Volume Seventy-Five

The Voice of Truth International

Celebrating 20 years of sharing the Gospel

Hitherto

Mary Gorges

We have come very safely — hitherto;
And sometimes seas were calm, and skies were blue;
Sometimes the wild waves rose — the tempests roared;
But never barque went down with Christ on board.

And so it shall be to the very end —
Through ebb or flow, the one unchanging Friend,
Ruling the waves which sink at His command,
Holding them in the hollow of His hand.

A lonely track, perchance, a darkened sky,
A mist of tears, and only God knows why —
Is He not worth our trust the voyage through,
He who has never failed us — hitherto?

Here all things pass, but Heaven keeps them fair;
The partings here — the joyous meetings there —
God's waves and winds drive onward to that rest;
Tossed home, as children, to a Father's breast.

There comes an hour, when — every tempest o'er —
The harbor lights are reached, the golden shore:
Never, oh nevermore to fret or fear —
Christ, give us faith to praise Thee even here!

"Yes! I do want to be saved eternally!
But what do I have to do?"

Atheist: ~~"Nothing. There is no soul or afterlife."~~

Lutheran creed: ~~"Justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ is held to be the central doctrine of the word of God."~~

Baptist doctrine: Confession before baptism: ~~"I believe that God for Christ's sake has pardoned my sins."~~

Methodist Discipline: "~~The doctrine of 'Justification by faith only' is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort."~~

Catholic dogma: ~~"Original sin, inherited from Adam, is forgiven when an infant is baptized."~~

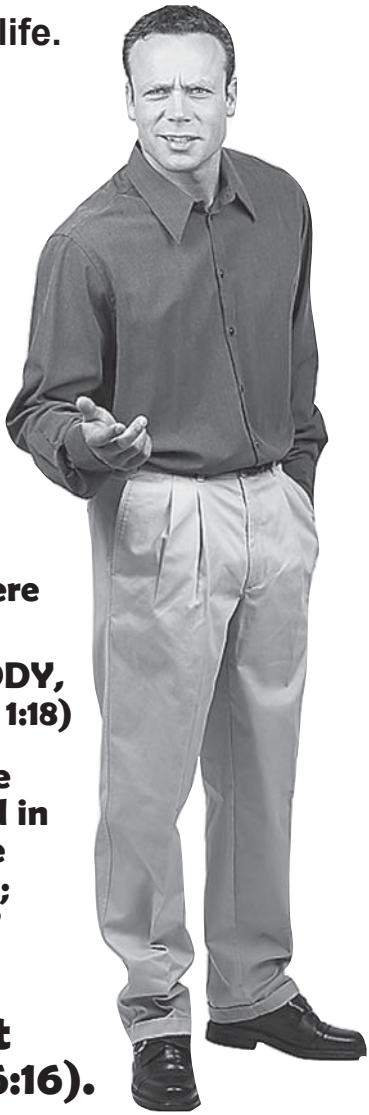
Mormon Millenial Star: ~~"Every spirit that confesses that Joseph Smith is a prophet ... and that the Book of Mormon is true, is of God, and every spirit that does not is of 'Antichrist'"~~.

Peter, by inspiration: "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

"I can understand about baptism, that it pictures in my life the death of Jesus, His burial, and resurrection, as I die to sin, am buried in the waters of baptism, and am resurrected to walk a new life. But there are hundreds of denominational churches!

Which one do I join?"

Denominational groups: ~~"The church doesn't SAVE! Join the church of your choice!"~~



The New Testament:

Jesus: "...upon this rock I will build MY CHURCH..." (Matthew 16:18).

"... the Lord added to THE CHURCH daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

"... He is the head of THE BODY, THE CHURCH..." (Colossians 1:18)

"There is ONE BODY and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all..." (Ephesians 4:4-6)

"The churches of Christ greet you" (Romans 16:16).

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The churches of Christ salute you
(Romans 16:16).

Paul's Majestic Description of Our God

Byron Nichols

A favorite passage of Scripture of many is what the apostle Paul wrote as he undertook to describe the Lord God. How blessed we are that these words are part of our Bible. In Romans 11:33-36 Paul painted his beautiful word picture of his (and our) God:

> *Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.*

Let's try to better understand and appreciate one of the most majestic and marvelous portions of all of God's inspired Word!

We are privileged to have preserved for us this burst of praise and adoration from Paul for the God who had rescued him from a life of persecution of the very Son of God and His church.

Verse 33. Paul began by drawing attention to God's intellect, wisdom, and knowledge. He acknowledged that God's mind is so superior to that of man that there is no way for us to truly understand God's thinking. Paul's words are in complete agreement with those in Proverbs 21:30, which say, *"There is no wisdom or understanding or counsel against the Lord."* In 1 Corinthians 1:20 Paul asks, *"Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?"* This great apostle wanted the Romans, us, and the entire world to recognize the greatness and superiority of our God, and to see how foolish it is for man to call God in question, especially

on matters that man still cannot even comprehend. Moffatt's translation of this verse is helpful: *"What a fathomless depth lies in the wisdom and knowledge of God! How inscrutable His judgments! How mysterious His methods!"*

Verse 34. We may know the mind of God only to the extent that He chooses to reveal it to man. As has already been noted, the supremacy of God's mind, His wisdom, and His knowledge have long been established. To question God or compare the mind of any man with that of God is to prove how incomparable He is. Oh yes, we may very well wonder why God operates like He does, but surely we would never be so arrogant as to think that our ability to reason even begins to approach that of God!

Oh, what a struggle we undertake as we try to understand our God and His ways! Man's knowledge of many things today is so superior to man's previous knowledge that we easily get to thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think (Romans 12:3), and so some humans decied it would be much more realistic for us to compare ourselves with God, not with mankind.

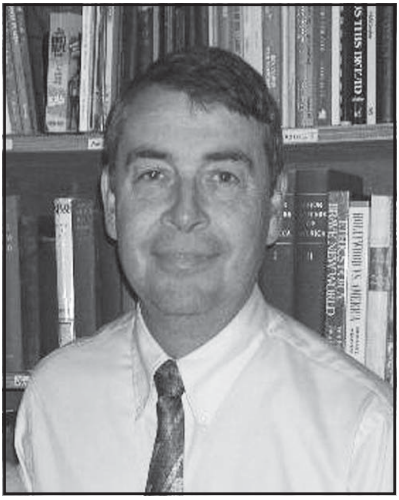
Verse 35. In His discourse with Job, God said, *"Who has preceded Me, that I should pay him? Everything under heaven is Mine!"* (Job 41:11). We are awed by the magnitude of the wealth of the richest people of the world, yet they are but beggars in comparison with the wealth of God. The whole world belongs to Him (Genesis 1:1 and John 1:3). Everything the rich man has actually belongs to God!

We have absolutely nothing to give to God that would then put Him in the position of needing to repay us. Yes, in Romans 12:1 Paul urges us to give our bodies as a living sacrifice to God, but we must understand that our doing that does not cause Him to be indebted to us. He will not *owe* us salvation…it will always be a gift from Him to us, through His divine grace. We must obey Him and serve Him, but He will not owe us anything.

We need to recognize the greatness and majesty of our God and join together in affirming that God, and God alone, is deserving of our everlasting homage and adoration and praise.

Verse 36. Goodspeed translated this verse like this: *"For from Him everything comes; through Him everything exists; and in Him everything ends!"*

Paul used this verse to summarize his beautiful and heartfelt doxology. Like Paul, we need to recognize the greatness and majesty of our God and join together in affirming that God, and God alone, is deserving of our everlasting homage and adoration and praise. ✞



How Spiritual Are You?

Jerry Bates

In today's world we read much about spirituality. Seemingly everyone wants to be spiritual and many claim to be spiritual. Of course, their spirituality may assume many forms, and many different methods have been tried in the history of man in an effort to be more spiritual. Usually, modern methods of spirituality emphasize more than anything else our feelings or emotions. As Christians, we must also be spiritual; however, our spirituality must be informed by the Scriptures and not by some worldly definition of spirituality. The word "spirituality" is not found in Scripture, but the concept is certainly a biblical concept. Many passages are relevant to the issue of spirituality, but for a few minutes let us consider Philippians 1:9-11. One preacher called this the Mt. Everest of spirituality. This passage reads:

> *And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

As we look at these verses, we can see that Paul's method of being truly spiritual was based upon our thinking, which then will direct our lives. Paul prayed that the Philippians would grow in love. This is not an emotional love but ***agape*** love, the love that always seeks the best for the object of its love. This love would be love for God. Love for God always includes obedience to His will. Jesus said, "*If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word"* (John 14:23). This love would include love for men, which are also the ones that God loves. How often in the church do we find envy, strife, and disunity instead of love?

In addition to praying that the Philippians would grow in love, Paul pleaded that they would grow in knowledge. This is not just knowing some facts about God, but having an intimate knowledge of God. It is knowing God in a personal and intimate way. The more we understand God, the more we are able to see our mutual responsibilities to one another as Christians. Of course, this knowledge can only come through a study and meditation of God's Word. Again, we see that spirituality is not how one feels but how one thinks and acts.

Next, we see that Paul prayed for growth in discernment or judgment. Paul was not talking about judging one another. Rather, he was discussing making moral judgments. True spirituality is discerning what is morally right and living pure lives. This is closely connected to knowledge, because without knowledge gained from a study of the Scriptures, one would never be able to make proper moral judgments. The writer of Hebrews had a similar idea in mind when he wrote in 5:14, "*But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*"

Furthermore, Paul encouraged growth in the ability to approve what is excellent or best. The NIV translates it as "*that you may be able to discern what is best*". The exact same phrase is used in Romans 2:18. The word translated *"approve"* means to test, often used in the context of testing metals to detect any flaw. Paul encouraged Christians to test their actions to determine what actions are the best. I think this characteristic is sorely lacking in many Christians. Far too many are making decisions only on the basis of what is right or wrong. If something is not wrong, then in their minds they should do it if they desire. However, Paul reminds us that true Christians are seeking to do what is best. True spirituality is not just knowing what is right or wrong, but also being able to determine what is better and best. Not all right actions are equally good. Some actions, even though not wrong themselves might easily lead to evil; therefore, Christians should avoid those things. Some actions have a greater potential for good than others; therefore, Christians should seek to engage in those activities as often as possible. Some actions are better for others; therefore, out of love, I will commit myself to those actions for the benefit of others. Too often, Christians give little thought to such things, but even more than that, far too many are so weak that they are unable to make such determinations.

Christians are to grow in Christian character. We are to have a character that is genuine and can be trusted. This doesn't mean that Christians never sin or that others will never claim to find faults for which they might accuse you. Even Jesus and His disciples were often wrongfully accused of sinning. Our religion must not just be an external show. We must not merely pretend to be faithful or spiritual, but it must be sincere. Are we growing in this regard? Some Christians ignore some small defect or sin in their lives. After all, everyone has some faults,

so that is mine. Yes, we all have faults and imperfections, but we should not become comfortable with them as if they are unimportant. We should strive to grow or become more Christ-like in our thinking and living.

Finally, we are to grow in fruitfulness. Christ commanded that His servants bear much fruit. *"By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples"* (John 15:8). True disciples of Christ will bear fruit, and the truly spiritual person will seek to consistently grow in fruitfulness.

We have seen that spirituality as considered in the Bible is always a matter of what we do. Certainly, our emotions and feelings are involved, but they must translate into actions in order for them to be useful. True spirituality can be seen in the lives of Christians, and if it is not, then it is not really spirituality at all. It is merely a counterfeit version, and just as we do not want counterfeit money, neither do we want a counterfeit spirituality. Do not be tricked into accepting a worldly spirituality or using some worldly method in an effort to become more spiritual. ✞

What Is True Love?

Jerry Bates

Love is a popular topic in today's world. The popular refrain is that we should just love one another. The apostle John talked a great deal about love, so much so that he is called the ***Apostle of Love***. He declared that love is necessary to being a disciple of Christ, so that if we do not love our brothers in Christ, we have not been born of God (1 John 4:7-8). What does it mean to love our brothers? In 1 John 3:14-15 John wrote, *"We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him."* We see that love and hate are opposites. There are only two options. We either love or hate; there is no in-between. If we hate, it is the same as being a murderer.

Most people look at these verses and assume that they love everyone. After all, if hating is like being a murderer, then it is easy to say we do not hate anyone. We do not want to hurt anyone; therefore, we do not hate. If we do not hate, then we must love, since there are only two options. Thus, according to this view, love is simply the absence of doing anything bad. This makes love easy, because we can love by doing nothing.

In contrast to the above view, look at how John viewed love. In 1 John 3:17 he wrote, *"But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?"* In other words, love means helping someone who is in need. This does not refer to a stranger begging on the street, but to a brother whom you know is in need. If we do not help, we do not love. If we do not love, then obviously we must hate, since there are only two options. According to John, love means doing good to others. Love is not merely the absence of doing anything bad; it is the presence of good actions. This makes love hard. True love is not easy; nevertheless, God demands true love from His disciples. ✞

Just How Young Is My Home Planet?

Louis Rushmore

Comparatively speaking, you and I live on a relatively ***young earth***. That is, our planet is very young compared to the claim of five billion years old for the earth made by evolutionists. God, both in Scripture and through the created universe, asserts that the celestial sphere that we inhabit is not more than 10,000 years old. Yes, ***true science*** verifies that the created universe in which earth has an important cameo cannot be more than 10,000 years old.

We need to understand that there is a difference between ***evolutionary theory*** and ***verifiable scientific fact***. Generally, scientists happily proclaim that science relates to that which can be *measured*, *tested* and *observed*, and that if with man's five senses it cannot be evaluated, then it must not be real. Ironically and admittedly, evolutionists must concede that the evolutionary theory has **not** been observed and cannot be demonstrated – even under laboratory conditions. Truly, the only reason that the theory of evolution exists is in an attempt to explain away God, which if mankind can do, it can liberate itself from the constraints of God-given revelation – the Bible.

First, what does God, through the Bible, claim regarding the age of the earth? Strikingly in the first place, our planet is precisely only five days older than our first ancestor – Adam. Jesus Christ said, *"But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female"* (Mark 10:6 NKJV). Genesis 1-2 record the creation of everything, including Adam and Eve who were created on day six of creation week. The first answer to the question concerning the age of the earth is that it is only five days older than mankind. The Bible teaches this throughout the volume of its 66 books, and Jesus Christ confirmed that to be factual. "…[T]he only books that do not refer to the Book of Genesis in some form are the books of Philemon, and 2 and 3 John!" (Harrub, "Age of the Earth" 40). *"By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, And all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. ...Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him. For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast"* (Psalm 33:6, 8-9).

In addition, we can be more definitive from the Bible with a high degree of confidence regarding the approximate age of the earth. The Bible provides for its students "genealogy combined with chronology" (Harrub, "Age of the Earth" 43) whereby one can ascertain from the Scriptures that our globe is about 6,000 years old. History in general and our modern calendar in particular verify that approximately 2,000 years have passed from the year of our Lord (A.D.) to the present. The genealogy of Jesus in Matthew 1 and Luke 3 in conjunction with secular history attest that another 2,000 years transpired between Jesus and His ancestor Abraham. Determination of the number of years between Abraham and Adam when added to the former figures ascertain for us the approximate age of the earth. This is so since Adam was the first man (1 Corinthians 15:45), and he was created at *"the foundation of the world"* (Luke 11:50-51) – within five days of the creation of the world. "Since Genesis 5 provides the ages of the fathers at the time of the births of the sons between Abraham and Adam (thereby providing chronological data), it becomes a simple matter to determine the approximate number of years involved. In round numbers, that figure is 2,000" (Harrub, "Age of the Earth" 44). Hence, the biblical record provides the student of the Bible upon investigation information that our beloved planet home is about 6,000 years old.

Second, fair treatment and analysis of the created universe proves that the earth is relatively young, in stark contrast to suppositions by evolutionists. A few areas of scientific investigation that substantiate a young earth include the following:

The ***Grand Canyon*** presents an insurmountable problem for evolutionists. The supposed uniformitarianism of evolutionary theory attributes the massive void of the Grand Canyon to slow erosion by the small Colorado River over millions to billions of years. However, where are the 900 cubic miles of soil missing from the Grand Canyon? It is not at the end of the Colorado River where it would have to be were the explanation of evolutionists correct. Only a catastrophic event such as the worldwide flood of Noah's day can account for the existence of the Grand Canyon.

The rapidity with which rushing water can carve out a canyon was demonstrated in 1926 with the development of the Burlingame Canyon "in less than six days!" (Harrub, "Grand Canyon"). It is "near Walla Walla, Washington" and "measures 1500 feet long, up to 120 feet deep, and 120 feet long" (Harrub, "Grand Canyon"). All it took for this to occur was the diversion of floodwater from a blockage to a ditch leading to a creek.

Niagara Falls even more impressively proves the impossibility of uniformitarianism of evolution as a satisfactory explanation as the origin of the universe, including our home – earth. Erosion by the Niagara River resulted in the formation of the Niagara Gorge and moving Niagara Falls back seven miles. Before the construction of water-diversion projects, erosion drove the falls back

three feet per year. Three-foot increments over the nearly five billion years that evolutionists claim for the age of the earth would have pushed the Niagara Falls upstream over 13 **billion** feet! However, "[t]he distance around the Earth is only 132 **million** feet!" (Butt emphasis added).

Polystrate fossils are my personal favorite evidence for a young earth, and they emphatically disarm the evolutionist's claim for eons of time for the formation and development of our planet. The evolutionary doctrine of uniformitarianism is completely absurd when it comes to polystrate fossils. These are fossils that protrude through at least two layers of geological strata, the same strata that evolutionists assert took millions of years to form. Fossilized trees extending through two or more geological layers are impossible to harmonize with evolutionary uniformitarianism. Organic material like trees would rot away (and not fossilize) long before millions of years later when geologists and other evolutionist imagine the deposit of a subsequent geological layer would occur. Only a catastrophe, such as a serious flood or falling volcano ash could produce such.

One of the more striking and interesting polystrate fossils is that of a whale skeleton nearly standing on its tail while penetrating so-called geological strata. This 75-foot discovery was unearthed in 1976 near Lompoc, California. The dirt surrounding is what is called diatomaceous earth, resulting from tiny algae that attached itself to the whale exterior. Before millions of years demanded by geologists and evolutionists for the formation of a subsequent geological layer, the flesh of the whale would have either been eaten by scavengers or simply rotted. Obviously, not uniformitarianism but a catastrophe was responsible for the encasing of the whale in such a way that it extended through more than one geological layer. Not millions of years, then, but swiftly polystrate fossils such as this one were enveloped by more than one so-called geological layers or strata.

The known rate at which the closest star – our sun – is shrinking also proves that evolution with its timetable is an impossibility. Extrapolating backward, shrinkage of five feet per hour times 20 million years, the earth and the sun would have been touching each other! Yet, evolutionists want us to believe that the earth is nearly five billion years old. Time really does not make evolution a plausible alternative to believing in special creation. Our ***shrinking sun*** denies evolution.

The ***depletion of hydrogen in the universe*** as it undergoes the one-way process of conversion into helium demands a young earth. "The conclusion is, since the universe consists chiefly of hydrogen, and since we have no evidence of any kind of current hydrogen genesis, that the concentration of hydrogen speaks eloquently of a *youthful universe*!" (Thompson). Further, ***Atmospheric Helium*** resulting from "disintegration of uranium and thorium" likewise evidences a young earth; "there is not nearly enough helium in the atmosphere to correspond to the alleged age of the

earth and the rate of escape of helium into the atmosphere from rocks forming the crust of the earth" (Thompson). The ***decaying magnetic field*** of our planet indicates that the earth is young by comparison of claims made by evolutionists. "…[T]he strength of the magnetic field is declining. If we project backwards in time, we will come to a point where the magnetic field is impracticably strong. This occurs no more than nine to ten thousand years ago" (Major). Furthermore, ***population statistics*** or kinetics when tested against suggested dates ranging in the thousands of years versus millions of years correspond to the actual population of the earth only by imputing into the equation thousands of years. The evolutionists' assertions of humans inhabiting earth for up to three million years would call for a population so numerous that the entire expanse of the known universe literally could not hold it. Evolution is false, but biblical information netting an age of the earth of about 6,000 years agrees with the facts relative to the population of the earth today.

In conclusion, the basis of keeping the Jewish Sabbath or seventh day holy was the days of creation week. *"For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it"* (Exodus 20:11). From the opening two chapters of Genesis forward, the Bible uniformly attributes the creation of the world and everything on it, including mankind, to God during six literal days. This occurred about 6,000 years ago. Numerous scientific observations of the universe correspond with the earth and everything on it coming into being not more than 10,000 years ago. Those numbers represent relative agreement in opposition to the billions of years touted by evolutionists. Evolution is not scientific, and only special creation by a Creator can account for the universe and all that it houses.

"For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened" (Romans 1:20-21). **Do you see clearly the God of creation, or is your foolish heart darkened?** ✞

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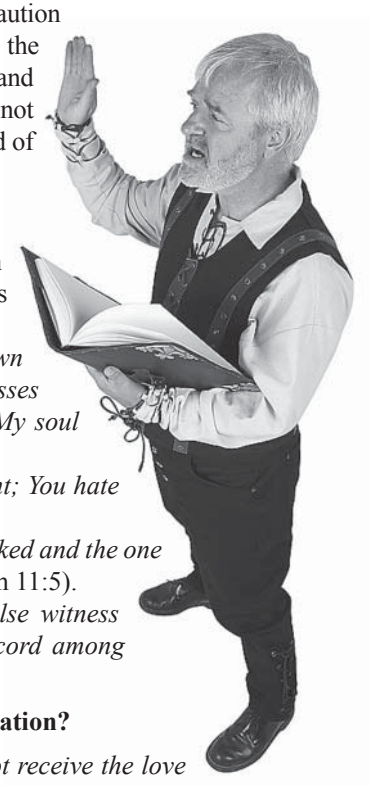
God Loves Sinners?

Owen D. Olbricht

Does God love all sinners? Does God know a sinner He does not love? The expressions, "God hates sin and loves the sinner," or "God hates sin, but not the sinner" has been repeated so often that it is accepted as Gospel truth, a teaching of the Bible. One preacher confidently declared that God will love even those He sends to hell.

A Word of Caution

Before quoting Bible teaching, a word of caution should be given. All sinners do not fall into the same category. Some sinners are hardened and have rebelled against God to the extent they will not repent (Hebrews 6:2-6); others can be convicted of their sins and want to turn away from them.



Bible Teaching

The following Scriptures are given without comment, for they speak for themselves concerning hardened, rebellious sinners.

- "*I will destroy your high places, cut down your incense altars, and cast your carcasses on the lifeless forms of your idols; and My soul shall abhor you"* (Leviticus 26:30).
- "*The boastful shall not stand in Your sight; You hate all workers of iniquity"* (Psalm 5:5).
- *"The Lord tests the righteous, But the wicked and the one who loves violence His soul hates"* (Psalm 11:5).
- *"These six things the Lord hates…A false witness who speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren"* (Proverbs 6:16,19).

Love or Wrath Assure Condemnation?

God's displeasure with those who do *"not receive the love*

the truth" is so great, *"He will send them strong delusion, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness"* (2 Thessalonians 2:10,11). If God loves those who do not love the truth but believe a lie, why will He send them a delusion so that they will believe a lie and be condemned?

Hate and Love No More

Israel had become so wicked (Hosea 5:11-9:15) that God began to hate them. Notice what God stated, *"All their wickedness is in Gilgal. for there I hated them. Because of the evil of their deeds I will drive them from My house; I will love them no more"* (Hosea 9:15). Yes, God loved sinful Israel and wanted them to repent, but if they continued in their sins, God would continue to hate them and would love them no more.

Instead of thinking that God will love us as rebellious sinners regardless of what we do, we should realize that God will hate us and love us no more if we will not obey Him. If we continue to live wickedly, His wrath will be poured out without mixture into the cup of His indignation to the degree that He will torment us forever and forever (Revelation 14:10,11).

Love Is Conditional

God's love is conditional. Jude wrote, *"Keep yourselves in the love of God"* (Jude 21). *"Keep yourselves"* means we must do something to remain in God's love. Jesus showed that God's love is conditional. He stated, *"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love"* (John 15:10). Positively stated, if we keep Jesus' commandments, we will abide in His love. Negatively stated, if we do not keep His commandments, we will not remain in His love.

Repent or Perish

The work of anyone who proclaims God's Word is to call people to repent in order to escape God's coming wrath (Matthew 3:7-10; Hebrews 10:25-28; 2 Peter 3:9). A speaker should tell the listeners that God loves them and wants them to repent, but if they continue to rebel against Him, He will hate them and love them no more. They must turn from their rebellious ways, believe and obey Jesus, or the wrath of God will remain on them (John 3:36).

We *can* live in such a way that God will hate us and love us no more. ✝

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His Majesty

2 Peter 1:16

Jimmy Clark

"For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Peter 1:16). The word translated *"majesty"* (2 Peter 1:16) is from the word meaning "greatness, magnificence" (Thayer, p. 394). This same word is found in Luke 9:43 and in Acts 19:27. The root of this word is translated "magnificent, excellent, splendid, wonderful" (Thayer, p. 394). The root is found in Luke 1:49 and Acts 2:11 to refer to the mighty works of God. When Peter used a term that was well used by Luke, he was referring to the great scene of the glory of Jesus shown to Peter, James, and John on the mountain (cf. 2 Peter 1:17,18). There is something to be pondered concerning the majesty of Jesus. Consider three thoughts.

1. **<u>The Essence of God</u>.** The New Testament abounds with statements that declare the deity of Jesus. Paul wrote, *"Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God" (*Philippians 2:6). Again, *"Has in these last days spoken to us by his Son, who he has appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person…"* (Hebrews 1:2,3). John wrote, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the*

*Word was God… And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (*John 1:1,14). All religions and thoughts of men that stumble at this fact will never see in this life what is key to salvation. Jesus Himself said, *"Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am he, you will die in your sins"* (John 8:24).

2. **The Excellence of His Authority.** The day Jesus was transfigured in the sight of Peter, James, and John, there were two other people present on that mountain. Luke recorded, *"And behold two men talked with him, who were*

There is something to be pondered concerning the majesty of Jesus. Consider three thoughts: The Essence of God, The Excellence of His Authority, and The Effect on Man.

Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem" (Luke 9:30,31). When Peter suggested that three tabernacles be made for these three glorified persons, a voice from heaven said, *"This is my beloved Son. Hear Him!"* (Luke 9:35). The Father is not denying the authority that was true of Moses and Elijah, only that Jesus is of greater authority than all. Peter would later say to the Sanhedrin, *"Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (*Acts 4:12). It is the authority of Jesus that will judge man in the last day (cf. John 12:48).

3. **The Effect on Man.** Peter made it clear that he and the other inspired apostles were not following *"cunningly devised fables" (*2 Peter 1:16). Many religions are tied to the imaginations of men (cf. Romans 1:21-25; 2 Corinthians 10:5). Peter made it clear to his readers, *"And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts"* (2 Peter 1:19). These testimonies were safeguarded by the guidance of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Peter 1:20,21). Great assurance of faith in the majesty of Jesus is tied to this sure testimony. ✞

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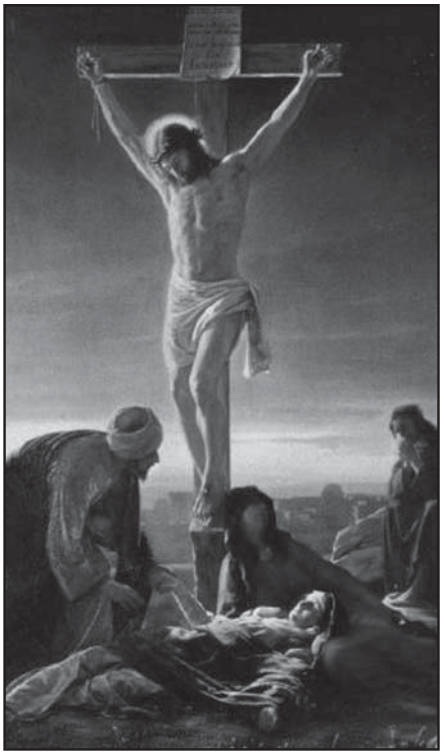
If We Could See...

Mike Ireland

It was the third hour when they crucified him. (Mark 15:25)

Jesus was nailed to the wood at nine o'clock on a Friday morning. The whole process would not have taken very long. These guys were professionals. They knew the drill. They had crucified lots of men.



Once their task was finished, the soldiers concerned themselves with a bit of gambling for a seamless garment. Beyond that, all they had to do was sit and wait for the condemned men to die.

In that moment, the most incredible thing was happening. But those at Golgotha had no idea.

That was certainly true of the Romans. They had no idea of the role they were playing in this world-changing event. They could not conceive of God becoming a man or behaving unselfishly. They had no notion of a Messiah or any awareness that they needed a Savior. What they did, they did in ignorance. So, Jesus prayed for them.

The Jews were just as confused, even if they should not have been. Even with access to the Scriptures and the many prophecies that foretold of someone special, they had a garbled view of the Messiah. They could not imagine that God would become a man or that the Messiah could be a suffering servant. And, even if they expected a Messiah, he wouldn't look like this Jesus. What they did, they did in ignorance. So, Jesus prayed for them.

Amazing! Jesus prayed for the forgiveness of His executioners while they concerned themselves with a bit of business. No reason to let a man's death get in the way of a bargain. He prayed. They gambled.

To our shame, that is so much like us! Created to see what is truly valuable, we often live with our eyes fixed on what is worthless. Made to possess the eternal blessings of God, we often pursue the temporal things of earth. Created by God to be like Him, we often get down in the dirt to make deals for what doesn't matter. We become fixed on the most trivial things and completely miss what God is doing all around us.

These soldiers were within a few feet of the greatest Man who ever lived, yet their focus was on the garment He wore. They gambled their coins while the world was saved.

It wasn't enough that they killed Him. They didn't really even see Him.

Even though we know better, it is remarkably easy to make the same mistake. Busy lives, loss of focus, interruptions, and a continuing cultural message that says you matter most are the things that distract us from Him.

The greatest mistake of all is to miss 'Who' matters most. Jesus came so we could see Him for ourselves. ✝

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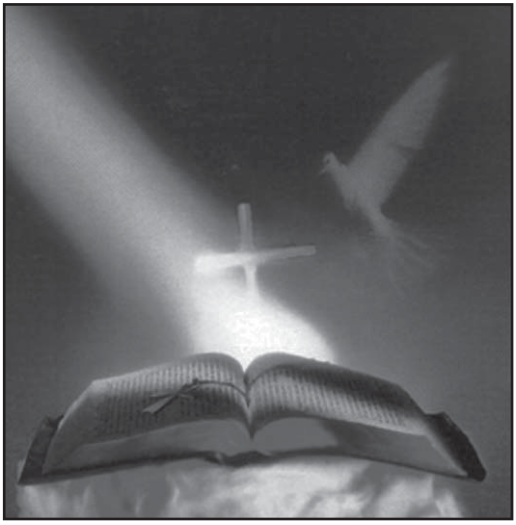
His greatness fills the Universe, and more...

He spoke, and by the power of His Word,
all things came to be...

If we could somehow see *His* greatness
and *our* smallness,
In awe we'd fall, face down upon the ground,
no words to speak,
hardly breath to breathe.
Perhaps the Seraphim would come and touch us,
give us strength,
That we might not perish in His awesome presence.
Or insult Him with our "Buddy" attitude... BBC

The Godhead

Jean Giles Barker



The following Scriptures show that the Godhead consists of three separate Beings.

The description in John 1:1-2 of the relationship between the "Word" (which is Jesus) and God shows that the two are separate Beings.

- John 1:1-2, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was **with** God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning **with** God."*

1. The word "***with***", used above, indicates "along side of, or in the company of".

2. Therefore, the **Word** and the **Father** are indicated as separate beings.

A plural noun was used in the creation account, showing involvement of more than one Being.

- Genesis 1:1, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and earth...."*

The Hebrew name used here for God (Elohim) is a **plural noun**, indicating that the word represents more than one Being.

The plural pronouns used in the following Scriptures show that there is more than one Being in the Godhead.

- In Genesis 1:26, God said, *"Let Us make man in **Our** image, according to **Our** likeness...."*
- In Genesis 3:22, *"The Lord God said, 'Behold the man has become like one of **Us**....'"*
- In Genesis 11:7, *"The Lord said, 'Come let **Us** go down....'"*
- In Isaiah 6:8, *"The Lord said, '...who will go for **Us**?'"*

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are manifested as being separate at Jesus' baptism.

• Matthew 3:16,17, After being baptized, *"**Jesus** came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and He saw the **Spirit of God** descending as a dove and lighting on Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, 'This is **My** beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.'"*

Here we see, at one instant in time, the Godhead manifested separately by:

1. **Jesus** being baptized,
2. **The Holy Spirit** descending as a dove,
3. **The Father** speaking from heaven.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are shown as being separate in the giving of the Great Commission.

• Matthew 28:19, Jesus said, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of **the** Father and of **the** Son and of **the** Holy Spirit."*

1. Before each of the Three, in the above Scripture, the article **"the"** is used. The article **"the"** is defined as referring to "a particular person or thing". This plainly demonstrates that **the** Father, and **the** Son, and **the** Holy Spirit are separate beings and not merely three manifestations of one person.

2. Between each of the Three, the conjunction **"and"** is also used, which indicates:

✢ along side or together with
✢ as well as
✢ in addition to

Jesus used the Law, given by Moses, to show that He had two separate witnesses (Himself and the Father) to prove that His teachings were true.

• In Deuteronomy 19:15, the Law of Moses stated, *"One witness shall not rise against a man ... by the mouth of **two** or three witnesses the matter shall be established."*

• In John 8:17-18 Jesus said: *"It is also written in your law that the testimony of **two men** is true. I am one who bears witness of **Myself**, and the **Father** who sent Me bears witness of Me."*

If Jesus is the same person as the Father, then the argument that He used would not have made sense.

In Jesus' prayer for oneness of believers, His use of the words "just as" indicates that the type of relationship between Himself and the Father is not that of a one-being relationship.

• In John 17:20-22 Jesus prayed, *"I ... pray ... for those who will believe in Me ... that they may be one **just as** We are one."*

1. We know that we are separate beings.

2. If Jesus desires for us to be one, **just as** He and the Father are one, then the oneness He desires for us must be in a sense that is other than a one-being relationship.

3. Therefore, the oneness between Jesus and the Father must be in the sense of oneness in thought, purpose, aim etc, and not a one-being relationship.

1 Timothy 2:5 shows that God and Christ Jesus are separate beings.

• In 1 Timothy 2:5, Timothy wrote, *"For there is one God and one **Mediator** between **God** and **men**, the Man Christ Jesus."*

A mediator is one in the middle between two others (a "go-between"). God and men are separate. Therefore, Jesus must be a separate Being from God, in order for Him to be a Mediator between God and men.

1. God
2. Mediator (Christ Jesus)
3. Men

Three separate beings are indicated in Jesus' prayer to the Father for another Helper.

• John 14:16,17a, Jesus speaking to the apostles said, *"And I will pray the Father and He will give you **another** Helper... the Spirit of Truth."*

1. The fact that Jesus is praying to the Father shows that Jesus and the Father are separate beings.

2. Jesus prayed for the Father to send **another** Helper. The word **another** means, "additional or different"; therefore, another Helper would be in addition to, or different from, either the Father or Jesus.

3. Therefore, three separate beings are seen in this prayer of Jesus.

✢ **The Son** praying
✢ **The Father** giving another Helper
✢ **The Helper** that will be given.

*"The grace of the **Lord Jesus Christ,** and the love of* **God,** *and the communion of **the Holy Spirit** be with you all. Amen "* (2 Corinthians 13:14). ✞

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Evolution

– No longer Mindless or Purposeless

Betty Burton Choate

Many Christians, living in our busy world, choose to ignore the debate raging between "official" science and creation-science. "After all," they reason, "why spend a lot of time studying a question of 'history' that even the experts in both camps don't seem to be able to settle?" In ignoring the problem, some Christians accept the theory of evolution side-by-side with their religious faith, not examining either closely enough to see that they are not in the least compatible.

Other Christians adopt the solution of "theistic evolution", thinking that since "scientists" are unbiased scholars and fully endorse the idea of evolutionary development, it must be true; therefore, in order to maintain their faith without contradicting science, they decide that God must have used an evolutionary process for the development of all that exists.

Then there are those who refuse to accept Darwin's theory in any sense. Their belief may be based solely on their studies of the Scriptures, or they may have made an in-depth study also of the voluminous amounts of material available on every aspect of the subject of macro-evolution. Either way, their studies have convinced them that there was design and purpose behind the creation of all that exists.

But the question of "creation" or "evolution" is not simply a history lesson. It is not a question that can be safely ignored or dealt with apathetically. Those among us who are content to focus on our own busyness and to let the proponents of "evolution" make the definitions and pass the laws are unwise. Already we are on a slippery slope that leads to disaster.

By definition, what is evolution? George Gaylord Simpson (from **The Meaning of Evolution**, pp 279, 344-45) wrote these words: "Although many details remain to be worked out, it is already evident that all the objective phenomena of the history of life can be explained by purely naturalistic or, in a proper sense of the sometimes abused word, materialistic factors. …*Man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind.*" (Emphasis added).

So, according to the evolutionary scenario, all life evolved through a mindless "survival of the fittest" and "natural selection", bringing us down to — no, "up" to — this point in time: **humans, the pinnacle of the evolutionary process, have arrived!**

We come as totally "free" agents: there is no Creator with authority over us, and there is no such thing as "law", beyond "scientific laws". Because we are nothing but physical beings resulting from a multitudinous series of mindless progressions (the same type of progression that has also brought the fly, the roach, and the amoeba into existence), there is no such thing as "values", "morals", or "good", or "evil" — unless some among us choose to think up such abstract concepts, and others of us allow ourselves to be bound by those artificial "laws". *Actually, we are nothing more than a big bug, and it is no more "wrong" to kill a human than it is wrong to kill a bug, unless we ourselves call it "wrong"!*

Evolutionists, realizing what wondrous things have been achieved through "mindless" and "purposeless" development, became ecstatic about all that can be achieved in the evolutionary process now that HUMANS can add intelligence and purpose to it! A religion of "evolutionary humanism" has been the result of this thinking. John Huxley stated that humans have the "sacred duty" and the "glorious opportunity" to seek to "promote the maximum fulfillment of the evolutionary process on the earth." (from Huxley's **Religion without Revelation**, p 194).

John Dewey began his movement of "religious humanism" with its Manifesto in 1933. He boasted that the death of theistic religion would bring a new dawning of scientific progress and cooperation in social programs for the betterment of mankind. Evolution's "promise" of moving toward perfection was incorporated into this new humanistic movement which envisioned that, as man's intelligence and purpose were added to all factors of the human development, everything would move onward and upward in a magnificent way.

Hardly had the new vision of man's potential greatness been worded when the lives of Hitler and Stalin made an entirely different statement concerning the inherent capabilities of humans.

Though a revised Manifesto was somewhat less enthusiastic, still the message declares that salvation for the universe comes through the purpose and design of humans as they practice the religion of "science": "Using technology wisely, we can control our environment, conquer poverty, markedly reduce disease, extend our lifespan, significantly modify our behavior, alter the course of human evolution and cultural development, unlock vast new powers, and provide humankind with

unparalleled opportunity for achieving an abundant and meaningful life." (from revised **Human Manifesto**).

No longer is evolution a "mindless" and "purposeless" development without direction. Man has become "God" in the vacuum he declared when he denied God's existence. He has returned to the Garden where Satan promised Eve that she and Adam could become as God, with *His* knowledge.

The religion of Humanism has promised a better world, without the encumbrances of an outdated mythological theistic religion. How has it delivered?

Direct Results of Humanism

◆ Laws allowing "no-fault" divorces, so that currently one out of two marriages in the US ends in divorce.

◆ "Live-in" relationships instead of marriage.

◆ Laws allowing "the termination of unwanted pregnancies", so that almost 1 ½ million human babies are killed each year in the US alone, and this has been done consistently since 1973, with even greater numbers slaughtered in Russia, China, Japan, and almost every other nation of the world. The same Humanistic and evolutionary brainwashing that propelled Hitler and his minions to exterminate those not of his "super race" has been used to convince governments, doctors, and parents that these deliberate abortions are not murder.

◆ Laws allowing "assisted" dying; another word for selective "suicide", and an intermediate step toward euthanasia.

◆ Laws sanctioning homosexual behavior, with teaching programs in place from the earliest ages in schools. Some companies require their employees to undergo courses promoting acceptance of homosexual behavior. When a defendant in a court case is convicted of homosexual bias, not only does he lose the case but one of the punishments is the requirement to go through a course to restructure his thinking about sexual orientation.

◆ Laws allowing same-sex "marriages" and the adoption of children who then become the victims of their "parents'" perverted life-style.

◆ The growing acceptance of the "fact" that there is no such thing as "evil", "sin", "right", "wrong". All "morals" and "values" are absolutely "relative", depending on the situation and the individual's own personal choices.

Have these changes made our world a better place? None of the statistics say so.

And what else can we expect, as humans take charge of the "intelligence" and "purpose" in our development?

Future Expectations of Humanism's "Improvements"

- Manipulation of genes, to "improve" babies.
- Cloning of humans for body parts.
- Selective destruction of unborn babies when genetic "testing" reveals a potential for some disease.
- The "termination" (an aesthetic-sounding word, somewhat akin to the cleaned-up sound of "abortion") of elderly people who are no longer useful to society but are, in fact, an unwarranted expense and burden.
- The "termination" of those who are mentally or physically handicapped.
- The "termination" of dependent children whose parents cannot afford them or who don't want them.
- The "termination" of dependent parents whose children cannot afford them or who don't want them.

You insist that such things could never happen? Who would have believed just fifty years ago that the world would today approve and accept the murder of several millions of unborn babies every year? Most people think of the "Holocaust" as one of the worst atrocities of human history, yet it pales in comparison to the murders committed each year under the sanitized name of "abortion".

Yes, if humanistic policies are not checked, one by one these unthinkable things will come because they are sensible and practical in a world where humans are deciding how to move the universe on toward "perfection".

In such a world, fearful genetic manipulations and daring cloning will be openly or secretly practiced by "dedicated" scientists, because they are committed to the quest of making the fittest even more fit — and why should they be concerned about the lesser-fit humans who may be purged along the way? Isn't that the other side of evolution's definition:

"Survival of the fittest"
"Extinction of the unfit"
??? ✝

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate who initiated the publication of *The Voice of Truth International* and *Global Harvest.*

Psalm 14:1 shouts: **The fool has said in his heart, "There is no God." They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none who does good.**
The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men...

"Thy Word Is Truth"

Hugo McCord

In John 14:6, Jesus speaks of Himself as *"the truth,"* but in John 17:17 (KJV) the Scripture speaks of Jesus as being the embodiment of all religious truth: *"thy word is truth."* Both the Old Testament and the New Testament make up *"the word of truth"* (Psalm 119:43; 2 Corinthians 6:7; Ephesians 1:13; Colossians 1:5; 2 Timothy 2:15; James 1:18).

"What God has said isn't only alive and active! It is sharper than any double-edged sword. His word can cut through our spirits and souls and through our joints and marrow, until it discovers the desires and thoughts of our hearts" (Hebrews 4:12, Contemporary English Version). Precious and meaningful is the thought that God's Word is able to:

1. Put faith in our hearts: *"faith comes from hearing…the word"* (Romans 10:17 NIV).
2. Sanctify us: *"Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth"* (John 17:17 NIV).
3. Convert us: *"The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul"* (Psalm 19:7 KJV).
4. Save our souls: *"the word…is able to save your souls"* (James 1:18 NIV).
5. Cause the new birth: *"He chose to give us birth through the word"* (James 1:18 NIV).
6. Cause the newborn to grow: *"like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow"* (1 Peter 2:2 NASV).
7. Live in us: *"you are strong, and the word of God lives in you"* (1 John 2:14 NIV).
8. Work in us: *"the word of God, which is at work in you"* (1 Thessalonians 2:13 NIV).
9. Guide us: *"You guide me with your counsel"* (Psalm 73:24 NIV).
10. Lead us: *"O send out your light and your truth; let them lead me"* (Psalm 43:3 NRSV).
11. Keep us from sin: *"I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you"* (Psalm 119:11 NIV).
12. Keep us pure: *"How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word"* (Psalm 119:9 NIV).

13. Give us wisdom: *"the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple"* (Psalm 19:7 NRSV).
14. Give us understanding: *"I gain understanding from your precepts"* (Psalm 119:105 NIV).
15. Revive us: *"Thy word has revived me"* (Psalm 119:50 NASV).
16. Give us nourishment: *"It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4 NIV).
17. Induce reverence: *"Establish Thy word to Thy servant, as that which produces reverence for Thee"* (Psalm 119:38 NASV).
18. Counsel us: *"Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors"* (Psalm 119:24 NIV).
19. Warn us: *"By [the ordinances of the LORD] is your servant warned"* (Psalm 19:9, 11 NIV).
20. Restrict us to the written word: *"so that you may learn from us the meaning for the saying, 'Do not go beyond what is written'"* (1 Corinthians 4:6 NIV).
21. Give us insight: *"I have more insight than all my teachers, for Thy testimonies are my meditation"* (Psalm 119:99 NASV).
22. Help us when we are afflicted: *"If your law had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction"* (Psalm 119:92 NIV).
23. Supply all our needs: *"His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness"* (2 Peter 1:3 NIV).
24. Equip us completely*: "Every scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be equipped, completely furnished for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3:16,17 FHV).
25. Bring peace to us: *"Great peace have they that love thy law"* (Psalm 119:165 ASV).
26. Put joy in our hearts: *"The precepts of Jehovah are right, rejoicing the heart"* (Psalm 19:8 ASV).
27. Bring comfort in the hour of death: *"Therefore comfort one another with these words"* (1 Thessalonians 4:18 NASV).
28. Give hope: *"Remember your word to your servant, in which you have made me to hope"* (Psalm 119:49, NRSV). ✞

Hugo McCord (1911-2004) was a longtime professor of Bible at Oklahoma Christian University in Edmond, Oklahoma, USA.

Reasons to Trust the Bible

Gary C. Hampton

The Bible lays claim to inspiration. Paul told Timothy, *"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 complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work"* (2 Timothy 3:16,17). Paul used the Greek word "theopneustos" in the place where we find "inspiration". "Theo" means "God" and "pneustos" means "breathed", thus, "God breathed", or "God breathed out". The idea is that God spoke, since we exhale, or breathe out, through the vocal cords to speak.

Peter explained inspiration when he wrote, *"For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit"* (2 Peter 1:21). As often as the Hebrews writer reported that God said a certain thing, when we know man did the actual writing, he must have recognized the way inspiration worked during the days of the prophets (see Hebrews 1:5,8; 5:5,6).

Many Old Testament writers claimed inspiration, as did some New Testament writers (see Isaiah 1:1,2,10,24; Jeremiah 1:1,2; 2:1; Ezekiel 1:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Peter 3:2). Jesus considered Old Testament Scriptures inspired and used them as authoritative (Matthew 4:4,7,10). His whole purpose in coming to earth was to do God's will by fulfilling Old Testament prophecy (Matthew 5:7-18; John 15:25). The New Testament writers considered Old Testament writers inspired (Acts 1:15,16; 4:25; 28:25-27; Galatians 3:16-19).

The writers of the New Testament also claimed inspiration for other New Testament writers. Jesus said the apostles would be guided by the Holy Spirit (John 14:25,26; 16:12,13; Hebrews 2:1-4). The clearest and perhaps most intriguing of all these statements is that made by Peter about the writings of Paul. *"And consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation — as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures"* (2 Peter 3:15,16).

However, such internal claims would be meaningless if they were not supported by evidence. In fact, such claims force us to test their validity. We can know the

Bible is from God because of the scientific facts which were written in it long before man recognized them or knew about them. In Genesis 1:11,12,21,24,25, we find the expression *"after his kind"* in reference to the grasses, trees, fish, birds, cattle, and other beasts. These statements are made despite the fact that man, even hundreds of years later, believed in spontaneous generation.

In recent years, some doctors believe they have found certain special elements in the blood of a baby boy eight days old which help to heal. Yet, Moses, thousands of years ago, wrote by inspiration that boy babies were to be circumcised the eighth day (Leviticus 12:3). Long before modern medicine thought of putting people with highly contagious diseases in isolation, God's Word, in Leviticus 13:45, instructed the children of Israel to do just that with lepers. "*Now the leper on whom the sore is, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!'*"" In George Washington's time, doctors believed "bleeding" a patient would rid the body of impurities. Now, doctors realize that the blood is the life of the body, just as Moses wrote in the long ago (Genesis 9:4; Leviticus 17:11,14).

Thompson and Jackson note that the Mississippi River dumps over 6 million gallons of water per second into the Gulf of Mexico. One might ask, "Where does it all go and why is the land not flooded?" The answer was revealed by God through Solomon. *"All the rivers run into the sea, Yet the sea is not full; To the place from which the rivers come, There they return again"* (Ecclesiastes 1:7). In 11:3 he explains further by saying, *"If the clouds are full of rain, They empty themselves upon the earth."* Amos concurs with Solomon when he describes God by writing, *"Who calls for the waters of the sea, And pours them out on the face of the earth — The Lord is His name"* (Amos 9:6).

The miracles worked in the Bible prove the spokesmen who worked them were from God. God gave Moses certain miraculous signs to use in proving to the Israelites that he was from God (Exodus 4:1-5). The miracles worked in bringing the ten plagues upon the land of Egypt were done to prove there was one God in the world and He was with Moses and the people (Exodus 7:5,17; 8:10,22; 9:14,29; 10:2; 11:7; 13:3; 14:14). Christ was raised from the dead to prove He was God's spokesman (Romans 1:4). That the apostles were speaking by God's direction is clear because of the signs they were able to work (Mark 16:14-20; Hebrews 2:3,4).

The Bible is also geographically correct. When it says someone or a group went up, the reader can be sure they went from a lower elevation to a higher elevation. For instance, in the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus said, *"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead"* (Luke 10:30). A simple glance

at a topographical map is very revealing. Jerusalem is in a mountainous area, with the Mount of Olives being 2680 feet high. In contrast, Jericho is near the mouth to the Dead Sea. It is actually below sea level, at approximately -500 feet. So, one truly would go "down" from Jerusalem to Jericho!

Other areas of proof could be explored, such as: the historical accuracy of the Bible; the unity of 66 books written by about 40 writers, in different languages, over 1600 years; and the greatness of the message. However, I believe we can already see that the Bible claims to be "God-breathed" and there are undeniable proofs that it is. ✞

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Jesus Wept

Ed Benesh

For years, men have debated this verse and exactly why "Jesus wept". Perhaps you have a theory of your own. Some say it was because His friend Lazarus had died. Others will tell you that it was because His friend, a righteous man, had gone on to glory and Christ wept because He was now going to bring him back from that glorious reward. Still others would say that He wept simply because He was caught up in the emotion of the moment and wept as everyone else was.

All of these, I believe, miss the clearest and simplest point of the concise and pithy statement, "Jesus wept." Jesus wept because "Jesus cared." He cared about His friend. He cared about his soul. He cared about Mary and Martha. He cared about the lesson He was teaching them.

This is abundantly illustrated for us, time and again, in His ministry. When He healed the leper — He cared. When He spoke to the woman at the well, a societal pariah, offering guidance and rebuke cloaked in the words that were soft as a dear friend's — He cared. When He withstood the stiff-necked Pharisees and called them hypocrites — He cared.

As His followers, we must display the same type of care and empathy. We must be sympathetic and have the ability to put ourselves in another's shoes, rather than simply try to impose our will and experience on them, and to personally create expectations of them. If we can do that, if we embrace every person where they are and help them see their way clear of trials, circumstances and difficulties, then we may have the mind of Christ, which always saw others before self and treated each person as if he or she were the only person in the world at that moment. If we can listen and not talk, if we can understand and not condemn, if we can see a man in pain and care enough to reach out to him, we will weep as Jesus wept.

In this day, care enough to consider others before self, serve and make a difference in your life and theirs. ✞

Why You Should Believe the Bible to Be the Word of God

J.C. Choate

Millions of people around the world believe the Bible to be the Word of God. They accept this as fact rather than to question it. Others are skeptical of it but only because they have not investigated its contents and examined its fruits. Still others reject the Bible entirely because they have been born into this world and reared to accept something else. If you are in one or the other of the last two groups, I would briefly like to give you some reasons why you should believe the Bible to be the Word of God.

1. **The Bible claims to be Word of God.** It is called the Word of the Lord (Jeremiah 14:1). Peter said that holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20,21). Christ quoted frequently from the Old Testament, calling it the Word of God (John 10:35). Finally, Paul tells us that it was all given by the inspiration of God (2 Timothy 3:16,17).

2. The Bible agrees with true science. Long before man discovered that the earth was round, that there were paths in the sea, and hundreds of other facts, the Bible had said it (Isaiah 40:22; Psalm 8). How did the writers of the Bible know these scientific facts at such an early date? God had revealed it to them.

3. The Bible is supported by the many archaeological discoveries. Such discoveries have shed light on events that took place hundreds of years before Christ, but they have fully supported the claims of the Bible. There have been those who doubted certain biblical stories, such as that of the flood, but in 1872 George Smith found the Babylonian tablets which also tell of the flood. Many other examples could be given.

4. The Bible and geography agree. Many of the mountains, rivers, cities, etc., that exist now are the same as are listed in the Bible under these names. This shows that the writers of the Bible did not write about fictitious places that never really existed.

5. The Bible and secular history support each other. For instance, many of the events that the Bible speaks of as having taken place are described in the reading of the different histories of the world. If the Bible was a book of fables, how could this be?

6. The Bible could not have been written by man alone, since much of it was beyond man's knowledge. If man alone wrote it, why is it that no one has ever been able to equal it? If man had written it, then someone would have written a better book by now.

7. The Bible is a wonderful book of unity. Although it had some 40 different authors, over a period of some 1600 years, written by those of different professions at different places, yet it completely fits together as one unified book. How could this have been possible if God had not been directing the entire writing?

8. The Bible not only contains many prophecies but reveals how they were fulfilled. For example in Joel 2:28,29 the author speaks of the time when the Spirit of the Lord would be poured out. Then in Acts 2, Peter says that which was then taking place was that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. There are many prophecies in the Old Testament concerning Christ, and these are fulfilled in the New Testament. Read Isaiah 53:5 and Luke 22:63,64.

9. The Bible is shown to be the Word of God inasmuch as it has stood the tests of time. It has had many enemies but it has outlived them all. It has been preserved down through the centuries and present day translations may be compared with ancient manuscripts to prove that it remains the same.

10. The Bible answers the great questions of man. Where did man come from? What is his purpose in life? Where is he going? The Bible is the only book that gives the answers. Man came from God (Genesis 1:26,27), his purpose is to glorify his Maker (1 Peter 4:11), and he will surely spend eternity somewhere (Matthew 25:46).

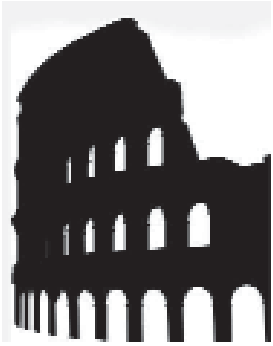
11. The Bible has the greatest and best influence on man of any book in all the world. As bad as the world may be, it is as good as it is because of the influence of the Bible.

12. The Bible will never pass away. Christ so states in John 12:48.

Truly, then, the Bible is the Word of God. It is the sacred message from God to man. It is the Truth, a guide from earth to heaven. Believe it, obey its teachings, and be blessed by its promises. ✞

J. C. Choate, now deceased, began publishing this magazine in 1993.

Romans 12:9-21



Jerry Bates

1. What is hypocrisy? (v. 9)
2. Christians are to hate _____ and cling to what is _____? (v. 9)
3. What kind of love should be exhibited between Christians? (v. 10)
4. Christians are to serve with diligence. What does that mean? (v. 11)
5. What should Christians be willing to do for fellow Christians who need their assistance? See also 1 John 3:17. (v. 13)
6. What should Christians do to those who persecute them? (v. 14)
7. What should Christians do with those who are rejoicing and weeping? (v. 15)
8. If a Christian is highly educated and wise, it is fine for him to think very highly of himself and his opinion. (v. 16) True False
9. Personal vengeance is acceptable in some situations. True False (v. 17)
10. Christians should be careful to always do what non-Christians know is right, even though they do not always live by the same rules. (v. 17) True False
11. Is it always possible to live peaceably with other men? (v. 18)
12. Who is going to take vengeance upon evildoers? (v. 19)
13. What may happen as a result of doing good even to our enemies? (v. 20)
14. How is evil to be overcome? (v. 21)

(see inside the back cover for answers)

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another, 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is posisble, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

NOTES: These verses consist of very short commands with little elaboration. Verses 9-13 deal with our relationships with fellow Christians, while the latter verses deal with our relationships with non-Christians. All of these commands are much easier to understand than it is to actually apply them to our lives.

The main emphasis is that we are to behave like a Christian. Christianity is much more than just a belief, a relationship, an experience, or a feelling. It is a way of life. Unless we live that life, our Christianity is worth very little. Especially is this true in regard to non-Christians. They are always watching what we do and say. Quite often they know what is right, even though they do not live it. We will have little influence upon them if our beliefs and our actions do not match. It matters little what they would do in a certain situation. Jesus asked the question, *"What do you do more than others?"* (Matthew 5:47). Paul encourages us to *"adorn the doctrine."* (Titus 2:10) This means to beautify something or to make it attractive. By our lives we make Christianity attractive to non-Christians. May we never bring shame and reproach upon the kingdom of Christ.

Nullifying the Cross

Bobby Dockery

The central event in all of human history was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. At the cross, God interrupted the process of history to alter the hopeless condition of mankind enslaved in sin. *"For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly"* (Romans 5:6).

It is the cross which makes salvation a possibility (Ephesians 1:7). It is also the cross which reconciles us to God by providing the antidote for the enmity born of sin (Ephesians 2:16). Furthermore, it is the cross which makes possible genuine spiritual peace in a guilt-ridden and doubt-torn world (Colossians 1:20).

Paul sums up the significance of the cross in these words: *"For the preaching of the cross… is the power of God"* (1 Corinthians 1:18). But Paul also notes that the power of the cross can be nullified. *"For Christ…* [sent] *me to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void"* (1 Corinthians 1:17; The NIV has, *"lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power."*) Paul says the amazing power of the cross can be neutralized by the ineptitude and unfaithfulness of men. Note some of the ways in which this is possible.

1. By Ignoring It. The cross

cannot save those who have never encountered it. In Romans 10:14, Paul asks: *"How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard?"* When we remain silent about the cross, we negate its power to save! How startling to hear of "churches" which have deliberately chosen not to mention the cross to a lost world. For them the cross of Christ has been effectively nullified!

2. By Distorting It. Some rob the cross of its power by trying to make it mean something it does not. They seek to warp and reshape the cross to fit their own doctrinal systems. For example, the widely held doctrine of "Limited Atonement" holds that the power of the cross is available only for a favored few who were predestined from eternity to be saved. But the Bible says that *"the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to **all** men"* and that Jesus *"tasted death for **every** man"* (Titus 2:11; Hebrews 2:9). A false Gospel proclaiming a distorted cross cannot save! Those who put their faith in men and their teaching rather than in Christ and His cross have robbed the cross of its power.

The cross can cancel out your sins, or your sins can cancel out the cross. Which is it for you?

3. By Rejecting It. Though Jesus *"tasted death for every man",* not all will receive the benefits of Christ's atoning death on the cross. Many will be lost eternally because they refuse to submit to the cross. In Romans 6:3 Paul asks, *"Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death?"* When we are baptized, we participate in Christ's death, and we become the people for whom Christ died! When we refuse the *"preaching of the cross",* we place ourselves in the same position we would be in if Christ had never died! Rejection of the Gospel robs the cross of its power in our lives.

The power of the cross is undeniable, but its effectiveness can be nullified. The cross can cancel out your sins, or your sins can cancel out the cross. Which is it for you? ✝

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Death Is . . .

Kevin L. Moore

Death is certain.

Our physical existence in this temporal world is not meant to be permanent; therefore, departing this life is the inevitable reality for everyone (2 Corinthians 5:1-10). *"For the living know that they will die . . ."* (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

Death is uncertain.

We do not know when it will come. Many are caught off guard, like the wealthy farmer who reveled in his prosperity until his life was taken unexpectedly (Luke 12:16-21). James warns, *"whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away"* (James 4:14).

Death is no respecter of persons.

Whether young or old, rich or poor, wise or foolish, righteous or unrighteous, all are subject to death's call (Psalm 49:10). *"And no one has power in the day of death. . ."* (Ecclesiastes 8:8).

Death is frightening to those who are uninformed and unprepared (Job 24:17).

While fear of the unknown is a natural human tendency, of even greater concern is to know what to expect and to not be ready. The righteous can pray, *"Please let us fall into the hand of the LORD, for His mercies are great . . ."* (2 Samuel 24:14). But for those who are not prepared for eternity, it *"is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"* (Hebrews 10:31).

Death is miserable for those who have no hope beyond this life.

When a loved one passes away, the biblical distinction is not between those who mourn and those who do not, but between those who have no hope and those who do (1 Thessalonians 4:13). Moreover, Paul gives this insight: *"If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable"* (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Salvation

Death is the end of all opportunity to make things right with God.

One of the lessons learned from the account of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31) is that the Lord has given sufficient opportunity, but only in this lifetime, and that our circumstances cannot be changed beyond the grave.

Death is a doorway.

"For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18). To pass from this life to the next, we must go through the entryway of death (1 Corinthians 15:50). Unfortunately, many do not want to leave this temporal life, but God has something so much better in store for those who are obedient to Him.

Death is a journey.

"So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:6-8). Paul concludes: *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain . . . having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better"* (Philippians 1:21-23).

Death is a rest.

"Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Write: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on."' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them'" (Revelation 14:13). God's rest on the seventh day after creation was simply a cessation of His creative activity (Genesis 2:2). The Sabbath rest enjoined on the ancient Jews was an end to the laborious toil they had endured in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). Israel's inheritance in the land of Canaan was a rest from the uncertainties and hardships of the wilderness (Joshua 21:43-45). Likewise, our future heavenly rest will not be an eternity of inactivity, but an end to the turmoil, sorrow, and struggle that characterize our physical existence here on earth (Hebrews 4:1-11).

Death is something for which we must prepare.

"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26). Beyond life insurance, a will, and making funeral arrangements, how does one prepare for death? To put it succinctly: *"Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him"* (2 Corinthians 5:9). ✞

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Making the Heart the Source of Obedience

Michael L. King

The Spirit directed the apostle Paul to speak words worthy of being emulated in the life of every sincere child of God. In Romans 6:16-18 Paul depicted life as having two options, just as Jesus did in Matthew 7:13,14, describing the two gates, two ways, and two consequences. Paul gives emphasis to the fact that unless our response to God comes from a sincere heart (mind), it is of no value and will not be acknowledged. Who would want to receive gifts, or be told words of endearment, knowing the gifts were given only out of duty and the words were spoken with insincerity? Neither does God want us to respond to Him out of improper motivation or inconsistency with our lifestyle or the passions of our heart.

Obedience from the heart is manifested by a heart of intelligence. Notice qualifying words of significant passages in the Bible addressing this subject: *"For as he **thinks** in his heart, so is he"* (Proverbs 23:7); *"Why do you **reason** these things in your hearts?"* (Mark 2:8); *"But Mary kept all these things and **pondered** them in her heart"* (Luke 2:19); and *"For with the heart one **believes** unto righteousness…"* (Romans 10:10).

The reader can quickly discern that emotions are involved, for the heart perpetrates love (Matthew 22:37). Obedience that is from the heart is an "obedience of faith". Obedience from the heart requires purpose, particularly so in terms of obedient giving, *"So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver"* (2 Corinthians 9:7). It would stand to reason that all other forms of response to God would require purpose and would certainly be intentional as well.

We might ask ourselves if our spirituality is permeated by "will power". In simple words, saving faith is a loving response to God's teaching (Romans 10:10). James gave great encouragement to his readers by saying, *"Blessed is the man ... when he has been approved"* (James 1:12). The importance of an intelligent and obedient response to God and His word is clearly taught in The Parable of the Soils (Matthew 13:5). Likewise, in The Parable of the Sower, the seed was the Word of God, with some seed finding good lodging, *"…the ones that fell on good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart"*

(Luke 8:15). Those who were saved and inducted into the New Testament church on the Day of Pentecost were those who *"heard",* were *"cut to the heart", "gladly received his word ... were baptized",* and *"...the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved"* (Acts 2:36-41,47).

Not only is an *intelligent* response to be given to the Gospel, but a *specific* obedience is required as well. It is important to have a "heartfelt" spirituality, but the feelings of the heart must be congruent with what God's dictates. The hand on a compass is always drawn to magnetic north. When the one who possesses the compass moves, the hand again acclimates to the north position. This occurrence is always predictable and never changes with the passing of time or conditions.

The people of God should believe, worship, marry, be saved, and behave in general as those Christians of previous centuries, because the position of God on such matters has never changed. He always points us upward. We know that Jesus *"...is the same yesterday, today, and forever"* (Hebrews 11:8) and that with God *"there is no variation or shadow of turning"* (James 1:17). This is speaking of God's care for us and fulfillment of His promises, but the principle remains the same.

Notice in the very same context (verse 18), James informs that *"Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be the firstfruits of his creatures".* Did you pick up on the fact that His *will* is the magnet of our spiritual compass that determines truth for every matter? Paul was inspired to write similar truth by saying, *"...though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness"* (Romans 6:17,18).

The Corinthians were given the basic teaching of obedience (1 Corinthians 15:1-8), to which they were to tenaciously cling, for it contained their means of salvation. It was affirmed by Paul, as above mentioned, that salvation would come when they embraced the doctrine of Christ (Romans 6:17,18). The nature and importance of repentance and entrance into Christ by baptism have been established (Romans 6:1-5). The baptism of a penitent believer is a burial in water, which is the likeness of the burial of Jesus (verses 3-5). Obedience from the heart allows one to be raised from the waters of baptism to walk in newness of life in similitude to Jesus' resurrection from the grave (verse 5). When one has *"obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine,"* the man living in bondage becomes *"alive unto God in Christ Jesus"* (verses 8,10,11). We can then say, *"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Corinthians 15:57). ✞

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Before You Pronounce Us Dead...

Dalton Key

A few years back, a small-town newspaper reporter gave an unusual excuse for his abbreviated, barely-there story. He explained, "First, nothing happened. And second, what did happen happened to people who don't happen to want everybody to know what happened."

There are always those who are quick to point an accusing finger at the lifelessness of the church, where, as they may say, "Nothing is happening!" Yet, beneath the congregational crust, in the day-to-day lives of sincere, consecrated members, a great deal is happening! The church's hardest workers are usually those least inclined to publicize their own good words. Because of their Christ-like humility, they don't "happen to want everybody to know what happened."

Those murmurers who criticize the local body for being dead and lifeless are too often failing to see the true picture. They fail to see the godly couple, who for years have taken food to an elderly sister. They don't know about the good members who regularly visit the nursing homes and hospitals. The critics haven't heard of the white-haired couple who spend long evenings, often into the wee hours of the morning, teaching an eager neighbor the Gospel of Christ.

No, these and scores of other good works go on right under our very noses. But we want something more sensational, more expensive, more publicized.

Matthew 10:42, "*and whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward*."

Christian brother or sister, before you sit in the critic's chair, before you pronounce the local church dead, look a bit deeper. You may be diagnosing no one but yourself! ✞

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The Church: Church Rulers

Robert Rawson

There is an element of rule involved in the eldership's work of the Lord, and there is to be respect given by the brethren (Hebrews 13:17). Such rulership is to be understood much as the wife is to be submissive to her husband (Ephesians 5:25-28). There is to be such love that working together for the common good is desired over and above any personal decision or will. Warning is given by Peter of the "*lording over God's Heritage*" (1 Peter 5:1-4).

It is true that grievous words can be used to lord over others (Proverbs 15:1). We are not to use grievous words that stir up anger. Thoughts can result in a special look of the eyes and face, which is evil (Deuteronomy 15:9). Mannerism of walk and folding of the arms can result in evil (Deuteronomy 31:29). Divine instruction warns to avoid being around angry people (Proverbs 22:24,25). There are those who are quick to get angry (Proverbs 14:17), yet sometimes such men are found in the eldership of the church.

I know these verses are in the Old Testament. Believe me, there are corresponding verses in the New Testament, and such words as "*Christ loved the church and gave himself for her*" (Ephesians 5:25) show us the true manners of the loving Savior and loving shepherds, too. Discouragement is a plague of many homes and congregations. Who is spreading such a plague? Does this come from the membership and rise up to the leadership of the church, or is it coming from the leadership's failure to encourage the congregation?

The leading of the flock away from the ghosts of fear and doubt must be done by good, godly elders. The eldership needs to have the vision to see the dangers faced by brethren, and to address those dangers with discussions in Bible classes, bringing in capable, outside teachers or preachers who address the needs of the hour. Timely articles that are filled with encouragement should be written. The brethren can be reminded of the Lord's promises (Matthew 28:20; Romans 8:28) that He is with us, and that all things will work together for our good. Yes, it is often what we see in the eyes, hands, and attitudes displayed by church rulers that provokes us to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24). ✞

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What Are You Looking For?

Jim Poland

There are two contrasting birds that fly over the fields. One is the hummingbird and the other is the vulture.

All the vulture can see is rotting meat, because that is all he looks for.

But, the hummingbird ignores the dead carcasses and smelly dead flesh. Instead, he looks for the tiny blossoms of the flowers.

Each bird finds what it is looking for.

What are you looking for in life? What identifies your image of good? What are you finding?

If folks are just looking for that which will gratify the things of the world, the culture, then they will find it in the activities that will rot, decay, and pass away. *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world"* (1 John 2:15,16).

IF YOU WILL LOOK FOR THE ETERNAL PURPOSES FOR LIFE, THEN YOU WILL FIND THESE IN JESUS AS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF THE LIVING GOD.

But, if you will look for the eternal purposes for life, then you will find these in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God. You will be ignoring the sinful activities and will be searching out the beauty of God's Word, the Bible, the New Testament of Christ! *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection,*

knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin" (Romans 6:1-6).

What are we seeking in a church? Some are seeking a church of their own liking. Some are seeking a church of their own thinking, a church that will fit their raising, surroundings, and culture. Some are seeking a church that will be popular to friends, relatives and modern thinking. Some are seeking a church that will satisfy their desire to be entertained, to be popular, and to be attractive to the world.

WHEN WE SEEK THE CHURCH WHICH JESUS BUILT, WE WILL FIND IT!

In the first century, the Jews sought a kingdom that would be earthly, physical with spiritual aspects. They were not looking for the church which Jesus came to build. They sought a Pharisee kingdom. Some sought a Sadducee-type kingdom, some another variation. The Greeks and Romans sought a pagan church of their choosing and raising.

But Jesus did not come to satisfy the earthly cravings or misconceptions concerning His church. It would be the one He built upon the foundation of His essence as Deity, the Son of God (Matthew 16:13-19; 1 Corinthians 3:11). The church that Jesus built is built upon the foundation of the teachings of the apostles and prophets of the New Testament (Ephesians 2:20). When we seek to find the church apart from, or in addition to, their writings, we will find something other than what Christ came to give His life to purchase and establish (Galatians 1:6-9; Acts 20:28).

WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING FOR IN LIFE? WHAT ARE YOU FINDING?

When we seek the church which Jesus built, we will find it through hearing the Gospel of Christ (Romans 10:17; Acts 2:14-36); repenting of sins (Luke 13:3); confessing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, before men (Matthew 10:32,33; Romans 10:9,10); and being baptized unto remission of sin in Jesus' name (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Those who thus seek the church of Christ find it, and Jesus will add those who are thus saved to His church (Acts 2:41,47). We must continue to seek His church and salvation through the teaching of the New Testament (Acts 2:42).✞

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Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses

There are those who teach what is called Calvinistic doctrine. This doctrine, created by John Calvin, who was born in France in 1509, is based on the belief that every soul is *predestined* by God to be either good or evil, and that *humans actually have no choice* in the matter.

An acronym has been developed for the doctrine:

T — Total depravity
U — Unconditional election
L — Limited atonement
I — Irresistible grace
P — Perseverance of saints

In compacted form, this doctrine says that humans are born as *depraved sinners*; that God's *election* is His own choice, not based on anything the person has done; that Christ's death provides atonement only for those that God chooses; that the elect *must* accept salvation; and that the saved person *cannot so sin* as to be lost eternally.

The following passages, among many others, refute these erroneous doctrines.

T— "But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for **of such** is the kingdom of heaven'" (Matthew 19:14).

U — "'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. **Whoever desires,** let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

L — "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that **whoever believes** in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

I — **"**You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always **resist** the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you" (Acts 7:51).

P — "...if, after they have **escaped** the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are **again entangled** in them and **overcome,** the latter end is worse for them than the beginning" (2 Peter 2:20).

Last summer my wife and I met a couple at a restaurant. After lunch, the women decided to go shopping, so I invited the man to go sailing.

While we were out on the water, a storm blew up. The tide had gone out, and we were down wind trying to work our way back through a narrow channel. At one point the boat grounded. We had to climb overboard and shove with all our might to get it back into deeper water.

As my new friend stood there, ankle deep in muck, the wind blowing his hair wildly, rain streaming down his face, he grinned at me. With unmistakable sincerity, he said, "Sure beats shopping."

Larry's doctor took him into the room and said, "Larry, I have some good news and some bad news."

Larry said, "Well, give me the good news."

The doctor replied, "They're going to name a disease after you."

On a mountain-climbing expedition the Swiss guide warned an American tourist, "Be especially careful not to fall – it's a dangerous place. But, if you do fall," he added casually, "remember to look to the right – the view is extraordinary!"

(This is a true story.) The teacher was reviewing the Bible lesson with her class of 2 – 4-year-olds. She asked the children, "Who was the Jewish ruler who came to see Jesus by night?"

One bright 2-year-old promptly answered, "Nakedemous, but he had clothes on."

A new mom took her baby daughter with her to the supermarket for the first time. She dressed her in pink from head to toe. At the store, she placed her in the

shopping cart and put her purchases around her.

At the checkout line, a small boy and his mother were ahead of them. The boy was crying and begging for something.

"He wants some candy or gum and his mother won't let him have any," the new mother thought.

Then she heard the little boy's mother reply to him, "No! You may not have a baby sister today. That lady got the last one!"

Psychiatrist: "Do you talk in your sleep?"
Patient: "No, I talk in other people's sleep."
Psychiatrist: "I don't understand. How could that be?"
Patient: "I'm a preacher."

"Why did your new girlfriend refuse to marry you?" a fellow asked his friend.

"Oh, for religious reasons," lamented the sad young man. "I'm broke, and she worships money."

A kindly 90-year-old grandmother found buying presents for family and friends a bit much one Christmas, so she wrote out checks for all of them to put in their Christmas cards.

In each card she wrote, "Buy your own present," and then sent them off.

After the Christmas festivities were over, she found the checks in her desk! Everyone had gotten a Christmas card from her with "Buy your own present" written inside, but without the checks!

The divorce court judge said, "Mr. Quinn, I have reviewed this case very carefully, and I have decided to give your wife $775 a week."

"That's very fair, your honor," the husband said. "And every now and then I'll try to send her a few dollars myself."

Truth or Madness?

Maxie B. Boren

When the Roman governor Festus accused the apostle Paul of being mad (i.e., crazy), he responded by saying, *"I am not mad, most excellent Festus, but speak forth words of truth and soberness"* (Acts 26:25). No, Paul wasn't "mad"…the "crazy ones" were those rejecting the truth!

And so it is today. The world looks upon those of us who (1) believe in God, (2) believe the Bible as the Word of God, (3) believe the creation account of Genesis 1, (4) believe the "seven basics of unity" of Ephesians 4, (5) believe the plan of salvation of Romans 1:16, Mark 16:15,16, and Acts 2:37,38, (6) and believe a high code of moral conduct clearly taught in many New Testament passages, as "crazy" and "old fogies" who have lost touch with reality. In fact, it is the world that is all mixed up and sadly lacking in understanding!

It has always baffled me why most people will more readily embrace error than accept the simple truth. That is puzzling, and I don't understand why it's like that. It seems to me that everyone would really want to know the truth concerning the salvation of their souls and where they are going to spend eternity. But sad as it is, the world is more intent on believing a lie (read the context of 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12) instead of believing the truth!

Let the world call us mad if it wants to, and let the false teachers rant and rave all they please…I still believe the clarion sounding forth of Truth will be received by the discerning hearts of those who really are hungering and thirsting after righteousness (Matthew 5:6). As the "pillar and ground" of the Truth (1 Timothy 3:15), the true church of the Lord will always boldly proclaim His Word without favor or compromise! Truth is distinctive. It always has been and it always will be.

My prayer for the brotherhood of Christ is that we will have enough good sense to reject the madness and folly of human wisdom, and cleave to the revelation of God's will, and to preach it boldly, yet in love (Ephesians 4:15). ✝

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No, Paul wasn't "mad"…the "crazy ones" were those rejecting the truth!

Baptism and the Thief on the Cross

A.L. Franks

"Baptism is not essential, because Jesus saved the thief without baptism."

Argument: A dying thief on the cross next to the dying Son of God requested, "*Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom*." In response, Jesus promised, "*Today shalt thou be with me in paradise*" (Luke 23:43). Jesus said nothing to the thief about baptism. He plainly said the thief would join him that very day in paradise. Many who object to the essentiality of baptism argue, "Since Jesus saved the thief without requiring baptism, so we can also be saved without baptism."

Response: The apparent salvation of the thief without baptism has no bearing whatsoever upon how the lost are saved ***today***. The thief lived and died under the law of Moses. All who have lived on earth since the first century are under the will (testament) of Christ. The New Covenant (testament) with its commandment of baptism "*for the remission of sins*" and "*to be saved*" (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16) was not given until after the death of Jesus, the "testator" (See Hebrews 9:15-17). The same is true with a will (testament) made by someone today. It is not in effect until after the testator has died.

All who have lived on earth since the first century are under a new covenant — the New Testament. While Jesus was upon earth, before His death, His law (testament) was not in force. He could and did forgive sins without requiring those forgiven to meet certain requirements of the New Testament. Jesus was yet alive. His testament was not in force while He lived and when He made the promise of paradise to the dying thief. But, it is different now. According to the New Testament, a present day sinner cannot be saved until he expresses genuine faith in Jesus by submitting to baptism (study Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). ✝

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Immortality

Perry N. Hall

The apostle Paul said, *"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain…I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better…"* (Philippians 1:21-23). Paul had truly set his affections on things above (Colossians 3:1-3). In varying degrees, the longing for immortality is common among men.

All people in all places and at all times have had some kind of belief in life after death. Ancient Egyptians believed and embalmed their dead that the body might be preserved for the spirit after judgment. Greeks believed and, thus, placed a coin in the mouth of the corpse, so that old bearded Charon would row the spirit across the river Styx. American Indians, upon the death of their chieftain, killed his horse, broke his cooking utensils, bows and arrows, etc., that the spirit might be liberated to be used in that happy hunting ground. Today, great men of literature, present day philosophers, and scientists have written of their faith in immortality. Instinct — intuition — it defies definition, but just as the homing pigeon wings that unerring flight, just as the bee makes that straight course to the hive, just as the southland in winter calls the birds, so immortality beckons the soul of man.

It remained for Jesus Christ to be raised from the dead and bring life and immortality to light, as a matter of Divine Revelation (2 Timothy 1:10; 1 Corinthians 15: 1-58).

He said at the tomb of Lazarus, *"I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die…"* (John 11:25,26). ✞

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Christian Values or Truth?

Justin A. Hopkins

Many in today's society speak of the significance of Christian values, or of "Judeo-Christian values". This term is thrown about in political discussions as many cry for legislation that reflects these values, values that are said to be based on the Bible. BusinessDictionary.com defines a value system as, "A coherent set of values adopted and/or evolved by a person, organization, or society as a standard to guide its behavior in preferences in all

situations."

Values, as such, can be deeply personal, or can be shared by an entire group, community, or culture. There are competing value systems, which hail from differing systems of religious and philosophical thinking. Each value system is understood to be equally valid for those who embrace it.

Notice that these values serve as a guide for behavior, but only for those who have, of their own free will, decided that they would live by them. Even then, those values are not hard and fast rules, but are merely "preferences". What does this mean for the "Judeo-Christian Value System"?

While these values may be true and valid for those who claim to be Christians, they have not been accepted and adopted by those *not* claiming to be Christians. Since the values are personal, and subjective, what right do we have to try to impose them on others? It is for this reason that the cry for a separation between Church and State has been so pervasive in western culture. After all, the government deals in matters that are objective and have an effect on all citizens, regardless of their value systems. This being the case, should not government be based on the realm of facts and objective truths, rather than the subjective realm of feelings and values?

Can we impose our values on others?

If we approach these matters from a system of values, what right do we have to make claims on, or demands of, the lives of others based on our value system? Should they not live and be judged by whatever value system they have decided will work for them?

Is the Christian system merely a set of values? Is it simply personal preference in matters of moral and behavioral decisions? Or, do the teachings of the Bible reach further than this? As we consider the concept of truth, we must ask the question that Pilate asked: *"What is truth?"* (John 18:38).

Truth is something that is *always* valid and accurate in all places, times, circumstances, and for all people. The problem is, how can anybody know for sure that anything meets this standard for truth? Is anything really a universal truth, or is it simply true for you? The only possible source of universal truth would be an Infinite Being, one who knows everything, and is everywhere all the time, having infinite power. Only in the existence of the God of the Bible can any truth be found. Jesus summarized the matter when He declared, *"Thy word is truth"* (John 17:17).

All truth, then, whether it is religious truth, moral truth, or mathematical truth

emanates from the very person of God! Two-plus-two will always equal four because God decreed it to be so. In the same way, then, moral and religious truths, as revealed by Jehovah, are not merely *values,* or *personal preferences.* No, they are *universal truths* that are equally valid and true for all people in all times and places.

It is just as Jesus said, *"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. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak"* (John 12:48,49). We must come to the realization that Christianity is not merely a system of values, but a system of truth. With this reality in mind, we now have a moral obligation to help others understand these truths, for it is by these truths that they will be judged.

To be evangelistic or to call for society at large to conform to biblical standards of morality and living is not to be bigoted and small-minded by forcing your personal values onto others. Instead, it is compassionate concern (or love) that seeks to help those around you prepare for the coming day of judgment!

Because the truths of Christianity are universal and objective, we are bound to the Great Commission. *"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). We are to go into all the world because all the world is affected by the truths that we hold, or the absence of them.

We go into all the world because all of the world must answer to the Gospel. There is no limit to the influence that our profession of Christianity is to have in our own lives. We are to be Christians, and to live by and share the truth of Christianity in our personal lives, and in the public arena. Our Christianity should affect our actions when it comes to politics. Our Christianity should affect our actions when it comes to education and the pursuit of knowledge. Our Christianity should affect our actions in the work place. Our Christianity should affect our actions in the home, and among our neighbors.

We must not be apologetic, accommodating, or compromising when it comes to the demands of the Gospel, because the souls of those around us hang in the balance, and the truths by which they will be judged do not — and will not — change!

To relegate the Gospel to the realm of values is to rob it of its power and influence. No! Christianity is much more than values. *It is truth!* ✞

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Restore the Old Paths

Paul Holland

The American Revolution had a disastrous impact on traditional forms of religious practice. Anglicans suffered for their British sympathies and Quakers for their pacifism. The ideals of personal liberty and reason wrecked havoc on the established churches in America.

Personal liberty had two profound impacts on late 18th century Americans, which contributed to the rise of the Restoration Movement. On one hand, people felt a freedom to live morally any way they liked. When they became detached from their religious moorings, they drifted into various vices which disturbed the sensibilities of biblically-minded peoples. That led to the second Great Awakening.

But also, this new sense of liberty and freedom helped motivate many people to think — "You know what, I don't have to be a member of this particular denomination. I can think and reason for myself." That led to the rise of a number of religious movements.

The uniqueness of the Restoration Movement among those efforts of the Second Great Awakening was that it did not center on any one man or group of men. It centered on the Bible and the "Old Jerusalem Gospel" — the search for the Ancient Order of Things.

Doctrine To Live By

On this side of the cross, how do we *"stand by the ways and see and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; and find rest for our souls"* (Jeremiah 6:16) — The ancient paths of Jesus Christ?

First, we must recognize the critical role the twelve apostles — and Paul — play in revealing the way as it is in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:20). We need to recognize that the purpose of their inspiration was to guide us — *all* Christians in subsequent generations — into *all* the truth (John 16:13).

Every generation has its own trials and challenges. Within the time frame of what we know as the Restoration Movement, growing out of the Second Great Awakening, the great challenge was coming out of the darkness of denominationalism. That challenge is still with us.

But then the challenge of "Which is the greater aspect to our plea: unity or truth?" That great challenge met the next generation when the mechanical instrument of music and missionary societies came along and drew people away from the ancient path.

Higher criticism and evolution — both challenges are still with us, but they came to a new generation and that generation again had to decide if it would pursue the ancient paths or if it would sacrifice its children on the altar of Molech.

Skepticism is still a challenge. Pentecostalism and ecumenicism have come along and even now, post-modernism, have all reared their ugly heads and frightened many once-faithful men and women to compromise and veer off the ancient path.

The danger of leaving God's way is always present among us because our adversary the Devil continues prowling like a roaring lion. Every family has to make its own choices on a weekly, daily or monthly basis if it will serve God first. Every individual, as he or she matures, has to answer the question for himself or herself: "Ultimately, whom am I going to serve?"

On July 4, 1826, the young United States of America celebrated her 50th anniversary. On that day, Thomas Jefferson died and his parting words were reported to be, "Is it the fourth yet?" Unbeknownst to him, that same day, his friend but one-time rival, John Adams, also passed away. But on the anniversary of the United States, it was reported that his parting words were, "Thomas Jefferson is still alive!" The hope to restore New Testament Christianity in this land and around the world is still alive! Will it be for the next generation?

Brethren, we have work to do. I suggest we boil our response down to two: **live the truth** in our lives, setting the proper example; and **teach, teach, and teach.** ✞

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Walking on the Inside

Andrew Burns

Sometimes a most uncomfortable situation is seeing a person in need and being too comfortable to provide the aid. Whether it is outright prejudice, pride or apathy, we notice the need but do not act. This does not mean we must act in every circumstance — but probably more often than we presently do (Matthew 7:24f).

Jesus provided a parable that genuinely caused the Jewish leaders to both squirm and to despise Him even more (Luke 10:25f). It is also a parable that should cause each of us to examine our intention as His followers. Jesus was asked the question, *"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"* The question is a valid one — but one that an expert in the law should have known well (vs. 25). The same verse shares this man's intentions, which were to test Jesus and to possibly cause Him to appear ignorant to His listeners.

Jesus answered the question with a question of His own, *"What is written in the law?"* In other words, "You know the answer because you know the law." The correct answer was simple to learn and to speak, but much more challenging to practice.

The answer was not good enough for the lawyer. Jesus had answered it too easily and the desire to expose Him as a fraud had not been satisfied. The lawyer then proceeded to get personal, desiring to justify his own spiritual walk before the people. You can almost see the smirk on his face as he took the conversation to another level, *"And who is my neighbor?"* (vs 29)

Jesus then called attention to God's second greatest command, "Love your neighbor as yourself". He told of a man traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho who fell among robbers and was beaten almost to death. As he was lying there on the road, two men passed by, coming from Jerusalem. We would presume that these were spiritual men who would have had the intention of serving God. In fact, their genetic and ancestral backgrounds were from the priesthood itself.

However, as they approached this unfortunate man (with God's second command on their minds, though maybe not on their hearts) both of them crossed over to the other side. In other words, they saw

him and took great pains to "miss" him entirely. They had no intention of actually seeing his needs or of helping him, only to get on their way.

However, a lowly, despised Samaritan approached the man and not only saw his needs and had pity on him, but he bandaged the wounds, pouring oil and wine on them and placing him on his donkey. He proceeded to take him to an inn where he could be further cared for. He then proceeded to go the second mile and paid for his care completely. Jesus completed the lesson by stating that the lawyer should live just as this Samaritan lived (vs 37).

A few interesting points we find:

1) The lawyer knew the law, but did not love God. He had no intention of doing what the law said, only appearing holy for his own benefit.

Are you like this lawyer, only appearing to be holy for your benefit and not for God's glory?

2) The two men in the story, also lawyers of a different shade, both ignored the very law they were religiously teaching and observing.

Do we ignore the very law that sets us free in Christ, simply out of false intentions and selfish motives?

3) This loathed Samaritan (the Jews deeply hated this race of people) stopped, showed pity for this unknown man and personally cared for his needs.

Jesus went directly to the heart of the Jewish leadership by naming the one who loves his neighbor as being like the Samaritan and not like the two Jews.

Do we show God that we are servants, that we walk on the inside to love our neighbor as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:39)?

4) This Samaritan not only used his own bandages and oil, but also his donkey and money at the inn for this unknown, beaten man. He was committed to going the second mile.

How far are we willing to go to please and serve God? We find in Scripture that God calls us to a challenging road each day (Matthew 7:13; Luke 9:23).

Are you willing to know the law AND love your fellow man at the same time? God's pleasure is worth it! And Heaven will certainly be worth it as well! ✞

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"For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always" (John 12:8).

How Did it Increase?

Bruce Buckley

We read, "*And the Word of God increased*" (Acts 6:7). Many seem to misunderstand how the Word of God increased.

Some claim to have had additional revelation from God, thinking the increase was in volume. This is not saying there was anything added to "*the Faith that once delivered unto the saints*" (Jude 2). Revelation was made only as needed to prepare for the preaching of the Gospel. The Book of Mormon and other similar works are not the increase of the Word of God; they are but the increase of the words of man. The Holy Spirit knew when to stop revelation. They too are in error.

The increase was in preaching the Word of God. The increase of preaching was permitted when the apostles were relieved of the distribution of food by the men selected for that task. They then spent more time praying and preaching. The work of seven men gave much more time to the important work of proclaiming the Word of God.

The increase was also in the reception of the Word of God. But that is really no mystery, as the Word is the seed. When seeds are sown there will be an increase. The reaping will be in proportion to the sowing. No sowing, no harvest. But there are exceptions.

There must be a manifesting of pure and undefiled religion by serving others. If there is grumbling, gossiping, complaining, and unwillingness to work, the Word of God will not increase.

At one time it was easy to get people to come to the church building to hear the Gospel preached. This is no longer usually true. Now there must be going before coming. It is then that it may be said, "and the word of God increased". ✞

Bruce Buckley (deceased) served as an elder in the Chapel Avenue congregation in Nashville, Tennessee, USA.

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The Kiss of Death

Lewis G. Hale

Perhaps the greatest difference between the church of the first century and that of our own is in the area of evangelism. Scattered disciples *"went everywhere preaching the word"* (Acts 8:4). We do not see that today. There are several forces at work to hinder that spirit.

We are not naturally evangelistic. The spirit of evangelism must be cultivated. We excuse ourselves that we are too busy. We are thinking about *time* when *eternity* is at risk. We say we do not know enough. If we knew enough to do what it took to be saved, we know enough to tell another how to be saved. "I do not know the mechanics." It helps to know how to do a job; being *willing* to do it is far more important. A soul on fire for other souls will get the job done. Indifference is also a big obstacle. We may say, "They'll come if they want to." We may deceive ourselves into thinking people already know what to do.

For many years we have dealt with the problem of compromise with false doctrine among those calling themselves Christians. Some of our preachers seemed to think that because people were sincere and devout, God would ignore their failure to truly obey the Gospel. They might not extend full fellowship, but still excused disobedience. If people are not lost in their error, why try to evangelize them?

If that were not enough to stifle evangelism, the real kiss of death to evangelism comes in its wake. We now have brethren who tell us God can be reached through Judaism. Yes, and even through the Muslim religion. Some of us now have good neighbors and friends who are Buddhists. You will even have good friends who are atheists, but are moral people. Why exclude them? Once you embrace false doctrine, where do you draw a line and stick with it? You don't! The truth is, *we* do not exclude anyone. It is *Christ* who said, *"No man cometh unto the Father but by me"* (John 14:6).

If you believe that, you know why we need to evangelize. ✞

Lewis G. Hale has worked for many years with the Southwest Church of Christ in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA.

If we knew enough to do what it took to be saved, we know enough to tell another how to be saved.

How to Hit the Nail on the Thumb

John Gipson

Been there. Done that. One summer was spent in building sheet metal garages for an oil company. (I soon learned there's a lot of bounce when nailing through sheet metal.)

Permit me, if you will, to give some directions for doing a thing in a manner sure to miss its value entirely.

Get up late on Sunday morning without having decided which clothes you are going to wear. Fuss at the children. Hurry through breakfast. Look for your Bible. Yell at your companion, "We're going to be late!" Fuss at the children. Tell them that they don't have time to eat. Drag them into the car. Honk your car horn at your spouse to hurry up. Go back in the house to get your contribution check. Drive off in a huff. Turn around and go back to see if you turned off the stove, or forgot to close the garage door. Arrive late for the service and stumble over people getting into the pew. Stare back at those who are staring at you.

Focus on the things you don't like: the temperature is too hot/cold; the songs are too new/old, or too slow/fast; the preacher said "git" instead of "get;" the usual order of worship was changed; why don't parents take their children to the nursery or the training room?; somebody needs to turn the sound up/down; if this service lasts any longer I'm going to miss the kick-off to the football game.

Leave the building without speaking to anyone, but rejoicing in knowing that you fulfilled your duty in worshiping God, and setting the right example for your family.

On the way home comment on those people playing golf when they ought to be in church. Too bad that they don't have the spirit of David who said, *"I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'"*

(Editor's note: Hopefully we will all profit from this bit of playful, yet serious, sarcasm.) ✞

John Gipson works with the Windsong Church of Christ in Little Rock, Arkansas, USA.

THE WORSHIP ASSEMBLY (TWO THINGS MUST HAPPEN THERE)

Jack Harriman

First, acceptable worship must be rendered unto God. Those who worship Him, *"must worship in spirit and truth"* (John 4:24). That means the form of worship must be according to His instruction (truth), and it must be offered in heart-felt sincerity (spirit). Second, encouragement and strength must be gained by the worshipper. The worship experience is designed by God to have a positive effect on the worshipper. Two things will help to accomplish this.

The worshipper is a performer and not an audience. We may develop the attitude of an audience attending a performance. We go to ballgames, concerts, etc., to be entertained. Then, depending on the performance of the actors and players, we smile or frown, laugh or cry, cheer or jeer. When it is all over, we go away as critics of the performance.

God is the audience. We are the performers. Every worshipper is to be a singer, a prayer, a giver, and a communer. If one does not sing, one does not worship. If it is not from the heart, one does not worship. Worship is something that each individual does to God — not something God does to us, nor what we do to one another.

How can we worship God effectively and get the most out of it? Preparation is the key. Those who come into the assembly having shut God out of their life for the past six days will leave not having accomplished either purpose. But if they have watched and prayed, studied and meditated, contended with the devil over sin and souls the past six days, then they will be ready to pour out worship to God and go away stronger as a result. ✞

Jack Harriman is a Gospel preacher living in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA.

The Devil Is Rejoicing!

Bonnie Rushmore

Before an individual obeys the commands of God to be immersed in water for the remissions of one's sin (Acts 2:38), that person is a child of the Devil. After one is baptized, the person becomes a child of God (Acts 22:16). When one lives in sin, Satan is happy, and when one obeys God's commands, God rejoices.

I believe there are times when the Devil is shouting for joy over the actions of people here on earth. Each time a child of the Devil hears the plan of salvation and does not respond to it, the Devil rejoices. God sheds tears of sorrow each time a sinner fails to respond to the saving power of the blood of Christ (2 Peter 3:9).

However, I believe that the Devil has greater joy when a child of God sins. The apostle Peter wrote, "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Peter 5:8). These words were written to Christians. Satan is roaming the world like a hungry lion, searching for his dinner. Peter went on to say in verse nine that we should be strong in our faith, knowing that our brothers and sisters around the world are suffering as are we. The children of the world are already the sons of the Devil, and he rejoices when they continue to walk in the ways of the world. However, he is diligently searching for ways to tempt the child of God to sin, and he is exceedingly glad when God's children fall into the snares he has laid out for each of us. When we sin, and do not repent of that sin, Satan rejoices all the more.

One of the greatest joys the Devil has is when brothers and sisters in Christ fuss and fight with one another. Satan truly rejoices when we allow our personal wants and needs to overshadow the greater good in the work of the Lord. Matthew 7:12 states, "*Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*" Jesus clearly taught that we ought to put others before ourselves. He further taught in Mark 12:31 that there is no greater law than to love others as we love ourselves.

John penned, "*I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. Therefore, if I come, I will call*

to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church" (3 John 9,10). Diotrephes tried to put himself above others in the church, making decisions for the congregation that were not his to make. If John were to visit the congregation as he hoped, he planned to make Diotrephes' actions known and rebuke him. In verse eleven, John compared Diotrephes' actions with evil and encouraged Gaius (and us) to not imitate the evil actions of Diotrephes.

The Devil rejoices when brothers and sisters fuss and fight, but God sheds great tears of sorrow when His children cannot get along. Strife within the body of Christ brings the work of the church to a halt. When God's children are not working, Satan is rejoicing. It is extremely difficult to bring the lost to Christ when God's children are fighting among themselves. Who wants to be a part of a group of Christians who do not show love for one another? First Corinthians 13:4,5 gives the definition of love, "*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil.*" When we love one another, we will be patient, kind, and humble. We will not let our pride interfere with the one job Christ gave each Christian — to teach others about the saving power of the blood of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20).

The Devil is rejoicing because Christians around the world are putting their desires above the greater good of the congregations in which they are members. God is shedding tears of sorrow because brothers and sisters in Christ have stopped working together to spread the Gospel, but instead they are fussing and fighting, demanding that their ideas, methods and desires are more important. Shame on us! Let us follow the words of Paul, "*bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do*" (Colossians 3:13,14). ✞

Bonnie Rushmore is a staff writer for the *The Voice of Truth International* as well as the layout person. She and her husband live in Winona, MS, USA where they and others cooperate to help perpetuate the long-standing missionary work of the late J.C. Choate.

The Devil is rejoicing because Christians around the world are putting their desires above the greater good of the congregations in which they are members.

Submission To Governing Authority

Wayne Barrier

Christians are fully aware that Jesus is the supreme authority over all heaven and earth. In Matthew 28:18, He states, "*And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*" Jesus is our Lord and King (1 Timothy 6:15), our Savior (Titus 2:13), our Advocate (John 2:1), our Redeemer (Ephesians 1:7), our Brother (Romans 8:17), and our only hope (1 Timothy 1:1). We are totally and forever indebted to Jesus and are required to be in full submission to Him if we are to receive His blessings. The kingdom of Christ is spiritual and not of this world (John 18:36).

As we study the Bible, we learn that followers of Christ, as citizens of His kingdom, the church, walk according to His example and instruction. Our character, behavior, attitude, and values are shaped by compliance to the teachings of Christ. Christians are motivated to love Christ, God, brethren, and fellow man because of the love expressed by Christ as he died to save us from our sinful state. Christians are provided instruction in Scripture for work and worship in everyday life (2 Timothy 3:16). Our governing authority for life as Christians is the Bible.

What about authority and government of this world? What should our attitude be toward the rulers and rules of man? Consider the instruction provided by Paul in Romans 13:1-7: "*Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.*"

Daily Christian Living

All across the world, governments exist that rule over the many nations of men. There is a wide range of methods of governing. Some involve hard totalitarian rulers, and others are free, democratic and facilitate easier and more pleasant lives for citizens. Christians must be careful to interact with civil government according to God's instructions. What are we to do? Do good, pay our taxes, give honor to whom honor is due and fear to whom fear is due. **Be faithful Christians.** God will take care of us. God is in control, and He will provide for outcomes that are according to His will. He uses governments of men for His purpose.

What about "bad" governments? God will handle them. We must keep our focus on "doing good" and being faithful. Those who do evil should be afraid. They will be subject to God's sword. We don't have to try to do this job or even be concerned with these matters. God can and will handle things. What about governments that support corrupt, immoral, and ungodly behavior? Again, God is in control. He will deal with evil governments and those who support them. Obey the laws of the land, pay your taxes, do good. God will bless and care for His people. What about the Christian that supports an evil government? God will reward the righteous and punish the wicked. We are instructed to be patient and God will act at the proper time.

All of us should carefully think about God's instruction to Solomon concerning his governing and government in 2 Chronicles 7:14, "*If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*" Only those who turn their backs on God have reason to live in fear. If we will not compromise on God's Word, we will be blessed. Those who approve and support works and workers of evil will face the wrath of God, even if claiming to be Christians. Do good and your land will be healed. The fate of our land is dependent upon God's people. If we are faithful, God will heal our land. ✞

Wayne Barrier lives in Florence, Alabama, USA, and does mission work in several countries.

Christians must be careful to interact with civil government according to God's instructions. What are we to do? Do good, pay our taxes, give honor to whom honor is due and fear to whom fear is due. Be faithful Christians.

A Call for Servants

Dwight Fuqua

"Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ" (Romans 1:1). *"James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ"* (James 1:1). *"Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ"* (2 Peter 1:1). *"...His servant John"* (Revelation 1:1). What do they all have in common? Disciples are **servants**!

Our Lord was a servant! Isaiah foretold His servanthood and Matthew proclaimed its fulfillment: *"Behold! My Servant, whom I uphold"* (Isaiah 42:1), and *"Behold! My servant whom I have chosen"* (Matthew 12:18). Jesus Christ took *"the form of a servant"* (Philippians 2:7). Listen to the Master's own words: *"Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many"* (Matthew 20:28). Are we not *"to walk just as He walked"* (1 John 2:6)?

Yes, Christians are servants of Jesus Christ! Jesus taught that we are not above Him, that it is enough for us to be like Him and that we are to serve as He served. *"A disciple is not above his teacher, not a servant above His master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master"* (Matthew 10:24,25). *"If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him"* (John 13:14-16). *"But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant"* (Matthew 23:11). Servant! Got it? How could it be any plainer?

We do not need more masters! Christ is our Master! But there is a great need for servants! The kingdom needs those who will say, *"Speak, Lord, for your servant hears"* (1 Samuel 3:9). The kingdom needs servants of righteousness — *"slaves of righteousness"* (Romans 6:18). The kingdom needs those who make themselves *"bondservants for Jesus' sake"* (2 Corinthians 4:4). The kingdom needs servants who are *"doing the will of God from the heart"* (Ephesians 6:6). Heaven demands prepared, *doing* servants! Good and faithful servants, arise! Arise!

Listen to the promise: *"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor"* (John 12:26). Look to that day when in heaven *"His servants shall serve Him"* (Revelation 22:3). Serve Him! Keep serving Him! ✞

Dwight Fuqua preaches for the Findlay congregation in Sparta, Tennessee, USA.

WHY VISIT?

Bobby Wheat

I made a visit last week. Actually, I made several visits, but two stand out in my mind as these words go on the page. The older Christian brother that I went to see had been ill and missed Sunday services. I went to offer words of encouragement and to pray with him, for his benefit. Later in the day, we called on a lady who had visited our services. We wanted to offer friendship and to encourage her to do something for her benefit.

In both cases of visitation, an amazing thing happened. It may be that those who were visited were encouraged and, indeed, received some benefit, but I think the greatest encouragement and benefit came to those doing the visiting. I went away refreshed, partly because I had done a "good thing", but mostly because of the love and gratitude that I received. How strange it is that the "giver" does the most "getting"!

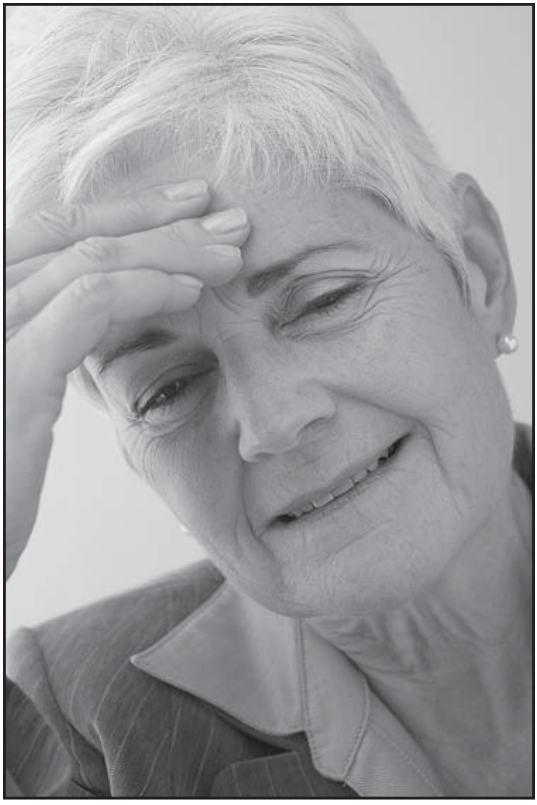
What's the point? The point is that visiting others is good for *us*. It's good for us because it builds up the church. It's good for us because it enables us to share the blessings God gives us with others. It's good for us because it fulfills God's command to love, because we, too, have been loved. It's good for us because it forces us to reach outside our own narrow existence to share something of ourselves and God with others.

In Matthew 25, Jesus told a great parable about the reality of judgment, the separation that will take place between the sheep and the goats. Seated on God's right hand, the place of acceptance, will be those who, among other things, "visited" those who were in need. The message is pretty plain: If we want to be acceptable as "sheep" in God's fold, we need to be at least as concerned about the welfare of others as we are about our own.

Here are two biblical reasons to visit others. The first comes from Matthew 22:39 where Jesus answered the question, asked by a Pharisee, concerning the greatest commandment. The first and greatest commandment is to love God, but the second one is to *"love your neighbor as yourself."* You know how much you appreciate encouragement; maybe you even know how another person's visits to you were the very thing that saved you from loneliness, illness, even from sin and condemnation. How much do you love your "neighbor"?

The second biblical reason comes from Matthew 28:19. *"Go,"* Jesus, said,

"and make disciples of all nations." One very effective method for making disciples, and for keeping them, is to visit people, especially those we already know, and invite them to Bible class and worship services, or offer to study the Bible with them in their home or in ours.



We want the church to grow. We want the borders of God's kingdom to increase. We want people to know the salvation, the joy, and the peace that come only in Christ. For these things to happen, we will have to connect ourselves with people. We'll have to visit them. Yes, that means we'll have to give up some things.

- An hour of television
- Twenty pages of a good novel
- A thirty-minute nap
- A second or third cup of coffee
- A game, or part of one
- Some internet surfing

You name it — but while you are making your list of things you'll have to give up to make a visit this week, ask yourself this: How much is one soul worth in comparison to the "sacrifice" I'll have to make to visit someone?

Go ahead. Give it a try. Go encourage someone. I promise — it'll encourage you even more! ✞

Bobby Wheat is a former missionary to Zimbabwe and now preaches for the Lord's church in Winfield, Kansas, USA.

5-Minute Bible Study

Habitation or Dwelling Place

Paula Bates

1. Be my _____ habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou have given _____ to save me; for thou art my _____ and _____. Psalms 71:3
2. And he led them forth by the _____ way that they might go to a city of _____. Oh that men would _____ the Lord for his own _____, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! Psalms 107:7,8
3. The _____ of the Lord is in the _____ of the wicked: but he _____ the house of the just. Proverbs 3:33
4. Look down from _____, and behold from the _____ of thy _____ and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies toward me? Are they restrained? Isaiah 63:15
5. And hath made of one _____ all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the _____, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not _____ from everyone of us: Acts 17:26,27
6. And the _____ which kept not their first estate, but left their own _____, he hath reserved in _____ chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Jude 6

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1. Strong, commandment, rock, fortress
2. Right, habitation, praise, goodness
3. Curse, house, blesses
4. Heaven, habitation, holiness
5. Blood, Lord, far
6. Angels, habitation, everlasting

A Mother's Influence

Dennis Gulledge

No one doubts the powerful and lasting influences of a mother (especially their own). Eugene Field said of his mother, "I have carried the remembrance of her gentle voice and soothing touch all through my life." My recollections are similar. I also remember another side — a voice not always so gentle and a touch not always so soothing. That's part of being a *good* mother. John Quincy Adams wrote, "All that I am my mother made me." Abraham Lincoln went further. He said, "All that I am or ever hope to be, I owe to my angel mother." Honest Abe was nine years old when his mother died. Her dying words were, "Be something, Abe."

Someone said: "An ounce of mother is worth more than a pound of clergy." Or, as I prefer to say, "Two hundred pounds of preacher." I don't always preach a Mother's Day sermon on Mother's Day. Mother's Day was born in 1907 and made a holiday by Woodrow Wilson in 1914. I suppose I can preach God's will for mothers any day of the year. The most important fact about this day is that it is the Lord's day. The Lord's day has been with us since Christ removed the Law of Moses (Ephesians 1:14,15; Revelation 1:10).

Most mothers are worthy of the honor (Exodus 20:12; 21:17; 2 Timothy 1:5). Some are not (2 Chronicles 22:2,3). The Bible tells of mothers: Eve — *"mother of all living"* (Genesis 3:20). Rebekah — mother of Jacob (Genesis 27). Hannah — mother of Samuel (1 Samuel 1). Mary — mother of Jesus (Matthew 1:18). Eunice — mother of Timothy (2 Timothy 1:5). ✞

Dennis Gulledge is the preacher for the Mabelvale Church of Christ in Mabelvale, Arkansas, USA.

"My Daddy Was Always Too Busy"

Keith Parker

I've heard it again, this time from a minister's daughter. Her father is a faithful evangelist of the church of Christ. She grew up with an abundance of respect for her daddy. Even till this day, he is her hero. But recently she confided in me disappointment about her childhood. "My daddy was always too busy helping other folks, attending funerals, and counseling. He had very little time for us." The hurt is still there.

This was not the first time that I've seen this monster of bitterness. Some time ago, I was preaching down in Mississippi. On the last night of our revival, an elder's wife came to me with this advice. She said, "Honey, whatever you do, take time for your children." She went on to tell me that her father was a preacher. Her only regret about being a minister's daughter was that her daddy was never there. He was always out preaching, teaching, visiting, and helping other people get to heaven. And the hurt is still there.

This has always been a problem. I suspect it was a problem for Samuel. You know, Samuel is one of the best men of the Bible. He was brought up at the feet of Eli. He was a lad who became a leader. So kind, sweet, and godly. But there is a statement that is made about him in 1 Samuel 8:3 that is hard to understand*: "And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment."* Can you believe it? Here is one of the best men of the Old Testament. He's the cream of the crop. So righteous and godly. But look at his boys. So corrupt and full of sin. Why? I mean, how did it happen?

When you go back to chapter 7, maybe you can see part of the problem. First Samuel 7:16 says about Samuel, *"And he went from year to year in circuit to Bethel, and Gilgal and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all those places."* See what Samuel did? Obviously, he spent a lot of time away from home. He was a circuit rider. He was out with the people, answering their questions and solving their problems. While he was out helping people be saved, his kids were going to the dogs.

Ministers are not the only ones who struggle with this problem. Elders, Bible class teachers, soul-winners, doctors, lawyers, salesmen, factory workers… it hits us all. So, next time Johnny says, "Hey, dad, let's go fishing…take him." The soul you catch may be your son's. ✞

Keith Parker works with the church of Christ in Hendersonville, Tennessee, USA.

An Open Letter to Christians Who Will One Day Meet My Children

Brad Harrub, Ph.D.

We are dreading it like the plague — and yet, we know there is nothing we can do about it. Our children will grow up, and one day leave home to build their own families. God blessed my wife and me with four precious children, who have brought a lifetime of joy and happiness in the few years He gave them to us for care and safekeeping. With bedraggled hair and lines on their faces, we have soaked up their morning time smiles. And with comforting arms and a plethora of night

lights, we have conquered nighttime monsters, all the while watching their beautiful handprints fill our house. But the time will come when they grow up and move away, no longer under our guidance and care. Thus, this open letter to you.

I don't know what day it will be, or in what town you will likely see them. But chances are, in this "small world", your paths will cross one day. I hope on that day, you will remember this letter and help their mom and me out. Believe me when I tell you that we are praying for that day. For you see, as parents, we want nothing more than to hear Almighty God say to our children *"Well done, good and faithful servants…enter thou into the joy of the Lord"* (Matthew 25:23). We want them in Heaven! Their souls mean more to us than all the material possessions on this planet. We are simply asking you to do all you can as a Christian to help us get them there.

Now please do not think we are unloading our responsibility on you. This is certainly not the case. We know that children are like arrows in the hand of a mighty man (Psalm 127:4), and it has been with forethought and determination that we have launched them towards that goal that we so lovingly call Heaven. In fact, we have centered their lives around God and His Word from the day they were delivered into this world. Bibles do not collect dust on our shelves. We try to seize every opportunity available to teach them about God, Jesus, the Bible, and His creation around us. We not only "talk the talk" of Christianity, but we humbly "walk the walk".

When the doors of the church building were open, our children were there. We lost count of how many Gospel meetings, vacation Bible schools, and area-wide singings they have attended. They were raised at the feet of men whose Bible knowledge and Christian example were nothing short of exemplary. But there will come a day when mom and dad's voices will not be heard as loudly as others. And sadly, there will come a time when we will not load them into our car to go to worship with us. And so, we are soliciting your help.

My wife and I do not subscribe to the idea of "political correctness". Thus, if you ever see our children doing something they shouldn't, correct them, and add a good swat as a reminder. Should they be running, playing, and acting like the auditorium is a gymnasium, block their path and rebuke them — remind them that tracks and playgrounds are for running. If our children look sleepy or tired in worship, please ask them what was more important the evening before that caused God to take a backseat. If they are late to worship, tell them to buy a watch. If they leave the auditorium during the sermon, kindly remind them to get "their business" done before worship begins. If they walk by without speaking to (or

worse yet, almost knocking over) elderly members in the church, take them by the arm and nip it right then and there. If they appear to be passing notes or not paying attention, kindly take a minute to ask them what they learned in the lesson that day, and ask them why we worship. Do not be afraid to tell them if they are dressed inappropriately. And if for any reason you do not see them in a worship assembly that they should be in, please pick up the phone and call them (and us) immediately. For you see, we want our children not only to be "Christians" in name, we want them to live faithful Christian lives.

If you have the opportunity to teach one of our children in school, or in a Bible class, please challenge them. I know many "specialists" warn that we should not push our children too hard, but we would like to see ours wrestle with a few problems. Part of learning is knowing how to think on your own. This lesson will never be learned if they are given the answers each time something is challenging. How will a child learn perseverance or diligence if they are handed everything on a silver platter? Expect more from them, but be there for them when they sincerely need help. Do not accept mediocre performance, and do not allow them to become bored. Help motivate and educate them. God blessed them with brains, and we expect them to use them.

We also do not buy into this idea of building our children's self-esteem in an unnatural way. If our children lose at a sporting event, please do not immediately run out and buy them something. If they make a poor grade, please do not curve it because they are nice. Some of the best lessons in life come at the expense of pain and tears. How will a child ever learn to improve if rewarded for everything in life? We want our children to understand that life will not always hand them roses. They need to be Christians whether they win or lose — good times and bad. Use these times to help them get better, so that they can win in the future. All of our children have grown up surrounded by love, and are complimented quite often. But we don't believe some guy, selling best-seller "how-to" books about self-esteem, knows what is best for our children. Call us old fashioned, but we still believe God's inspired Word knows what is best for us all.

If you happen to be the parents who are currently rearing the children who will be their future spouses, know that we are praying for you as well. We know that the values, character, and spiritual emphasis you are currently placing in your children's life will one day greatly affect our own children. Our children are being taught that marriage is for life — period. And they will walk into their marriages able to quote God's one and only acceptable reason for divorce and remarriage. We hope your children are hearing the exact same message. We beg

you to "do your homework now" — teaching your children to love God more than anything in the world. Maybe, as parents, if we focused more on loving God, instead of only "Thou Shall Not's", then our children's own hearts would be convicted when they face something God would not approve of. Your offspring will likely be one of the most influential factors in getting our children to heaven. Please do not take your job lightly!

And finally, dear Christian, please notice what type of example and influence you are being for our children. While they may sit by you in worship on Sunday, what message are you teaching them throughout the remainder of the week? They will see you walking into the corner grocery for alcoholic beverages. They will hear you belittle your family members or cuss out the waitress in the restaurant. They will watch you work overtime to buy more and more material things, and yet have no time or money for the church. They will hear you gripe and complain about the preacher and elders all the way home. They will learn about your priorities and commitment to sporting events as they look at Sunday night and Wednesday night attendance. They will observe elders who enjoy the "title", but are not strong enough to stand up for the Truth, especially if it means there will be confrontation. They will witness preachers who claim to love God, but then act in a way that proves otherwise. We hope when they look at you they will see nothing less than a Christian faithfully trying to serve our Almighty Creator.

The devil desperately wants my children. He would love nothing more than to have them as his own. However, he knows that as long as their mother and I still have breath in our lungs, we will be fighting for their souls — a fight that we do not intend to lose. And with you in our Christian family, we know that the devil will fail. Know that we are eternally grateful for your help, and we ask for your continued prayers as we do all we can to get our children to Heaven. ✞

Brad Harrub, with Focus Press, serves as an Editor for Think Magazine, and writes and debates widely on evidences and moral issues. www.FocusPress.org; email: mail@focuspress.org.

"... fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

What Is Love...Really?

Alex Gibson

Abandon all hope, ye who enter here, because I am not going to tell you about how nice and sweet and frilly love is. I am here to tell you the marrow-churning, hard-core, downright painful truth about love, at least what I have learned about it.

Now we all know the "love is" list. Love is kind, love is long suffering, love is not easily provoked, thinks no evil, etc., etc., etc. You know what could be added to that list? Love will not let you settle for any less than your best; love will inflict a world of hurt on you for your ultimate good even if it means unhappiness now.

Love and kindness are two very different things, and while they may go together, they can and often are found poles apart from each other. Now what do I mean by this? Let's use a few brief examples. If I had a friend who was having money trouble and I wanted to be kind, I would just lend him a bit or even just give him enough to get by. Now if I loved him, though, I would not be content to stop there. In fact, if a friend of mine is having money problems, I would more than likely go over his bank statements with him before even considering lending him one cent. Why? It's not because I want to be stingy; it's because I want to see just how he is using his money so I can help him budget better to stand on his own two feet rather than needing help. That's a longer way of saying if you *give* a man a fish, you feed him for a day, but if you *teach* a man to fish, you feed him for life.

Admittedly, God has a much harder task than going over budgets or fishing with us, though. For this I will use my own struggles as examples.

I suffer from pride in an extreme measure. I literally would rather sleep in a hole in the ground than to ask friends for a place to stay. I would rather go hungry than to ask for someone to help me out. So what do you think God has had to do in order to break me of this? I've been put in positions this entire year where I've had to ask for help or would have gone hungry or would have been sitting on literally my last dollar and debating between gas for the car or food. (The car wins out every time, by the way.)

Trust me when I say that God put me in situations that were designed to crush my pride so that I could learn a bit of humility. I still have a very VERY long way to go but, the Lord willing, I'll get there eventually. So why is this good? It is good because a *kind* God would have just wished me comfort and happiness, a *loving* God knows I need to be broken in order to be what I should be and to live a more meaningful life. If that pride were allowed to live in me, I promise

you I would be exacting and controlling, unyielding, and eventually a very nasty person. It is though the death of that pride that I have learned the value not only of serving but, more importantly, of being served. That concept alone is world-changing but one I never would have reached if God had not loved me enough to break my pride, even though that was not a kind process.

So you want to know what love did to me? It kept me out of work for most of this last year, it let me go hungry, it let me get depressed, and let me fall to a point where I could no longer manage on my own. None of those things were kind, but for my spiritual development, I was much better served than I would have been to have just bounced along on a blessed cloud of happiness.

Much the same happened to characters all through the Bible. The Israelites were constantly going through trials and struggles because their hearts were hard. Those trials were meant to bring them back to God because of *another* quality of love. *Love stoops to victory.* Do you think God suffers from pride when dealing with us? No! Hebrews 12:1-3 says, *"... let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls."*

Love will go to any lengths and down any road to help the beloved. Love is more relentless than a gang of hungry men trying to get at a pack of bacon... mmm, bacon....

If I love someone, I mean — really love them — I will not allow them to flounder on their own. I will, in fact, do what is best for them, even if the best is painful. And that leads up to the main point here. If God loves you, then it means He will do what He, in His infinite wisdom and eternal view, sees is best for you. It means if you struggle with pride, your life just may suck to a point where that pride can be broken so that you can have spiritual joy. If you struggle with lust, you may face loneliness or a ton of bad relationships so that you can come to value a true relationship. If greed and/or materialism are your weaknesses, you may find yourself losing everything so that you can appreciate what you do have.

Whatever is the case, God will see to it that, *if you are seeking Him,* your sins and their roots, will be addressed and taken out with a vengeance because they are a hindrance to what He really has in store for you.

And let me tell you the lessons hurt, but the removal of vices from your life is the destruction of the things which will drag you to hell if given their way. And a loving God will, for the eternal sake of our souls, not allow us to be consumed by our sinful nature if we have asked Him to help us grow above it. And so, no

matter how painful it might be to us, God is willing to go through the trouble of saving us from ourselves.

Now, what is on the other side of all that painful remolding of our sinful selves? For me, it was a forty-five minute drive up a canyon in the mountains, listening to "Hallal" hymns and crying tears of joy at the beauty around me, realizing for the first time in years that I am not angry, and that I am loved, and that I don't have to do everything on my own because there is help and support beyond my own strength. It was the feeling of happiness after a long time of misery. It was peace in the face of the unknown and frightening. I could go on but, believe me, the sheer difference in me this last month has been one of transformation from death to life, and a life I thought was too far removed from me to come to again.

God's plan may not always be pleasant, but trust me when I say it is not without its joyful mountain tops. And, speaking of mountain tops, I think it's high time I go spend some hours out in those mountains I love, with the God who sees and loves me.

As always if you have some feedback, let me know. The email remains the same: zex1@hotmail.com. ✞

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God Is Faithful

Harvey Porter

It isn't uncommon to hear those who claim to be believers in God say, "Why did the Lord let this happen to me?" Or, we might ask, "Where was God when I needed Him?"

Paul gave some wonderful teaching to the Corinthian church that clears up this problem of blaming God for everything that happens to us. He wrote, *"No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it"* (1 Corinthians 10:13 NIV).

First, we should understand that God does not tempt us; the Devil does. James wrote, *"When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone, but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed"* (James 1:13,14). It is well that we understand the source of all our problems and temptations; it is the Adversary, the Devil, not our Heavenly Father.

Second, in the same area we must note, however, that God does permit the Devil to tempt us. His purpose in the temptation is that, through being tried, we become stronger. The Devil's purpose is that we might fall away from God. We are the ones who decide what the outcome will be. If we use that help which God makes available to us, we will never give in to temptation. We have His Word, which is the Truth that makes us free from sin. We have fellow Christians who love, strengthen, and encourage us. We have the constant closeness and fellowship of our Lord Jesus who has promised never to forsake us. We have the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to strengthen us. We alone decide to stay with the Lord or to leave.

Third, Paul said that temptations would be common to all mankind. We all have the same temptations. They appeal to fleshly satisfaction or to spiritual pride. All sins are of the flesh or the spirit. No one is exempted; so, don't cry "poor me".

Fourth, in this same connection we should take heart, for God has said to His own that He *"will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear"*. This means that we should always pass the test. The test that God allows is intended to make us stronger. He will not permit us to be overwhelmed, put at a

disadvantage, if we *choose* to do right. He is for us, not against us! He knows exactly what our talents and weaknesses are. We do not know fully what we can do or cannot do. We are often surprised at what we can do in the Lord's work, or even in daily life. We sometimes discover strengths we did not know we have. God does not permit the Tempter to take unfair advantage of us.

Fifth, the great lesson we must learn about temptation is that God *"will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it"*. We must first recognize temptation, and second, look for the way out. The problem is that often we do not *want* a way out. We desire the "fruit" the Devil holds out to us. The flesh overpowers the spiritual side of us.

There is no sin for which we cannot repent and receive forgiveness. Jesus encouraged us to take drastic measures when He said that if you could not stop lusting, pluck out your eyes, and if you could not stop stealing, cut off your hand. He said that it would be better to enter eternal life without hands than to enter hell with both hands. We need to understand that what He really meant was that we must control ourselves, resist temptation, and seek eternal life with Him and the Father above everything else.

Remember that God is faithful, and we must be, too!

Harvey Porter (1929 – 1998) preached for many years in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA.

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Offenses Must Come

T. Pierce Brown

In Luke 17:1, we find, *"Then said he unto the disciples, It is impossible but that offenses will come: but woe unto him, through whom they come!"* As we have studied with Calvinists, they have indicated that they think this means that since God decreed before the foundation of the world all that would happen, then all the offenses that come are because they were predestined to do so, and it is in that supposed fact that the impossibility exists.

The primary problem with this supposition is that it makes all the offenses that come dependent upon God's decree, and then holds man responsible for doing what he had to do because God made him that way. The truth is that because of man's sinful condition and his determination to do his own will instead of God's will, it is not possible that men will not sin. It is not because God *made* man that way and that it is impossible for him to be otherwise. Ecclesiastes 7:29 says, *"Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions."* Isaiah 53:6 says, *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."* We could not have "gone astray" if we were born that way. So because of the sinful condition and deliberate depravity of man, it is impossible that occasions of stumbling not come. But since we are responsible for what we do, God pronounces woe unto the one that causes the offense to come. Be careful that you are not the one who causes anyone to stumble. The thought was so terrible to Paul that he would not eat meat or drink wine or do anything else that would cause his brother to stumble (Romans 14:21; 1 Corinthians 8:13). ✞

T. Pierce Brown (1923-2008) was a preacher and elder for many years in the church in Cookeville, Tennessee, U.S.A.

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Doeg

Neal Pollard

Sometimes, a "minor" Bible character appears on the stage of inspiration and is immortalized for either good or bad. Doeg definitely falls into the latter category. We see him in 1 Samuel 21-22. He is identified as an Edomite (one of Esau's descendants), *"the chief of Saul's shepherds"* (1 Samuel 21:7). We see him with Saul's servants (22:9), and by his hand 85 of Israel's priests, who had sheltered David from Saul's jealous wrath, are slaughtered (22:18). Apparently, Doeg already had a bad reputation. When David hears this devastating news, he laments, *"I knew on that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul"* (22:22).

He was so spiritually wretched that the Holy Spirit through David makes him the subject of infamy in Psalm 52. It is of Doeg that David speaks when he says, *"Your tongue devises destruction...you love evil more than good...you love all devouring words"* (verses 2-4). Then, David predicts an awful demise for Doeg: "*God shall likewise destroy you forever; He shall take you away, and pluck you out of your dwelling place, And uproot you from the land of the living. Selah. The righteous also shall see and fear, And shall laugh at him, saying, 'Here is the man who did not make God his strength, But trusted in the abundance of his riches, And strengthened himself in his wickedness.'"* (verses 5-7). He trusted the wrong things and did the wrong things. What ignominy!

Doeg illustrates a few things for us. First, character matters. Doeg's character was deplorable. He had no respect for God's priests. He was willing to sell out others for his own profit. He had no value for life, and specifically the righteous. Second, there may be temporary reward in behaving badly. This is implied by David's words in Psalm 52 about "abundant riches" (verse 7). Perhaps he was "court pet" of the day. We can see today that sinners may enjoy wealth and fame...*in this life*. Finally, wickedness will not ultimately prosper. Solomon's words apply to Doeg and to all those of his ilk. *"It will not be well for the evil man and he will not lengthen his days like a shadow, because he does not fear God"* (Ecclesiastes 8:13).

We can learn great lessons from "positive characters," but we can learn from those others, too. Old Testament characters instruct us and give us hope (Romans 15:4), and that includes "negative characters" (1 Corinthians 10:11). Let us learn from Doeg and build better character than that. ✞

Neal Pollard is the preacher for the Bear Valley church in Denver, Colorado, USA.

Jesus Called Him "Peter" Only Twice

Kevin L. Moore

The day that Jesus first met Andrew's brother, He said to him, *"You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas"* (John 1:42). The term Cephas is the Aramaic version of Peter, meaning "a stone" and projecting the imagery of firmness and stability. But hereafter, whenever the Lord addresses this disciple in the New Testament record, it is almost always as Simon rather than by his new name. Why?

The name Simon is the Greek form of Simeon, derived from a Hebrew expression meaning "he has heard" (see Genesis 29:33). The idea of "listening" is an obvious connotation. It is of no small significance that the Gospels repeatedly depict Andrew's brother as impulsive, slow to hear, and quick to misunderstand. Thus, whenever the Lord addressed him by his given name, it doubled as a subtle reminder to Simon of his pressing need to pay attention. Jesus consistently called him Simon in spite of the name change, except on two important occasions.

A couple of years into the Lord's ministry, popular opinion was divided concerning His identity. It was Simon Peter (as Matthew refers to him) who affirmed on this occasion: *"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"* (Matthew 16:16). Jesus then commended *"Simon Bar* [son of]-*Jonah"* for this great confession (verse 17), and went on to declare, *"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church . . ."* (verse 18a). The Greek text indicates an apparent play on words that is lost in the English translation. The masculine noun Petros ("Peter" or Aramaic "Cephas," the moniker Jesus had said *"you shall be called"*) means "a stone," i.e. a piece of a larger rock. In contrast, the feminine "petra" is used to describe that upon which the church is built, i.e. large foundational bedrock. Peter is merely a small (albeit significant) component, while Jesus Himself is both the builder and the foundation of what He describes as *"My church"*. The point is that the rock-solid substructure upon which the church stands is the enduring truth that Jesus is *"the Christ, the Son of the living God."* Or, as stated elsewhere:

"For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:11).

The only other recorded instance of Jesus using the name "Peter" is in the upper room on the evening prior to His crucifixion. The disciples had been arguing among themselves about who should be considered the greatest (Luke 22:24). The Lord singles out one of them and says, *"Simon, Simon"* (verse 31a). Notice the repetition of the name. Might this have been Christ's way of emphasizing the importance of what He is about to tell Simon and/or a shrewd way of saying, "Listen, listen!"? Jesus knew the potentially devastating challenge that was about to confront Simon's faith, so He offers these words of reassurance: *"But I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren"* (verse 32).

Instead of carefully and thoughtfully listening, however, impetuous Simon blurted out: *"Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death"* (verse 33). Irrespective of the sincerity of his intentions and the nobleness of his words, he evidently didn't get it! How would his imprisonment at this time and premature death in any way contribute to the divine scheme of redemption? It was the perfect Lamb of God who had to suffer and die (verses 19-22), but there was another purpose in God's plan for Simon.

Jesus responds to the impulsive outburst, saying: *"I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me"* (verse 34). Why did the Lord uncharacteristically address him here as "Peter"? Would not "Simon, Simon" ("listen, listen") be better suited to this occasion? Well, He had already tried that, and it apparently didn't work! Since Jesus was one to choose His words carefully, never misspoke, had good reasons for everything He uttered, and almost never used the name "Peter", surely a point is being made. While we don't know what facial expression the Lord had at the time, or whether sarcasm was in His tone, perhaps this was a pointed reminder that Simon was expected to live up to his new name ("strengthen your brethren"), even though he obviously wasn't there yet.

Christ's statement in John 1:42 appears to have been prophetic (*"shall be called"*) rather than an immediate name change. Looking beyond Simon's weaknesses and inadequacies, the Lord was able to see potential in him that was probably unnoticed by everyone else, including Simon. With a great deal of patience and fortitude Jesus continued working with this fallible human being, continually reminding him to close his mouth and open his ears until the rock-

solid character that was needed for God's purpose had developed.

After the Lord's personal ministry on earth was completed and the continuance of His work had been delegated to His loyal disciples, the only time in the biblical narrative that the apostle Simon is mentioned without the name Peter is in Acts 15:14. Here James refers to him as "Simeon" (the Hebraic form of his given name), although James is not speaking *to* him, but rather *about* him. Note that the inherent meaning of this name ("listen") is not directed to Peter, but to those who had just heard him speak (verses 7-11). Peter ("a stone") was now fulfilling his purpose as a strong, reliable representative of the Lord to whom others were encouraged to listen (cf. 2:14, 22).

Is there a lesson to be learned here? Am I currently living up to my full potential in the Lord and fulfilling my purpose in His service? This depends, of course, on how attuned I am to God's will. In other words, am I making a genuine effort to listen, to learn, and to grow? Even if I am not yet where I need to be, am I moving forward and developing the potential the Lord sees in me? Moreover, despite all the rough edges, are we looking for the potential in each other? Are we patient enough and determined enough to help one another grow into the solid people of faith God expects us to be? As Peter himself reminds us, *"Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ"* (1 Peter 2:4,5). Are we listening? ✞

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God Is Watching

Chad Ezelle

"In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility…" (Titus 2:7)

Someone, I don't know who, said that character is what we are when no one is watching. How true! When we do things that aren't right, we try to hide them from our families, friends and the rest of the church. Even then, God is watching, and He knows.

If you want to be pleasing to God, to walk with Him, you must seek to follow His commandments. When you try to live up to God's standard, your character will take care of itself. You won't be living to please other people anymore. You'll live to make God happy, and if we get that right, the rest will fall right into place.

A Transformation

Betty Tucker

As Stephen was being stoned to death for his zeal in serving the Lord, Saul looked on in admiration. It was a day of great persecution for the Lord's church, headed by this man, Saul – a Jew, born a Roman citizen, and educated in the Greek culture.

One day, as Saul journeyed to Damascus to arrest Christians there, God got his attention! There was a bright light which blinded him, and a voice from heaven spoke, *"Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting"* (Acts 9:4,5).

Jesus told the sightless Saul to go into the city and he would be told what he should do. There he met Ananias, a disciple who restored his sight and taught him the true message of the Lord.

The unbelieving Saul became Paul, who embraced the faith of the Christians whom he had persecuted. He astonished his listeners who found the transformation from persecutor to Gospel preacher hard to believe!

From that day, Paul faithfully taught the Jews about a loving Father. He was zealous in his work and suffered many hardships. He wrote to the Corinthian church, recounting his beatings, imprisonments, labors, and shipwrecks among the calamities he endured for the cause of Christ.

In his last letter to Timothy, Paul instructs him in the things he should do in his work as an evangelist. He is the older, experienced preacher, handing over the banner of faith to the young man, Timothy.

At this time, Paul was in Rome, and his departure was at hand (2 Timothy 4:6). Listen as he says with pride, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith"* (2 Timothy 4:7). Paul did not fear death, but rather, looked forward to a better life with God the Father.

Paul tells Timothy to *"preach the word; be instant in season, out of season…"* (2 Timothy 4:2). The beloved black evangelist, Marshall Keeble, liked to say, "That means when they like it, and when they don't."

Paul further urges the young preacher to *"reprove, rebuke, exhort"* (verse 2). He is saying, "Timothy, you must persuade them to hold onto their faith. You must instill in them good practices, show them how living for God enriches life."

At the same time, the old preacher warns that when he does these things, Timothy will have to endure hardships and afflictions (verse 5). Paul says that the time will come when they will not listen, but will turn away to fables.

Paul could be talking to us, today, warning about the error that is creeping into the Lord's church. It behooves us to remember Paul's message to the young preacher, and to hold fast to our faith, that we may one day enjoy that blessed eternal home where there are no tears.

We have briefly scanned the life of Paul, witnessing the great transformation in his life. He rose from the terrible role of persecuting those who love God to become a dedicated teacher of the very doctrine that he once hated. ✞

Betty Tucker was a staff writer for *The Voice of Truth International* prior to her death in 2008.

Peter's Eyes

Dean Kelly

Many wonderful people are shown throughout God's Word. Their victories, their faith and their strengths are made known, but so are their trials, their pain, their weaknesses and sins – those things that plague every human who has ever been. I would love to see through the eyes of each great one, to be able to partake in the deeds that each one has done. However, of all of the characters that in the Word I find, the way Peter was is most like me, in my mind. Sometimes it is as through Peter's eyes I look at life. Just like him, I often cause my own strife, but hopefully from him, I can great lessons know. As I travel life's paths down here below, I see sometimes through Peter's eyes of doubt – when he did not understand what it was all about, when he failed to be as strong as he should be. Way too often, that is the picture of me.

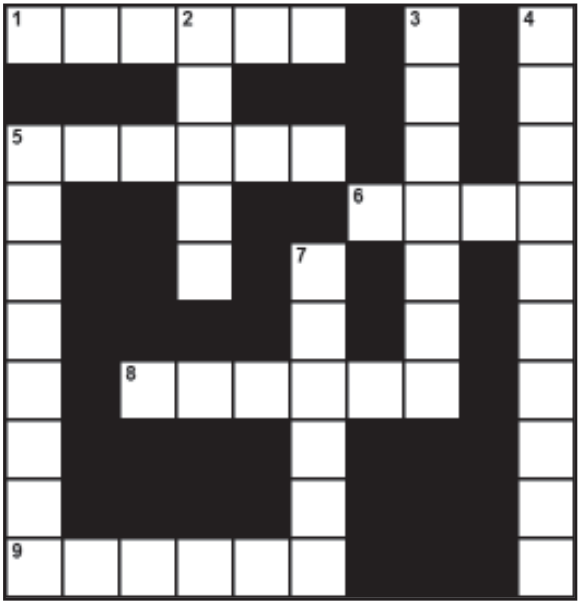
I see sometimes through Peter's eyes of fear, as he followed Jesus to His trial, but not too near. As he was overcome by fear, he denied Christ. How many times have I fought that fear inside? I see sometimes through Peter's eyes so weak, when he forgot it was after God's will that he should seek, when he did not stand like he should have for right. Too many times, I am not ready to fight that fight. I see sometimes through Peter's eyes of faith so strong, that faith that makes him among the greats belong, the faith that would win out for him over time. I hope that I can reach those heights sublime.

I guess the bottom line, when through Peter's eyes I look, is to see the Savior revealed to me in God's Book. While Peter walked with Him as He walked this place, I, through Peter's eyes, must come to see His face. By faith I must reach my hand to the Savior dear. I must do all I can to draw near to the Lord. Then one day in a heavenly land up above, my eyes will join Peter's – enjoying the Father's love. ✞

BIBLE FIND

Raised From the Dead

Bonnie Rushmore



Across

1. Who raised the Widow of Zarephath's son from the dead? (1 Kings 17:17-22)

5. A man was raised from the dead when he touched the bones of _____.(2 Kings 13:20,21)

6. Jesus raised the son of the widow of _____ from the dead. (Luke 7:11-15)

8. Jesus raised the daughter of _____ from the dead. (Luke 8:41,42,49-55)

9. Many _____ rose from the dead at the resurrection of Jesus. (Matthew 27:50-53)

Down

2. Who arose from the dead, never to die again? (Matthew 28:5-8)

3. Jesus raised _____ from the dead. (John 11:1-44)

4. Elisha raised the son of a _____woman from the dead? (2 Kings 4:32-35)

5. Who did Paul raise from the dead? (Acts 20:9,10)

7. Who did Peter raise from the dead? (Acts 9:36-41)

In What Sense Should a Christian Pray for the Holy Spirit?

(Luke 11:13)

Wayne Jackson

The admonition to "ask" the Father for the "Holy Spirit" would be difficult if isolated from complementary information elsewhere in the New Testament. However, consider the following:

1. One is not to petition God for the Spirit involving any supernatural endowment. Holy Spirit baptism, for example, was limited to the apostles (Acts 2) and to the first Gentiles ushered into the church (Acts 10). A lesser bestowal, though miraculous, was exclusively through the hands of the apostles (Acts 8:18; 19:6). Since miraculous signs were for the confirmation of the Gospel in that era before the Scriptures were completed (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3), these gifts were terminated when the "perfect" (literally, completed) thing was achieved (1 Corinthians 13:6ff).
2. The encouragement of Luke 11:13 obviously does not refer to the Spirit gift that is provided to new Christians at baptism (Acts 2:38; Galatians 4:6). (Note: while some see the *"gift of the Holy Spirit",* Acts 2:38 as miraculous, I do not believe the evidence supports this view).
3. What, then, is the meaning of Luke 11:13? We must compare this text with its parallel in Matthew's Gospel (7:7-11). While Luke speaks of the Holy Spirit being given, Matthew employs in its place the expression *"good things,"* e.g., the necessities of life. Matthew's emphasis is upon the blessings received, while Luke's focus is upon the divine Source! These parallel texts thus suggest that the Spirit of God operates in the realm of providential activity, resulting in the good things that richly bless our lives. In this sense, the Christian may pray for the operation of the Holy Spirit to be effectual in his life. ✝

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Would You Answer the Following Questions about the Lord's Supper?

Ken Tyler

Who instituted it? Jesus (Matthew 26:26-30).

When? The night of His betrayal by Judas (1 Corinthians 11:23).

Why? To establish a lasting memorial until He returns (1 Corinthians 11:23).

What was used? Unleavened bread and fruit of the vine (Luke 22:1,18,19).

Who were there? Jesus and the 12 apostles (Matthew 26:20).

What did Jesus tell each person to do? To eat the bread in memory of His body, and to drink the cup in memory of His blood (1 Corinthians 11:24,25).

Where was this new memorial feast to be placed? In His Kingdom (Matthew 26:29).

What did the apostles do with it after Jesus sent them the Holy Spirit? They made the Lord's Supper an act of worship in the church (Acts 2:41,42).

How often did the church observe the memorial feast? It was a weekly observance on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

Where was it eaten? In the church assembly (1 Corinthians 11:18).

Who ate? The disciples of Christ/Christians.

What was each person exhorted to do? Examine himself (1 Corinthians 11:28).

Was it possible to do it unworthily? Yes. One could eat and drink without discerning the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 11:29).

What else is this feast called? A communion (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Is there a church where one can observe this simple memorial feast in honor of Christ? Yes. We in the churches of Christ observe it every first day of the week as nearly as possible like Jesus said to do. ✞

Ken Tyler has preached several years for the Arab Church of Christ in Arab, Alabama, USA.

Did Jesus Condemn Homosexuality?

Kyle Butt, M.A.

By and large, the American culture is aggressively promoting the sinful lifestyle of homosexuality. In the midst of such pressure, many people who call themselves Christians are caving in and accepting this perverted lifestyle in spite of God's clear teachings against it (Butt, 2003). Just recently, the country singer Carrie Underwood stated that her Christian faith led her to support gay marriage (Nilles, 2012). In truth, the life and teachings of Jesus Christ could never be accurately understood to lead a person to conclude that homosexual marriage is moral (Miller and Harrub, 2004).

One of the most common arguments made in support of homosexuality is that Jesus Christ did not explicitly condemn the practice. Supposedly, since Jesus never stated specifically: "Homosexuality is a sin," then His failure to denounce the lifestyle can be interpreted to mean that He approved of it. This reasoning is riddled with error.

First, Jesus explained to His followers that He did not have time to teach them everything they needed to know. He told them that the Holy Spirit would bring to their remembrance all that He had taught, and would include additional teaching that He had not had time to cover. He told His disciples: *"I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth has come, He will guide you into all truth"* (John 16:12-13). When we look to the inspired writings of the New Testament, we see the authors boldly and specifically condemning the practice based on the revelation they received from the Holy Spirit (Miller and Harrub, 2004). Thus, it is wrong to suggest that only the "words in red" are Jesus' teachings. On the contrary, He foretold that more teaching would be done after His return to heaven due to the fact that the apostles "could not bear" all of it at the time.

Second, even if Jesus did not explicitly condemn the practice (though He actually did, as will be noted later), that certainly could not be used as evidence that He condoned the practice. For instance, where does Jesus explicitly state that bestiality is wrong? Where in the New Testament does Jesus state that polygamy is wrong? Where are the "words in red" that specifically condemn pedophilia?

Are we to suppose that the Son of God condoned using crystal meth because there is not an explicit statement from Jesus' mouth that says "do not smoke crystal meth?" The idea that silence from Jesus on a subject means He approved of or condoned the practice cannot be substantiated.

Finally, it must be considered that Jesus did, in fact, speak against homosexuality. On numerous occasions, Jesus condemned the sins of adultery (Matthew 19:18), sexual immorality (Matthew 19:9) and fornication (Matthew 15:19). These terms describe any type of sexual intercourse that is not within the confines of a marriage ordained by God. Jesus then proceeded to define exactly what God views as a morally permissible marriage. He stated:

"Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:4-6).

By defining marriage as between one male and one female, Jesus effectively condemned all other arrangements, including but not limited to one man and two women, one woman and two men, three men and one woman, three men and three women, one man and one man, one woman and one animal, etc. You can see the overwhelming logic of such. For Jesus to have to explicitly condemn every assortment of genders and numbers would be absurd. When He defined marriage between one man and one woman, He clearly showed that such an arrangement is the only one authorized by God.

Several years ago a man named Cory Moore "legally married his 2004 Cherry ES-335" Gibson guitar ("Man Marries Guitar," 2007). He said: "The day I got her, I just knew she was the one…. I know it seems weird, but I really love her — like, really love her, with all my heart. I just wanted to make it official" (2007). Are we to conclude that because Jesus never specifically condemned a man marrying his guitar then the Son of God approved of such? To ask is to answer. In 2006, 41-year-old Sharon Tendler married a dolphin ("Woman Marries Dolphin," 2006). Jesus never said one word explicitly about refraining from marrying a dolphin. Does that mean His "silence" should be viewed as approval? Not in any way.

Homosexuality is a sin. It always has been, and it always will be. The inspired New Testament writers repeatedly teach that to be the case. Jesus explained that the Holy Spirit would bring to the inspired writers information that they could not handle at the time of His departing. In addition, Jesus did explicitly define

marriage as being between one man and one woman. The ruse to suggest that Jesus approves of homosexuality because He never expressly condemned it cannot be sustained logically, nor can it be defended on any type of moral grounds. The person who presumes to claim to be a Christian, and yet supports homosexuality, misunderstands the teachings of Christ and needs to repent and stop approving of a perverted, destructive practice that Jesus condemns (Matthew 19:1-9). ✞

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[People] ... exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.
26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.
27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.
28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them (Romans 1:25-32).

Barnabas — Acts 11:22-26

G.L. Mann

INTRODUCTION

A. The church at Antioch was established as the result of persecution of Jerusalem Church, Acts 11:19.
B. Some preached only to the Jews, vs. 19.
C. Others preached to Grecians, vs. 20.
D. The Jerusalem church sent Barnabas to Antioch, perhaps to reconcile and coordinate efforts of the first Jew-Gentile church.
E. The success of his mission depended upon his personal character.

I. THE CHARACTER OF BARNABAS

A. He was a "good man". Amiability, kindness of purpose and manner, generosity of spirit, considerateness of others, Acts 9:26,27.
B. He was a liberal man, Acts 4:31-37.
C. He was an exhorter, Acts 11:23; 2:40.
D. He was not envious. "Was glad".
   1. Envy is rottenness of bones, Proverbs 14:30.
   2. Envy crucified Christ, Matthew 27:18.
   3. Envy caused Jews to speak against the truth spoken by Paul, Acts 13:45.
E. He was "full of the Holy Spirit". Entirely under its influence, Galatians 5:22,23.
F. He was "full of faith".
   1. He had a strong grip of Gospel truth. No disputing and doubts in his mind. He had genuine convictions.
   2. He understood the broader aspects of the Christian system — Jew and Gentile.
   3. Hebrews 3:12.
G. He was a successful man.
   1. "Much people was added unto the Lord".
   2. One cannot join God's family – he is born into it or added by the Lord, Acts 2:47.

CONCLUSION

A. Any person who has the same characteristics will do a great work for the Lord. ✝

Today Is the Day of Salvation

Hebrews 3:15

Robert Martin

Introduction

A. Today is the most important day in your life.
B. This is the only day that you have.
C. Why is this day the most important day in your life?

I. Because We Do Not Know When We Will Die

A. Proverbs 27:1
B. Ecclesiastes 9:5
C. James 4:13,14

II. Because God Has Spoken and His Word Must Be Obeyed

A. Matthew 7:21
B. Hebrews 5:8,9
C. John 12:48

III. Because Death and Judgment Are Certain

A. Hebrews 9:27
B. Acts 17:30,31
C. 2 Corinthians 5:10

IV. Because To Delay and to Die Lost Means To Lose Your Soul

A. Acts 24:24,25
B. Matthew 16:16
C. There is danger in delay.

Conclusion

A. If you delay and die never having obeyed the Gospel — you will be lost forever.
B. If you delay and die having been unfaithful — you will be lost forever.
C. Today God is ready to save you if you will "*repent and be baptized*" (Acts 2:38).
D. Right now God is ready to welcome you back if you will "*remember from where you have fallen, and repent, and do the things you did in the beginning*" (Revelation 2:5). ✞

Robert Martin is a longtime missionary in the Pacific Islands.

Judges and the United Kingdom

Rex Banks

Although the seven year conquest of the Promised Land under Joshua was not without setbacks, an optimistic atmosphere pervades the book of Joshua, a volume which records the implacable progress and astounding victories of the children of Israel over the Canaanites. However, transitional verses in Judges 2:7-10 carriy an ominous note:

"The people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua, who had seen all the great work of the LORD which He had done for Israel. Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of one hundred and ten. And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel."

For the next 300-350 years the nation lacked centralized leadership and the various tribes exercised individual autonomy in the land. The history of this era, the period of the Judges, is recorded in the book of Judges and the first seven chapters of 1 Samuel, and it is a dark epoch indeed. Lacking the faith to possess the land completely, the people increasingly succumb to the temptation to form alliances with the Canaanites, to worship their idols and to intermarry with them, and as a result an appalling cycle repeats itself throughout this 300-350 year period. Over and over again the cycle of rebellion — repentance — restoration — rebellion is repeated as the Lord disciplines His wayward people by permitting a succession of enemies to afflict them. In each cycle deliverance follows repentance as the Lord raises up a succession of divinely equipped deliverers or "Judges" to liberate His people from their oppressors (e.g. Othniel, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah). The final Judge of Israel is Samuel whose history is recorded in 1 Samuel 1:1-15 (c.f. 25:1; 28:3).

In about 1050 B.C. Samuel accedes to the peoples' demand for a king and is divinely directed to anoint Saul, a Benjamite, to this office (1 Samuel 9). Following Saul's disappointing reign of about 42 years, David the son of Jesse of the tribe of Judah reigned from about 1,010 B.C. to about 970 B.C., and in turn his

son Solomon was king from about 970 B.C. to about 930 B.C. Thus the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon totaled about 120 years, and this period is often termed the "United Kingdom" era. In the following paragraphs we will say a word about extra-biblical information from the time of the Judges and early Kings of Israel.

The Merneptah Stela

In his **The Bible as History,** Werner Keller writes:

"In the Cairo Museum there is a monument from a mortuary temple near Thebes, on which the victory of Pharaoh Merneptah over the Lybians is commemorated and celebrated... (Other) notable victories which this ruler is said to have achieved are also mentioned. The end of the hymn of praise runs as follows; 'Canaan is conquered, Yanoam is blotted out. The people of Israel is desolate, it has no offspring: Palestine has become a widow for Egypt"'.

Keller goes on to explain that the hymn is very significant because "...here for the first time in human history the name 'Israel' is immortalized, and that by a foreigner and a contemporary." Because of its importance, the seven foot high block containing the hymn, known as the Merneptah Stela, has been the subject of much study and debate since its discovery by Flinders Petrie in 1896. From what I have read, the reference to Israel should probably read, "Israel is desolate, its seed is not," and the meaning is that Israel's food supply has been destroyed.

Of particular interest is the fact that the text suggests that Israel at this time was not a small tribe, but was on par with the other countries mentioned. Now according to the "conventional chronology" of Egypt, Merneptah ruled between 1213-1204 B.C., (Britannica), and given this chronology the stela (dated to the fifth year of Merneptah's reign) would provide proof that by the end of the 13th century, Israel was settled in the land of Canaan.

Clearly this would effectively answer those critics who affirm that Israel did not emerge as a nation until the next century. However, recently the revisionists have suggested a later date for Merneptah's reign. David Rohl, for example, argues that according to the "new chronology" the stela dates from about 880 B.C. Too, Rohl argues that "The final strophe on the 'Israel Stela' is not a record of Merneptah's personal military activities but rather a view of the international scene as it appeared in his reign." According to Rohl, the victory over Israel which is spoken of is that of Merneptah's father, Rameses 2nd (the biblical Shishak). As we said earlier, the chronology debate is continuing but, either way, the Memeptah Stela provides an early and significant extra biblical reference to the nation of Israel. ✞

Who Am I ?

Rebecca Rushmore

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.

1. I am a priest.
2. I am a scribe.
3. I prepared my heart to "seek the Law of the Lord" and teach it to Israel.
4. King Artaxerxes sent me with generous provisions and gifts to check on the rebuilding in Jerusalem.
5. The king granted me authority to take care of religious and civil matters.
6. God protected me when I traveled to Jerusalem without a guard from the king.
7. I found that God's people had intermarried with the nations around them.
8. I instructed God's people to put away their pagan spouses, even if they had children.
9. At the instruction of Nehemiah, I read the Law before the people of Jerusalem from morning to midday.
10. I wrote a book of the Old Testament that bears my name.

See answer on inside back cover

My Score:_____

Looking Back Over the Years

Betty (Mrs. J.C.) Choate

In the summer of 1952 when the young preacher, J.C. Choate, came to Winona, MS to preach in a Gospel meeting, he was writing his first book: **Sermon Outlines.** When it was printed, I persuaded several in the congregation to buy a copy (though I am sure that none of them ever expected to do any preaching from that purchase!). I was 12 at the time, and a new Christian. Thus began a 60-year printing effort, and what became a lifetime of spiritual adventure with a husband whose vision kept leading us forward into unplatted territory!

J.C. continued to print the occasional book in the States, and for a couple of years he printed a compilation of articles written by various brethren in a magazine he called ***Choate's Quarterly.*** When the mission era of our lives began in 1962, we became painfully aware of the dearth of printed materials available in other countries. Bible correspondence courses and monthly magazines in local languages helped to fill the void. In time, to those were added small study books. While living in Sri Lanka, **The Gospel of Christ, The Church of the Bible,** and **New Testament Worship** were written to help supply answers and guidance to contacts.

Then came the portion of our lives when J.C. was in India half of the year to record radio programs and to work with local men in their development of follow-up literature. The children and I lived in Winona. Gradually, additional books were printed here under the banner of J.C. Choate Publications, a non-profit service in which funds from sales were reinvested in further printing. For many of those years we also printed a bimonthly newspaper, ***World Evangelism,*** to report on the work faithful brethren were doing throughout the world, and the work that we were doing under the oversight of the Liberty Church of Christ in Dennis, MS.

From The Heart Of...

In 1993, two major events occurred. With the help of numerous brethren who gave of their time and others who gave of their funds, we constructed the office building in Winona, to house the printed materials and to provide office space for those of the team who lived and worked here. We remain continually grateful to everyone who helped to provide the facility that is such a blessing to us and to Christians and searchers of truth throughout the world.

The second event was J.C.'s decision in 1993 to launch into the printing of another quarterly magazine. This one he decided to name ***The Voice of Truth International.*** Byron and Gay Nichols expressed an interest in helping with the editing and communication with those who would be staff writers. At J.C.'s invitation, they came to Winona so that the whole project could be discussed, and so began a new 20-year relationship. What a blessing the Nichols have been in countless ways, in all the background work as well as in the editing!

The Voice of Truth International has blossomed over the years. It remains a "Reader's Digest" size book of 116 pages, divided into topical articles dealing with "God", "The Word of God", "The Church", "The Christian Home", "Doctrine to Live By", "Sermon Outlines", "Bible Questions", etc. The intention was to provide a growing "library" of studies on the various subjects, particularly for people in other countries who have no reference materials.

Of course, because English is the international language, most of the printing is done in English (approximately 45,000 copies each quarter). Other languages continue to be added: Tamil (and Braille Tamil), Telugu, Paite, Hindi, Nepali, and Spanish, Consideration is now being given to making it available in Swahili. Altogether, between 65,000 and 70,000 copies are printed most quarters.

Many churches in the States order boxes (35 copies to the box) for their members, and of course there are individual subscriptions. [A box is $25 a month or $300 a year, for four issues. Individual subscriptions are $12 for one year and $20 for two.] These subscribers pay for the bulk of the printing, but also contributions are given by concerned Christians to cover the cost of overseas postage and some of the overseas printing. Of the American printing, about 20,000 copies are sent to 80 countries, free of charge. The shipping, alone, on these is in excess of $8,000 each quarter.

The monthly magazines printed in the various languages overseas, as well as the quarterly editions of ***The Voice of Truth International,*** are also sent free of charge to radio/TV listeners and other contacts. Bible courses, books of sermons, and numerous other study books, in local languages, are made available to contacts as they request them.

I would like to share a sampling of emails we receive in appreciation:

"May Almighty God bless you all in Jesus Name, Amen. Thank you for the spiritual materials that you offered to [name withheld] CHURCH CHRIST, the materials are very useful to the congregation, we gave out volume 53 to our people and because we are 70 members. Other failed to get books. [name withheld] Nigeria"

"Brother Choate we requested you to add us other volume and if possible you can give us more information. We are interested with your Ministry. Daniel Jaoko."

"Dear brethren, I wish to salute you in Him, this mail serves to confirm my receipt of the 35 voice of truth book, volume 66 . Thank you so much for assisting the spread of the gospel here in Zimbabwe. May God bless you. in Him, Wilson"

We have continued to add to the titles of books printed here in the States, written by faithful Christians. We sell enough to pay the printer, and then we give away — and ship overseas — many thousands each year. About 250 titles are now available, dealing with a wide variety of studies and topics. Several times each year, a number of Christians from some congregation will come to Winona to put together boxes of these books to send to churches, preachers, or preacher training schools overseas. Typically, we ship about 35,000 books each year to brethren, trying to supply what is not available in any bookstore in their countries.

Jerry and Paula Bates (Jerry@WorldEvangelism.org), and Louis and Bonnie Rushmore (Rushmore@gospelgazette.com), moved to Winona in the fall of 2007, to carry on the work J.C. was doing here and overseas. Since his death, they continue to add to the overall program, here at home with their individual talents and among

Jerry Bates, then Louis, Bonnie, their daughter, Rebecca, and Paula, readying a shipment.

our foreign brethren through seminars, meetings, teaching in Bible schools, etc. Both brothers serve as Associate Editors of ***The Voice of Truth International.*** Bonnie is doing much of the layout work now, and Paula helps with articles and proofing. Louis has an online magazine, ***Gospel Gazette Online*** (Gospel-Gazette.com), with a wide range of good studies each month.

Let me share excerpts from letters we have received in appreciation of the boxes of study books we have shipped overseas:

"I am very happy to inform you, Sir, that a box of books has been received with joy. I thank you sir for the love you have for me, one you have not seen, known and yet you make me to be what I am today by teaching me to stand to preach only thus says the Lord in order to bring the lost to Christ. I pray God to observe, add more and more strength, knowledge, years to you so that you will be able to do more as you have been doing, working for the gospel of Christ.

"Please Sir I recommended one preacher's address, that you may receive him and cover him with your materials. He is a devoted brother, truthful and faithful in the work of our Lord. Sir, I pray you welcome him as address reads... [name withheld] NIGERIA"

"Dear brethren, Calvary greetings in the highly exalted name of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I thank you for the good work you are doing in the Lord's vineyard, I appreciate the efforts of "world Evangelism/J.C. Choate Publications" in adding more books to my Library. May I therefore use this medium to confirm the sage arrival of the box containing 17 quality and sound Biblical study materials and few tracts; may the good Lord continue to bless you all in Christ's name Amen.

"Please, I pray you add my name in your mailing list, may I equally appeal for a good study Bible and Hymn books for the congregation am preaching in, we also need communion cups and tracts for evangelism.

"Extend my regards to every member of world evangelism and J.C. Choate publications teams and the sponsors (Libety Church of Christ) May you all remain blessed in the Lord. Thanks. [name withheld] Nigeria"

"Good morning, sister Betty Choate. My name is Ben Little, preacher for the Central church of Christ in Goodwood, Cape Town, South Africa. I have been a

recipient of many of the published materials that you & our dearly beloved brother, JC, have authored, and distributed over the years. I was a Catholic for 32 years... so I had to play catch up...your printed materials have helped me to do this.

"I was in the U.S., in 2008, when brother JC passed away, and will never forget it. He was close to my heart, because I too, am a missionary/evangelist. I have lit my feeble flame of evangelism from roaring fire of the Choates' work in Asia. You are our heroes...and we are following in those clear footprints that you have left for us to follow.

"I love your poems, and articles...just wish I could've met you both...I know... if I'm faithful, it will be in Heaven. God love you, and continue to bless you. Ben & Mel Little, Cape Town."

"Greetings in the name of our living lord and savior. we hope you all are prospering in the lord. We are thankful to the lord for the materials you are sending us. we proudly make known to you that a new congregation was established here through gospel seminars in which the materials are being used up to now. many leaders from local congregations are benefiting from these seminars. more requests are being send to us for doctrinally sound literature, this has henceforth prompted me to mail you this letter. please help us with literature many are still starved. my physical address is [name withheld] zimbabwe. grace and peace be with you all . looking forward to your response."

"Dearest to all in the world evangelism team, God bless you whenever you read this mail. I am Elangwe Esowe Greg , the director of the Cameroon Bible institute of wotutu. i am sending to you this letter of appreciations for the three cartons of your wonderful materials you sent to our school. I received them well and was on a mission that is why i could not notify you immediately.

"Please if you have some other materials like study Bibles even used ones will help us also. Thanks for your good work. God bless you all. Elangwe and family""

"May I use this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to you all (World Evangelism Team),for the materials you sent to me through brother [name withheld]. I received from him two boxes that contained 16 books each and one box of Voice of The Truth, Vol. 35,for the church. May our good Lord bless you all in Christ's precious name. In His Service, [name withheld] NIGERIA)"

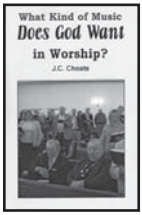
"Dear brethren, My mane is [name withheld] and my address, [name withheld] Church of Christ, [address omitted] Nigeria.

"It is needful that I write to acknowledge the receipt of the boxes of books which you sent to me through Bro Monday John Akpakpan. Today indeed is a very great day to me as you have just enriched my library with so many books that I could hardly imagine owning just once. I took possession of those books just this evening. Thanks very much for such magnanimity. I indeed appreciate. May God continue to encourage you in your undying effort to spread His word across the globe through the printed page. Felix O. Aniamalu"

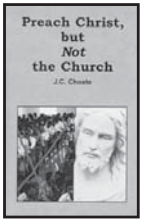
From The Heart Of...

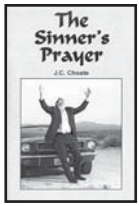
Before J.C.'s death on February 1, 2008, we had printed the first issue of a mission news magazine, ***Global Harvest,*** and that has been continued, with Wayne Barrier [wbarrier@HIWAAY.net] as the Editor. Its primary aim is to make American brethren [limited to the US, because the cost of shipping it overseas is prohibitive] more aware of what is being done in mission fields around the world, and including here in the States. For covering its cost, we ask for a donation, rather than making a subscription price. It is a full-color 8.5 X 11 magazine, 64 to 84 pages.

Jesus' final instructions to His disciples were to *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"* (Matthew 28:19,20). Since He intended evangelism to be the primary focus of the church, we feel that a magazine that helps Christians to see what **is** being done, what **can** be done, and what desperately **needs to be done** is of extreme importance. We would encourage our brethren to submit reports for inclusion, and for all to order and study this valuable magazine, and then be inspired by it to become more involved in bringing the Gospel to the lost — whether it is their neighbor or someone on the other side of the world.



Another service has been added to those we offer: tri-fold, pocket-sized tracts in full color, covering a wide variety of topics. Four are available in small booklet form, and **80 have been printed as tri-folds.** These are supplied at the rate of $2.50 for 25 copies of a single title; a set of one each of the 80 titles is priced at $15.00.



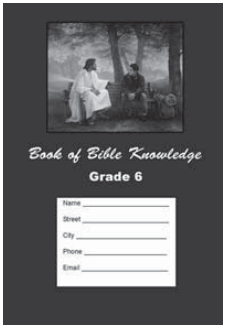


"Sir, i am [name withheld], a christian worshiping at church of christ, [address omitted] nigeria. I have some people who need to know the Bible stand in reference to abortion, and your tract,*"What Is Abortion"* prove suitable for this occasion. what I came across was one copy of this tract which cannot go round and achieve the intended result. So i need more copies about one or two bundles, also include other tracts. My postal details is: [name and address

withheld] Nigeria. Thanks for prepairing great lessons. I am anticipating your kind and positive reply."

And now we are in the planning stages of developing a complete line of Bible class curriculum for use in churches in the States and, ultimately, for translating and printing for churches overseas. We are calling these materials **Our Master's Mission.** They will cover ages from the cradle to the grave. Component parts will be quarterly, full-color student books [that can become part of the home library, for family devotionals], teacher's manuals, visuals, activities, take-home sheets, Book of Bible Knowledge, memory work cards, chronological Bible Time Lines, Saturday work programs, materials for family devotionals, board games and other types of "fun" learning tools, and much more.

Full-color student books, "Life-Span" take-home sheet, Book of Bible Knowledge — picturized samples of some of the things we are planning to develop.



Picturized Memory Cards

This, too, is designed to be a service for the church, rather than a "business". Justin and Leah Hopkins of Cleburne, TX are providing leadership in this development, coordinating the efforts of about 300 concerned Christians who have volunteered to do writing, artwork, layout work, editing, etc. If you would like to be a part of this work, please contact Justin at 210-593-8329, or Justin@HopkinsPublishing.com, or Betty Choate at 662-283-1192.

God has richly blessed the past sixty years of service, and the twenty years since the first issue of ***The Voice of Truth International.*** We are thankful for the opportunities He has provided and for the dedication of co-workers. BBC ✞

How Do You Measure Up?

7 But the end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers.

8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins."

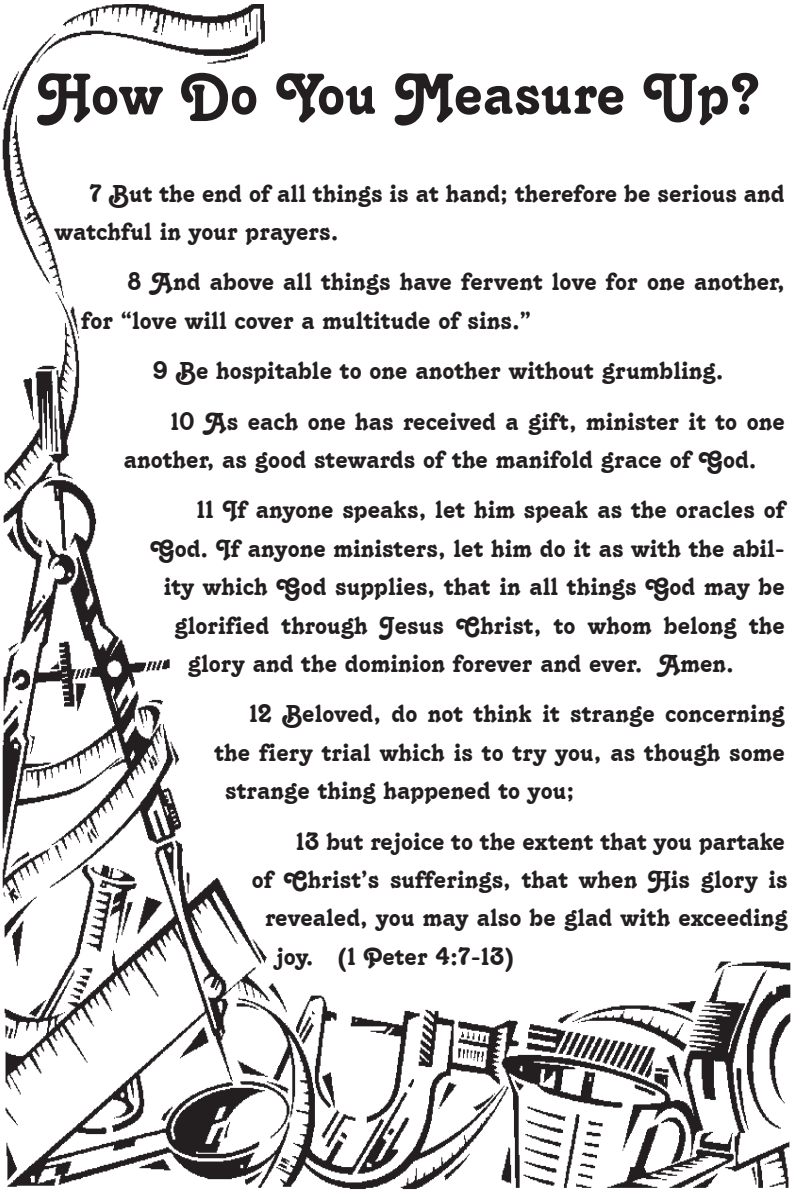
9 Be hospitable to one another without grumbling.

10 As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

11 If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you;

13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. (1 Peter 4:7-13)



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Gospel Gazette Online is a monthly Gospel magazine on the Internet, begun by Louis and Bonnie Rushmore in 1999. Thousands of articles, written by faithful Christians, are archived and selectable through the onsite search engine. GGO is free to users throughout the world, and it is visited regularly even in parts of the world that remain virtually inaccessible to missionaries. **(www.gospelgazette.com)**

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What Can You Do to Help Spread the Word?

* For just a moment, put yourself in a village in Africa, or even in a large city in India, or in the jungles of South America. You are an immortal soul, living in a perishing body. How will you knowledgeably prepare for the judgment and eternity that awaits us all?
* Does the church of Christ exist in your community, so that you can hear the Gospel preached? For most people in the world, the answer is "No".
* Is there a source for buying Bibles in your community? Though the Bible has been translated into most languages, villages seldom have bookstores. For most people in the world, the answer is "No".
* If you have found the Truth and are a Christian, is there a bookstore from which you can order additional study materials? For most people in the world, the answer is "No".

So you are born into an unbelieving home, you live according to the religion of your parents, you grow old, and you die, thrust into eternity to meet the God you never knew. What unspeakable tragedy! The scenario is LIFE for the majority of the people of the world.

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To help with this particular need, please send your checks to:

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To speed up your announcement that you want to help,
call us at 662-283-1192 or send your email to
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- We want to give $_____ each month to help send this magazine to mission fields of the world, including the USA.
- As a congregation we want to help print and circulate 100,000 copies of each issue of this magazine by making a special contribution to this effort. We can specify where the copies we pay for will be used, whether in our personal work, in jail ministry, overseas, or . . .

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Springfield, MO 65808

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Answers to Puzzles

Verse Search (page 35)

1. Believing or saying one thing and doing the opposite.
2. Evil, good.
3. Brotherly love.
4. Giving our all in an effort to please God.
5. Help them physically.
6. Bless
7. Rejoice with those rejoice, weep with those who weep
8. False
9. False
10. True
11. No
12. God
13. Heap coals of fire on his head.
14. With good.

Bible Find (page 90)

E	L	I	J	A	H		L		S
			E				A		H
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U			U			N	A	I	N
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S	A	I	N	T	S				E

Who Am I? (page 100)
Answer: (Ezra: Ezra 1-10; Nehemiah 8:1-8)

For Further Information, Please Contact:

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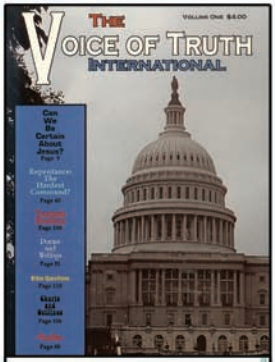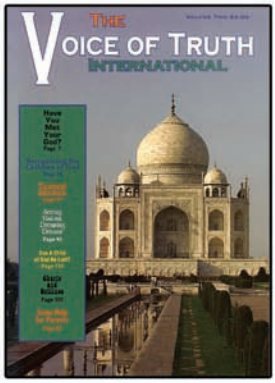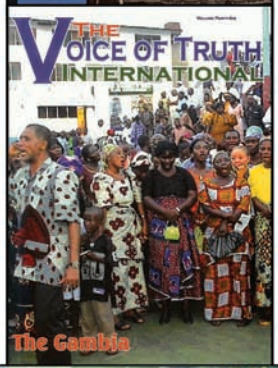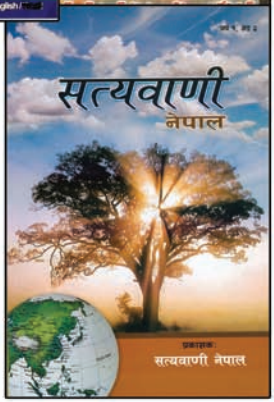
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