannot save himself. *"And they were astonished out of measure, saying among themselves, 'Who then can be saved?' And Jesus looking upon them said, 'With men it is impossible, but not with God: for with God all things are possible'"* (Mark 10:26,27).

God loves man and wants to forgive him his transgressions if he fulfills the conditions to obtain the forgiveness of sin through God's grace. *"Thy sins are forgiven"* (Mark 2:5). The forgiveness of sins is the good news to men as a free gift from God if man accepts the conditions God granted: faith, repentance, confession of faith, and baptism in water (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1-10). God is looking forward to seeing man return to the fatherly home (Luke 15:11-32). God's compassion makes it possible for man to return to God even though he is an unworthy creature. His return to the paternal home and to life makes it possible for fallen man to be restored.

Forgiveness of sins and restoration of life would be impossible without Jesus Christ, the Son of

God. Only Christ has the power to forgive sins. The death of Christ is presented as a redemptive act which makes possible the remission of sins. Jesus said: *"For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many"* (Mark 10:45). Only Jesus Christ can restore a spiritual life through His forgiveness of sins. Thanks to Him, every sin will be forgiven, except the sin against the Holy Spirit.

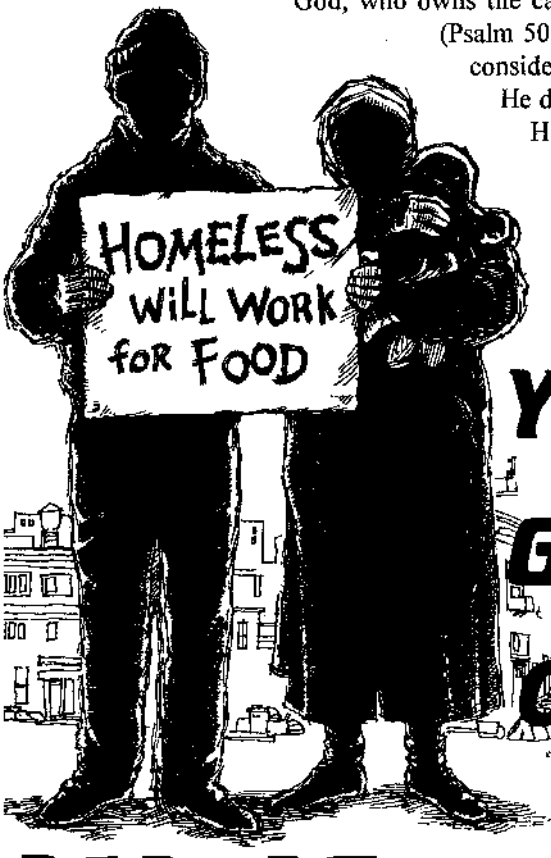
As we look upon the church of the Christ, we will see that the forgiveness of sins is related to Christ and the Christian life. This grace is specially significant in baptism. *"Then Peter said unto them, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost'"* (Acts 2:38). *"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations . . . ."* (Luke 24:47). Paul said: *"Therefore we are buried with him* (Jesus Christ) *by baptism into death . . . knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin"* (Romans 6:1-10).

It is a must for Christians to forgive the sins of those who offend them. The real atmosphere of a Christian community is that of a permanent forgiveness of sins. It is impossible to please God without forgiving others their transgressions (Matthew 6:12-14; 18:21-35; Mark 11:25). *"And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses."*

There is no way to live with God's forgiveness without forgiving the sins of our fellow men. Thus for the church of Christ forgiveness does not concern only the things of the past. It is the living action of God which man knows in forgiveness and which unceasingly opens the future to him.

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:14). *"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace"* (Ephesians 1:7). As God in Christ forgave our sins, so it is a must to forgive the sins of our fellowmen. It is impossible to imagine a Christian community without a permanent forgiveness of sin from all our heart. ✞

Hans J. Dederscheck is an evangelist in Vienna, Austria.



Is Your God On Welfare?

W.T. Allison

God, who owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10), does not need to be considered an object of charity. He does not want to be pitied. He does not need to be pampered or humored. He is well able to sustain His plans and maintain His purposes without earthlings offering Him little deeds of benevolence.

What does God want and what does He deserve? It is the complete commitment of each of His children. He needs our fullest love, deepest affection, and most sincere dedication. He wants us to live for Him twenty-four hours a day for all the days of our lives. But as for occasional donations to flatter His pride, or some gift to appease His wrath, He can get along fine without them.

Yet, it is surprising how many people think that God needs charity, or that He seeks the "left-overs" and the "hand-me-downs," or that He should

be satisfied with a token of our time, money, love, and energy — just the "souvenirs" of our lives.

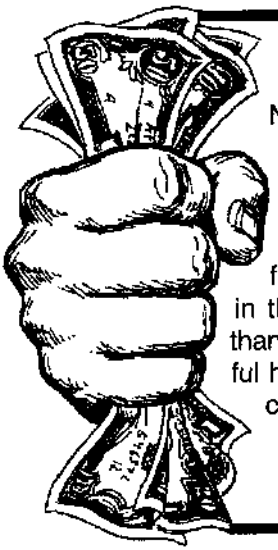
Some feel that after they have made their contribution on Sunday, or visited some sick person, or taught a Bible class that they have "done their good deed for the week." They have given to a "needy one" and now the conscience may be at rest until the next divine emergency arises.

In the meantime, everything belongs to us. Time is ours to use as we might see fit. Money is ours to spend as we desire. The body belongs to us and we can use it as we please.

How different is the "GOD ON RELIEF" from the God of the heart! To the real Christian pure religion does not consist of almsgiving, but of complete, total, and full commitment to Him. The true believer seeks Him with the whole heart. The life he lives in Christ has slain selfishness and his life is *". . . hid with Christ in God"* (Colossians 3:3). He loves the Lord with *". . . all the heart, soul, mind, and strength"* (Mark 12:30). His whole life is spent is preparing himself and performing greater service to Christ.

What kind of God do you serve? Is your God on "welfare," or does He reign in your heart? Does He get a mere token obedience, or a full commitment? Is He an object of charity, or the Master of your life? ✞

W. T. Allison is the preacher for the Creekwood Church of Christ in Mobile, Alabama, U. S. A.



Is Christianity free?

NO. It cost God the ultimate gift of His Son. He will accept no token gift from us — nothing less than our *". . . bodies a living sacrifice . . . ."* A token in money or time or talents or other possessions will not be accepted either. If we follow the rule in force since the earliest record in the Scriptures, we will not dare to give less than one-tenth — and then our joyous and thankful hearts will look carefully to see what more we can give.

— Betty Burton Choate
from "Christianity — Is It Free?"

What Is God Like?

Willard Collins

The Bible declares the existence of God in its first verse, which states, *"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"* (Genesis 1:1).

The human mind cannot fully comprehend the meaning of God. The best picture man has of the Creator is in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, who said, *"He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"* (John 14:9).

God Sees In Secret

The Almighty is able to see in secret, according to Christ. In describing an acceptable manner of prayer, the Lord told the disciples to *"enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and the Father who seeth in secret shall recompense thee"* (Matthew 6:6).

David recognized the omnipresence of God, because he wrote: *"If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in Sheol, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shalt thy hand lead me"* (Psalm 139:8-10).

There is the story of the very poor father who took his little son with him to steal some corn. As the man prepared to put the corn in the bag, he looked around to see if anyone was watching. The little boy replied, "Daddy, you didn't look in one direction." Frightened lest the boy had seen someone, the father asked, "Where? Where?" The son answered, "Daddy, you didn't look up." The father dropped the bag, and taking the little boy by the hand, returned home without the corn.

Men may hide their sins from each other, but God sees and knows everything. There are eyes above which watch our conduct.

God Makes Heaven Possible

In describing the judgment to come, the Lord revealed Jehovah as the one who makes heaven possible. The saved in that day of decision

will receive the message, ". . . *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world"* (Matthew 25:34).

A seventy-five year old friend of mine told me recently that she was just waiting to live in a happier existence. This lady has been submissive to God for fifty-six years, and she is happy because of her hope in the future. Heaven seems nearer to her now than it did fifty years ago.

I read a story of a ship which was being tossed about by the winds and waves of the sea. Passengers were frantic; that is, all but one little girl who sat calmly in her cabin. Another passenger asked her, "Why are you not frightened?" The child replied, "Because my daddy is captain of the ship."

Christ, the captain, can lead man to heaven, the existence made possible by God for His children.

God The Father

Jesus and Paul referred to God as the Father. There are one hundred sixty-one instances recorded in the New Testament in which Christ referred to God as Father. Paul wrote to the members of the church in Corinth, *"Yet to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things . . ."* (1 Corinthians 8:6).

The late W. L. Oliphant told a story of a young father who lost his wife in death. He was left to be both mother and father to a little girl.

After the funeral the father and young daughter returned home. That night he took his baby girl to her room and tucked her into bed, turned out the light, and requested that she go to sleep. Through her tears she said, "Daddy, it is so dark. I am afraid. I can't go to sleep."

The child continued to cry until late in the night. Finally, in an effort to be brave, she asked, "Daddy, will you stay with me all through the night?" "Yes, dear," replied the heartbroken father, "I will stay with you." "All right, Daddy," said the little one. "It's so dark I can't see you, but I know you are here in the room and will stay with me, because you are my father and because you promised not to leave me, so I can stop crying and go to sleep."

The young man knelt beside his baby's bed and said, "Yes, God, it is dark — so dark I cannot see You, but I know You will stay with me, because You are my Father and because You promised not to leave me. So, I too, will stop crying and go to sleep."

The Christian can find great comfort in the realization that the God of the universe is his Father, and that he can talk to such a God in prayer. ✝

Willard Collins is President-Emeritus of David Lipscomb University in Nashville, Tennessee, U. S. A.

I Stand Amazed

Michael L. King

It has been observed by a gentleman named Thompson that time is "the narrow vale between the mountain peaks of two eternities." Creation is that moment in which eternity touched upon time. The thought has been advanced that the advent of Jesus is another occasion when eternity invaded time. Eternity is not time stretched out, but rather, timelessness.

God is infinite and is regulated by no boundaries other than by His own immutable nature, for *"he is the same yesterday, today, and for ever"* (Hebrews 13:8). God is not concerned about time, for "He transcends all the limitations of time" (Conner); therefore, it is not difficult to accept the fact that with God *"one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day"* (2 Peter 3:8). God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit are eternal beings represented by the "mountain peaks" aforementioned. Humanity is plagued by limitations, living in the "narrow vale," being valley people. We here see the infinite contrasted with the finite. The infinite has no limitations regarding time, power, knowledge, presence, etc. We speak of the "omni-attributes" of God — all-powerful, all-knowing, and present everywhere. But man, on the other hand, is finite and burdened with limitations. Paul spoke of the *"bounds of our habitation"* being determined by God

(Acts 17:26). There are limits beyond which we cannot reach and abilities we cannot achieve — *"With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible"* (Matthew 19:26). In this passage, Jesus was refering to salvation.

Moses called Him the *"eternal God"* (Deuteronomy 33:27), Isaiah declared that He is the *"everlasting God"* (Isaiah 40:28), and Jeremiah said that He was the *"everlasting King"* (Jeremiah 10:10). John revealed that God was the creator of all things (John 1:1-3), and David says that He is from *"everlasting to everlasting"* (Psalm 90:2).

Christ left the "mountain peak" to visit the "narrow vale" to help the "valley people" in making the transition from finite and temporal to infinite and eternal. Paul taught that a change would occur because of the visit that Jesus made to the earth (Philippians 3:20,21; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58). The purpose, according to John, for Jesus' coming to the earth was to convey God's love in the form of a sacrifice, that finite man might become "everlasting," which is another way of saying, "to share the infinite" where time and limitations are removed and man conquers time and the grave to become a "mountain peak" person like those of the godhead!

Why should the Christian have problems seeing himself/herself as being able to *"do all things through Christ who strengthens me"* (Philippians 4:13), or that *"we are more than conquerors through him that loved us"* (Romans 8:37), and that we are to be thankful to God *"which giveth us victory through the Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Corinthians 15:57)? We have an infinite God, limitless in every way, guiding, empowering us to salvation (Romans 1:16) and enabling us to overcome every obstacle, even the fearfulness of death and the grave. Our primary fear should be what the devil can do to us (1 Peter 5:8) to negate the privileges through the hope of becoming eternal and in the resurrection, being raised to *"eternal life"* as opposed to *"eternal destruction"* (John 5:28,29).

May our lifelong ambition while here in this "narrow vale" be *"to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth. For ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory"* (Colossians 3:1-4).

Do you not find this **amazing**? ⇧

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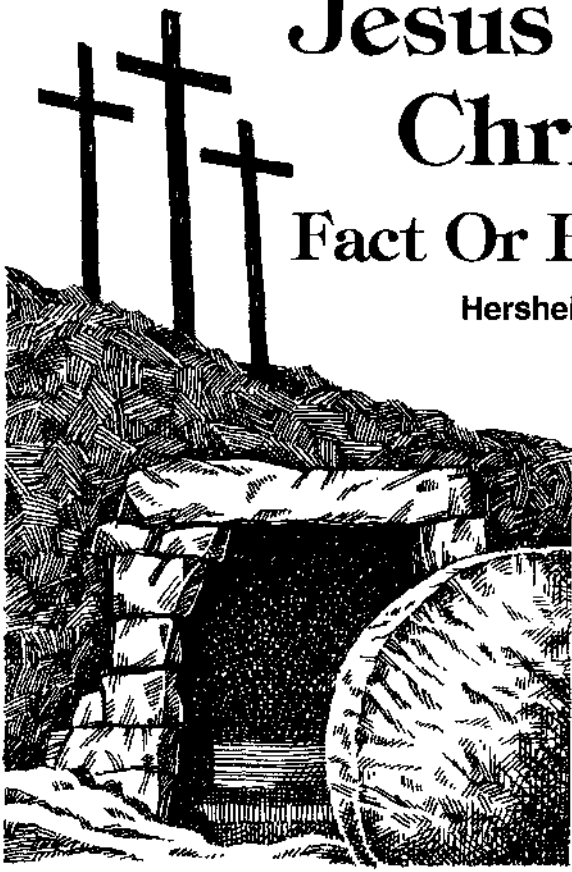
Jesus Christ: Fact Or Fantasy?

Hershel Dyer



There are few persons in the world whose lives, directly or indirectly, have not been influenced by Jesus Christ. Yet, unknown millions of these are unwilling to grant that He is the Son of God. Moslems are willing to concede that He was a prophet, religious liberals will say that He was a good man, but these refuse to acknowledge His divinity.

This raises the question: What shall we do with the Christ who is set forth in the four Gospel records? He is therein revealed to be the Son of God descended from heaven and who afterward ascended back to heaven where He now lives and reigns.

Is it reasonable to suppose that these writers, devoid of scholastic attainments, would or even could invent a Christ they did not comprehend? Imagine Peter contriving that incident where he boasted so vainly that he would never deny the Lord, then relating how he cowardly denied Him with cursing and swearing, even saying that he did not know Jesus! If Peter, as

an imposter, wanted to convince anybody that Jesus was the Son of God, a confession that he reputedly had made more than once, why would he then relate how he so completely disavowed that faith? And, remember, it is recorded of all the apostles that they *"forsook Him and fled"* (Matthew 26:56).

The ring of truth and honesty is heard in all they wrote. If men had conspired in their thinking and efforts to invent such a divine character for human belief, surely they would have revealed themselves as His unswerving, indefatigable followers. The fact that they show themselves faltering and weak in their faith gives a greatly increased credibility to their accounts.

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Though the cross did make salvation possible, it presents some of the most startling paradoxes known to man.

It was the most tragic event in history . . .
Yet it was the most wonderful thing that ever happened.
It was the saddest spectacle mankind ever beheld . . .
Yet by it came the greatest joy.
The old rugged cross was Satan's greatest victory . . .
Yet by the cross Satan suffered his most stunning defeat.
The cross was the greatest exhibition of Divine justice . . .
Yet it was the most wonderful demonstration of Divine mercy.
It was through the cross that God condemned sin . . .
Yet by it He forgave the sinner.
The cross stands for God's hatred of sin . . .
Yet it was the greatest proof of His love for the sinner.
The cross was mankind's darkest hour . . .
Yet it was the greatest of all lights.
On that day the sun, the S U N, refused to shine at midday . . .
But on that day the son, the S O N, became the light of the world.

— via Etowah, TN, *Herald The Family*

Christianity Is True Because the Early Disciples of All Cultures Were Religiously United

Roger E. Dickson

In the book of Acts Luke gives one of the strongest arguments that can be launched against man-made religions. If religions are man-made, then any man that comes along can add to the teaching, and thus, cause division among the followers. If the followers of any particular religion cannot find divine authority for the teachings of the religion, then they will divide over the pronouncements of great teachers of that religion.

Any religion that is closely linked to any particular culture is subject to isolation and division. Its own cultural orientation makes world propagation very difficult. Man-made religions are often tied to the culture from which

they spring. Because they are culturally linked, it is most difficult for such religions to be propagated to other cultures.

The problem also arises with the culture from which a particular religion may have arisen. If the culture changes — and all cultures do change with time — the religion is often divided from within because of struggles between conservatives and liberals within the religion and culture. Luke argues that Christianity is above the culture of man. And by being above the culture of man, it is applicable to all cultures of the world. This is a most convincing argument to prove that Christianity is the revelation of the one God of heaven who is the Father of all humanity.

Luke seeks to prove that Christianity is a God-revealed religion simply because the foundation principles of Christianity were based upon the simplicity of one gospel message and the few fundamental beliefs which Christians must maintain in order to be saved. That one gospel message, he affirms, originated from God, and not man.

The Disciples Preached One Gospel

The central message of the disciples was the coming of Jesus to die for man's sins, His burial, resurrection to give hope, and reign over all things at the right hand of God. Men must obey this Gospel by immersion into the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2:38; 8:12,38; 10:47,48; 16:15,33; 18:8; 19:5; 22:16). Jesus is also coming again and will judge the world (Acts 17:30,31). Because Jesus is coming again to judge all, men must maintain a moral life of integrity and righteous living (Acts 24:25).

The message of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus permeates the preaching of the disciples. Luke records several major sermons which include these central events of the Gospel. Peter preached the death, burial, and resurrection on Pentecost (Acts 2:22-32). He preached the same in the temple (Acts 3:14,15). Peter and John preached this good news to the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:10). The apostles preached the same message every day in the temple and from house to house (Acts 5:42). The disciples' belief in and preaching of the Gospel united them in their outreach to the world.

The Disciples Preached Jesus As Messiah

Luke centers his defense for Christians on the basis that they believed Jesus fulfilled Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah. The apostles preached *"Jesus as the Christ"* (Acts 5:42). Paul preached *"Jesus is the Christ"* (Acts 9:22; 17:3; 18:5). Apollos also preached that *"Jesus is the Christ"* (Acts 18:28). The disciples' stand on this belief united them

into one body of believers. They maintained their unity because they believed that this Jesus fulfilled all prophecies about the Messiah.

The Disciples Were Together And Expressed Unity On Fundamental Teachings

After Jesus had ascended, the apostles returned to Jerusalem. *"These all continued with **one accord** in prayer and supplication . . ."* (Acts 1:14). On the day of Pentecost *"they were all with **one accord** in one place"* (Acts 2:1). Those who were baptized *"continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship . . ."* (Acts 2:42). *"Now all who believed were **together**, and **had all things in common"*** (Acts 2:44). The *"multitude of those who believed were of **one heart and one soul . . ."*** (Acts 4:32). *"And they were all with **one accord** in Solomon's Porch"* (Acts 5:12). In Samaria, *"the multitudes with **one accord** heeded the things spoken by Philip"* (Acts 8:6). Luke's defense on this point is clear. The community of disciples throughout the Roman Empire were united as a group. The Christians came from many different cultures. However, they were united by one Gospel into one church.

When unconverted and legalistic Jews attempted to destroy the united fellowship of the disciples by binding Old Testament laws on the church, the church rose up as one to rid itself of this divisive influence. Thus in Jerusalem *"the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter"* (Acts 15:6). They made a decision to send a letter to the Gentile churches in order to inform them that those who went out from Jerusalem to bind circumcision on the Gentiles had received no such commandment (Acts 15:24). *"Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men"* to Antioch to deliver this letter (Acts 15:22). One of these men was Paul, who labored in agreement with all the disciples.

Luke has already written to Theophilus concerning fundamental moral teachings in the book of Luke. In Acts he is showing the difference between the unifying fundamentals of the church as opposed to the diversity of beliefs which are so characteristic of man-made religions.

Luke unceasingly delivers to all who would question the validity of Christianity the argument that the one church was unified in its struggle against Jewish persecution. The church was unified in its evangelistic outreach to the world. It was unified on the fundamental doctrines concerning salvation. ⇧

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LET THERE BE LIGHT

Wayne Jackson

On the first day of the creation week, God said, *"Let there be light"* (Genesis 1:3). For the very first time light existed. What is light? It is a form of energy that exists in "rays." God once asked Job, an ancient wise man, *"Where is the way to the dwelling of light?"* (Job 38:19). It is an amazing fact that light does exist in a "way" (a path), and it moves in a straight line. Light travels at the speed of over 186,000 miles per second (640 million miles per hour). It takes the sun's light more than eight minutes to come to earth (the sun is 93 million miles away).

Everything that God made was *"very good"* (Genesis 1:31), and that includes light. Light is good because without it we could not see the clouds, the birds, the green grass, or the words on this page. We see objects clearly or dimly, depending upon how many light rays fall upon them.

Light is good because without it plants could not grow and we would not have good vegetables to eat. Nor would we have meat to eat, for animals must eat plants in order to live. Light is good because it kills many germs which would be harmful to us if they grew as rapidly as they sometimes can in the dark. Doctors are even using light to perform surgery. Have you heard of laser surgery? How thankful we should be that God made light. ✝

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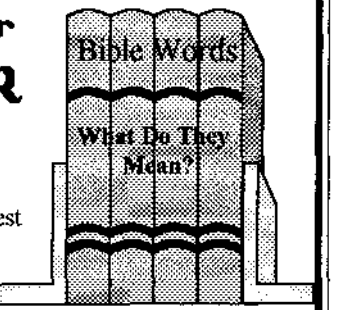
It Helps to Enrich Your

BIBLE WORD POWER



By Fenter Northern

Are you sure you are understanding the richest meaning of the Bible? Test your comprehension of the following words used in the context found in Matthew 23. After making your choices, turn the page for the correct answers.

1. **scribe** *n.*— A: an orator. B: a writer. C: a attendant. D: Temple official.
2. **pharisee** *n.*— A: separated. B: united. C: saved. D: sinner
3. **seat** *n.*— A: bottom. B: sofa. C: piece of furniture. D: rank of teacher; judge.
4. **phylacteries** *n.*— A: drugs. B: garments. C: safeguards or preservatives. D: utensils.
5. **synagogue** *n.*— A: an assembly of Jewish worshippers. B: a townhall. C: court. D: school.
6. **rabbi** *n.*— A: sir. B: my great one. C: teacher. D: preacher.
7. **abased** *v.*— A: promoted. B: selected. C: chastised. D: assigned to a lower rank.
8. **exalted** *v.*— A: cast out. B: to be included. C: raised to a summit of dignity.
9. **pretense** *n.*— A: yesterday's strain. B: part of speech. C: to negotiate. D: color.
10. **damnation** *n.*— A: a sentence of punishment. B: foul language. C: a hot place. D: to be rejected or ostracized.
11. **proselyte** *adj.*— A: a weary traveler. B: one who has learned a doctrine. C: a new convert to the Jewish faith.
12. **swear** *v.*— A: to utter curse words. B: to offer as a witness for one's word. C: to cross the fingers and hope to die. D: to raise your hand in a court of law.
13. **sanctifieth** *v.*— A: to separate from the profane and consecrate for holy use. B: to dance and sing. C: to speak in tongues. D: to be baptized.
14. **cummin** *n.*— A: to be travelling. B: a small seed of a garden plant. C: incense. D: a sacrifice.
15. **sepulchres** *n.*— A: a tomb or burial spot. B: a bier. C: whited stones. D: a cave.
16. **hypocrites** *n.*— A: sincere religious people. B: deacons. C: elders. D: an actor or pretender.
17. **woe** *interj.*— A: a command to stop. B: an exclamation of grief. C: pronounce a curse. D. weep loudly.

Answers to

"It helps to Enrich Your Bible Word Power"

1. **scribe**—(Gk. grammateus) A: to write; a copier of the law.
2. **Pharisee**—(Gk. pharisaios) A. separated. The Pharisees were extremely self-righteous and refused to have any dealings with sinners, while Jesus mingled with them and found them more open to his authority than the Pharisees.
3. **seat**—(Gk. kathedra) D: rank or teacher; judge. The scribes and Pharisees were highly respected instructors of the law of Moses. As members of the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish court, their views were considered final in religious legal matters.
4. **phylacteries**—(Gk. phulakterion) C: safeguards or preservatives. The Phari sees wore parchments on their sleeves and foreheads in pouches as preservatives against sin.
5. **synagogue**—(Gk. sunagogue) A: an assembly of Jewish worshippers. Synagogues had their origin during the Babylonian captivity. They were found in every major town by the time of Christ. They were centers for religious instruction.
6. **rabbi**—(Gk. rhabbi) B: my great one; my honorable sir. A title of respect for teachers of the law.
7. **abased**—(Gk. tapeinoo) D: assigned to a lowly rank. Because the Pharisees exalted themselves on the basis of observing external laws and ignored the spirit of the law, Jesus said they would be assigned to a lower rank.
8. **exalted**—(Gk. hupsoo) C: raised to a summit of dignity. Jesus said the blessing that came to the poor in spirit was entrance into the kingdom of God.
9. **pretense**—(Gk. colour) D: Color, therefore to color over or hide real motives; to be a hypocrite.
10. **damnation**—(Gk. krima) A: a sentence of punishment. Jesus warned that because the Pharisees were planning to murder him, as their fathers did the prophets, they were in danger of this judgment.
11. **proselyte**—(Gk. proselutos) C: a new convert to the Jewish faith.
12. **swear**—(Gk. omnuo) B: to offer as a witness for one's word. Jesus condemned their meaningless oaths saying that one's word was sufficient. (See Matt. 5:34-37).
13. **sanctifieth**—(Gk. hagiazo) A: to separate from the profane and consecrate for holy use.
14. **cummin**—(Gk. kuminon) B: a small seed of a garden plant. Cummin was a small bitter-sweet herb grown by the Jews. At harvest they gave a tithe of the seed to the Temple priests.
15. **sepulchres**—(Gk. tophos) A: a tomb or burial spot. Jesus accused the Pharisees of being like whited sepulchres, outwardly all clean and washed, but inwardly corrupt.
16. **hypocrites**—(Gk. hypocrites) D: an actor or pretender.
17. **woe**—(Gk. ouai) b: an exclamation of grief.

Vocabulary Scale

7—10 correct.....good
11—13 correct.....Bible Student
14—15 correct.....Bible Scholar

Love the Truth

E. Claude Gardner

Basic to translating truth into daily living is the acceptance of truth as absolute.

It is essential to believe that truth is the final authority in religious practices and in everyday religion. The truth is the expression of the divine will for mankind.

The truth is understandable, knowable, and available to us. No one can plead ignorance or confusion and assert that one cannot specifically know how to be saved, how to worship, and how to conduct oneself in order to go to heaven by God's grace.

In an age of acceptance of "relativism" and being "situational," we must be reminded that there are absolutes. Here are divine imperatives; Jesus used the strongest word possible — "must." He said, *"Ye **must** be born again"* (John 3:7). Again He commanded, *"God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him **must** worship Him in spirit and in truth"* (John 4:24).

Here are other "musts": Acts 4:12; 9:6; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Timothy 3:2; Hebrews 11:6.

Jesus, *"the truth"* (John 14:6), taught that truth can be known when He declared, *"And ye shall know the truth . . ."* (John 8:32). He also stated that if one wants to know, or has the desire to understand, he will know. *"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself"* (John 7:17).

Cornelius had the desire to know God's will, and he found it (see Acts 10:33). If the Word of God cannot be known or understood sufficiently for us to be saved, it is because the Godhead either could not or would not give the divine will clearly. Who can accept either of these extremes?

The Written Truth must not be ignored with the foggy notion that

we should follow the Living Word (Jesus). Actually the two are inseparable. To accept or reject Jesus is the same as accepting or rejecting the written truth. Our Lord warned, *"He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day"* (John 12:48).

The written Word is more than giving general guidelines. It is not merely a "love letter." Basic principles, illustrations, narratives, and commands abound in the Scriptures.

The God of truth (Deuteronomy 32:4), Christ the truth (John 14:6), and the Spirit of truth (John 14:17) endowed and inspired men to produce the Book of Truth (see 2 Peter 1:21). We must accept or reject the New Testament as the all-sufficient rule of faith and practice. It has clear commands to obey and examples to follow. From these we learn how to become a Christian, how to worship, and how to organize a congregation. To deny that religious authority is ascertained by direct commands, necessary inferences, and approved apostolic examples puts one into theological confusion.

It is of no value to encourage translating truth into life until we teach how to ascertain authority. After we are able to accept the New Testament as our divine creed, we then strive to bridge the gap between what the truth teaches and our personal practices. Belief of the truth without action and involvement in daily living is of no value. We should strive to get our "theory and practice" closer together, because it is important for us and also for others we may influence (see Matthew 5:16).

One's attitude toward the truth will determine the acceptance or rejection of it. This thought was eloquently presented by N. B. Hardeman in his sermon, "The Reception of Any Truth Depends Upon Our Attitude Toward It." He asked, ". . . what is your attitude tonight toward the Bible with reference to its being a book of *Absolute Authority*? Is the Bible just a book of general directions, outlining the general policy, with all details to be worked out by sanctified common sense, or is the Bible specific in those things that would lead a man out of darkness into the kingdom of God? Is it specific and does it go into detail with reference to how the child of God ought to worship the Father?"

J. D. Thomas has written, "What we do say, however, is that the use of commands, examples and proper inferences are valid ways of learning God's will about certain things, especially those that impart information about essential obedience (man's response to God's requirements). ✝

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Is It Or Isn't It?

David Deffenbaugh

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Is it capable of making the *"man of God"* perfect, or isn't it?

"According as his divine power has given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3). Did God give us *"all things,"* or didn't He?

Many notables (and not-so-notables) in the religious world claim that God has spoken directly to them. This is a claim to which many have responded with disbelief and efforts of refutation. Among this same select group to whom God has supposedly spoken there is also the claim of direction and guidance given by the Holy Spirit separate and apart from the Word. Because of these claims and those who attempt to refute them, there is also left a group of people who just aren't sure about it.

Let's consider what we do know for sure. We know that what the Bible claims for itself is true. Therefore, the Bible is able to make us *"perfect,"* and God has given us *"all things that pertain to life and godliness."* If these are both true (and they are), then the Bible must be the final and complete and perfect revelation of God to man. If it is not, then no reference to *"perfect"* or *"complete"* or *"all things"* could be made. But we can say emphatically that God and the Holy Spirit do not act in the way which some people claim. How can we be so emphatic? Because if God does speak directly to man today and the Holy Spirit does direct the lives of people independent of the Word, then Paul and Peter were sadly misinformed when they wrote the words cited at the outset of this article.

Is the Word able to do what it claims to do, or isn't it? The claims of the Bible and the claims of these people cannot both be true. The claims of the Bible, if true, exclude any further or separate guidance or messages from God. The claims of these people, if true, exclude the Bible from being the final, complete, and perfect revelation of God to man. **Is it, or isn't it?** ✝

David Deffenbaugh is a gospel preacher in Harrison, Arkansas, U.S.A.

THE SACRED WRITING (HOLY SCRIPTURES)

(PSALM 19:7-14)

Don L. Norwood

The Scriptures were written and preserved by God's divine providence so that mankind could come to know for himself God's will (John 20:30,31; Luke 1:3,4; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 1 John 5:13; 1 Timothy 3:14,15).

God's Holy Spirit inspired (guided) the men whom God chose to write the Holy Scriptures (2 Peter 1:20,21; 2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Samuel 23:2). Christ Himself endorsed the Old Testament Scriptures as being divine (Luke 24: 27,44,45). Consider some of the scriptural names that are applied to the Sacred Writings (Romans 3:2; 2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Timothy 4:2; 2 Peter 3:16).

We are warned concerning what will happen to persons who wrest or twist the Scriptures (2 Peter 3:16). The New Testament explains that a person must love the truth (the New Testament is the whole body of truth brought to mankind through Jesus Christ — John 14:6; John 1:17), or God will cause the person to be deluded, and thus to believe a lie and be damned as a

result.

God instructed the Hebrew people: *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart; you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up"* (Deuteronomy 6:5-7).

The New Testament Scriptures teach that a Christian has *". . . all things that pertain to life and godliness in the knowledge of him who called you by his own grace and virtue"* (2 Peter 1:3). This knowledge can be found only in the Scriptures of the New Testament. The Apostles of Christ were guided by the Holy Spirit into revealing all the truth (John 14:26; John 16:13; 1 Peter 1:10-12).

The kings of Israel were commanded by the Lord to have a written copy of God's law at hand all the time and to be very careful to do as it taught (Deuteronomy 17:14-19).

Human beings have the free moral choice of learning and believing God's Word (Holy Scriptures, the Bible) or not to do so. However, Christ said that those who believe the Gospel and obey it will be saved, and that those who disbelieve will be condemned (Mark 16:15,16; John 3:36).

The Bible (at least parts of it) is three thousand years old. It was written over a period of about 1600 years by men inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. It never contradicts itself, and its historical accuracy is perfect. It tells openly about the good and the bad deeds of people mentioned in it. The prophecies recorded in it have come to pass just as was predicted centuries before. It even named people long before they were born and told what they would do. No ordinary human being could write such things.

As the Psalmist wrote: *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"* (Psalm 119:105). Man cannot guide his own life in a manner that God will accept (read Jeremiah 10:23 and Proverbs 14:12). Without the guidance from the Word of the Son of God (Christ), mankind will be hopelessly lost and condemned to an eternal punishment with the Devil and his angels (Ephesians 2:1-3,11,12; John 3:36; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).

How precious, then, are the Sacred Writings to all mankind? Surely nothing compares with the value of these words of God, and man's learning and doing as they instruct. ✞

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The Silence of the Scriptures

Owen Cosgrove

There are two marvelous aspects of the Holy Bible: what it says and what it does not say.

The restraint of the Scriptures is very impressive to me. If I had been an eyewitness of the Lord's life and had been writing a Gospel account by mere human power, I would have been tempted to write details of His physical stature and appearance and other items that would have become spiritual distractions through the centuries. The Scriptures are complete. They say just enough and they do not say too much. Anything that I would do to "touch them up" would only defile them.

Going beyond the Scriptures can be just as serious as falling short of them. The Bible warns against leaving out part of the Word, but it also cautions against adding to it (Revelation 22:18-20; 1 Corinthians 4:6; 2 John 9-11).

The early restorers pleaded, "Let us speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent." Man is not free to make up his own rules that go beyond the Word of God.

How many times have you heard someone defend an unscriptural practice by saying, "The Bible does not say not to"? A doctor's prescription does not have to tell the pharmacist what NOT to put into the medicine. To add unauthorized chemicals or elements is to alter the prescription.

While historically we have urged "calling Bible things by Bible names and doing Bible things in Bible ways," many congregations and preachers seem bent on inventing catchy names, titles, phrases, programs, and ministries that are inclined to go beyond mere descriptions of Biblical activities. They tend to add a whole new terminology to our work that clashes with the simplicity and the honest directness of the Bible. They belie our appeal for pure Biblical terminology.

Respect for the Word of God involves appreciation for what it does not say, as well as for what it says. ✞

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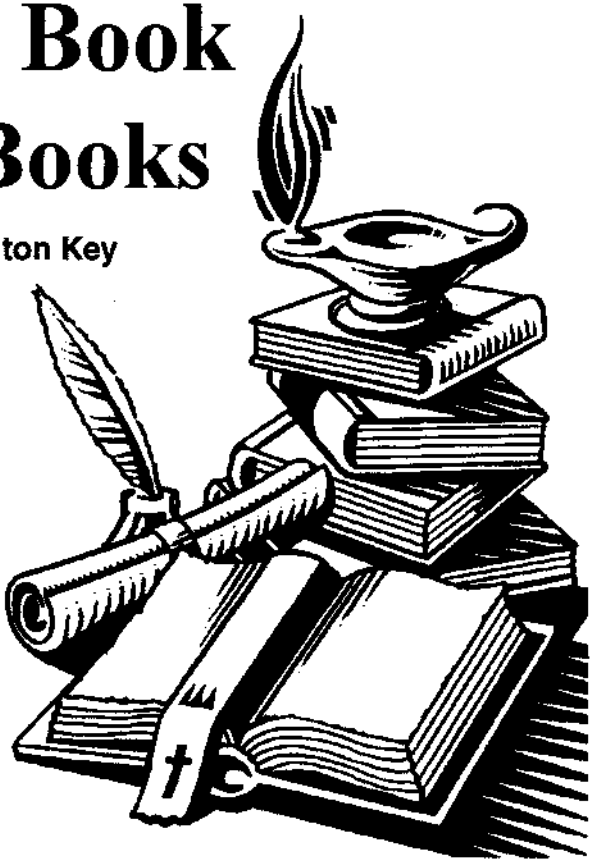
The Book of Books

Dalton Key



The Bible is by far the best book in all the world. It merits our reverence, our respect, our love, our belief, and our complete trust. It deserves our subjection and our willing obedience. Without this book we would be as helpless, hopeless nomads traveling the rocky road to eternity with no purpose, no map, and no guide. Were it not for God's book, the Bible, we would know nothing of divine law, will, and love; we would know nothing of God's eternal purpose for man; we would be ignorant of Christ's sacrifice, shed blood, intercession, and advocacy. Without the Bible we would not know of our own sin, our need for salvation; we would be without knowledge of our eternal nature and promised destiny.

The word "Bible" is not found within the pages of God's eternal revelation to mankind. This matchless book refers to itself as the law (Psalm 119:97; James 1:25), the word (Psalm 119:11), the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15), the oracles of God (1 Peter 4:11), scripture (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 3:16; Acts 17:11), doctrine (2 John 9; 2

Timothy 4:2,3), and truth (John 8:32; 17:17). The Bible describes itself as a sword (Ephesians 6:17), a fire and a hammer (Jeremiah 23:29), a seed (Luke 8:11), a lamp (Psalm 119:105), and a light (Psalm 119:105).

The Bible is not a "dead letter." According to the Hebrews writer, God's Word is both quick (alive) and powerful (Hebrews 4:12). It was by the word of God that the worlds were framed and the heavens were made (Hebrews 11:3); Psalm 33:6). The Bible quickens (Psalm 119:50), begets (James 1:18), cleanses (Psalm 119:9), purifies (1 Peter 1:22), converts (Psalm 19:7), saves (Acts 11:14; James 1:21), pricks and cuts the heart (Acts 2:36-38; Hebrews 4:12), and will judge us in the last day (John 12:48; Revelation 20:12).

The Bible stands alone. It is unlike the books of man in that it is inerrant (Psalm 19:7; 33:4), verbally and wholly inspired of God (2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Corinthians 2:10-13), and eternal (Matthew 24:35; 1 Peter 1:24,25). While the books of men rise and fall with respect to public acceptance and popularity, the Bible has throughout the years sustained a "best seller" status. Other works are undergoing constant revision, yet God's book is every bit as relevant today as it was when first etched out by the inspired penmen.

Through the ages, many and various attitudes have been held by men toward this Book of Books. Some have rejected it, some have waged war against it, some have been apathetic toward it, and some others have loved, cherished, and respected it. King Jehoiakim cut and burned his Bible because he didn't care to hear or do what it demanded of him (Jeremiah 36:23). Unlike this wicked king, David loved God's Word to the point of making it his constant meditation (Psalm 119:97).

What is your attitude toward the Bible? ✝

Dalton Key is the editor of *Old Paths* and preaches for the North Amarillo Church of Christ in Amarillo, Texas, U.S.A.

"O How I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day . . . How sweet are Thy words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:97,103).

The Book of Ephesians for adults

Fill in the verse below by using the graph.

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	POWER	FAR	IS	AT	WHO	THINK
2	JESUS	ALL	CHURCH	OR	WE	WITHIN
3	BE	BY	NOW	GENERATIONS	THAN	EPHESIANS 3:20-21
4	ABUNDANTLY	AMEN	FOR	DO	AND	GLORY
5	WORK	ASK	CHRIST	EVER	TO	THAT
6	HIM	IN	ABLE	US	MORE	THE

C3 E5 A6 E1 B3 F6 A1 D1

A5 F2 D6 C1 C6 E5 D4

B1 E6 A4 E3 B2

F5 E2 B5 D2 F1, E5 A6 A3

F4 B6 F6 C2 E4 B6

C5 A2 E5 B2

D3, C4 D5 E4

D5. B4. F3.

PRECIOUS FAITH

2 PETER 1:1-4

O. P. Baird

"Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and the Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1). The Christian's faith now is as precious as the faith of Peter and the other apostles and all the early Christians. It is precious because of the righteousness of God and our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Faith brings a person into the grace and peace of God and our Lord Jesus, *"Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord"* (2 Peter 1:2). As our knowledge of God and His will increases His grace and peace increase in us, and our faith becomes more and more precious.

God's power gives us life and godliness, *"Seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and virtue"* (2 Peter 1:3).

The Christian's faith is precious because God's promises are precious, *". . . he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises"* (2 Peter 1:4a). Faith becomes more precious as we lay hold of the promises.

Peter gives another reason why the Christian's faith is precious. Speaking of the promises, he says, *". . . that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature . . ."* (2 Peter 1:4b). What is the divine nature like? Speaking of Christ, the writer of the book of Hebrews says, *"Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity"* (Hebrews 1:9). That also describes the person who has become partaker of the divine nature.

What was man like when God created him? *"And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them"* (Genesis 1:27). When the man and woman whom God created listened to the devil and believed what he said and did what he suggested they became unlike God. Some people are more corrupt than others, but all responsible people have sinned (Romans

3:10,23). But God, because He loved us, sent His Son Jesus to save us from sin (John 3:16). When God saves a person He remakes him in His image. *"Ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him"* (Colossians 3:9,10). Notice that this work of God is not yet completed. The new man is "being renewed."

There is something that must happen before we can receive the divine nature, *". . . having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust"* (2 Peter 1:4c). Lust or evil desire is part of human nature, and it is natural for a person to do what he desires. The nature of man leads to greater and greater corruption, and he must escape from this before he can receive the divine nature. He escapes when his faith brings him into submission to Christ. When Peter preached the first complete Gospel sermon, he said to the people, *"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"* (Acts 2:36-38). The forgiven person is in Christ, *"For we are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ"* (Galatians 3:26,27). In Christ we have the new nature, the divine nature, *"If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold they are become new"* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Perhaps a warning is in order here. Some people might think it is not serious for them to sin if they plan to repent later. But that is not the divine nature, not the Spirit of Christ. *"But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his"* (Romans 8:9). We cannot escape corruption if our minds are on the evil lusts, *"For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit things of the Spirit"* (Romans 8:5).

By faith we obtain forgiveness. Those who have faith are partakers of the divine nature. By faith we inherit the promises (Hebrews 6:12). How precious the Christian's faith is! ✝

O. P. Baird is a former missionary to Korea and now lives in Searcy, Arkansas, U. S. A.

PEACE IS SEEING A SUNSET AND KNOWING WHOM TO THANK.

Our King Is Coming

Charles E. Cobb

Jesus Christ is the Christian's **King**. He lives, rules, reigns as *"King of kings and Lord of Lords"* (Revelation 17:14; 19:16). He is the head over all things to the church, and He is the Savior of the body. He lives today at the right hand of God while He waits for the time of His coming to claim His own — those who have been redeemed by His blood.

The majestic Jesus will come in His glory with all the holy angels with Him. What a spectacle of power, might, and splendor this will be. The nations of men will behold His glory and the announcement has already been made, *"Every eye shall see Him and they also who pierced Him . . . ."* (Revelation 1:7). There can be no mistaking the event that is taking place when Jesus comes.

The idea that Jesus is coming back to THIS earth to set up His Kingdom and rule from Jerusalem for a thousand years is a popular theory, but is sadly lacking in genuine biblical proof. The Kingdom was to be established while some of the contemporaries of Jesus still lived (Mark 9:1). We learn from the Colossian letter that the Kingdom was in existence and people were being *"translated"* into it (Colossians 1:13,14). The Kingdom, therefore, is already in existence, and Jesus now rules over it as its king.

Date setting for the coming of Christ has been a popular speculation down through the years. The plain teaching of the Scriptures is that no one knows when Jesus will come again. *"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night . . ."* (2 Peter 3:10), while men are saying, *"Peace and safety,"* and others, *"Where is the promise of His coming? All things continue as they were from the beginning,"* the Lord *"will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God . . . ."* (1 Thessalonians 5:3; 2 Peter 3:3,4; 1 Thessalonians 4:16). But, we do not know the day nor the hour (Mark 13:32,33).

Just as surely as our Lord lives, just that surely He will come again. The faithful promise of the Son of God is, *". . . I will come again . . ."* (John 14:3).

Jesus left the earth after suffering mockery, ridicule, unbelief, scourging, and crucifixion. He will come again in glory, power, honor, and judg-

ment.

When our King comes, He will call forth all of the dead, both small and great (Revelation 20:12). Men who have gained prestige, prominence, and power will be called to stand before the Lord. Men whose lives have been a waste, who have lived a gutter-type existence, will stand before the Lord. The rich, poor, bond, free, all races from every walk of life will give answer to Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). There will be no respect of persons and no escape when the King shall come.

Men may seek to hide. They may *"with one consent begin to make excuse."* Men may cry out in agony because they have been overtaken in their sins and discovered by the Lord. Their efforts to hide, make excuse, or cry in terror before the King will not prevail. The judgment of the Lord will be without mercy, for the mercy of God has been granted while men lived with opportunity to make ready.

The plan of God is that Jesus will, at His coming, deliver up the Kingdom to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:22-28). The King of kings will have won the victory over Satan and his hordes. He will be the Conqueror over all and will present to the Father the victorious Kingdom. The citizens of the Kingdom of Christ and of God (Ephesians 5:5) will be forever blessed of the Father. All the trials and troubles of earthly life will be over and there will be peace — pure, beautiful, and lasting peace.

Knowing that the King is coming should cause every person to want to make ready for this glorious event. Those in Christ should live faithfully (Titus 2:11,12). Those who are not in Christ should obey the Lord and be in a state of readiness (Matthew 7:21; Mark 16:15,16; Hebrews 5:8,9). The message of the inspired apostle to those in sin on the day of Pentecost was, *"Repent, and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins . . . ."* (Acts 2:38). Those who obeyed were added to the church (Acts 2:41,47).

Our King is coming. If Jesus is not your King, if you are not in His Kingdom, if you are not serving Him as your Master and Lord, it is time NOW that you should obey His will while time yet affords you the opportunity.

Why not plan to be one of the celebrants at the coming of the King, rather than one who will be confined to an eternity of misery and punishment? The coming King wants you to belong to Him (Matthew 11:28-30). ✞

Charles E. Cobb is editor of *Tennessee Valley Christian*, and he lives in Scottsboro, Alabama, U. S. A.

Faith Is Our Victory

Randall Caselman

". . . This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith" (1 John 5:4).

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). One translation says, *"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."* There is a lot of talk in the religious community today about faith, what it is and is not. An understanding of this subject is important to us as Christian people.

Faith is a knowledge of God. There can be no biblical faith without knowing God. Ignorance is the antithesis of faith, and is its enemy. Our faith is a result of knowledge. *"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God"* (Romans 10:17). Hebrews 11:6 tells us we must believe that He is. Genuine, victorious living is impossible without a faith in God. Don't even try it.

Faith is mental assent. Faith is acceptance, acknowledgement of God as God, as the Supreme Being, Creator of the universe, Sustainer of life, Grantor of salvation. *"In the beginning God created . . ."* (Genesis 1:1). *"In Him we live, move and have our being . . ."* (Acts 17:28). *"For God so loved the world that He gave . . ."* (John 3:16). Many know about God but fail to acknowledge Him as Supreme and Sovereign.

Faith is trust and confidence in God's promise. This is where many of us fail. We know the Bible, we acknowledge Him as Sovereign with our lips, but we are still not sure we want to trust Him with our hearts. *"They honor me with their lips,"* Jesus said, *"but their hearts are far from me"* (Matthew 15:8). Yes, we know about Noah's salvation, Abraham's blessings, Israel's deliverance, David's confidence, Elijah being fed by ravens, and the Sea of Galilee being calmed, but we fall short of letting God work in our lives. Faith is relying on God in our daily walk. Friends, God will see us through. Trust Him. Believe that *"He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him"* (Hebrews 11:6).

Faith is obedience. Even the casual Bible student knows that genuine faith is not complete until it is moved to act in accordance with the will of God. **By Faith** Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than did Cain

(Hebrews 11:4). **By Faith** Enoch walked with God (Hebrews 11:5). **By Faith** Noah prepared an ark (Hebrews 11:7). **By Faith** Abraham, who, when he was called, obeyed (Hebrews 11:8). *"We are saved by grace, through faith . . ."* (Ephesians 2:8). Christ died for all, but all will not be saved. Universal salvation is not taught in the Bible. We must, *individually,* do what *all* have been asked to do — submit to the will of God. Jesus said it best: *"I came to do the will of the Father."* James put it this way: *"Faith without obedience is dead"* (James 2:17). The devils know about God, acknowledge Him as Sovereign. They have confidence in His Word, but they do not keep the commandments. There is no submission, no contrite heart. How can we read the Bible and not see that faith demands a response? It always has. *"Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. This is love for God: To obey His commands. This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith"* (1 John 5:1,3,4).

Faith is our victory over guilt of sin. *"To open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me"* (Acts 26:18).

Faith is our victory over temptation. *"Above all taking up the shield of faith, wherein you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of Satan"* (Ephesians 6:16).

Faith is our victory over ignorance. *"That from a child you have known the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus"* (2 Timothy 3:15).

Faith is our victory over impatience. *"Knowing this that the trying of your faith worketh patience"* (James 1:3).

Faith is our victory in prayer. *"Ask in faith, nothing doubting. The prayer of faith shall save the sick. The effective fervent prayer of the righteous avails much"* (James 1:6; 5:15,16).

Faith is our victory over death. *"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. He that believeth not shall be condemned. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls"* (Mark 16:16; John 3:16; 1 Peter 1:9).

The victory is ours. Praise God! What changes would be made in my life and in yours if we had this victorious faith! I need it, don't you? ✝

Randall Caselman is the preacher for the church in Bella Vista, Arkansas, U. S. A.

Go From Left To Right To Get It Right

Tim Nichols

GOD → TRUTH → CONCLUSIONS → CONSEQUENCES

The little chart above is not intended to be a political statement. It is not a cure for dyslexia. It is simply to illustrate, in a very abbreviated way, the proper order to follow in arriving at what we will believe and do as followers of the God of the Bible.

The chart is oversimplified, but it may hopefully provide something like a map for us to follow as we attempt to understand and apply the will of God to our lives. Much more could be said about each of the elements of the chart than we will have space for in this brief article.

GOD. We begin with God. This may seem to be out of order at first. After all, we can only know of the existence of God by examining the evidence that is available to us in nature and in His written Word. But these proofs of God's existence came to us from God. They are sure and unmistakable to the unprejudiced mind, to be sure, but God came first. The evidence may have arrived first in our minds, but God has been behind it all from the beginning.

TRUTH. God inspired men to write the series of books that we call the Bible. They reveal more about the nature of God than we could have ever come to know by observation of nature alone. They reveal truth about the nature of the world and of man. They reveal the will of God for mankind. They provide us with a clear point of contact with the mind of God.

CONCLUSIONS. We take what God reveals and draw conclusions about what He is saying to us. Honest, sincere, and humble people try very hard to conclude only those things that God's Word **actually**

teaches. They synthesize all that the Scriptures teach on any given subject, being careful to conclude no more and no less than what they directly teach or truly imply. For the humble servant of God, this process is more than just an academic exercise. It is an exciting adventure to seek out and to precisely discover divinely revealed truth.

CONSEQUENCES. Truth has consequences. Right conclusions have right applications to life. God revealed truth that leads us to the right conclusion that it is wrong for a man to steal. Consequently, it is wrong for me to steal; it is wrong for you to steal; it is wrong for him to steal; it is wrong for her to steal. Anyone who will begin with God, examine His truth, and draw the conclusions that are demanded by an examination of that truth will have little or no difficulty understanding the consequences of those conclusions in the real world. How to apply God's truth to life is much easier to understand than it is for many to do. When the *doing* becomes difficult, the *understanding*, for some, becomes muddled. However, if you start on the left and work your way to the right, you will understand what you and others are taught by God to believe and do. Struggle, if you must, with the *doing*, but do not allow the struggle to rob you of the proper *understanding*.

Never allow yourself to begin on the right and move to the left! If you begin there you will go wrong every time. Do not let yourself begin with what you want to believe and do. If you begin there you will devise a principle that will "justify" your belief or practice and call it your conclusion. You will then move one more step to the left and read *into* the Bible what is not there. You will go to the Bible in an attempt to prove what you have already decided to believe or do, and you will "find" what did not originate with God.

Some seem to begin at the right and work their way to the left when the application of God's truth just seems too hard for them. Those who find themselves in adulterous marriages often move to the left in search of "loopholes." Those who seek to justify the sins of friends or family members do the same. Preachers who must preach to audiences that might be offended by the actual consequences of truth are sometimes tempted to move from right to left. But all faithful **doers** of the Word and all faithful **preachers** of the Word go straight down the line — from left to right. ✞

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Matthew 19:9 and Divine Holiness

Frank Chesser

God is independently, infinitely, and immutably holy. He sits upon the *"throne of his holiness"* (Psalm 47:8). He is of *"purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity"* (Habakkuk 1:13). Isaiah pictures the seraphim as flying about the throne of God crying, *"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts"* (Isaiah 6:3). God is absolute holiness, untouched by even the shadow of sin.

Divine revelation and divine holiness are indubitably consistent. Any doctrine that is contradictory to the holiness of God is a false doctrine. Such is the case with regard to the limitation of God's law to marital relationships in which both partners are Christians. The earth's population is nearing six billion. Of this number, a very small portion are Christians. Smaller still is the number of marriages in which both partners share in the faith of the Gospel.

Is it conceivable that our holy God would leave the teeming masses of humanity in pagan darkness, void of any law to govern and restrain their sexual relationships? Are we to conclude that by divine design, the non-covenant world is allowed to wallow in the pit of sexual indulgence with as many partners as they wish until they find themselves within the confines of the church? By His permissive will in the absence of law, would not God be encouraging animalistic sexual behavior among His own offspring?

This humanly devised doctrine is an offensive affront to the holiness of God. It is as incompatible with the nature of God and as easily discernible as such as is the Calvinistic view of predestination and election, or the impossibility of apostasy. It nullifies holiness and promotes sin.

This matter could not be more serious. This is not an ivory tower theological debate on some abstract principle. It is an eternal destiny-determining matter involving the souls of men and the unity of the church. The principle of God's holiness is overwhelming evidence for the fallacious nature of this doctrine and those in kinship therewith and for the universal application and obvious import of Matthew 19:9 and kindred passages. ✞

Frank Chesser is the preacher for the Lake Forest church in Jacksonville, Florida, U. S. A.

Mark 16:16

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.

Anyone who obeys these stated essential conditions of Jesus

Has faith in Jesus as the incarnate Word of God

Obeys the next equally essential command that follows

Immersion in water is the second stated essential

An emphatic promise of eternal life by the Lord

Rejects either or both of the stated conditions in his word

Be judged unworthy of eternal life and will receive eternal condemnation

—Fenter Northern

The Purpose for Church Discipline

Maxie B. Boren

There can be no doubt but that the church must exercise discipline in any given situation that calls for it. By inspiration, the apostle Paul **commanded** the church in Thessalonica to ". . . *withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us"* (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

An example of such "disorderly" (i.e., the word means to be "out of step" with God's revealed will) conduct took place in Corinth in apostolic times. A brother was guilty of gross immorality in carrying on a sexual affair with his father's wife. The church had taken no action, so Paul wrote them a letter in which he instructed them **by the authority of Christ** to take disciplinary action against the brother **so that his *"spirit may be saved"*** (1 Corinthians 5:5). This is obviously the first and foremost reason for church discipline — to save the soul of the one in sin (see James 5:19,20).

A second reason is for the sake of the church. When stringent measures were taken against Ananias and Sapphira, as recorded in Acts 5:1-11, the text informs us that *"great fear came upon the whole church."* Brethren need to know that the church must remain pure as per the teachings of God's revelation, and that immoral conduct, false doctrine (Romans 16:17), and a *"divisive spirit"* (Titus 3:10) will not be tolerated.

After every reasonable effort has been made in a loving and tender way to restore an erring brother or sister, and that has failed, and the elders then deem it necessary to take disciplinary action, the church must follow the Biblical instruction laid down in 1 Corinthians 5:9-13 and 2 Thessalonians 3:14,15. ✝

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We know that it is very confusing in the religious world. It's hard to know where to turn or what to believe. The Lord led John the apostle to remind people to be very careful in establishing their religious beliefs. *"Beloved,*

Introducing the Church of Christ

Garell L. Forehand

do not believe every spirit, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). But **how** could you and I be able to test someone and his teaching to verify whether or not he is truly representing the Lord? Since the Word of God (the Bible) is supposed to be *"a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"* (Psalm 119:105), the guidance necessary to test spiritual matters must certainly be found in the Scriptures of the Lord. That's why the Bereans were called "noble" by the Lord — because *"they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so"* (Acts 17:11). They didn't even trust Paul until they had checked him out in the Bible!

With that in mind, we'd love for you to give the church of Christ a fair evaluation from the Bible's point of view. We do not claim to have any man other than Jesus as the founder of the church. There is no date, except the Day of Pentecost right after the resurrection of Christ, that we would

point to for the beginning of the church of which we are a part. There are absolutely **no** doctrines that we teach or practice that have been originated by a man or group of men. There is not a single view that we hold to that has Alexander Campbell (or any other person) as its source. We try our very best to depend exclusively on the Bible itself to establish all of our doctrinal positions. Feel free to check us out on that claim as to **anything** we believe or practice.

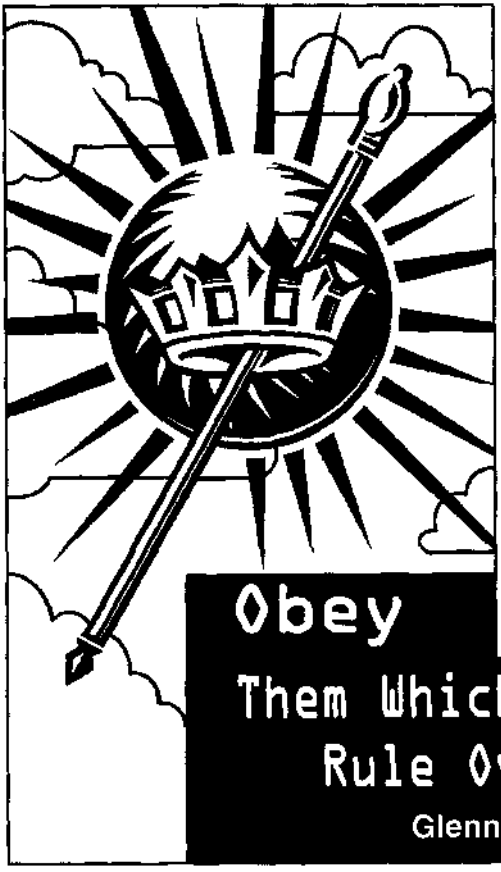
We believe that the Word of God is the "seed" of the kingdom (Luke 8:11). And we believe that the truth will make us free (John 8:31,32) — that the Gospel is God's power to save people (Romans 1:16,17). If people will honestly and faithfully accept the Word of God, the Lord Himself will cleanse their sins by His grace, and add them to the church He built and purchased with His own blood (Acts 2:37-47). The seed of the kingdom (the Word) will grow **just Christians**. All other "plants" will finally be uprooted on the last day (Matthew 15:13). We are just people; but we are people who try to obey God's Word the best we can. Please take a closer look at the church of Christ. ✝

Garell L. Forehand is the preacher for the Granbury Street Church of Christ in Cleburne, Texas, U. S. A.

God's Church

Most people think the New Testament church is built of
brick and wood and stone
And after Sunday services stands empty and alone.
But God's own church is made of souls, who spread both
far and wide.
The story of His wonderous love and Jesus crucified.
A living church — a family royal; with Christ the king to
reign.
Which after stone and wood are gone, forever will
remain.

— Selected



There is an ongoing debate these days about the authority of the group of men holding the office of elder (or bishop) in the church. Some believe that the elders have no authority, and that their leadership applies only in the sense of maintaining a good example, and no more. Others believe that elders have authority to make judgments relative to the spiritual well-being of the members in the flock they oversee, and that the members have an obligation to follow their leadership unless it conflicts with God's Word.

Obey Them Which Have the Rule Over You

Glenn Colley

There are several interesting passages awaiting your consideration on this subject: 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4.

We would also do well to consider Hebrews 13:17 which reads, *"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you."* Anyone can see from this verse that we are commanded to obey **someone**. If this passage teaches obedience to the elders of the church, then in honest hearts the confusion over the authority of elders will be forever settled.

The word "obey" here is from the Greek word "peitho." According to

Thayer, it comes from a root word meaning "to bind." Specifically in this passage it means, "To listen to, obey, yield to, comply with."

But who are we to obey according to this passage? Who is it who has the "rule over you," and watches "for your souls"? We find two other references in this chapter to the ones who have the rule over us: (verse 7) — "*Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.*" (verse 24 — "*Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints . . . .*"

In Acts 20:28, where Paul is instructing the **elders of the church** from Ephesus, we read, "*Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.*" The elders can be correctly described as "overseers," from a Greek word meaning "a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly." That describes elders in the New Testament church.

While it is true that elders lead by example (1 Peter 5:3), it is also true that elders lead as overseers, and we, as members of the flock which they are among, must obey them. The exception to this teaching would of course be the case of elders requiring that which contradicts the Word of God. (Acts 5:29) — "*We ought to obey God rather than men.*"

Hebrews 13:17 clearly has reference to the overseers of the flock, the elders of the church.

We should thank God for godly elders. May we be humble Christians who "*remember them which have the rule*" over us (Hebrews 13:7). May we obey them, and submit ourselves (verse 17). Their responsibility is to "*watch for*" our souls (verse 17). One day, after the trumpet sounds its unmistakable blast, those elders will give account for the way they have overseen and cared for the flock which Christ, the Chief Shepherd, left in their care (1 Peter 5:4). May we hold up their hands so they may do their work "*with joy, and not with grief.*"

Glenn Colley preaches for the church in Jasper, Alabama, U. S. A.

The greatest danger for most of us is not that our aim is too high and we miss it, but that our aim is too low and we reach it.

Women As Elders And Deacons

Jimmy Jividen

Woman's role in our culture is changing. Her work is no longer confined to household chores. She has established her position in the workplace, assuming leadership in business, finance, education, and government. Why would anyone object to her being an elder or deacon in the church?

The New Testament gives qualifications for elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3. Both bishops (elders) and deacons are to be *"the husband of one wife."* This criterion disqualifies bachelors and women from serving in such leadership roles. It is true that the generic term translated "deacon" is used of Phoebe, a woman, in Romans 16:1. The same general term is also used for civil rulers and slaves in the New Testament. 1 Timothy 3, however, refers to special servants of the church as being "deacons." It is in this special sense that they must be men.

God created woman *from* man and *for* man in the beginning (1 Corinthians 11:8,9). The Scriptures teach that women must remain silent in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34). Attempts to nullify this teaching by calling it mere cultural trappings of the first century world is to make the Scripture a religious smorgasbord from which one can take what he pleases and reject what pleases.

The woman already has the most influential leadership role in the world. She is described in 1 Timothy 5:14 by the Greek term which is literally translated "house ruler." A woman who is a homemaker and mother has a glorious leadership role.

One does not need a religious title to be great in Christ's kingdom, the church. Jesus Himself said, *"Whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave"* (Matthew 20:26,27).

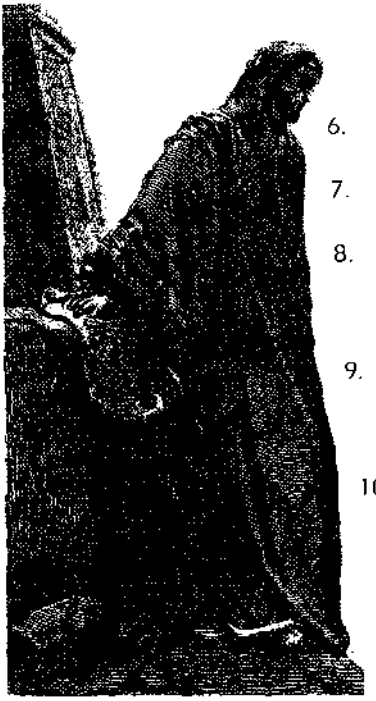
Jesus held no "religious position" like a scribe, elder or priest, yet He influenced the world more than any person who ever lived. Why would any of His followers — male or female — seek leadership roles He has not authorized? ✝

Jimmy Jividen is a well-known writer and preacher from Abilene, Texas.

Who Am I?

Can you identify me? Read each clue and think carefully. If you guess my name after the first clue, give yourself a score of 100 points. If you know who I am only after the fifth clue, your score is 60, etc. When you are sure of my identity, look up the passages of scripture following each clue to verify the facts from God's word. My faith and courage make me a good example to follow.

1. **100** I was born in Judah during the reign of Jehoiakim (1:1).
2. **90** Though a slave, I was advisor to four kings (1:19-21; 5:16; 11:1).
3. **80** I was described as good-looking, gifted in all wisdom, possessing knowledge and quick to understand, with ability to serve in the king's palace and to learn the language and literature of my captors (1:4).
4. **70** I had a friend named Mishael (1:19).
5. **60** I served one king who was haughty of heart, so that God taught him humility through making him like a wild animal for a period of time. At the end of that punishment he sent a letter to his subjects proclaiming the greatness and oneness of God (4:28-37).



6. **50** Others in the palace were jealous of me (6:3,4).
7. **40** I prayed regularly — three times a day — facing Jerusalem (6:10).
8. **30** God showed me a vision of four great beasts, indicating the development of future events in the world (chapters 7 and 8).
9. **20** I saw a vision of *"the Ancient of Days"* with *"one like the Son of Man"*, and of the coming of His kingdom (7:9,10,13,14).
10. **10** I survived a night in a den of lions (6:23).

My Score _____

See answer on inside back cover.

Bless The Feet of Those Who Are Coming

Betty Tucker

The young Chinese brother's prayer was simply-worded, but as I considered it I realized that it had far-reaching implications. His plea to our Heavenly Father was, "Bless the feet of those who are coming."

I think that Chinese brother was requesting the Lord's blessing upon those who were on their way to worship with us that day. For purposes of this study, we will consider a few others upon whom we should solicit His blessings.

Those Who Come To Visit

Think of an aged man, sitting apart from the others in an old rocking chair, on the porch of a nursing home. His eyes are not so quick to distinguish the features of those who approach.

He does not hear as well as he once did; and his hands tremble as they lie folded on his lap. As Hosea said in Hosea 7:9, *". . . gray hairs are here and there upon him . . .",* for he has grown old with the years.

This pitiful old man yearns for someone to come and spend an hour with him. He needs companionship, the comfort of human kindness, someone to listen as he gives voice to memories of years gone by. "Lord, bless the footsteps of those who are coming."

Those Who Come To Help

Next, we consider the woman living in the hovel on the side of the mountain with her three small children. Her husband is mourned by

them, his body entombed beneath the cemetery mound.

The day the mine caved in marked a drastic change in their way of life. Now, they barely have enough food to chase away hunger pangs; and their clothes have become faded and worn.

Perhaps someone will read the passage in James 1:27 which states that *"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction . . . ."*

"Lord, bless the footsteps of those who are coming" to bring food for the table, a warm blanket to shield against the cold, a pretty dress to brighten the smile of a tiny girl.

Those Who Come To Teach

Look around you at the countless throngs who do not know the old, old story of a Savior who gave up the joys of heaven to come to live and die here for the sins of us all.

Think of the family across the street who live in the lap of luxury, but are schooled only in the ways of the world. They must be taught the Gospel if they are ever to enjoy the pleasures of the city with streets of pure gold (Revelation 21:21). "Lord, bless the footsteps of those who are coming" to teach by word and example.

Imagine the millions of lost souls in other lands who know not God. They have never heard the Gospel one time! Perhaps someone will leave the comfort of their native land to bring to them the Gospel.

Perhaps they will gladly accept and follow Christ, once they hear the message of salvation . . . **but someone must come** (Romans 10:14). **"Lord, bless the footsteps of those who are coming!"**

Betty Tucker is a Christian writer living in Linden, Tennessee, U. S. A.

"How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news" (Isaiah 52:7a).

A New Word An Old Idea

Barry Stump

There seems to be a new word in our vocabulary today. The evening news has one. School teachers and Hollywood have one. Nearly everyone has one. If you don't have one you're perceived as a person who doesn't care. The word is ***"agenda."***

We are being bombarded with causes that range from the freedom to do what we please with our bodies to the saving of the kangaroo rat. The sad thing is that our children are the most vulnerable. Are we raising a generation of children more concerned about the saving of our environment than the saving of a person's soul?

I believe this word "agenda" is just a new word for the word "philosophy." What do you think was Jesus' agenda? What was His philosophy of life?

The philosophy of Jesus can be summed up in three points in five verses, Matthew 5:43,44 and Matthew 22:37-39. Point 1 is *". . . love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind."* Point 2 is *". . . love your neighbor as yourself."* Point 3 is *". . . love your enemies. . . ."* These are three relatively simple points to understand, but hard to live unless there is an example.

It is good to be concerned with our resources, but let's not forget what matters the most. Our children need to see us as parents living this philosophy so they can see for themselves what is more important. Our children will pattern their philosophy after someone's. We all need to read the words of Jesus every day.

Jesus' philosophy has to be our philosophy if we are truly to be the children of God. ✝

Barry Stump serves as a deacon in the Cornwell Drive Church of Christ in Yukon, Oklahoma, U. S. A.

The Most Beautiful Fruit

Frances Parr

In Genesis 1:22, God said to the sea creatures and birds, *"Be fruitful and multiply."* Mention the word "fruit," and many will instantly visualize sweet, juicy food. We have used fruit flavors for soft drinks, candies, desserts, and medicines. Fruit colors can be found in our wardrobes and throughout our homes.

In Psalm 17:10, David asked God to keep him as the apple of His eye. The pupil or center of the round part of the eye is called the apple. Saying someone is the "apple of the eye" means they are especially loved. The adage, "an apple a day keeps the doctor away," dates back to the early 19th century.

In ancient Greece, the most beautiful woman was rewarded with a golden apple. On one occasion it was used as a bribe. The apple was given to Aphrodite, who then helped the emperor capture Helen of Troy, starting the Trojan War.

A fruit changed the history of mankind in the Garden of Eden. God allowed Adam and Eve to eat from every tree in the garden. The

one exception was the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan tempted Eve, she ate the fruit and sin entered the world.

Throughout Bible times, fruit was an important dietary staple. When Moses sent spies to the land of Canaan, they returned with pomegranates, figs, and a cluster of grapes so large it was carried between two men. *"The land flows with milk and honey and this is its fruit,"* they reported (Numbers 13:27). In 1 Samuel 25:18, Abigail fed David's army with 100 clusters of raisins and 200 cakes of figs.

The fig tree and grape vine were teaching tools in Judges 9:7-15. They spoke to other trees in Jotham's parable regarding Abimelech's illegal conspiracy to become king. Jesus used the fig tree to teach about working, in Matthew 21:19. Solomon advised in Proverbs 25:11, *"A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold."*

Harper's Bible Dictionary says, "The olive in antiquity was the fruit par excellence; either the fresh fruit or its oil found a place at every meal. It was a mainstay of the diet." An evergreen, the olive tree is beautiful to behold, long-lived and sturdy, often clinging tenaciously to rocky hillsides. It became a symbol of fertility, Psalm 128:3; beauty, Jeremiah 11:16; divine blessing, Deuteronomy 7:13; and peace, Genesis 8:11.

Fruit played an important role in Jesus' life. In addition to the fig tree lesson, He used the juice of the grape as an emblem of His own shed blood.

The dictionary describes fruit as the result, product, or consequence of any action or work. In addition to the items we identify as fruits, there are edible grains, vegetables, and seeds. Children are referred to as "fruit of the womb or loins." Words are fruit of the mouth, according to Proverbs 12:14. A virtuous wife's profits are the fruit of her hands, Proverbs 31:16. John 4:36 says that saved souls are the fruit for eternal life. A man reaps the fruit of his doings, as is mentioned in Jeremiah 17:10.

Jesus again uses fruit as an example in John 15:2 in comparing Christians with grape vines. We will be known by the fruit we bear (Matthew 12:33).

What is this fruit Christians are to bear? Paul explains in Philippians 1:9-11. Increase in love, knowledge, and discernment; approve of things which are excellent, and be filled with the fruits of righteousness.

A fruit such as an apple is made up of several parts: the skin, the pulp, the seeds, and within each seed, the germ of life capable of producing a new apple tree. Every

apple has all these parts, but it is just one fruit.

Paul says in Galatians 5:22, *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control . . . ."*

Notice that the word "fruit" is singular with a singular verb following. These are not fruits of the Spirit from which one can pick and choose. Love, joy, peace, etc. are different parts of one fruit.

Paul further states in Ephesians 5:9,10, *"The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness and truth, finding out what is acceptable to the Lord."*

Hundreds of years before Paul's time, the prophet Isaiah had already completed the circle. *"The fruit of righteousness will be peace. The effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence forever"* (Isaiah 32:17).

Comparing individual fruits of any one kind, variations will be obvious. Similarly, each Christian is unique. Walking daily toward eternal life, we all will have blemishes and imperfections in the fruit we bear. Maturing in every aspect of the fruit of the Spirit is worth the effort of a lifetime. It is truly the most beautiful fruit we can bear ✞

Frances Parr is a Christian writer living in Eldon, Missouri, U. S. A.

Light My Light

Thank You, Lord, for
Hope, which lightens
Every step in my path.

Light of the world;
Open my heart,
Renew my vows,
Direct my life.

I am Your
Servant.

My light shines.
You are my Salvation.

Lift me, I pray,
Into service of
Giving love;
Heavenly Father,
Thank You for Your light.

— Vida B. Howard Cole

A Smile

Demar Elam

Oh, how great is the value of a smile on the face of a Christian! If we could only grasp the value of a smile, we would smile a lot more often.

I looked into the face of a teenager this past week, and my heart ached. That face had no smile. Rather, rebellion and resentment and hate seemed to be etched in that young face. A smile on a face says volumes about what is in the heart. It has been said about a smile: "A smile costs nothing but gives much. It enriches those who receive without making poorer those who give. It takes but a moment, but the memory of it sometimes lasts forever. None is so rich or mighty that he can get along without it, and none is so poor but that he can be made rich by it. A smile creates happiness in the home, fosters good will in business, and is the countersign of the discouraged, sunshine to the sad, and it is nature's best antidote for trouble. Yet it cannot be bought, begged, borrowed, or stolen, for it is something that is of no value to anyone until it is given away. Some people are too tired to give you a smile. Give them one of yours, as none needs a smile as much as he who has not more to give."

The wise man wrote, *"A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken"* (Proverbs 15:13). Don't we realize the truthfulness of this from our everyday experience of life? A cheerful countenance, manifested by a warm, friendly smile, is indicative of a happy heart.

Solomon also said, *". . . he that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast"* (Proverbs 15:15). Joy and happiness are being searched and longed for by the human race, but in most cases they are never attained. People continue looking for them in the wrong places.

In Christ we are instructed to *"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, rejoice"* (Philippians 4:4). Rejoicing is what God intended for those who accept His Son and live a life on a higher plain. Traveling the upper road will produce the peace of God in the heart of man; *"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:7). The peace of God in our hearts will produce smiles on our faces!

Paul said to the Philippians in Philippians 4:8, *"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."* Surely, when our minds dwell on these things, we cannot help but wear a smile on our face. ✝

Demar Elam is the Director of World Missions at Southern Christian University in Montgomery, Alabama.

If I Thought . . .

If I thought that a word of mine
Perhaps unkind and untrue,
Would leave its trace on a loved one's face,
I'd never speak it –
  Would you?

If I thought that a smile of mine
Might linger the whole day through
And lighten some heart with a heavier part,
I'd not withhold it –
  Would you?

– Anonymous

When You Pray

Bill McFarland

A disciple said, *"Lord, teach us to pray"* (Luke 11:1). This man knew he needed to pray, and he wanted to do so. Yet, he felt that his attempts were inadequate and that he needed to learn to do better.

Many of us can identify with that disciple. We have struggled with the pressing distractions and the dull routines which discourage genuine prayer. What can we do?

1. Be specific. Don't just drift through a list of generalities. Jesus taught the man who questioned Him to pray with purpose and to call things by name (see Luke 11:2-4).

2. Be yourself. Real prayer is simple and it deals with daily concerns. One does not need to use a different voice, nor words and phrases which he would not ordinarily use.

3. Be unselfish. A person is asking amiss if his focus is his own pleasure (James 4:3). Balance your petitions with praise, thanksgiving, and intercession. In this way, prayer will bring you closer to the Father's will.

4. Be fervent. Sincerely pour your heart out to God. Deal with things which are urgently important to you. Ask, seek, and knock (Luke 11:9,10).

5. Be confident. Ask in faith, nothing doubting (James 1:6). Rest assured that your heavenly Father will answer your prayer in the way that is

best. He hears, cares, and acts in our best interest (1 John 5:14,15).

Our Lord was a man of prayer, and we must be people of prayer. Perhaps these principles can help us *". . . always to pray, and not to faint"* (Luke 18:1). ✝

Bill McFarland is the preacher for the National & High Church of Christ in Springfield, Missouri, U. S. A.

Living the Way I Pray

I knelt to pray when day was done.
And prayed: "O God bless every one;
Lift from each saddened heart the pain,
And the sick be well again."
And carelessly went on my way.
The whole day long I did not try
To wipe the tear from any eye;
I did not try to share the load
Of any brother on the road;
I did not even go to see
The sick man just next door to me.
Yet again when day was done
I prayed,"O Lord, bless everyone;"
But as I prayed, into my ear
There came a voice that whispered clear,
"Pause, hypocrite, before you pray,
Who have you tried to bless today?
God's sweetest blessings always go
By hands that serve Him here below."
And then I hid my face and cried,
"Forgive me, God, for I have lied,
Let me but live another day
And I will live the way I pray. Amen."

— Anonymous

His Precious Promises

Jeril (Polly) Cline

As surely as the warmth of spring follows the cold of winter, His precious promises assure that abundant life will spring forth after the long wintry trial of our faith. In the Father's wisdom, this time of testing has at its heart our greater good, stronger faith, maturer character.

We rejoice, then, for this tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts, through the Holy Spirit who was given to us (Romans 5:3-5).

He has, in fact, granted to us His precious and magnificent promises in order that by them we might become partakers of His divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust (2 Peter 1:4).

So we persevere under trial, knowing that once we have been approved, we will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him (James 1:12).

And we recognize the discipline of the Lord as a true sign of our belonging to Him, for He disciplines those who are His (Hebrews 12:8,9). Not only this, but He disciplines for our good, that we may share His holiness. Though it is not pleasant, He has promised that by it we are being trained, and afterwards it will yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11).

So, we entrust ourselves to a faithful Creator Who will do what is right (1 Peter 4:19). This allows us to keep placing our faith and confidence in Him, though the world may not understand, though our family may not understand, though our friends may not understand . . . just as Christ did and those around Him misunderstood (1 Peter 2:23).

Yet we know that His precious promise to us is that He will not allow more than we can bear, but with each trial/temptation will provide the way

of escape, that we may be able to endure it (1 Corinthians 10:13).

So we ABIDE. We abide in Him and His promises. We abide in His Word. We hold still and quit squirming and quietly ABIDE (John 15:4,7). And by abiding in His Word, by becoming obedient to all we know He wants of us, we abide in His love (John 15:10).

And we are not afraid of the pruning, for it is natural for the branch that is unhealthy, wild, or diseased to be pruned by the loving Gardener. He prunes, and that is enough for us. We trust His knowledge of what needs to be done in our lives. We know that He will do only what will restore health, conform us to His character, rid us of that which continues to sap our spiritual strength, that we might bear more fruit to His glory (John 15:1,2).

Besides this, we have come to know that apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). In fact, apart from Him nothing can come into being at all (John 1:3)!

So, we are not ashamed of Him or His precious promises, for we are convinced that He is able to guard that which we have entrusted to Him till that day when all will be made clear (2 Timothy 1:12).

Jeril (Polly) Cline is a Christian writer living in Blue Ridge, Georgia, U. S. A.

A Lesson from the Spider

I looked outside my window
pane
And saw suspended there,
A spider spinning his own web
Securely in mid-air.

I thought that in this life
we, too,
Are spinning when we speak
With words of Christian
kindness,
Concern for those we seek.

The cares of life entangle us
In webs we often spin
With every good intention
To overcome our sin.

Why can't we spin with
confidence
As spiders do in space,
And build our trust in
Jesus Christ
For His amazing grace?

— Shirl White

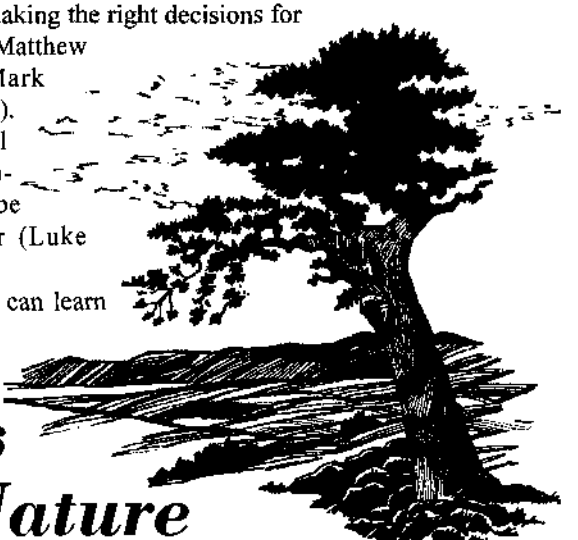
When God created the universe and all that was in it, he pronounced it "very good" (Genesis 1:31). Everything had its place from the tiniest virus to the greatest dinosaur, the smallest mould to the greatest redwoods, the showiest flowers and vegetables to the prickly cacti. Each had its place and multiplied after its own kind. Yes indeed, all was "very good." Over all this man had dominion and rule (Genesis 1:28-30).

What can we learn from creation? The first thing is rest. On the seventh day God rested from all his work (Genesis 2:1-3). This was the pattern he set down for man and all domestic animals (Exodus 23:12) because God knew man needed rest from his labours. The land also was to be given a rest in the seventh year (Exodus 23:10,11). This is to be a time of refreshing for the body, soul and spirit.

Too often we are too busy for God and our own spiritual welfare. We need to be like a tree planted near a river, it brings forth fruit in season, its leaf does not wither and it prospers (Psalm 1:2,3). This is another lesson we can learn from nature. We need to be tapped into the spiritual river to truly prosper. That river is the Scriptures and prayer. It takes time and a quiet place.

Jesus knew the value of the quiet times with his Father. That is the time for refreshing and for making the right decisions for our lives (Luke 6:12, Matthew 14:13-21,23, 17:1, Mark 6:30-32 and Luke 21:37). Before his greatest trial in the Garden of Gethsemane he needed to be alone with his Father (Luke 22:39-46).

Another lesson we can learn is the value of pruning



Lessons from Nature

Phillip Sherwood

(John 15:1-8). In nature old, dead, unproductive or wild branches are removed. This produces better fruit and flowers. We mow our lawns to keep them green instead of weedy and lank. So too our spiritual lives need pruning. All useless and unproductive sin needs pruning then the fruit will abound. If a branch does not bear fruit it is cut off and burned. It is far better to receive the chastisement of God now than to face eternity separated from him (Hebrews 12:5-11). Let us put aside that sin that tries to keep us down and run the race to victory (Hebrews 12:1,2).

Another lesson to be learned from nature is *do not worry*. In Matthew 6:25-34, God tells us that he provides for the birds and beasts and he will provide for us as we are of more value. Worry robs our spirit of its peace, worry can not make us taller. The flowers grow and bloom in the providence of God and even Solomon with all his splendour cannot outdo a flower. The temporal things of this world are but for a moment, seek God and his righteousness and all these things are a surety.

In Proverbs 6:6-11, we are told to consider the ants. Always busy, going about their work, providing food for themselves and their offspring, caring for each other and their homes, tidying up their environment, getting on with their everyday lives and not waiting for handouts. We too, need to keep busy doing the right things and we will be blessed and lack nothing. Put aside the garbage in our lives and concentrate on that which brings spiritual blessings, the destiny of our souls are at stake.

Watch the hen and her chicks (Matthew 23:37, Luke 13:34), she scratches around to find food for her chicks, calls them to her and teaches them what to look for and what is good to eat. She protects them under her wings when there is danger. This is how Jesus felt about the city of Jerusalem, he wanted to protect the people but they rejected him. We need to be like the hen, protecting each other and caring for each other, looking for the spiritual food. God has offered it, all we need to do is take it. Yes, we can learn some wonderful things from nature. Look around you today and each day, learn and be blessed. ✝

Phillip Sherwood is responsible for getting out newsletters of the North Shore Church of Christ in Auckland, New Zealand.

The only thing that's more expensive than an education is ignorance.

What Is a Mother?

If there is something one cannot do without, it is a mother. Father loves her; daughter imitates her; son tolerates her; salesmen thrive on her; motorists hurry around her; and grandchildren adore her.

She can be sweeter than sugar, sour as a lemon, crying and laughing in any two-minute period. She likes ice cream, having her birthday remembered, popcorn in the evenings, spiritual things, a new dress, eating out on Sundays, and grandchildren.

She dislikes doing the dishes, having her birthday forgotten, the motorist behind her, broken promises, and the neighbor's dog.

She can be found standing by, kneeling over, sweeping under, dusting off, stretching around, hanging up, but rarely sitting down.

She has the beauty of a spring day, the patience of Job, the memory of an elephant, a heart of gold, and the spirit of a tiger.

She brags about you to family and friends; she loves you no matter what; she always believes in you; she remembers your birthdays and she is always there when you need her. Yes, a mother is one thing that nobody can do without. And when you have tried her patience and worn her out, she can be won back with four little words,"Mom, I love you!"

(from Woodlawn Bulletin)

Is there a way out?

If all who live to be adults are sinners, what effect will sin bring? Will there be consequences for breaking God's laws? Is there work that we can do to take away our guilt of sin?

Just as there must be penalties for breaking civil laws, there are also retributions for violating God's moral and spiritual laws. In fact, Romans 6:23 explains, *"For the wages of sin is death."*

*"...each one is **tempted when** he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when **desire is conceived,** it gives birth to **sin;** and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth **death"*** (James 1:14,15).

The cry of every soul, burdened with guilt, is the same: *"Oh wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"* (Romans 7:24)

There is an answer: *"I thank God—through Jesus Christ, our Lord...There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are **in Christ Jesus...**"* (Romans 7:25; 8:1).

Next: **How do I find the way out?**

A GOOD HUSBAND

Don Hatch

Nothing makes a *good wife* like a **good husband**. The matter of being a righteous husband is under consideration in this article. Men who are weak in character generally define the nature of their marriage by less than favorable characteristics. If driven by vice, greed, lewd devices, or base desire, the marriage will be encumbered by these prevailing characteristics. However, if the opposite is so where the man seeks righteousness, holiness, purity, and godliness, it will manifest itself in the marriage. Men who abdi-

cate responsibilities sooner or later find the home is in a state of anarchy. All that we can observe in the homes of our times and those of bygone days demonstrate to us that the husband is a key to the way homes will be shaped.

God has spoken to men who will become husbands and fathers. Fatherhood is more than being biologically able to procreate. There are responsibilities that must be considered and met. Man is the **head of the home** (Ephesians 5:23; 6:1-5). Love that he displays for his wife and children will unify the home (Colossians 3:18; 1 Corinthians 7). Honor he affords his mate (1 Corinthians 7:2) by purity of life exalts the wife and home. The greatest instrument for teaching is doing. Husbands who provide for their family demonstrate to the sons their future responsibility and to the daughters types of men they should choose for a mate (1 Timothy 5:8). Children, as tender souls, are nurtured in the home (Ephesians 6:4) and will reflect the home's values. An exception is when the child falls into companionship with the world (1 Corinthians 15:33) and allows good morals to be corrupted.

Here are ten general values which will help the husband:

1. Remember that the wife is a partner, not property.
2. Don't expect the wife to be a wife and the provider at the same time.
3. Don't think that your business is none of her business.
4. You will hold the love of your wife the same way you won it.
5. Your first concern must be building a home, not just a house for your family.
6. Discipline is a cooperative venture of the husband and wife.
7. The cheerfulness of the husband establishes the tenor of the home.
8. Criticism of your wife should never be tolerated in your presence.
9. Never take the wife for granted.
10. Remember to keep the home holy.

Personal interest which each husband has in his home will never be wasted effort. Offer companionship, love, thoughtfulness, understanding, appreciation, sincerity, and godliness. Fulfill the law of Christ by bearing the burdens of others without grudging or complaining (Galatians 6:1-5). Never be satisfied with just being as good as someone else. Remember the words of Paul, *"Stretching forward to the things that are before, I press on towards the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 3:14). ✝

Don Hatch is the preacher for the Grape Street Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas, U. S. A.

The Power Of Mothers

Dan R. Owen

Mothers are powerful in shaping the lives, the personalities, the relationship styles, and the values of their children. Mothers will determine the destiny of churches, communities, and nations.

Mothers are powerful as the transmitters of sincere faith. Timothy was a devoted Christian evangelist because his sincere Christian grandmother and mother left their mark on his soul. Mothers who love God's Word are constant in prayer, and those who love and serve in their daily lives produce soldiers of the cross for the next generation.

Mothers are powerful as the transmitters of Christian family values. In many cultures the family is crumbling, but Christian mothers can change the future of the family. How will children learn what it means to love one's husband? How will they learn what it means to love one's children? Where will they learn about personal purity? Where will they learn kindness? How will they know how wives are supposed to relate to husbands or how to make a home? They will learn from their mothers in large measure. By these means mothers will shape society.

Children have God-given responsibilities toward their mothers. Honor them as they raise you and as you care for them in old age.

Obey them. Never curse or despise your mother, for this is an abomination against the Lord.

Our mothers leave their indelible mark for good or ill upon our souls. We carry them with us in our bosom until we die. Thank God today for Christian mothers. May all of their children rise up and call them blessed. May God give them strength to wield their great power for our good and God's glory. ✝

Dan R. Owen works with the Broadway congregation in Paducah, Kentucky, U. S. A.

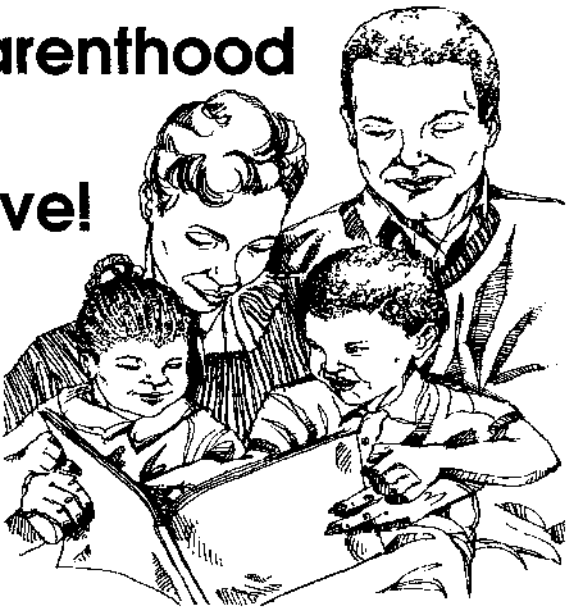
"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth" (Ephesians 6:1-3).

What God Gives a Boy or Girl

- A body to keep clean and healthy as a temple of life for mind and soul for the earthly journey.
- A pair of hands to use for one's self and others; but not against others for self.
- A pair of feet to do errands of love, kindness, charity, and business but not to loiter in places of mischief and sin.
- A pair of lips to keep pure, unpolluted by either tobacco or strong drink, and to speak true, brave, kind, and helpful words.
- A pair of ears to hear the music of the birds and human voices, the harmony of humanity, but not to give heed to anything that dishonors God or parents.
- A pair of eyes to see the beautiful, the good, the true — God's handiwork in all nature and opportunities for happiness in service to His glory.
- A mind to remember and reason and decide and in which to store useful information — not a chip basket for trash.
- A soul as fair as a new-fallen snowflake, to receive impressions of good and to develop faculties of power and virtue which will shape it day by day, as an artist's chisel shapes the stone.

— via McKenzie, TN

Marriages Are Important — Good Parenthood Is an Imperative!



Dayton Keesee

When those who say "I do" don't, the grandest human institution on earth is turned into the greatest potential for deep problems, emotional strain and pain, plus burden-bearing of the blackest blight (one meaning of this term is that which destroys or prevents growth). The hub of all institutions is the home. Faltering in the family forecasts folly for all other relationships. Harbored in the home are the most emotional moorings, life's deepest decisions, and the greatest demand for trust. When feelings fester among home folks, the pain penetrates deeper. Hurts at home are the hardest to handle.

When God disregarded Israel's worship, it was because they had dealt "treacherously" with their covenanted mates (Malachi 2:13f). That word means "faithlessly, deceitfully, fraudulently, perfidiously, untrustworthy." Worship goes stale before God when things don't work well at home.

Whatever the pains and problems are between a husband and wife, they intensify when the couple move into parenthood. If good marriages are truly important, then good parenthood is a community and national impera-

tive. In Malachi 2:14f, it is evident God was looking to a remnant in order to get from them godly offspring.

The world is moving in just the opposite direction — poor marriages, shattered families, and community chaos! Jean Bethke Elshtain, Professor of Political Science and Philosophy at Vanderbilt University, shares with us the price being paid because of profligate parents: "Three out of four teenage suicides occur in households where a parent has been absent. Eighty percent of adolescents in psychiatric hospitals come from broken homes. Tracking studies indicate that five of six adolescents caught up in the criminal justice system came from families in which a parent (usually the father) has been absent. A government survey of 17,000 children found, according to one analyst, that 'children living apart from a biological parent are 20 to 40 percent more vulnerable to sickness.' The rate of out-of-wedlock births reaches nearly 80 percent in some inner-city neighborhoods." These figures warn that current circumstances will likely worsen!

Some who read this will be related to homes that are hurting. Please put prayer and a perusal of God's Word on your agenda. (Especially note Proverbs 1-10; Deuteronomy 6; Psalms 78, 119; Ephesians 5,6; Colossians 3; and 1 Thessalonians 4.) As sure as the home is the key to success in all other institutions, so success at home is the guaranteed key to happiness. Let husbands and wives, parents and children blend and bond, grow and glow to assure not only the grandest of living, but to grant us a godly seed! Therefore, as God said a long time ago, *". . . take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously"* (Malachi 2:16). ⇧

Dayton Keesee preaches for the Eastside Church of Christ in Midwest City, Oklahoma, U. S. A.

JUST SUPPOSE THE LORD LET SOME PARENTS LOOK INTO THE FUTURE AND SEE WHAT THEIR EXAMPLE AND LAX CONTROL DID FOR THEIR CHILDREN.

The Ideal Family (Finding Fulfillment Without It)

Jack Harriman

When I think of an ideal family, four things come to mind. First, one with all the ideal family members: husband, wife, and children. Second, one in which all family members are faithful Christians. The spirituality of the man and woman is rich and deep, and the children walk in their footsteps. Third, all members of this family relate ideally to one another. This is "a marriage made in heaven." Father and children, mother and children, children and children have an ideal relationship with one another. Fourth, all members of this family function ideally in the community — super dad, super mom, and super kids.

We would all like to have a family like this one, but most of us don't have it and will never have it. So, we must learn to be happy and fulfilled in a family that is less than ideal. We can, too! Note these three things.

Happiness and fulfillment do not come from human relationships. The apostle Paul said, *"Our sufficiency is from God"* (2 Corinthians 3:5). Whether married or unmarried, with or without children, well-adjusted or maladjusted, fulfillment comes from our relationship to God.

God may bless you greatly through some less-than-ideal family aspect. The promise that *"All things work together for good"* (Romans 8:28) does not mean that God causes the sinful attitudes, words, and acts that destroy family relationships. It means that He will help you "pick up the pieces," if you will allow Him. Most of us are closer to God today because something was not ideal.

Don't let the bad part ruin the good part. A lot of us don't have all the ideal parts, and all family members may not share our faith, and relationships may sometime be strained; but a lot of good things remain intact.

Here is the point! Work with what you have. It can be rich and fulfilling. This is possible because *"our sufficiency is from God."* ✝

Jack Harriman is the preacher for the Center Street Church of Christ in Fayetteville, Arkansas, U. S. A.

When the Story Is Told

When the story is told and it's over,
When there's nothing more to be said
But a whispered unfolding of memories,
Recalling the life of the dead,

When the voice that we loved has grown silent,
When the smile that we cherished is still,
When the heart that aroused us to action
No longer responds to the will,

When our own hearts are hurting and broken,
The pain like the edge of a knife,
Oh let us recall, with the anguish,
That the dead in the Lord wake to life!

He has gone — yes — to be
with the Father
Through the veil that now shadows
the way —
Dear God, pierce our darkness
of sorrow
With the light of eternity's day!

— Betty Burton Choate

Do We Really Care For The Unsaved?

Johnny Ramsey

Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Luke 10:10). He left the glory of heaven to suffer and die for the unredeemed (Luke 24:46). The Lamb of God desires to take away the sins of the world (John 1:29) and reconcile mankind to the Creator. We often sing:

"Souls in danger look above
Jesus completely saves
He will lift you by His love
Out of the angry waves."

But, factually, Christ left the task of salvation in the hands of His followers. The parting concern of the Savior dealt with preaching the Gospel to every creature in every nation till the end of time (Mark 16:15). First century saints took the Master seriously (Acts 8:4) and daily, publicly and privately proclaimed the glad story of victory over sin and death (Acts 5:42).

"Sing the sweet story
Redemption's sweet song
Over and Over
The chorus prolong."

Yes, we have a definite responsibility to share *"the gospel of the grace of God"* with the sin-cursed masses of humanity groping in darkness (Acts 20:24). Since Christ came to give light to those in the shadow of death (Luke 1:79), we need to come out of the shadows and preach peace to the billions in our world that are hopelessly lost!

"He who lives to himself
And dies to himself
To himself and none besides
Lives as though Christ never lived
As though He never died."

Do we really care? Can our neighbors cry, in the language of Psalms 142:4, *"No man cares for my soul?"*

If lost souls bother us, we will do the following:

1. Learn the Bible so we can teach it to others—far and near (1 Peter 3:15)!
2. Grasp every opportunity to speak up for Jesus (Psalm 107:2).
3. Expose error so truth will shine (Ephesians 5:11).
4. Never encourage false teachers (2 John 11).
5. Present the Truth clearly at all times (John 3:32).
6. Learn denominational doctrines and church history so we can converse intelligently with others (Colossians 2:8-10).
7. Be Christ-like and never lose our composure even if those in error ridicule us and the Gospel (Acts 26:25).
8. Be steadfast in spite of many who will not listen and obey (Galatians 6:9).
9. Remember that the seed of the kingdom is the Word of God (Luke 8:11) and that the Lord gives the increase (1 Corinthians 3:6).
10. Never emphasize "responses," but always stress *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* (Colossians 1:27).

Those who are not ashamed of the Gospel will always be ready to pay the debt we owe to those about us — the message of salvation (Romans 1:14-16). Joseph Grigg wrote these words of exhortation in song:

> "Ashamed of Jesus! Sooner far
> Let evening blush to own a star
> And O may this my glory be
> That Christ is not ashamed of me."

Do we really care for lost humanity? If we do we will give generously to the cause of Christ that truth might cover the world as waters cover the sea. While the souls of men are dying in iniquity we dare not sit by idly. There is something we can do. Parents can rear children with a deep desire to preach in difficult places where others will not go. Prosperous brethren could live in smaller houses, drive less expensive cars, wear cheaper clothes, forego fancy jewelry, do away with smoking and other wasteful habits so that more money is released to send the good news of the Savior to earth's remotest boundaries. Do we really care? If so, we could write letters to preachers on foreign soil and difficult areas of America. We could teach

more on personal and world evangelism and the value of each soul (Mark 8:36). We could change the emphasis of young people in the church from entertainment to evangelism (Romans 14:17), and a new day would dawn in many congregations. If we loved lost souls like the Bible tells us to, more evangelists would leave Texas and Tennessee and spend some of their preaching years in Trinidad and Timbuktu! But do we really care?

Paul's **spirit stirred within him** (Acts 17:16) at the lost condition of Athens. Sin must not bother many of us very much. Jeremiah could not keep quiet because God's Word was too precious (Jeremiah 20:9). And, the Scriptures are of deep value in our day also (1 Samuel 3:1). Two centuries ago, Isaac Bickerstaffe sadly wrote these words:

"I care for nobody, not I."

But the love of Christ propels us (2 Corinthians 5:14) into sharing the saving message to those steeped in error. With David and Paul we exclaim:

"I have believed, therefore I have spoken."

Out there in the villages and hamlets of Scandinavia, India, Africa, Brazil, and a hundred other nations are millions of folk who desperately need redemption. The ransom price has been paid (1 Timothy 2:6), but many of the captives don't even know it.

"While the souls of men are dying
And the Master calls for you
Let no one hear you idly saying
There is nothing I can do."

Do we really care if many are lost? ✞

Johnny Ramsey is an evangelist and teaches in the Brown Trail School of Preaching in Bedford, Texas, U. S. A.

"Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

One Woman's Efforts

Jane McWhorter

Several years ago on the Harding University campus I met Mary Lea Thompson, a young woman whose story greatly impressed me in showing what one person can do in reaching the lost. *"Go ye therefore and teach all nations . . ."* (Matthew 28:19) includes each of us. Although women cannot speak publicly in a mixed audience in proclaiming the Word (1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12), they still have a tremendous responsibility in sharing the good news.

Upon graduation from college a number of years ago, the newly married Mary Lea and her husband moved to New Jersey to teach school and, most important, lead others to Christ. Undaunted by a culture which knew practically nothing about New Testament Christianity, Mary Lea trusted the power of the Word as she began inviting her friends to her house for a period of Bible study each Thursday afternoon. Several of the women who taught at the same school accepted the invitation, as well as some neighborhood women. One afternoon each week this group of women met around Mary Lea's kitchen table with nothing but open Bibles. Many of the students had never before studied directly from the Word of God. Mary Lea always

began with one of the Gospel accounts, verse by verse, and then proceeded to the book of Acts. She told how captivated these women were with the records of conversion found in this study. The stories were completely new to most of them, and how fascinated they were! No one had to be asked to obey the Gospel. Instead, when they read of a conversion, they would excitedly exclaim that they wanted to do exactly what these early Christians had done, even though their actions would alienate them from their own families and cultural ties in the communities. Mary Lea was there to help them with any problems.

That fall I spoke to a ladies' retreat in the Northeast. There I met five of Mary Lea's most recent converts, whom she had brought for spiritual nurturing and growth. A snapshot of this devoted teacher and her friends is one of my most prized possessions, and I have taped it in the front of my Bible as a constant reminder of the power of the seed and the faithfulness of one woman to scatter that seed, even on some most unpromising soil. How rich has been the harvest! What power is in the seed! ✝

Jane McWhorter is a Christian writer and the wife of a gospel preacher. She lives in Fayette, Alabama, U. S. A.

The Doorkeeper's Prayer

Almighty God,

Dwell in me,
Open my heart
On this day,
Route and guide,
Keeping me
Ever
Excelling with
Patience
Even
Rejoicing

In peace and harmony
Never failing Him as

God's helper.
Openly
Devotedly,
Saying,

Help me
Overcome
Utter indifference.
Strengthen me to carry on
Each daily task.

—Viola B. Howard Cole

(Matthew 13:1-23; Mark 4:1-25; Luke 8:4-18)

Gary C. Hampton

Introduction

The word "parable" actually comes from two Greek words. "Para" means "beside." "Ballein" means "I throw," or " I place." Thus, we have, "to throw or place beside." In parables, Jesus and other inspired men laid stories that would be familiar to their listeners alongside spiritual truths. The people who were receptive could then learn something of God's will.

The Parable of the Sower

In Mark chapter 3 Jesus told about a farmer who went out to his field to sow some seed. A portion of that seed fell on the wayside, or foot path. Palestine in the days of Christ was a land without fences. People walking through an area naturally followed basically the same path. Eventually, such led to there being a hard, packed way through the fields. Seed which fell on this ground would either be trampled under foot or eaten by the birds.

Other seed fell on rocky ground. This was a rock ledge covered by a small layer of topsoil. Seed on such ground would readily spring up. However, because its roots could not go deep, the plant soon withered. Some of the seed fell on ground already covered with thorns. The thorns would compete with the young seedling for sun and moisture. At last, the thorns would choke the seedling to death. Seed also fell on good ground. Harvest time found such ground yielding thirty, sixty, or one hundred times as much grain as was originally sown.

The Importance of Learning From the Parables

Jesus called for those who could hear His message to seek for an understanding of its meaning. Parables were intended by our Lord to uncover that

which had been hidden. The word "mystery" is used in the New Testament to refer to the plan of God for the redemption of man which had been hidden from previous generations (compare Romans 16:25-27).

Of course, parables were also intended to hide the truth from those who were not ready to receive such. To them, the stories told would be innocent little stories of common life. Interestingly, Paul says the rulers of this world would not have crucified Jesus if they had fully understood the mystery (1 Corinthians 2:6-8). Jesus promised that those who had receptive hearts would find the parables teaching them much more about the kingdom of heaven. Those who had little understanding and refused to receive more would find the parables a puzzle which obscured understanding.

Explaining the Parable of the Sower

Christ used this parable to point out the responsibility an individual has when he hears. The seed of the kingdom is God's Word. The sower is someone who preaches the Word. The four soils represent different conditions of the human heart.

The wayside soil represents the person who has closed his mind completely to the Word of God (Hebrews 3:12-13). The rocky soil represents the person who fails to think out carefully what he has heard. He does not follow through completely and develops no depth of understanding. So, when hard times come, he abandons the truth. The thorny-soiled heart is that individual who loves the cares and pleasures of this life more than God's kingdom. This one allows such to choke God's Word out of his life. The good soil represents the person who understands, receives, and keeps with patience the Word of God.

Applying the Parable of the Sower

Reception of the Gospel and the fruit it produces depends upon the heart of the one who receives it. The real hearer is the man who listens, who understands, and who obeys. *"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves"* (James 1:22). We must, therefore, be sure our minds are open and receptive to the Word of God.

Teachers also need to remember that it is their job to sow the seed without regard to the types of soil it falls upon. God is the one who will give the increase (1 Corinthians 3:5-7; Isaiah 55:10-11). God expects every faithful Christian to sow the seed of the kingdom (2 Timothy 2:2; Mark 16:15-16). We cannot be faithful and be quiet! ✝

Gary C. Hampton is an evangelist in Valdosta, Georgia, U. S. A.

"Meet For The Master's Use"

Clarence DeLoach, Jr.

It is evident from a study of the Bible that God can take people of all kinds and make them suitable for His work. He can take ordinary, little and unknown men, place His spirit and power upon them, and work with and through them.

Look at the apostles! They were not the world's great! Some of them are still obscure. What do you know about James, the son of Alphaeus? He is even called James, the less (Mark 15:40). The original word actually means "little." Little what? Was it stature? Age? Influence? It could be that he was a small, young person with a personality not too commanding. To say the least, it is encouraging that the Lord does not depend upon superstars!

You don't have to have the finest personality, a great education, a commanding voice, great leadership, unusual insight, exceeding ability to be a servant for Christ. James, the less, Bartholomew, Simon, the zealot were all **apostles**. However, they are marked by obscurity. The Lord used ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things. He still does!

Hebrews chapter 11 is a great chapter on faith. After naming those who were outstanding, the writer concludes the chapter with a reference to a host of unnamed people who through faith wrought amazing things (Hebrews 11:33-38). Then, he added that the world was not worthy of the silent heroes of faith.

The point in all of this is obvious! The human instrument is not the focus — Christ is! Humble, ordinary servants who dare to trust, obey, and place their very lives in the hands of Christ can be used by Him for remarkable service.

It is not the instrument, but the touch of the Master's hand, that makes the difference. Will you allow the Potter to "mold and make you" after His will? ✝

Clarence DeLoach, Jr. preaches for the Walnut Street Church of Christ in Dickson, Tennessee, U. S. A.

Verse Search

Supply the missing information from the gospel of John, chapter ten.

1. Jesus compared His Family, or His way, to a _____. (V. 1)

2. Those who would try to enter by some way other than the door (Himself), He called _____ and _____. (V. 1,7)

3. Jesus said, "I am ___ ____ _____. ___ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____." (V. 11)

4. *Out of all of those in the world who would follow* Him, Jesus said He would make ____ flock and _____ shepherd. (V. 16)

5. Jesus said His Father loves Him because He was willing to do what? (V. 17)

6. "No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have _____ to ___ ___ _____, and I have _____ to ___ ___ _____. This _____ I have received from ___ _____. (V. 18)

7. Because they did not understand these teachings, some said Jesus was possessed by a _____. (V. 19,20)

8. Others defended Him, asking, "Can a demon _____ ____ _____ ____ ____ _____?" (V. 21)

9. At the Feast of Dedication, what challenge did the Jews make to Jesus? (V. 24)

10. Had He already plainly told them who He was? (V. 25)

11. When Jesus said, "I and My Father are one", what did the Jews do? (V. 30,31)

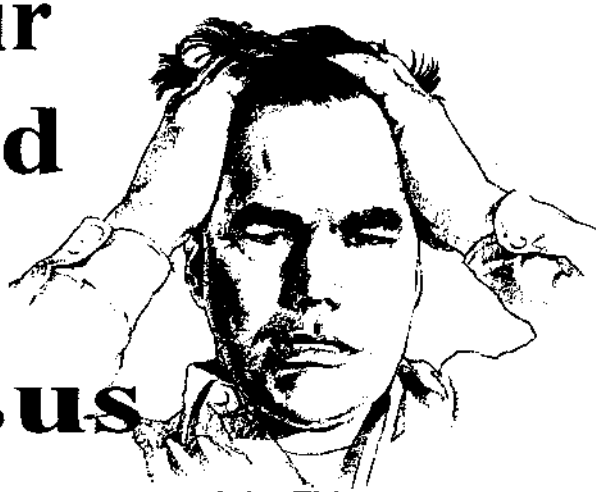
12. Why did they do this? (V. 33)

13. Of the One Whom the Father had _____ and _____ ____ _____, the Jews said, "You are _____", because Jesus had stated plainly, "I am the Son of God." (V. 36)

14. Jesus said, "If I do [the works of My Father], though you do not believe Me, _____ ____ _____ that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me, and I in Him." (V. 38)

[See inside of back cover for answers.]

Our Need For Jesus



John Thiesen

One of the hardest tasks, and at the same time the most important in the world, is to get across to people their great need for Jesus. If they understood their need for Him and what He offers them, more would be coming to Him.

We Need Forgiveness

All of us, without exception, need Christ. For instance, we all need the forgiveness of sins which He brings. No one has passed through this world without sinning. Everyone at some time in his life has either lied, cursed, envied, coveted, cheated, stolen, hated, gotten drunk, been irreverent, or done something immoral. *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23).

God has taught us in His Word that doing these things will separate us from Him and cause us to be lost. *"For the wages of sin is death . . . ."* (Romans 6:23). Since we all have sinned, if we don't get forgiveness from the Lord, we will be lost in the judgment day. But this is exactly where Jesus enters the picture. He is God's way of removing our sins. Christ suffered a terrible substitute punishment for our sins on the cross.

Christ's Salvation Available Now — Not Later

However, this mercy of God is only available to us now while we are still alive. It is not offered after death. Many are thinking to take their

chances on Judgment Day, hoping that somehow the good about them will outweigh their sins in God's eyes when they stand before the throne of judgment. They are in for a shock. God's mercy will not be extended on Judgment Day, but right now, while we are on the earth drawing our breath in the flesh. The mercy is found by all who in this present life turn to Christ. Then, in the judgment, those sins will not be there to condemn us, because they were taken away in life.

It is to the living, not the dead, that Jesus sent the message that *"repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem"* (Luke 24:47), and *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"* (Mark 16:15,16).

If we could only get across to people this vital message that their only chance of salvation is now, not later, and that Jesus Christ is the only way, then maybe their urgent need to turn to Him would be impressed on their minds and we would be seeing many more coming to the Lord. ✝

John Thiesen is a former missionary to Malawi and continues to be involved in that effort while working with the Pleasant Valley congregation in Mobile, Alabama, U. S. A.

This Is for You

This is for you, Dad, for the father I love, for the one who has cared all these years but has never heard enough about how much I care.

So this is for you, for the one who has helped me through all my childhood fears and failures, and turned all that he could into successes and dreams; for the man who is a wonderful example of what more men should be; for the person whose devotion to his family is marked by gentle strength and guidance, and whose love of life, sense of direction, and down-to-earth wisdom make more sense to me now than nearly any other thing I learned.

If you never knew how much I respected you, I want you to know it now, Dad, and if you never knew how much I admire you, let me just say that I *think* you're the best father that any child ever had.

These words are filled with love, Dad, and they're *all for you.*

— Author Unknown

Salvation, God's Way

Hollis Miller

Jesus was asked: *"Who is my neighbor?"* In reply he told a parable about a man who had been robbed and left by the side of the road. Three men: a priest, a Levite, and a Samaritan, travelled the road and saw the stricken man. But only the Samaritan stopped and cared for him. Having completed the parable, Jesus asked: *"Which of these three do you think proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?"* (Luke 10:25-37). The answer was too obvious for the inquirer to have a choice other than the one who had helped the victim.

Let us borrow from the parable of Jesus and apply it to a different story. A man was seeking salvation, and made inquiry of three teachers concerning how he might obtain it. The first teacher cited the doctrines of his church and urged the man to accept them. The second teacher appealed to the rulings of the hierarchy above him, stating that he was bound by what the hierarchy decided. The third teacher asked the inquirer to get a New Testament and search the Scriptures with him for an answer to his question. Which teacher properly responded to the inquirer's concern?

How tempting it is for men to subdue the truth that salvation is God's subject, and not their own. It is God who planned it, and it is God who implements it. Man was, is, and always shall be wholly passive with regard to planning what one must do to be saved.

The Bible is the only source known to men wherein Jesus and His apostles revealed the will of God concerning salvation. We learn from the Bible that certain things are absolutely required by God for salvation. No man, or

council of men, can ever change them. They will stand until the Lord returns for his own. The things absolutely required are:

1. Belief in God

"Without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

2. Faith in Christ

"God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16, see John 8:24).

3. Repentance

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30).

4. Rebirth of Water and of the Spirit

"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

Whatever may be said or written about the foregoing requirements for salvation, no man has the right to change them, for they are divinely decreed.

Difficulty in understanding the word "water" in John 3:5 is traceable to doctrines which leave no room for baptism in the scheme of redemption. It is quite plain that if salvation is by faith only, then the water to which Jesus referred cannot be a reference to baptism. One expositor explained Jesus' words thusly: "Jesus now described the new birth in terms of water and Spirit. Of these two, Spirit is the more crucial...water may well refer to the emphasis of John the Baptist on repentance and cleansing from sin as the necessary background for, even the negative side of, the new birth." (**The New Testament and Wycliffe Bible Commentary**, p. 289.) Another says: "Various interpretations have been suggested for the water. Does it refer to natural birth, which is accompanied by watery fluid? Or is it a symbol of the Spirit (John 7:37-39) so that "water" and "Spirit" are merely a hendiadys, two words referring to the same thing? Or is it a symbol of baptism? The best answer seems to be that if Jesus was attempting to clarify his teaching for Nicodemus, he would answer in familiar terms; and the author would want his readers to understand his phraseology. Since Jesus' ministry came shortly after that of John the Baptist, Jesus may have been referring to John's preaching, which dealt with the baptism of water, signifying repentance, and with the coming messenger of God who would endow men with the Holy Spirit (John 1:31-33). The new birth is conditioned on the

repentance and confession of the individual in response to the appeal of God and by the transformation of life by the gift of the Holy Spirit." (**The Expositor's Bible Commentary**, Vol. 9, p. 47.) If, as these citation suggest, Jesus employed the word "water" in reference to the earlier preaching of John the Baptist, then does His statement not necessitate that John's message be proclaimed today? What, then, happens to the all-sufficiency of the Gospel? (See Galatians 1:8,9.) Such interpretations of what Jesus meant by "water" would never have been introduced had men not ruled baptism out of God's plan for saving man.

Efforts to circumvent the teaching of the New Testament in order to uphold false doctrine will always lead to confusion and harm. How important it is for men to permit the Bible both to speak for itself and interpret itself. The proper interpretation of "water" in John 3:5 begins with the words of the Lord in Matthew 28:19, continues through the book of Acts, and ends with several references in the letters (see Romans 6:1-4; Galatians 3:26,27; 1 Peter 3:21; Colossians 2:12). No one in New Testament times was born again who was not baptized into Jesus Christ. ✝

Hollis Miller is an evangelist in Elkton, Kentucky, U. S. A.

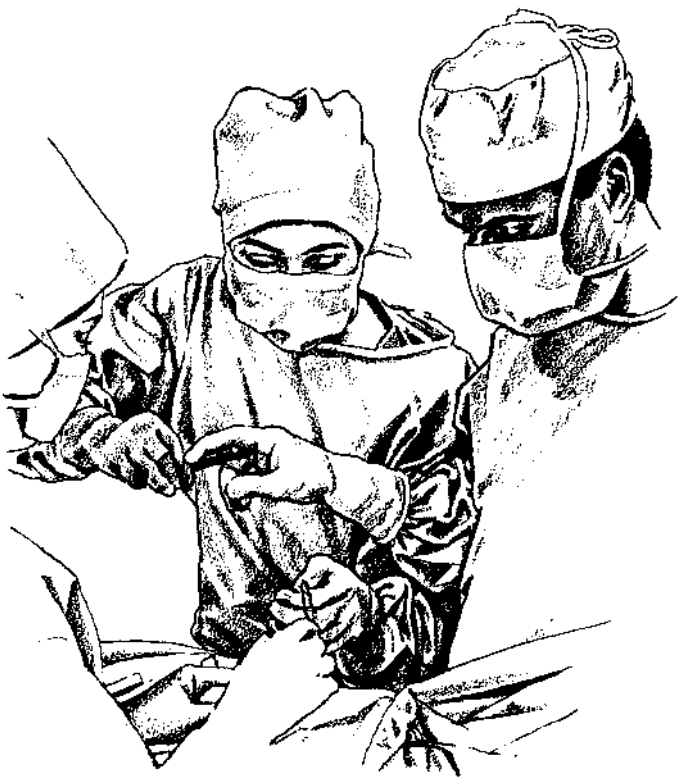
Wonderful Amazing Grace

God's grace –
His undeserved favor,
reaches out
when we learn
Christ loves us,
and that He died
for us.
This grace makes
us conscious
that we are great sinners –
not only because
of transgressions committed,
but because we fall
short of God's standards
for our lives.
We are amazed,
never ceasing to marvel
as we experience
God's undeserved love,
mercy and grace
as He forgives
our shortcomings
and supplies
all our needs

– Brunice C. Cole, Jr.

Finding "Heart-Felt" Religion

Ancil Jenkins



"Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezekiel 18:31).

Dr. Christian Barnard revolutionized surgery by performing the first successful heart transplant and continued to pioneer this field for many years. On one occasion, one of his heart transplant patients asked to see the removed organ. Dr.

Barnard brought him a large bottle that contained the old heart. As the man looked at the scarred organ that had once pumped life through his body, the doctor realized that this was the first time in human experience that a person had ever seen his own heart. This historic occasion became even more significant by the comment of the transplant recipient. Realizing that this old heart was worn out and that without the transplant he would be dead, the patient said, "I'm glad I don't have that old heart any more."

The Bible speaks of man's heart as the center of his actions. (The Bible "heart", of course, is not man's blood pump, but his intellect, will, and emotions.) The outward expressions of man, his words and actions, come from within him, from his "heart." Jesus said, *"For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean' . . . ."* (Matthew 15:19,20).

What a difference a new heart can make! Only this operation can adequately and completely change man and his life. Man's need is not a little rest or a little reformation. Man, without Christ, needs a new heart. This alone can change him. This change is not optional. Unless we get a new heart, we die (Ezekiel 36:26)!

How about your life? Do you lack the ingredients that make it full, joyous, and free? Do you have an overload of guilt, fear, resentment, and regret? Do you feel right about all the wrong things and wrong about all the right things? The solution is simply — you need a heart transplant. Jesus can take your old, calloused heart and give you one that is brand new. Then purpose with your heart, obey from the heart, cleave to Him with your heart, and love from your heart (2 Corinthians 9:7; Romans 6:17; Acts 11:23; 1 Peter 1:23). With a new heart and heart-motivated actions, you will have a real heartfelt religion. ✝

Ancil Jenkins preaches for the Sunset Church of Christ in Miami, Florida, U.S.A.

Where God's finger points,

God's hand will always make the way.

The Seed and the Soil Necessary to Salvation

W. Douglass Harris

Note the word "necessary" in the caption of this article. It would be a waste of time, talent, and effort to discuss something not essential to salvation. Our title suggests two basic essentials to scriptural conversion — the right seed and the right soil. Without the God-ordained seed and the proper soil, there can be no salvation from sin.

The Seed Necessary To Salvation

"The seed of the kingdom is the word of God" (Matthew 13:19; Luke 8:11). God established His immutable law at creation that each seed produces after its kind (Genesis 1:11,24). Had the pure, unadulterated Word of God been sown from the beginning (that is, from Pentecost in Acts 2) until now, there would be only one church in existence now. This seed produced only one church in the first century, and it would have done the same thing in subsequent centuries if it were unmixed with doctrines and commandments of men.

Let us note some essentials of the seed to reproduce. (1) It must be alive, or the germ of life must be

in it. Inspiration affirms that it is "living and active" as God gave it (Hebrews 4:12), and that it is God's power unto salvation (Romans 1:16) and imperishable (1 Peter 1:23). (2) Seed must be planted. Peter and the other apostles were promised that they would do the first sowing (Matthew 16:19; 18:18). They were also promised another Comforter, the Holy Spirit, that would reveal to them the seed (John 14:26; 16:13). This was a promise of inspiration and infallibility. (3) There must a place to begin the development of the seed.

No heart is a good heart until it is first an honest heart.

Note particularly the three requirements to produce fruit to perfection — a sower, good seed (pure Gospel), and honest and good hearts.

In fulfillment of the promise to His apostles, the Holy Spirit descended on them in baptismal measure on the first Pentecost day after Christ's ascension into heaven to guide them into all the truth (Acts 1:4-8; 2). Peter and the other apostles were the sowers, the place was in Jerusalem, and the Holy Spirit miraculously supplied the seed. Luke said this is where it would begin (Luke 24:44-49), and Peter referred to it as "the beginning" (Acts 11:15). Any seed that originated with any source other than the infallible (in teaching and writing) apostles of Christ is false seed. We now have the seed in the completed and final revelation in the New Testament (Jude 3; 2 Timothy 3:16,17).

The Soil Necessary To Salvation

In the same parable where the seed is identified, the proper soil is also described — *"honest and good hearts"* (Luke 8:15). All the soils in the parable of the sower represent different kinds of hearts, but only the good soil — honest and good hearts — produced properly. And the order of *"honest and good"* is significant, which is the order in the Greek text. No heart is a good heart until it is first an honest heart. Note particularly the three requirements to produce fruit to perfection — a sower, good seed (pure Gospel), and honest and

good hearts. It was the same seed that was sown in all the soils by the same sower; the great difference was **how** all heard the Word (see Luke 8:18).

Note the process at work in Acts 2. Peter's sermon (verses 22-36) prepared the soil for the seed. The audience asked, *"What shall we do?"* This implied that they believed the word preached by Peter and were convicted of their sins. Peter then bound on them what had already been bound in heaven as conditions of pardon (Acts 2:38; Matthew 16:19; 18:18). Luke records the results: *"They that gladly received his word* (the seed) *were baptized"* (Acts 2:41). Note the indispensable elements of preaching the Gospel (sowing the seed) and the reception into *"honest and good"* hearts. This same process is evident in every case of conversion recorded in the book of Acts, the book of conversions.

What fruit was produced? They were simply saints (later called Christians) and members of the Lord's church (Acts 2:47). The same seed, unmixed with the doctrines and commandments of men, planted today in the same kind of soil will produce now exactly what it did then. **If not, why not?** ✞

W. Douglass Harris is the editor of the *Caribbean Messenger* and lives in Decatur, Alabama, U. S. A.

I Met the Strangest Man

- He said he believes the Bible is the word of God, *but he never reads it.*
- He said the church would be more effective in its ministries if more of its members were really dedicated, *but he isn't.*
- He said he feels that the assemblies are times of edification and praise, *but he never attends.*
- He said the younger generation needs stronger spiritual values, *but he doesn't exemplify them in his life.*
- He said the church is not doing the work the Lord intends it should do, *but he is not working.*
- He said he believes that God hears and answers prayer, *but he does not pray.*
- He says he knows the Lord is coming again, *but he lives as though the Lord will never come.*

Just Good Morals Do Not Make One A Christian

Basil Overton

Some think that one is a Christian if he is a good moral person. However, just because one pays his debts, loves his family and friends, and is a good neighbor, does not mean he is a Christian. Truly one must be good morally to be a Christian. Christians should grow in their good qualities. But to become a Christian one must believe and obey the Gospel; he must do this regardless of how good he is.

The eunuch, whom Philip baptized, was a *good* man in many respects before he reached the blood of Christ and had his sins washed away. He was a man of great *authority;* he had the charge of all the treasury of a great nation; he was doubtless well educated; he was obviously intellectually adept; he was a *religious* man; he had been to worship, and on his way home he was reading his Bible; he was *honest;* he was a *gentlemen;* he was an inquiring, humble man; but he was *a lost man* (Acts 8:26-40)! *He was lost in spite of all these good traits.*

Even though all these things were true of the eunuch, he had to hear the Gospel, believe it, and go down into the water and be baptized into Christ, where he could reach the blood of Christ.

That which has been shown concerning the eunuch is also true of others in the New Testament record, like Saul of Tarsus, and Cornelius (Acts 9,10). But they, too, had to obey the Gospel before they belonged to Christ.

Many today are depending on their good qualities to save them, and they *think* they are Christians because they are *good morally.* But before they are Christians they will also have to humbly submit to Christ and be baptized into Him.

If you have not obeyed the Gospel, you should! Dear friend, if you have not obeyed the Gospel like the eunuch and others, you are not a Christian (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). ✝

Basil Overton is editor of *The World Evangelist* and lives in Florence, Alabama, U. S. A.

Blessed Be God

T. Pierce Brown

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

Probably on the average of at least three times a day I thank God in wonder and amazement at the multitude and magnitude of blessings bestowed upon me personally as I participate in the various efforts to evangelize — take the good news — to people everywhere. As I go all over the nation, I try to emphasize that we are to be concerned not only with taking the Gospel to every home in the U.S.A., but to every person in every nation.

A part of those blessings are the responses of thousands of students of correspondence Bible courses, the letters from hundreds of preachers in Africa, India, and other places who respond to something they have read which has apparently helped them. God placed in almost every person the desire to feel useful. To find that God has permitted us to be useful in accomplishing the task which is so important that Christ died for it is thrilling and humbling.

As I read Paul's glorious words of praise in Ephesians 1:3, it occurred to me that I was simply experiencing in a small degree what Paul had in a large degree. He was expressing as a concrete reality that which many of us are aware of only as a theoretical possibility.

Let us examine some thoughts in that verse that should express the feeling of every Christian. First, *"Blessed be God . . . ."* To bless God is to express adoration, veneration, and gratitude for Him, and to acknowledge His excellency in all respects. When we feel, as Paul did, an overwhelming gratitude for the infinite love and grace bestowed on us, we must cry out, *"Blessed be God."*

But let us note a point that is vital and arresting. It is not simply God as God to whom Paul gave this ascription of praise. It was to *". . . the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . ."* The blessedness

of this relationship to the God who is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ made all others pale into insignificance. When Jesus said in John 14:6, *"No man cometh to the Father but by me,"* He is suggesting something of this thought. We can have no meaningful relationship with God except through Christ.

Note also the tense of the verb. It is not simply that He will bless us, but *"He hath blessed us."* Verse four elaborates on that: *"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love."*

It is a truth of staggering proportion that before the foundation of the world — before Adam was created — God had a plan for redeeming mankind through Jesus Christ. The church was not an afterthought, dragged in as an alternative plan because the Jews surprised God and rejected His Son as the King of His proposed kingdom, as premillenialists teach. It was predestined before the foundation of the world that those who trusted in Jesus (verse 12) would be saved.

This trust in Jesus involved, because of the very nature and meaning of the term "trust," the willing submission to the authority and will of Christ. If a person should go to a doctor anywhere in the world, and the doctor should say, "Do not worry about a thing. Just trust in me, and I will cure you," nobody would assume he meant, "You will be cured the moment you have faith in me, and are willing to take my prescription." "Just trust in me" would properly be understood to mean, "Rely on my word, and take the prescriptions as I direct." If one did not have to pay the doctor, he would understand that his being cured of the disease would be by grace through faith. Although he could not be cured by any plan he could devise, or medicine he could invent, it would still be achieved only if, as, and when he took the medicine which the doctor prescribed. Why this simple truth cannot be as easily seen in the case

It is a truth of staggering proportion that before the foundation of the world — before Adam was created — God had a plan for redeeming mankind through Jesus Christ.

of the Great Physician is one of the greatest mysteries of the day.

This truth is made even more impressive when we see that the place where He blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places is in Christ. Note that it is not only *through* Christ, but *in* Christ.

To be required to name all the spiritual blessings Paul had in mind might be an impossible task, but to meditate on just a few of them, each one more valuable than all the world, is a thrilling experience. In Christ we have remission of all sins, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the right to call God our Father, the promise that no sincere prayer will be ignored, the protection against the fiery darts of the Evil One so that no temptation can be given us that is too heavy for us to bear (1 Corinthians 10:13), constant cleansing of sins as we walk in the light as He is in the light (1 John 1:7), an inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, reserved in heaven for us (1 Peter 1:3), and many other exceeding great and precious promises (2 Peter 1:4).

It is a tragedy beyond imagination that the religious world has so perverted the Gospel that, although many religious leaders admit and teach that these blessings are in Christ, few, if any, tell their followers what the Bible says about how one gets into Christ. Those of us who preach the Gospel are sometimes falsely accused of believing that Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:27 teach that baptism is the only thing we need to do in order to get into Christ. That is not true, but it is the transition act which, if properly preceded by a loving, trusting, penitent, obedient faith, does get us into the relationship with Christ where all these spiritual blessings are.

To obey the Lord just to receive these blessings is not the highest motive we can have. The highest motives we can have are to do what we do through love, in order to glorify God. Each of us needs to be more deeply aware of these blessings in order for us to continue to glorify God and properly praise Him for those blessings. ✞

T. Pierce Brown preaches the Gospel in Cookeville, Tennessee, U. S. A.

One must have the resolve to stand on the word of God, *and that alone* — even if it means *being* alone.

Some Thoughts On Unity

Don W. Walker

I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts (Psalm 119:63).

The Psalmist wrote, *"Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!"* (Psalm 133:1). There are some things that are good, but not very pleasant. Proper church discipline would be an example. And again, there are some things that are pleasant, but not very good. Sin would be a good example of this point (Hebrews 11:25). Yet, "Brethren dwelling together in unity" is both good and pleasant.

It is such a rewarding feeling to know that what I have done has brought glory to God. Yet, this feeling is multiplied when we realize the fellowship we have with those who are also bringing glory to Jehovah.

We can see the serious nature of unity in God's eyes when we realize what the Bible teaches concerning those who would disrupt unity. In Proverbs 6:16-19 we learn there are six things the Lord hates, *"Yea, seven are an abomination unto Him."* The seventh thing mentioned is *"He that soweth discord among brethren."* Paul wrote, *"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them"* (Romans 16:17).

John would show the standard of fellowship when he wrote, *"But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another"* (1 John 1:7). The doctrine of Christ plays a necessary role in fellowship. In fact, without His doctrine, there is no fellowship.

So it is, each one of us should live in such a way that we will be able to say, *"I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts"* (Psalm 119:63). ✝

Don W. Walker preaches the Gospel of Christ in Stephenville, Texas, U.S.A.

Despised and Rejected of Men

Isaiah 53:3 John 12:48 John 1:11,12

How He Is Rejected	By Whom Rejected
1. His *divinity* rejected. Luke 1:35; 3:22; John 3:16; 5:22.	By modernists, infidels, agnostics. 1 John 2:22; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; 2 John 7-11.
2. His *authority* rejected. Matt. 28:18; John 5:26,27; 12:48.	By popes, councils, conferences. 1 Tim. 6:15,16; Gal. 1:6-8; Acts 20:29.
3. His *name* rejected. Phil. 2:8,9; Acts 11:26; Col. 3:17.	By denominational names and labels. Acts 4:11,12; Rom. 7:4; 1 Pet. 4:16.
4. His *church* rejected. Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:23-27.	By man-made organizations. Matt. 15:13; Eph. 1:3; 22,23; 4:4.
5. His *gospel* rejected. Mk. 16:15,16; Rom. 1:16; Gal. 1:6-8.	By doctrines of human origin. Matt. 15:8,9; Gal. 1:6-8; Rev. 22:18,19.
6. His *worship* rejected. John 4:24; Acts 2:42; Col. 3:16.	By social emphasis and pretense. Matt. 23:14; Lk. 18:9-14; 1 Cor. 14:15.

Dillard Thurman

The Purpose of Preaching

J. C. Choate

INTRODUCTION:

1. Preaching is the means of communicating God's Word.
2. It may be from the pulpit, by radio, or through the medium of television.
3. But what is the purpose of it?

DISCUSSION:

I. Preaching is definitely not for certain purposes.

A. Not to preach self (2 Corinthians 4:5).
B. Not to show education (1 Corinthians 2:1-5).
C. Not for entertainment (1 Corinthians 2:2).
   1. Joking all the time.
   2. Telling death-bed tales.
D. Not to be popular (1 Corinthians 4:9-13).
E. Not for a job only (1 Corinthians 4:12).
F. Not for promoting hobbies.
G. Not for preaching false doctrine (Galatians 1:7-9).
H. Not for condemning only.
I. Not to preach something new (Revelation 22:18,19).
J. Not to be used.

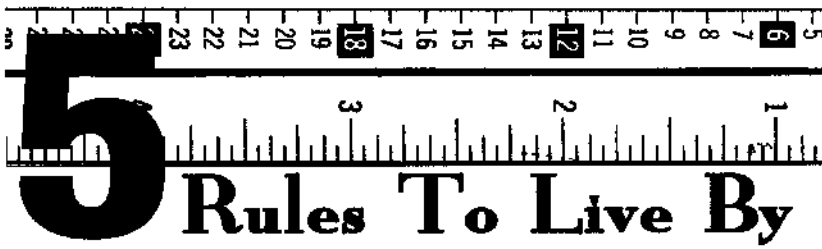
II. The purpose of preaching.

A. Jesus has commanded it (Mark 16:15).
B. To preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:2).
C. To evangelize (Acts 8:4).
D. To inform or educate (Matthew 28:19; Romans 10:15-17).
E. To exalt Christ (1 Corinthians 1:23).
F. To condemn error (2 Timothy 4:2).
G. To correct the ungodly (1 Corinthians 5).
H. To be simple, practical, and in the language of the people.
I. To persuade men (2 Corinthians 5:11).

CONCLUSION:

1. We are sent to do a job.
2. Once the Lord's Word is preached, then we leave the results with the Lord.
3. Preaching is powerful when the emphasis is on the message rather than the messenger. ✝

"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!" (Romans 10:15)



5 Rules To Live By

Ken Tyler

Purpose: To point out the importance of living by God's rules.

1. ***"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might . . ."* (Ecclesiastes 9:10).**
   A. The practice of this principle will cause the church to spread throughout the world.
   B. This rule will also make us productive at work, school, and in every aspect of our lives.

2. ***"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets"* (Matthew 7:12).**
   A. The church that practices the "golden rule" will have unity that can never be destroyed.
   B. Our society desperately needs this rule — we are destroying one another.

3. ***"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"* (Romans 8:28).**
   A. One of the hardest things for us to be able to do is to see the big picture.
   B. The key is for us to love God and put our trust in Him.

4. ***"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not"* (Galatians 6:7-9). (See also Isaiah 3:8-11; Ephesians 6:8.)**

A. Most people are ignoring this rule.
B. Our actions determine our quality of life and destiny. We must never forget!

5 ***"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul"*** **(Mark 8:36,37)?**

A. The rule is this — If I lose my soul I have lost everything.
B. Why have people forgotten about their souls?

Conclusion: If we live by the right rules we will have the right life and the right destiny. ✞

Ken Tyler preaches for the church of Christ in Arab, Alabama, U. S. A.

If Jesus Came

Would you have to change your clothes before you let Him in?
Or hide some magazines, and put the Bible where they had been?

Would you hide your worldly music and put some hymn books out?
Could you let Jesus walk right in, or would you rush about?

And I wonder . . . if the Savior spent a day or two with you,
Would you go right on doing, the things you always do?

Would you go right on saying the things you always say?
Or would life for you continue as it does from day to day?

Would you take Jesus with you everywhere you go?
Or would you maybe change your plans for just a day or so?

Would you be glad to have Him stay forever on and on?
Or would you sigh with great relief when He at last was gone?

It might be interesting to know the things that you would do,
If Jesus came in person to spend some time with you.

— Author Unknown

Did The Witch of En-dor Make Samuel Appear?

Max Patterson

In 1 Samuel 28 there is a story concerning Saul and the witch of En-dor. Saul is in the depths of despair. He seeks help from a source which he formerly would have regarded with great contempt — the witch of En-dor. He had no doubt put to death others who practiced witchcraft and similar deceptive matters. But now, in despair, he remembers Samuel, whose wisdom he had disregarded in life, but whom he hopes to reach for advice through the witch.

The woman (the witch) does her usual incantations (ones common in such seances). What happens next is a real surprise. Samuel appears. The appearance of Samuel is real. But this was not accomplished by the witch's treachery. Actually she was wholly unprepared for what occurred. She had not expected Samuel to actually appear, and she was surprised. It seems Saul had more faith in the witch than the witch did.

The appearance of Samuel was neither by the power of the woman nor by the agency of the devil. It was not an illusion. The design of what happened is to rebuke both the witch and Saul. What happened is clearly a miracle. The proof of the genuineness of the miracle is to be seen in Samuel's message delivered to Saul: Verse 19, "... *God will deliver Israel also with you* (Saul) *into the hand of the Philistines; and tomorrow you and your sons will be with me ....*"

Samuel predicted that the Philistines would triumph in battle over Israel, and that Saul and his sons would die on the morrow following this exchange. These details could not have been known by the woman, Satan, or any of his agents. So, they must have been delivered by inspiration.

Therefore, Samuel did appear before King Saul, not by witchery, but by divine interposition. The purpose of what happened was to rebuke both the woman and Saul. So, this story lends no credence to sorcery. What happened was not a trick, nor was it the witch actually calling up Samuel by her supposed powers. ✝

Max Patterson preaches for the Hillcrest Church of Christ in Neosho, Missouri.

What Is the New Testament Church?

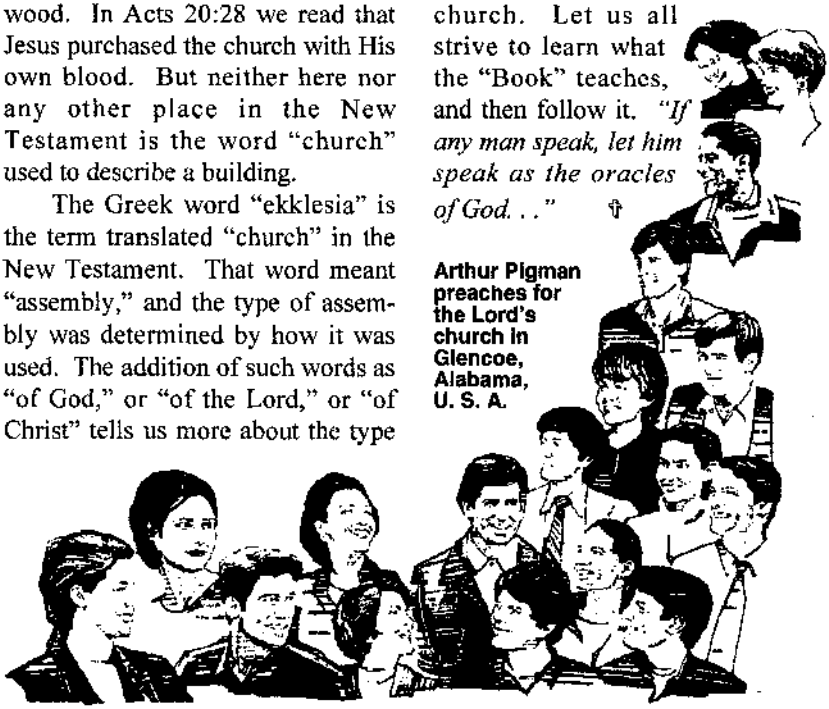
Arthur Pigman

The New Testament church is the church that Jesus promised in Matthew 16:18 to build: *"And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."*

Many have the mistaken idea that the church is a structure made of brick, block, mortar, steel, and wood. In Acts 20:28 we read that Jesus purchased the church with His own blood. But neither here nor any other place in the New Testament is the word "church" used to describe a building.

The Greek word "ekklesia" is the term translated "church" in the New Testament. That word meant "assembly," and the type of assembly was determined by how it was used. The addition of such words as "of God," or "of the Lord," or "of Christ" tells us more about the type of assembly. In Acts 20:28 it has the phrase *"which he purchased."* This makes it clear that the assembly belongs to Christ, because He bought it with His own blood.

The New Testament tells us all about the church. It reveals the plan of salvation, the organization of the church, the worship of the church, and the work of the church. Let us all strive to learn what the "Book" teaches, and then follow it. *"If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God. . ."* ✝



Arthur Pigman preaches for the Lord's church in Glencoe, Alabama, U. S. A.

China . . .

Edward Short

With 1.3 billion people, China represents 21% of our world's population. Ninety-two percent of Chinese belong to the Han ethnic group. An additional fifty-five ethnic minorities make up the other 8% of the population. In spite of the numerous mega-cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai, Wuhan, Guangzhou (Canton), etc., with which the world is more familiar, China's population is only 26% urban; 74% of the people live in rural areas.

China's 1.3 billion people represent over 20% of our Lord's Great Commission, and if one adds the millions of Chinese residing outside the mainland, the Great Commission becomes at least 25% Chinese.

The *Beijing Review* for January 8, 1990, stated that in 1989 there were 30,000 foreign experts working in the PRC. Thousands live there today as well. Fields of work include energy, chemistry, machinery, textiles, building materials, transport, agriculture, telecommunications and, of course, the teaching of English. McDonnel-Douglas builds airplanes in China, Pierre Cardin makes suits and Chrysler builds Jeeps. Motorola manufactures pagers, BellSouth produces telephones and Nike makes shoes. Jobs are available to qualified personnel, and why shouldn't some of these openings be filled by Christians? I encourage you to look for a job there.

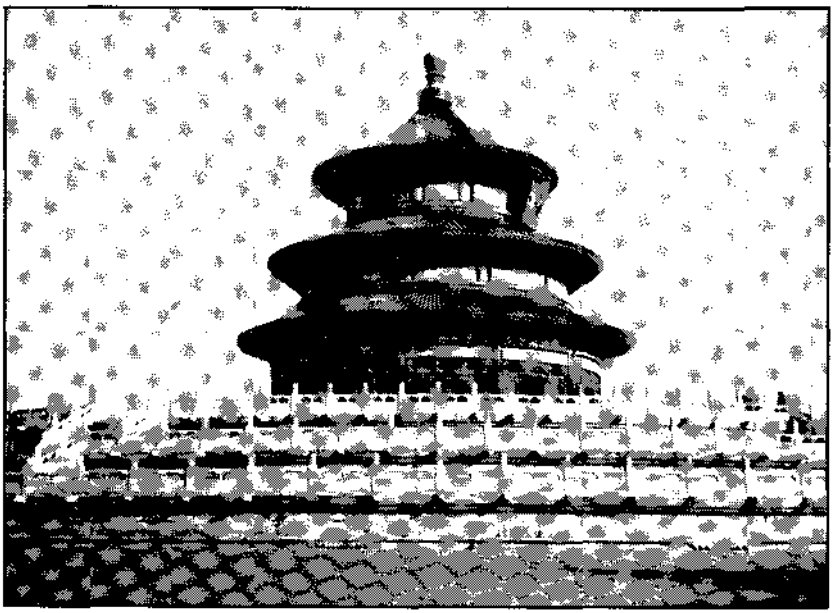
. . . and the Gospel Today

In fact, members of the churches of Christ have been invited to China as experts in the fields of surgery, dairy production, soil improvement, citrus fruit production, teaching and other areas. Companies who sell pipe fittings, greeting cards and electricity generators have sent Christians to China, and others can and should go. I encourage you to go. Don't say, "But I'm not a preacher." This is one time in the history of missions when not being "a preacher" is an advantage! When governments close doors, God opens windows; and the window to China for Christians who are specialists in their vocations is certainly open.

Several members of the Lord's church have taught English in China and some are there now. These teach and befriend students and invite them home where they cultivate closer relationships and privately teach the gospel. While religion cannot be taught in classrooms, teachers do have occasions to talk about words and concepts that raise questions which can be

Farmers from rural areas surrounding Beijing bring their extra produce in wooden carts and display it for sale on the roadside.

answered outside the classroom (words such as hope, love and righteousness). And there are many Biblical allusions in Western literature just waiting to be explained. Even the teacher's Christian lifestyle will evoke questions from students.



The Temple of Heaven in Beijing. China has a rich legacy of ancient buildings and exquisite works of art.

Another open window is for Christians to go to China to study Chinese. We send students to France to study French and to Italy to study Italian. Why not go to China and learn their marvelous language? During the Cold War many Christians spent time in Prague and other East European cities studying languages and teaching the gospel quietly and privately. Now is the time to send mature people to China to learn Chinese while teaching God's gospel privately.

We also need a strategy that will take the gospel to the millions in China's rural areas. I remind you that over 70% of China's population lives in the countryside; furthermore most of these are not permitted to move to the cities. While there are enough people to keep us busy preaching in any

number of cities (12 million in Shanghai, 10 million in Beijing, etc.), there are 800 million people in China's countryside. We must not forget them!

One of the tools that has been used for reaching the masses is World Christian Broadcasting, KNLS in Alaska. Since July 21 of 1983 the church has done five hours of daily broadcasting to China and other Pacific realm nations. There is response to this effort in the form of letters and requests for Bible correspondence courses. World Bible School and World English School courses are used.

John Wu has provided the voice for the Chinese version of John Clayton's video series, "Does God Exist?" Al Henderson worked with Jule Miller to revise an older version of the Miller videos, using World Christian Studios with the voice of Edward Ho for the commentary. These are used in personal visits to China and contacts with students.

The materials are also used in evangelism among Chinese in the U.S. and other countries. Presently about a dozen American congregations have active programs among university students. The Chinese have a natural inquisitiveness about the Scriptures, knowing that much of the Western culture has been built on Christian principles.

Churches of Christ are active in China, although those who live and serve there cannot openly identify themselves as Christian ministers and missionaries. They work in other types of employment and serve Christ in the process.

Others teach Jesus during frequent or infrequent trips into China. Congregations in China which are affiliated with churches of Christ in the U.S.A. are few, but the members are both happy and evangelistic. Indigenous congregations which have no, or only very little, connection with churches of Christ in the U.S.A. and other parts of the world, but whose doctrinal positions are Biblically sound (e.g., who baptize by immersion for the forgiveness of sins and who eat our Lord's supper weekly, etc.) are said to number in the hundreds. We should thank God for these Christians, not a few of whom have spent time in prison "because of Jesus." Let us lift these people up in prayer before God! Furthermore, let us do what we can to increase the number of Christians in the great country of China! ✝

Edward Short lives in Nashville, TN and is deeply involved in the radio broadcasts for China. He and his family worked for a number of years in Taiwan, becoming fluent in the Chinese language.

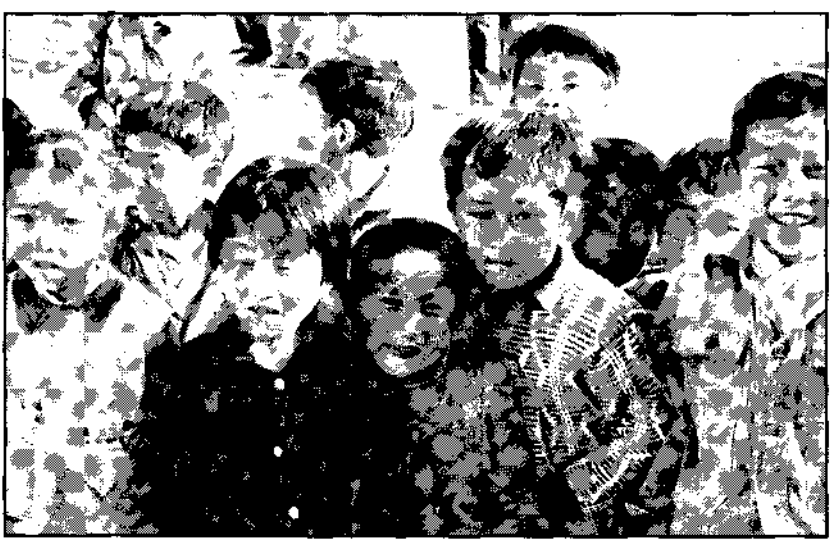
FROM THE HEART OF . . .

The Involvement of Churches of Christ in China

Alan Henderson

In the last twenty-five years members of the church of Christ have traveled into China for business and educational exchanges. Christians from Canada and the U.S. have taught in medical colleges, teachers' universities, and other institutions. They have held "religious discussions" in their apartments and lectured on Western Culture and Christianity. A number of the Chinese people in such classes have become Christians. While living in the PRC it is important not to challenge or criticize the government, but to compliment and give "honor to whom honor is due".

Another excellent way for Americans to teach and win Chinese is by



What will be the eternal future for these children of China?

opening their homes to the 35,000 Chinese students attending our colleges and universities. They enjoy having host families and look forward to invitations into American homes. They also enjoy practicing their English.

There are at least 23 Chinese churches and ministries in the U.S., in Alabama, Arizona, California, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, New York, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas. Other Asian churches in the U.S. include 12 Laotian churches, 3 Cambodian churches, 2 Japanese churches, and 18 Korean Churches

Annual retreats for Chinese living in the U.S. are held at the Highland Church of Christ, Memphis, TN; Paragon Mills Church of Christ, Nashville, TN; S. Baton Rouge Church of Christ, Baton Rouge, LA. For international student evangelism workshops to be held at your congregation, to learn how to become involved as a "host family" for foreign students, write to Church of Christ, Box 186, Shallo-water, TX 79363. Materials for teaching conversational English may be obtained from the same address.

John Clayton's video, **Does God Exist**, is available by writing to Box 835865, Richardson, TX, 75083.

To order the Chinese version of the **Jule Miller video,** write to Gospel Services, Inc., Box 262302, Houston, TX 77207-2302

Bible correspondence courses and cassettes in Chinese may be ordered from W.C.B.C., 605 Bradley Ct., Franklin, TN 37064.

For the book, **The Church of Christ As Recorded in the New Testament** in Chinese, write 5419 7th St., Lubbock, TX 79416. To buy **A Review of Eschatology** and **The Christian and the Sabbath,** write Chinese minister Daniel Hung, 218 Ocean Ave., San Francisco, CA, 94112.

To obtain Chinese tracts, order from Church of Christ, 1/F, 221 Jaffe Rd., Wanchai, Hong Kong.

In 1994 six Chinese in Eastern Russia were individually taught the Gospel and are now Christians. World English Institute, which has sent materials into 108 nations, has over 1,000 students in China. For a booklet, "Practical Answers to Living and Teaching in China", write: Church of Christ, Box 186, Shallowater, TX 79363. ✝

Alan Henderson works with *"International Student Evangelism"*, developing host programs for foreign students among churches of Christ in the U.S. He and his family worked in Taiwan for a number of years, giving them the advantage of having learned the Chinese language. They have continued to be involved in evangelizing the Chinese people since their return to the U.S., to Lubbock, TX.

Answers to Puzzles

Verse Search – 10 (from page 84)

1. Sheepfold.
2. Thieves and robbers.
3. the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives
   His life for the sheep.
4. One, one.
5. Lay down His life for the sheep.
6. Power, lay it down, power, take it again.
   Command, My Father.
7. Demon.
8. "Open the eyes of the blind?"
9. Tell us plainly if You are the Christ.
10. Yes.
11. They took up stones to stone Him.
12. "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God."
13. Sanctified, sent into the world; blaspheming.
14. Believe the works.

Who Am I?

(from page 52)

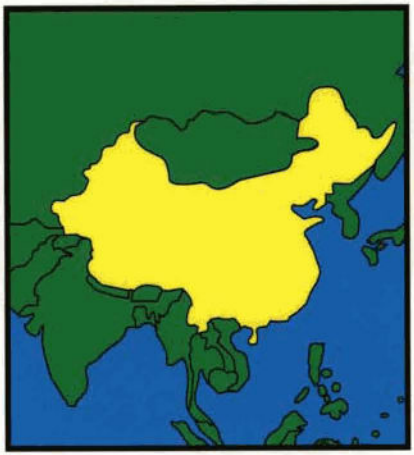
Daniel

The Book of Ephesians

Now to Him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.

(page 35)

For further information, please contact:



People's Republic of China

Government: COMMUNISTIC
President: JIANG ZEMIN
Premier: LI PENG

Secular Facts:

Location: Eastern part of Asia, with a land mass slightly larger than the US.

Land Mass: 3,691,521 sq. miles.

Population: 1,300,000,000.

Major Cities:
Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Canton, Wuhan, Shenyang, Nanjing.

Language:
Chinese, Mandarin, and local dialects.

Literacy:
73%

Religion:
Officially atheistic; traditional religions contain elements of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism.

Economy:
With much of China being mountainous, only 10% of the land is arable. Principal agriculture products are rice, wheat, grains and cotton.

Exports of $85 billion exceed imports by almost $5 billion. Major items of export are textiles, garments, petroleum, and illicit drugs. Imports include specialized industrial machinery, manufactured goods, chemicals, and fertilizer.

Monetary Unit:
Yuan.

The Church:

Congregations: George S. Benson worked in China during the 1930's and was able to establish congregations of the church of Christ. The Communist revolution stopped mission efforts and cut off communication between Chinese Christians and those of other nations. While it is hoped that brother Benson's efforts were not destroyed, there is no list of congregations in fellowship with the American church. However, it is believed that many of the non-denomination, independent groups are actually faithful to the teachings of the Scriptures and are, therefore, brethren.

Christians have been located at Gwangjou, Xian, Shanghai, Beijing, Shenyang, and other places. Some have been converted while living in other countries and have since returned to China.

Modern History: Work in mass media is done through broadcasts on KNLS, World Christian Broadcasting station in Alaska, for five hours each evening. Correspondence courses are offered, and listeners write to request them.

Also, some American Christians have gotten employment within the country, enabling them to teach people who come under their influence. Campaign groups from some of the Christian universities make two-week summer visits.

Front Cover: **The Great Wall of China,** begun in 221 BC, extended 1500 miles.