

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL



He died for me...

The Sin of Omission

Louise Buffington

Lord, at ninety I live alone
And I'm bowing now before Your throne,
Spilling my grievous thoughts to You
About the things I've failed to do.

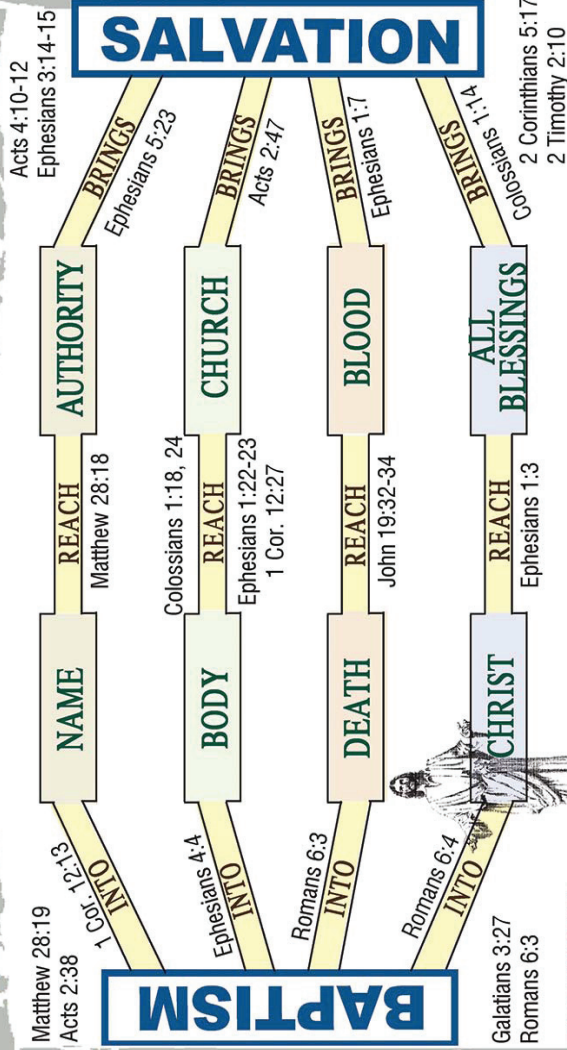
At some point I let myself slip back
And wandered off the spiritual track,
Yet in my state of mind I knew
That I had been neglecting You.

I could have done much in my youth
Had I not turned from the Gospel truth.
Troubles piled up to blur my way
And hindered me when I tried to pray.

Finally I came unto myself
When I was faced with the jaws of death;
Guilt kept on festering within
Omission had become a constant sin.

Lord, what I'm trying so hard to say
Is that I came close to losing my way.
Forgive me for those wasted days
When I forgot to sing Your praise.
Forgive me for the wasted years,
Washed so often in bitter tears,
Forgive me for the souls untaught
And help me bring them to the Cross.

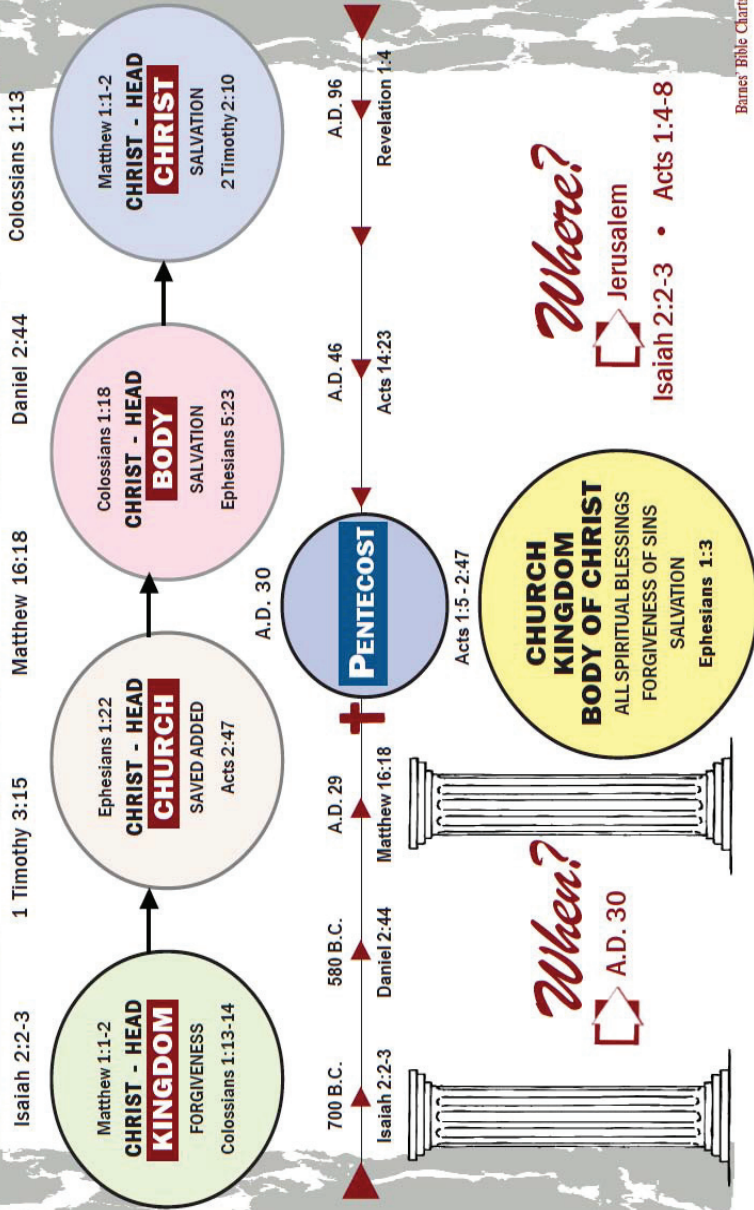
Baptism & Salvation: "Into" "Reach" & "Brings"



EXPLANATION:

1. We are baptized "into" the name of Christ, where we "reach" His authority, and it "brings" Salvation (in His NAME)
2. We are baptized "into" the body of Christ, and since the body is the church, we "reach" the church and it "brings" salvation (in His CHURCH)
3. We are baptized "into" the death of Christ, where we "reach" the blood of Christ, and it "brings" salvation (in His BLOOD)
4. We are baptized "into" Christ, and since all spiritual blessings are in Christ, we "reach" these blessings, and it "brings" salvation (in CHRIST)

The Kingdom/Church Established



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Associate Editors: Jerry Bates
Louis Rushmore
Layout: Betty Burton Choate
Typesetting: Gay Nichols
Computer Consultant: Bradley S. Choate

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TELUGU EDITION:

Managing Editor, Translator:
Joshua Gootam

TAMIL EDITION:

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Nepal Center for Biblical Study

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



Decisions, Decisions

Byron Nichols

The Bible speaks of many decisions, some that have been made and others that have yet to be made. Some people make decisions much more swiftly than others. Some have the ability to weigh the “pros and cons” with more ease and confidence than the rest of us. Some are more observant of information that is pertinent to the decision at hand.

However, not all swift decision-makers use wisdom in reaching their decisions. Many, unfortunately, are overly impulsive in making some decisions. We have all made some purchases rather hurriedly that we later regretted, haven't we? That isn't necessarily all bad, though, because if we will let them, our mistakes can help us to become more careful and less impulsive in our decision-making.

Then there are those folks who seem afraid to make a decision. It is difficult for them to make a purchase, but the same reluctance is true in deciding whether to seek or accept a new job, choose to remain single or to look for someone to marry, etc. Like it or not...there are many decisions in this life that we *must* make, and so we need to make those decisions with as much wisdom as possible.

Decisions have to be made every day. For example: How will I use this day? Will I consciously try to use it in a way that will please and glorify God? Will I attempt to encourage others? Will I give any attention to the needs of others? Will I try to grow spiritually myself?

Some decisions are more serious or critical than others. Whether I shave before or after breakfast is not as important as whether I show up for work at the appointed time. Checking whether the car needs to be washed is not as serious as making sure it has sufficient gas in the tank to get me to where I need to go.

Making decisions that can enhance the likelihood of my eternal salvation are much more vital than making decisions regarding my physical appearance.

Please notice some crucial decision-making when Jesus asked, ***“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).

Decisions carry consequences. The choosing of our friends can have eternal consequences. Choosing God-fearing Christians as our friends can bear wonderful spiritual fruit, but choosing as close friends those who have little or no concern about God and who have no interest in serving Him can easily cause us to drift farther and farther away from the Lord.

We have a great deal to do with our own well-being and our relationship with God. James tells us, ***“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you”*** (James 4:8). Then in verse 10 he adds, ***“Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.”***

The Bible likens our manner of life to a farmer sowing seed in preparation or in anticipation of a crop. It is our decision as to what kind of seed we sow, as well as to the quantity that we sow. We need to heed the words of Paul in Galatians 6:7,9, which read, ***“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.”***

Paul makes it quite clear that **we** make the decision as to what kind of seed we are going to sow. However, he makes it equally clear that regardless of which kind of seed we decide to sow, we **will** reap a harvest – either a harvest of earthly corruption or a spiritual harvest of everlasting life. I ask you, ***“How difficult should it be to make that decision?”***

Most folks want to be able to make their own decisions, to make their own choices. That’s the way God made us, with freewill. That’s just fine as long as we understand what a great responsibility we have in making our decisions. We must not forget that decisions carry consequences, and sometimes those consequences are irreversible; they cannot be undone.

When we lie down at night, we need to review our day and the decisions that we made in it – whether they were good, not so good, or even bad. They will have their consequences. Repentance and prayer can result in forgiveness of our sinful decisions, but that still does not eliminate all of the consequences that can result from our decisions.

Let’s all pray fervently and frequently for wisdom as we make our decisions throughout our lives here, so that we may be able to enjoy eternity. 



God Is Not Unjust

Jerry Bates

In Hebrews 6:10, we find the inspired writer wrote some very encouraging words. ***“For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”*** The recipients of this letter were discouraged. Previously in this same chapter, the writer warned them of the dangers of apostasy. Then in verse 9, he expressed his confidence that they would

continue living faithfully, and he penned words of encouragement. These words should encourage us as well, because they remind us of the faithfulness of God. Let us briefly think about these words.

We find the assurance that God is not unjust. God does not change His mind or revoke His promises. In contrast to man, God always keeps His promises. Man changes his mind for three main reasons. Since we cannot predict the future, we sometimes have to adapt to new situations. Nothing, however, takes God by surprise. Sometimes our plans are hindered by someone or something more powerful. There is nothing more powerful than God, so this cannot be true of God. Thirdly, man changes his mind due to covetousness because he thinks he can get a better deal. Again, we see that this cannot be true of God. Moses wrote in Numbers 23:19, ***“God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?”*** Furthermore, the psalmist penned, ***“My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips”*** (Psalm 89:34). God wants us to know that we can trust Him completely, and the writer of Hebrews continued to emphasize that in Hebrews 6:13-18.

God is not unjust to forget. This carries the idea of simply neglecting to do something. We know that man often forgets and needs to be reminded. Not only does man forget, but he frequently neglects to do what he knows he should do. We see this idea in the Book of Hebrews. These Christians were

warned against neglecting their salvation (Hebrews 2:3). They had neglected to grow as they should have (5:12). They were encouraged not to neglect to show hospitality (13:2). However, God does not forget. God sees even the smallest act of kindness and love, such as simply giving a cup of cold water in His name (Matthew 10:42), and He certainly will not simply neglect to keep His promises. Isaiah emphasized this fact when he compared God to a mother and her baby. ***“Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you”*** (Isaiah 49:15).

On the other hand, God does forget some things. For instance, God forgets our past sins. ***“I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins”*** (Isaiah 43:25). In Hebrews 8:12, the writer quoted Jeremiah 31:34, ***“...their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more.”*** Thus, we can be assured that when God forgives, those sins are gone forever. This is often in contrast with the habits of men. Shakespeare once wrote, “The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones.” God remembers our good deeds and forgets our sins. What a blessing this is!

God is not unjust to forget our labor of love. These are deeds done out of love with no hope of recompense. This is love shown toward Christ; yet, the deeds are administered to fellow Christians in need. When one cares for fellow saints, he is also caring for Christ (Matthew 25:40). These Christians are called saints. One does not have to be dead to be a saint, nor does the word refer to a super-spiritual person. All Christians are saints, that is, one consecrated or set apart for God’s service. These Christians had performed such loving service in the past and were continuing to do so, but they needed words of encouragement, words to remind them that their labor was not in vain.

God would remember their loving kindness shown to fellow saints. ***“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him”*** (2 Chronicles 16:9). God took note of Cornelius’ desire to please Him even in his unsaved state (Acts 10:4). How much more will He take note of His children’s efforts to serve Him? These words should encourage us as well. It is easy to get discouraged and wonder if it is all worthwhile. We sometimes ask, “Does anyone care?” Man might not, but we can rest assured that God sees, and He cares. Never should we be discouraged by thinking that our deeds are being overlooked. 



Left Behind

Louis Rushmore

The real *left behind* are not the supposed post-premillennial rapture refuse of ungodly souls per that anti-biblical and unscriptural manmade, denominational doctrine that has been and continues to be so popular with the majority of the religious crowd in Christendom. The **real left behind** are the survivors whose parents, children, spouses, other family members or friends have passed away. “*We who are alive and remain*” (1 Thessalonians 4:15) have been *left behind*, and we grieve. The severity of our grief varies from person to person, differs respecting who it is that left us behind (e.g., acquaintance, friend, grandparent, sibling, aunt or uncle, spouse, child, etc.) and fluctuates in keeping with the depth of the relationship we enjoyed with the deceased (i.e., the closer the relationship and the more love exchanged). In any case, we grieve because we have been *left behind* by our loved ones.

We who have been *left behind* find ourselves overwhelmed with a myriad of often simultaneous and involuntary feelings. There is that biting, overshadowing umbrella of loneliness and a sense of abandonment. At the same time, there is the stifling and stuffy delirium of sadness and depression that leads us to throw away formerly held human and earthly aspirations as though there is little left for which to live and no expectation of ever enjoying anything again or even any longer maintaining a longing for life. Life, death and eternity become the only realities. An embarrassing spontaneous bitterness arises, really with no one or anything toward which to direct it, though some mourners fashion the object of their resentment in the form of the departed loved one or even at God. Collectively, such an emptiness and void in the lives of those who are *left behind* is a dark, bottomless pit of misery.

Tears flow, resisting every effort for their abatement, in the quiet, idle moments of a road trip, during the dark alone hours of early morn or when attempting to sing church hymns (most of which are either about heaven or death, and singing itself summons one's emotions to the surface). Losing a spouse with whom one was especially close for many decades amounts to a drastic amputation more severe one thinks than surrendering bodily limbs. Clearly half of me is gone, and I am not me any more without **my better half**. "How?" we posture aloud, "can we possibly go on?" The thought was too terrible to contemplate that one of us would die and leave the other behind that I once mused that it would be better for us were we to die together, maybe in one of those sometimes headlines of a fatal plane crash. As we were aboard an international flight and accompanied by other missionaries with whom we were laboring for the Lord, one of them piped up, "Wait a minute! I'm on **this** plane, too!" Alas, though, others and I painfully find ourselves **left behind**.

What are we to do? **First**, acknowledge that the pain of our losses likely will **never** go away, but that with the passing of time the **unbearable pain** presently borne will eventually **become more bearable**. **Secondly**, observe that death has distinguished for us between things that don't really matter and what really matters (i.e., things spiritual and relating to eternity). **Thirdly**, filling one's life with Christian service and routine will provide automated purpose and direction to help us through the numbing period when we lack sufficient enthusiasm to be thoughtful and reflective in our daily lives. Christian service, routine (e.g., exercise, time to eat, sit on the back porch before retiring for the night, etc.) and duty will get us out of our beds to which perhaps we would rather like to retreat and stay for the next hundred years.

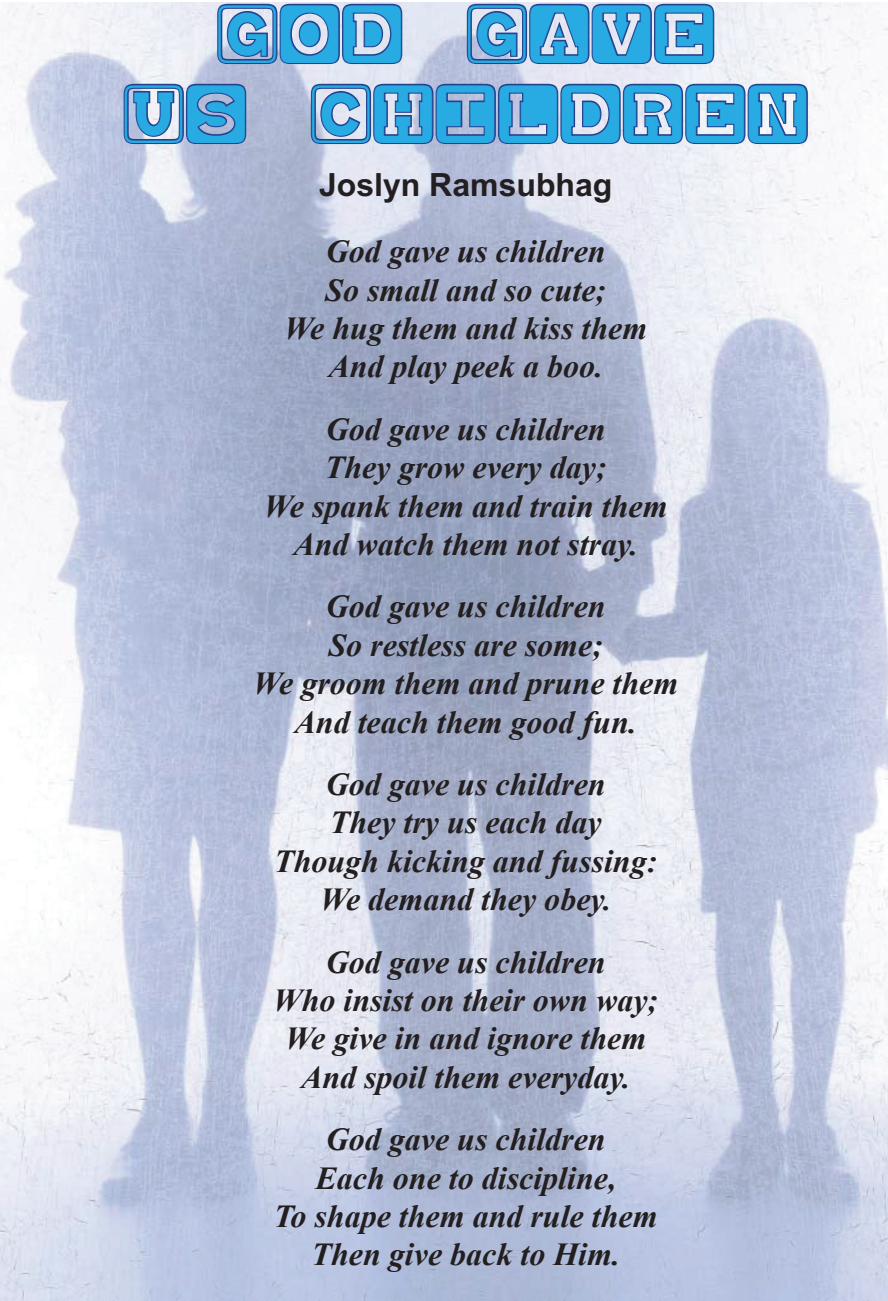
Fourthly, look for the opportunities in the single life to accentuate one's value to our Lord Jesus Christ as fruitful servants.

"There is a difference between a wife and a virgin. The unmarried woman cares about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But she who is married cares about the things of the world — how she may please her husband. And this I say for your own profit, not that I may put a leash on you, but for what is proper, and that you may serve the Lord without distraction." (1 Corinthians 7:34,35 NKJV)

Fifthly, we who have been *left behind* can harbor an internal, personal hope of reacquainting ourselves with the souls who have parted from us. ***“But now he is dead; why should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me”*** (2 Samuel 12:23). Yet, the relationship will not be the same as it was; for instance, there are no marriages in heaven (Matthew 22:24-30), but marriage is an earthly relationship dissolved at death (Romans 7:2). **Sixth**, ***“we who are alive and remain”*** can rejoice by remembering the years during which we were able to treasure the association with our loved one, thanking God for that. **Seventh**, some of us may find the sweet comfort of renewed companionship by entertaining a new – but not a replacement – love. For some, that will involve remarriage with God’s blessing (Romans 7:2,3; 1 Corinthians 7:39; 1 Timothy 5:14). ***“Then Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah’s tent; and he took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death”*** (Genesis 24:67).

Eighth, we who have been *left behind* have every reason to take to heart more fully in our thoughts and plans the biblical phrase, ***“if the Lord wills”*** (James 4:15; 13-16). Make plans, but do so with the full realization that God may overrule us. **Ninth**, if not completely subsided in this life, our tears will be removed in the heavenly hereafter where there is no death (Revelation 21:4). **Tenth**, the sheer joy of heaven will sufficiently overshadow our current sorrows, no matter how deeply they are felt on this terrestrial sphere (Matthew 13:44).

Comparatively speaking, life is short (Job 14:1,2; Psalm 90:10; 1 Peter 1:24). ***It matters not as much how long we live, but rather what we do with our lives as long as we live.*** We who are *left behind* need to live our lives fully and let God make the determination as to when we will finally be granted release (Philippians 1:20-24) to enjoy the foretaste of heavenly bliss (Luke 16:19-31). In the meantime, we who are *left behind* need to consign ourselves to Christian service, leaning on our Lord for the comfort that we so desperately need. That comfort is afforded to us through our Christian brethren. ***“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God”*** (2 Corinthians 1:3,4). 



GOD GAVE US CHILDREN

Joslyn Ramsubhag

*God gave us children
So small and so cute;
We hug them and kiss them
And play peek a boo.*

*God gave us children
They grow every day;
We spank them and train them
And watch them not stray.*

*God gave us children
So restless are some;
We groom them and prune them
And teach them good fun.*

*God gave us children
They try us each day
Though kicking and fussing:
We demand they obey.*

*God gave us children
Who insist on their own way;
We give in and ignore them
And spoil them everyday.*

*God gave us children
Each one to discipline,
To shape them and rule them
Then give back to Him.*

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The Beautiful Side of Slavery

Brett Petrillo

Slavery. It's not a pretty word. It's not a "feel-good" word. In today's culture, it is not a politically correct word. When we hear it, we think about oppression, inhumane treatment, and despicable actions. We think about some of the darkest times and most terrible people. Slavery has negative connotations for good reason. There is no doubt slavery has a deep, dark, and ugly past. So what could possibly be good about it, much less beautiful?

Romans 6 reveals a very different side to slavery. In this chapter, Paul talks about a time in our lives when we were enslaved to sin (verse 6). Sin was our master. Sin ruled over us, oppressed us, and ultimately was going to destroy us (verse 23). Then something wonderful happened. We were offered freedom from our wicked master if we would simply become slaves of the Lord (verses 1-7).

Romans 6 reveals a very different side to slavery.

GOD

With Him as Master, He offered us a new life (verse 4). He offered us freedom from our sins (verse 7). He offered us righteousness and sanctification (verses 16,19). He offered us eternal life (verse 22).

This offer is still available today. God is asking us to leave our slavery of sin to serve Him. The rewards He offers us cannot be measured. The benefits He gives cannot be adequately described. He isn't asking too much of us in return. He will treat us with love, care, and compassion. He will be patient, forgiving, and gentle. In fact, He won't even treat us as slaves, but as sons and joint heirs (Galatians 4:7).

The problem is, we will always be enslaved to something. Even if all racism, prejudice, discrimination, and bias ends in our world, there will still be slavery. It is impossible for there not to be. The reason is because we only have two choices: (1) Let sin and Satan be master over us, or (2) Let God be master over us.

When we really think about it, there is nothing negative that comes with being a slave to God. None of the negative feelings and connotations that come from slavery can be applied to this relationship with the Lord. If there was ever a beautiful side to slavery, this is it. The only question that remains is: whom will we serve? I hope we will echo Joshua's famous words, *"If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"* (Joshua 24:15). 

Brett Petrillo is the youth/family minister of the Bear Valley church of Christ in Denver, Colorado, USA.

**Sin ruled over us, oppressed us,
and ultimately was going to
destroy us (Romans 6:23). Then
something wonderful happened.**

GOD

Implications of God's Existence

Neal Pollard



“God is.” God is real. God is alive. God is watching. God is in control. All these ideas and an infinite number besides are implicit in the fact of God’s existence. That **God is** implies other things.

God can work through every event of life among men to accomplish His sovereign purpose (Romans 8:28). God, in an amazingly intricate way, weaves together the innumerable actions and occurrences that transpire in daily life on every continent according to His will. He does not make or force anyone to do anything, but He can work through even tragedies caused by men to effect good. The problem comes when one tries to define goodness on his or her terms rather than on the transcendent good that is larger than a single person. Strength in trial, character in tragedy, example in spite of great loss or pain are all transcendent good

GOD

that can occur even in the reverses we face in our individual lives.

God has not left us alone (Romans 8:35-39). Deism suggests that God created it all, then took a divinely giant step backward forever out of our affairs. Yet, God isn't aloof and indifferent to man. This was best proven at the cross of Calvary. It is proven in the perfect Word He has left to guide us. It is proven through the strength derived from prayer. It is proven by the fellowship and companionship provided through the church He eternally purposed (Ephesians 3:9-11).

God holds us accountable (Romans 14:12). What a privilege to be counted as part of the human race, made in the likeness of God (James 3:9), and to be recipients of countless blessings! So, **“... from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more”** (Luke 12:48). Especially is this true in relationship to God. He has given us life, an everlasting spirit, material and spiritual blessings in abundance, talent, time, and opportunity. For all of these resources, we shall give an account for our stewardship of them.

Only a fool would deny what is so clearly seen (Psalms 14:1; 53:1; Hebrews 11:3). Since God is, we must respond appropriately. We should do so both from gratitude and a sober realization that His existence requires our proper response.



Only a fool would deny what is so clearly seen (Psalms 14:1; 53:1; Hebrews 11:3). Since God is, we must respond appropriately. We should do so both from gratitude and a sober realization that His existence requires our proper response.

Neal Pollard is the preacher for the Bear Valley Church of Christ in Denver, Colorado, USA.



GOD

Christ Our Life

Vance Hutton

Paul referred to Christ as *“our life”* in Colossians 3:4. For him to live was Christ (Philippians 1:21). Christ lived in Paul (Galatians 2:20). Is the Lord magnified in your life (Philippians 1:20)? Paul often wrote of the importance of Christ being in us (Colossians 1:27; 2 Corinthians 13:5). Let us notice some of the things involved when Christ is our life. These things must be obvious in our lives.

Thinking, Studying, and Meditating on and about the Lord

We are made to ponder things in our hearts. The Christian thinks and meditates on the Lord. The desires of the heart are in the direction of heaven (Colossians 3:1-3). We think on the just, the pure, and the holy (Philippians 4:8). The Psalmist spoke of meditating on the Lord during the night (Psalm 63:6,7). To Timothy, Paul gave the challenge of meditating on the spiritual (1 Timothy 4:15). Time, much time, will be given to a study of the Word of God. Let us do so daily, as did the Bereans (Acts 17:11).

Obedying What the Lord Has Said to Do

The Lord has authority over us (Matthew 28:18; Acts 5:36). His words will judge us at the last day (John 12:48). Loving Him demands that we be obedient to His commands (John 14:15). The Lord is the author of eternal salvation to them that obey Him (Hebrews 5:8-9). Those who do not obey the Lord will be the recipients of His wrath (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). So, with Christ as our Lord, we will be careful to obey God (Acts 5:29).

Praying to God Fervently and Regularly

Adoration for the Lord, and awareness of our sins, our needs, concerns, and gratitude will drive us to the throne room of God. Much of life is spent in prayer. Our Lord rose early before day to pray (Mark 1:35), and He continued all night in prayer at times (Luke 6:12). The threat of death should not keep

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us from prayer (Daniel 6; Revelation 2:10). Time will be given just to thank God for what He has done for us. Our quest for wisdom is partially fulfilled through prayer (James 1:5). Our sins and weaknesses send us to God in prayer. Let us give ourselves to prayer (Acts 6:3).



Worshipping God Regularly

When Christ is our life we are longing to worship. As we follow the theme of ***“the Lord’s house”*** through the book of Psalms, we see that so much is said about worship and the desire for worship. Study worship in the Book of Revelation. Worship God (John 4:23,24). Such will become an integral part of living. May it never be a chore, a bore, or a wearisome thing. Here we come to give adoration to the Lord and we go away ever so blessed as well. Is Christ your life? Have you turned your back on worship (Hebrews 10:24,25)?

Anticipating Heaven More Each Day

We sing about heaven. We have read about heaven, and a longing builds for that wonderful place (2 Corinthians 5:1). By faith we see the unseen. We look for that city as did Abraham (Hebrews 11:10). All here is temporal, but we are laying up treasures in heaven (Matthew 6:19,20). Anticipation mounts as we think of being with the Lord, being with all the righteous of all ages, being in a place where all the burdens of life are removed, and being in a place of such magnificent beauty. We surely do not deserve it (Romans 6:23).

Is Christ in your life? He deserves to be. Your life is not what it could and should be if He is not in it.



Vance Hutton is the preacher for the church of Christ in Double Springs, Alabama, USA.

What Is the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit?

J.C. Choate [Deceased]

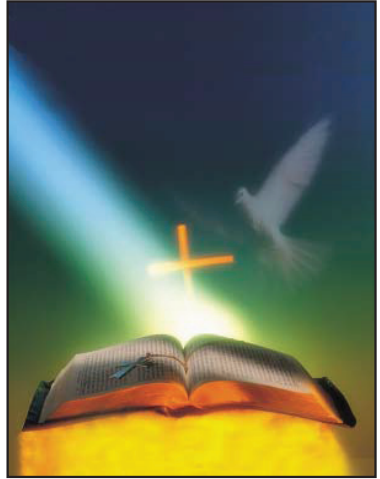
The Apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Christians, “**Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus.**

“**For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one should take advantage of and defraud his brother in this matter, because the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also forewarned you and testified. For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.**

“**Therefore he who rejects this does not reject man, but God, *who has also given us His Holy Spirit.* But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another” (1 Thessalonians 4:1-9).**

In this setting Paul is encouraging these Christians to remain pure and clean and to have proper respect and love for one another since they belonged to God and the Holy Spirit had been given to them. In the context, it appears that Paul is speaking to all Christians in general, and in doing so he says that God had given them the Holy Spirit.

Paul said to the Christians at Corinth, “**Do you not know that you are**



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the temple of God and that **the Spirit of God dwells in you?** If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are” (1 Corinthians 3:16,17).

Again, he said, “Or do you not know that **your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you**, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19,20).

Paul was clearly saying that our bodies are the temple of the Spirit, but how can He live in a Christian in a non-miraculous way? In the same way that Christ dwells in us (Colossians 1:27), and God dwells in us (Ephesians 4:6), and of course we dwell in Christ, and in God (Romans 6:3,4; Galatians 3:26,27).

There are those who deny a literal “indwelling” of the Spirit, saying that He indwells Christians only *representatively* through the Scriptures. Their logic is that the Bible was inspired by the Spirit, so **He dwells in us through the Word.**

● There are several problems with this doctrine, beyond the fact that when they read verses saying that the Spirit dwells in us, as in Romans 8:11, they are forced to parenthetically insert “through the word” in order to make it read like their belief says: “**But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you [through the word], He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you [through the word].**”

Doesn’t Revelation 22:18 have something to say about “adding to the word”?

“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone *adds* to these things, *God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book....*”

● Beyond that problem, there is the fact that when Peter preached, saying that those who repented and were baptized would receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, **the New Testament had not yet been written!** How could the 3000 on that day receive something that would not be completed for decades, if the “gift” of indwelling was **the Scriptures**, not **the Spirit, Himself?**

● And then there is the problem that people living under the Old Testament portion of the Scriptures were never described as being given the

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“gift of the Holy Spirit”. They had God’s word dwelling in them. Why is it never said that the Holy Spirit was “indwelling” the nation of Israel?

● And, finally, humans imbibe various amounts of Scripture throughout their lives. If the “indwelling” is only as they have the Scriptures in their hearts, do some have 20%, others 35% of the Spirit — and what about those who have even memorized large portions of Scripture and yet were never baptized correctly according to the specifications in Acts 2:38? They may actually have more of the literal Scripture in their heads than do many who are part of the Family of God, so do they have more of the Spirit dwelling in them even though they never complied with what God required a person to do to be given **“the gift of the Holy Spirit”** in the first place?

We therefore believe we are in the Lord and the Lord is in us. We believe God hears and answers prayers and He works mightily through providence. At the same time we believe that the work of the Spirit, in answer to prayer, through providence, and all that is sacred and divine, is done today in harmony and in keeping with the Spirit’s word — or the word of God — as contained in the New Testament. Nothing, absolutely nothing, in our lives and in the things we teach, can contradict one word that is written in the Scriptures. God works today, and the Spirit lives within us, not miraculously, but it is within the framework of what is clearly said in His word. ✚

J.C. Choate passed into that eternal realm on February 1, 2008.

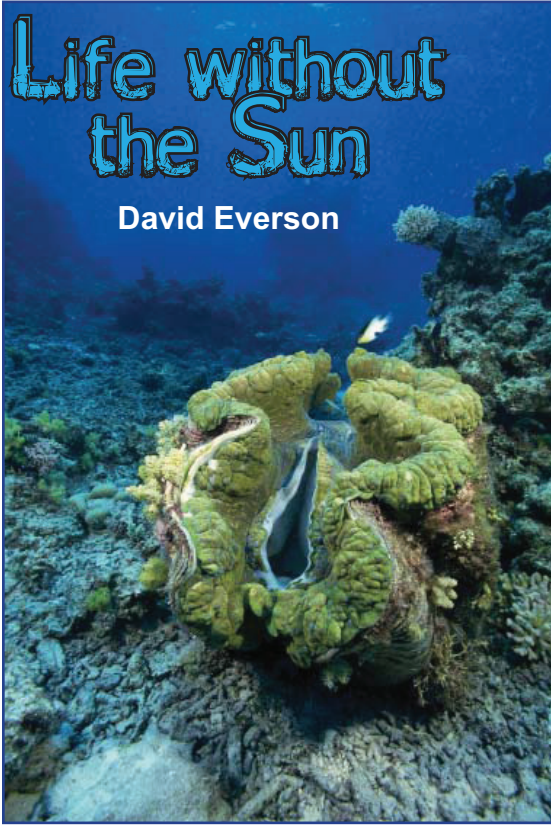
Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee (2 Corinthians 1:21,22).

Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee (2 Corinthians 5:5).

In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory (Ephesians 1:14).

Life without the Sun

David Everson



As scientists have studied life on earth, one constant that has always been accepted and easily demonstrated was that all life needs the energy from the sun for survival. They have seen the process that God has created in plants, that of photosynthesis. This process is necessary to lock energy from the sun into sugar for animals to feed upon. This process is what causes life on earth to continue. Life depends upon this process, but when scientists discover life existing without the sun it causes quite a stir.

The discovery of life not connected to the

energy of the sun has caused scientists to scramble to explain these life forms. For the creationists who believe that an all-powerful God designed all life on earth, it is easy to accept that He might decide to create life based on another biological process other than photosynthesis. Let's look briefly at the location where this occurs, the process and the life forms that have modern man scratching his head.

The life forms that support the food chain at deep-sea hydrothermal vents also participate in the formation of the minerals that make up the sulfide chimney structure. These hydrothermal vents are basically geysers

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on the seafloor. As the vent water bursts out into the ocean, its temperature may be as high as 750°F. Yet, this water does not boil because it is under so much pressure from the tremendous weight of the ocean above. When the pressure on a liquid is increased, its boiling point is raised. It continuously spews super-hot, mineral-rich water that helps support a diverse community of organisms. The “black smokers” are the hottest of the vents. They spew mostly iron and sulfide, which combine to form iron monosulfide. This compound gives the smoker its black color. “White smokers” release water that is cooler than their cousins and often contain compounds of barium, calcium, and silicon, which are white.

Believers in God just marvel at His marvelous might and power.

Some of the many life forms that God has created to withstand unearthly conditions include Tubeworms, a reddish worm known as vestimentifera, which builds and lives in a tube up to twenty-five feet long, and is so different from any other known animal that it has been classified in a phylum of its own. There are huge clams, eyeless shrimp, crabs, and pink brotulan fish. Many of these animals are “extremophiles” or organisms tough enough to thrive in hot, corrosive, high-pressure environments. At the base of the food chain are chemoautotrophic archaea, basically a bacteria that uses chemical energy derived from the breakdown of hydrogen sulfide to build organic compounds.

The first of these hydrothermal vents was discovered in 1977. They are known to exist in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. Most are found at an average depth of about 7,000 feet in areas of the seafloor spreading along the Mid-Ocean Ridge System. Since then they have been found in many other places, and they show that the life forms that God has created can show tremendous diversity and be vastly different from other forms of life in His creation. So while evolutionists struggle to explain how these life forms could *evolve* in such difficult environments, believers in God just marvel at His marvelous might and power. 

David Everson is an elder in the church of Christ in Belington, West Virginia, and has many years of education in biology.

Would You Destroy a Bible?

Steve Higginbotham

Many years ago, a wicked king was presented with a copy of God's Word. The king commissioned a man to read it for him, and after only reading a few paragraphs, the king took the scroll and cut it with a penknife, then destroyed it by throwing it in the fireplace (Jeremiah 36:21-23). By way of divine commentary, Jeremiah records that after the king destroyed God's Word, ***"they were not afraid, nor did they tear their garments..."*** (Jeremiah 36:24).

But here is what has captured my attention with regard to this historical event. As bad as it was for the king to destroy the Word of God, it was also incredible, from God's perspective, that no one feared Him enough to tear their garments in light of what was done.

Here is the thought I want to leave with you. While we may never have the nerve to flagrantly destroy a Bible because we don't like what it says, might we be guilty of being calloused when we witness others contemptuously "destroy the Bible?" Have we feared? Have we torn our garments? Have we clothed ourselves with sackcloth?

Friends, there is a time for every purpose under heaven. There is a time to laugh (Ecclesiastes 3:4), but there is also a time to put away laughter and lament, mourn, and weep (James 4:9). Don't allow yourself to become desensitized by an ever-increasing culture of disrespect for God and His Word. Much of our media (television, movies, music, Internet, etc.) is destroying God's Word just as flagrantly as did that king with his penknife. What will our reaction be? Will we continue to watch, listen, chuckle, and even share, or will we lament, mourn, and weep? Give it some thought. ✝

Steve Higginbotham preaches for the Karns Church of Christ in Knoxville, Tennessee, USA.

**Don't allow yourself to become
desensitized by an ever-increasing
culture of disrespect for God and His Word.**

THE WORD OF GOD

Known, But Forgotten or Ignored

Michael L. King

It seems to be a human tendency to obtain a lot of information about life and what serves our best interest, but for some reason not abide by what we have learned. We are plagued by the same weakness when dealing with our spiritual lives. Many of the things that we have learned we know could impact the destiny of our souls, but we become distracted by things of lesser importance and jeopardize our safety and security regarding crucial matters.

God must have known that this would be a tendency of man, so He gave repeated warnings and reminders so we could keep matters of importance first and foremost in our log of priorities and values. The believers to whom James was writing were warned, ***“...to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin”*** (James 4:7). Paul advised Timothy to charge his hearers to ***“...strive not about words to no profit”*** (2 Timothy 2:14). Just after Peter had recorded a listing of needed spiritual qualities, he stated that ***“I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth”*** (2 Peter 1:12). Jude followed the same line of reasoning in the content of his message aimed at his audience, by saying, ***“I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not.”*** (Jude 1:5).

There is a huge obligation to all who know and understand the truth. The Ephesian church was accused in John’s revelation of having ***“left your first love”*** (Revelation 2:4). When we once have an understanding of truth and the opportunity to know it and to live by it, we are without excuse; ignorance cannot be used as a license for not doing (Acts 17:30; Hebrews 6:4-6)! Israel’s entire history was a maze of forgetfulness and failure brought about largely by their rebellion against God while possessing knowledge of His expectations of them.

“Likewise, when the Lord sent you from Kadesh Barnea, saying,

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‘Go up and possess the land which I have given you,’ then you rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God, and you did not believe Him nor obey His voice” (Deuteronomy 9:23). As God was directing Moses to educate the children of Israel, prior to their entrance into the Promised Land, their rebellion and forgetfulness were flagged. A very serious charge was made by Moses: ***“You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you”*** (Deuteronomy 9:24). In this very chapter, and the chapters in context, the word “remember” appears several times, apparently because they were forgetting or ignoring. The writer of the Hebrews letter categorized this as willful sin; he warns, ***“For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins”*** (Hebrews 10:26). There were some in Rome that had knowledge of God, but ***“...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”*** (Romans 1:28). In the same letter, some were referred to as ***“...having a form of knowledge and truth...”*** (Romans 2:20). Paul cautioned Timothy that there would be some who had ***“a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away!”*** (2 Timothy 3:5). A “form”, not the real thing!

God has provided us with conscience-joggers to help keep us alert and remembering necessary things. We have been given the ***“perfect law of liberty”***, the Bible, into which we can look, somewhat as a mirror, to remember what we saw there for making corrections of the unacceptable (James 1:23ff). The Lord is to be remembered each and every Lord’s Day by commemorating the Lord’s Supper, lest we forget the extreme price that was paid for the redemption of our souls (Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:24,25; Ephesians 5:25; Acts 20:28). Worshipping together with fellow believers is one of the most effective ways of avoiding spiritual forgetfulness, by which we exhort one another (Hebrews 10:25) with regularity and consistency (Acts 2:42-47). Want to please God? Let us ***“...do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased”*** (Hebrews 13:16). 

Michael L. King preaches for the Lord’s church in New Albany, Mississippi, USA.

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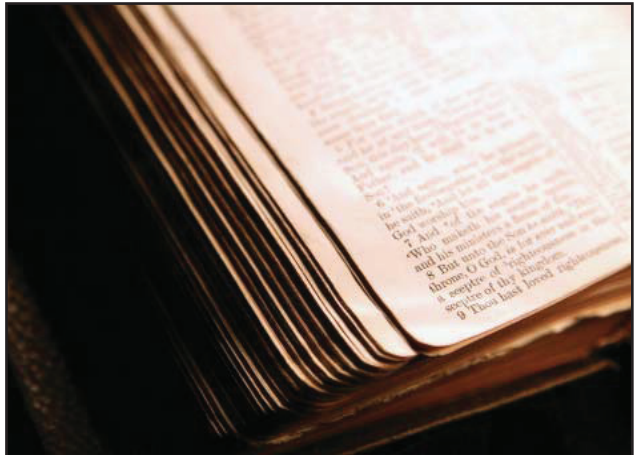
The Engrafted Word

(James 1:21)

Jimmy Clark

“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (James 1:21). The Word of God is called many different things in the Book of James. For example, it is called ***“the word of truth”*** (James 1:18), ***“the perfect law of liberty”*** (James 1:25), ***“the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ”*** (James 2:1), ***“the royal law according to the scripture”*** (James 2:8), ***“the law”*** (James 2:9, 11; 4:11), ***“the whole law”*** (James 2:10), ***“the law of liberty”*** (James 2:12), ***“the scripture”*** (James 2:23; 4:5), ***“the truth”*** (James 3:14; 5:19), and ***“the wisdom that is from above”*** (James 3:17).

Here James uses the term ***“engrafted”*** (James 1:21) to denote the need for the Word to be found within the inner man. Thayer says of the Greek word translated here ***“engrafted”*** (James 1:21), “in-born, implanted by nature; implanted by others’ instruction: thus the doctrine implanted by your teachers” (Thayer 209). The



verb *foini* of this adjective is the term that means to implant. There are several thoughts about this engrafted or implanted Word that are worth studying. Consider three.

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(1) **Rid Oneself of Hindering Influences.** While the Word has the power to produce what God has designed for it to produce (Isaiah 55:10-11; Romans 1:16), it must be in the right kind of heart for its full benefit. The Parable of the Soils reveals this in so many ways (Luke 8:5-15). The term translated **“filthiness”** (James 1:21) refers to anything that is of “wickedness as moral defilement” (Thayer 564). It reminds of the statement Paul made to the Corinthians where he said, **“Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God”** (2 Corinthians 7:1).

While the Greek words in each passage are different words for filthiness, the thought is the same. The pure Word of God (cf. James 3:17) cannot be mixed with the defilements of the world. The term **“superfluity of naughtiness”** (James 1:21) refers to the residual evil disposition that could still be present in the hearts of people who have not gotten the “world out of their system”. This would be in keeping with the expression of the truly pure and undefiled man who keeps himself **“unspotted from the world”** (James 1:27). One must lay aside the negative influences for the implanted Word to be productive.

(2) **Receive the Word with Meekness.** The term for **“receive”** (James 1:21) is the word denoting to welcome. Meekness is that gentle, willing quality that gives the Word a home in the heart in which to reside. How special is the Word of truth (James 1:18) to this recipient! Such people as Cornelius, the Ethiopian eunuch, Saul of Tarsus, Lydia, the Philippian jailor, etc. come to mind here.

(3) **Recognize the Power of the Word to Save.** James distinctively points out that the Word is able to save the soul. God’s power to save has always been through the means of the Word of God (Romans 1:16). Man lives by every word (Matthew 4:4). Taking heed to oneself and the doctrine leads to salvation (1 Timothy 4:16). Mankind would not know of the details of the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the plan of salvation, the identity of the church, the moral, holy life to live, the approach to God in worship, and a host of other specifics without the Bible. It is truly light (Psalm 119:105) to life (2 Timothy 1:10). 

Jimmy Clark preaches for the Bethel Church of Christ in Athens, Alabama, USA.

THE WORD OF GOD

**Stop Dismissing
Scripture With,
“That’s Just Your
Interpretation!”**

Wes McAdams



THE WORD OF GOD

Occasionally, I will have a conversation, or overhear a conversation, where a person is told what the Bible says on a certain subject, but he or she quickly responds, “Well, that’s just your interpretation!” – as if that statement settled the matter once and for all. It’s as if everyone has a right to his or her own interpretation of Scripture, and that one interpretation is just as valid as another. Here are a few thoughts on that line of reasoning.

Understanding Some Important Words

There are some words we use all the time, and we just assume people understand what they mean, but perhaps it would be good to take a moment to define some important terms:

“Translation” – The 66 books of the Bible were written in three different languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek). Therefore, in order for English-speakers to read them today, they must be translated into English. There are many reliable English translations of the Bible, and they have been translated from the original languages by groups of experts and scholars who have devoted their lives to understanding these languages. The translator’s primary concern is: **What does the text say?**



“Interpretation” – The books of the Bible were not only written in different languages, they were written thousands of years ago in completely different cultures from our own. So, even when a book has been translated into a current language, it can still be difficult for people today to understand what the author was talking about. We ALL must interpret Scripture, but this simply means that we must ask the question: **“What does the text mean?”**

“Application” – When the biblical text has been translated into our own language and we have done the hard work to understand what the text means, then we must apply it to our own lives. We must ask the question: **“What difference should the text make in my life?”**

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Only One Right Interpretation

We need to understand an important principle: A **biblical text has only one right interpretation**. In other words, it only means one thing. The idea that people are entitled to their own interpretations and that every interpretation is just as valid as another is erroneous.

If the person who hears or reads a statement can decide for himself what the statement means, and there is not just **one right meaning**, then attempting to communicate with each other becomes pointless. Imagine a policeman pulling a driver over for failing to stop at a stop sign. The policeman says, “Sir, did you see that stop sign?” The driver responds, “Yes sir, I did.” Confused, the officer says, “Don’t you understand that means you have to stop?” The driver then smiles and says, “Well, that’s *your* interpretation.”

The meaning of a particular passage might be *difficult* to understand, but rest assured, it only has one correct interpretation. **The Bible is not some mystical book that changes meanings, depending on who is reading it**. It doesn’t mean different things to different people. When the prophet or apostle penned those particular words to the original audience, he meant something. Our job is to figure out, “What did he mean by that?”

Interpretation Requires Hard Work

Understanding what a passage of Scripture means can be difficult. As I said earlier, the books of the Bible were written by men living in entirely different cultures. On top of that, different books of the Bible must be interpreted differently. For instance, the Book of Psalms is a book of poetry, and you can’t interpret poetry the same way you interpret historical narratives like the Book of Joshua.

If we want to know the Truth, we must do the hard work of interpretation. We must ask questions like: “Who wrote this book?”, “To whom did he write it?”, “When did he write it?”, “What literature style was he using?”, “What was the primary purpose of this book?”

The more we understand the answers to these questions, the better conclusions we will reach about the correct meaning of Scripture. This

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is NOT an impossible task. God wants His people to understand what Scripture means. The Bible was written to be timeless. It was written to be read for centuries. It was written to be understood.

Several Possible Meanings

I will readily admit there are some difficult passages of Scripture to interpret (not nearly as many as some people would have you believe). These passages have various *possible* meanings. In other words, scholars and theologians disagree on what the passage means, and they have come up with several different *possible* interpretations. But at the end of the day, there is only one *right* interpretation, and all the other interpretations are wrong.

Let's Stop Being Lazy and/or Disobedient

When a brother in Christ admonishes me, saying, "Scripture says you're wrong for what you're doing," and I respond with, "Well, that's just your interpretation," at the very least I am being lazy, and at the worst I'm being disobedient to God. It could be that the person is wrong in his interpretation. In that case, we need to sit down together and figure out the correct interpretation of the text and how it applies to the lives of Christians today. If he is wrong in his interpretation and I know he is wrong, it isn't loving or kind for me to leave him with the impression that it's alright for him to continue believing a wrong interpretation, as if we are all entitled to different interpretations.

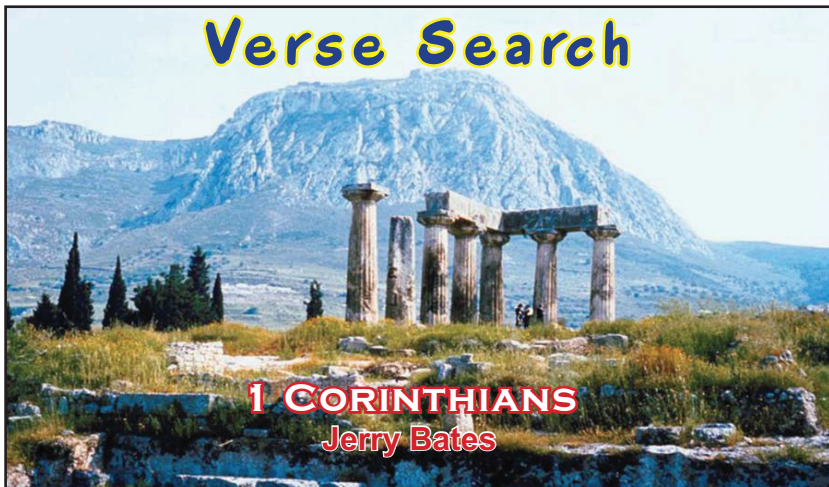
It could also be that his interpretation is correct. If so, I need to yield my life to God's will. It's easy to just dismiss something with, "That's not how I interpret that passage," but it's easy because dismissal is often simply disobedience. Disobedience is easy.

The Bottom Line

Just because you don't like what a passage of Scripture says doesn't mean you can just interpret it a different way. If you would be a disciple of Christ, you must accept even the difficult and challenging truths as revealed in Scripture. 

Wes McAdams preaches for the Baker Heights Church of Christ in Abilene, Texas, USA.

Verse Search



1. What sin had Paul heard was among the Corinthians? (5:1)
2. What had the Corinthians done about it? What should they have done? (5:2)
3. Paul was _____ in the body but _____ in spirit. (5:3)
4. What were the Corinthians to do in regards to those in sin? (5:4-5)
5. To what does Paul compare sin? (5:6)
6. "Do you not know that a little _____ leavens the _____ lump?" (5:6)
7. Who is our Passover? (5:7)
8. We as Christians must live as the unleavened bread of _____ and _____. (5:8)
9. What did Paul say the Corinthians should do in regard to the sexually immoral brother or sister? (5:9-11)
10. What other sins did Paul name along with sexual immorality? (5:11)
11. Why should we not treat the non-Christian the same way as a Christian? (5:12)
12. Who judges those outside of the church? (5:13)

(See the back cover for answers.)

VERSE SEARCH

1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles--that a man has his father's wife! 2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you. 3 For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed. 4 In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, 5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

6 Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, Our Passover, was sacrificed for us. 8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

9 I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people. 10 Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. 11 But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner--not even to eat with such a person.

12 For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside? 13 But those who are outside God judges. Therefore put away from yourselves the evil person.

NOTE: In this passage Paul is discussing how the church should deal with sin among her own members. Rather than ignoring sin or being proud of it, the church should disfellowship those who are openly and continually living in sin. This seems harsh to many today, but the purpose is to convict them of sin in order that they might repent, thus saving their souls. Some temporary bodily suffering is much preferable to eternal destruction. Sin within the church must be dealt with because it will eventually affect the whole body. Sin is compared to leaven, and just as a small amount of leaven will affect the whole loaf, sin will affect the whole body of Christ.

Paul's instructions are limited to those who are Christians. If the same standard was applied to everyone, then Christians would have to withdraw themselves from the world, and Paul tells us not to do that. We should not expect non-Christians to live as Christians. It is not our responsibility to judge those outside the body of Christ. God does that; however, we are told to judge those within the body of Christ.

What Must I Do to Be Saved? Well, It Depends...

Kevin L. Moore

What is the biblical response to one who asks, “What must I do to be saved?” The answer depends on who is asking and where the person is in relation to the Lord. This question was asked on three separate occasions in the book of Acts (2:37; 16:30; 22:10) with a different response given each time.

A complete unbeliever must first **believe in God** (Acts 14:15; 17:23-27) and the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 16:30-31). Without this initial step of faith, one can go no further in the salvation process. And before believing is even possible, the truth of God’s Word must be communicated, understood, and accepted (Acts 2:37; 8:12a; 16:32; 17:23,34). Once the divine message has been received and trusting faith has



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been generated (Romans 10:17), what must the one *now believing* do to be saved?

One who believes in Jesus must confess (or acknowledge) that belief. Unfortunately, **some believe in Jesus without confessing Him** (John 12:42), and **some confess Jesus without obeying Him** (Matthew 7:21).

A believer must repent, i.e. turn away from sin (Acts 2:38a; 3:19; 17:30; 26:20). Without repentance, salvation is not available (Luke 13:3,5; 24:47; 2 Peter 3:9). When a believing one turns from darkness to light, what must this penitent believer do to be saved?

Upon the profession of faith (1 Timothy 6:12), a penitent believer must be baptized (immersed in water) for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Romans 6:1-5,17,18). Unless one is born of water and of the spirit, entrance into God's kingdom is prohibited (John 3:5,22,23). Seeing that salvation is **"in Christ"** (2 Timothy 2:10) and baptism places one **"into Christ"** (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27), baptism is therefore necessary for salvation (Mark 16:15,16; 1 Peter 3:20,21). After baptism, what must the penitent baptized believer do to be saved?

A penitent baptized believer must continue in the faith (Acts 2:42; 11:23; 14:22). This involves acknowledging and repenting of sins whenever necessary (Acts 8:22; 1 John 1:7-10). It also involves learning, growing, obeying, and serving as an active member of the Lord's church (Romans 12:1-18; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; 2 Peter 1:2-11; etc.).

What must I do to be saved? Well, who's asking? **An unbeliever must believe. A believer must confess his belief. A believer must repent. A penitent believer must be baptized. And a baptized penitent believer must continue living a life of faithfulness according to biblical directives.** God Himself is faithful and does His part as each of us humbly complies. ✝

Kevin L. Moore teaches Bible and missions at Freed-Hardeman University in Henderson, Tennessee, USA.

What must I do to be saved? The answer depends on where the person is in his or her relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Heaven

Perry N. Hall

Abraham and Sarah died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them (Hebrews 11:8-16). ***“Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.”*** What a sublime thought! In the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:14ff, we see God’s plan for His faithful ones. ***“Well done, good and faithful servant: you, have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.”*** Here and in a great many other places Jesus spoke of the eternal destiny of the righteous. With sharp contrast to that of the wicked, the righteous are spoken of as being with God, or in a relationship of blessedness and fellowship of God.

The Greek noun *ouranos* is used to describe this abode of God and is translated by the English word so well-known to all of us, that word being “Heaven”. It is the Greek word equivalent to the Hebrew *shamayim*, which means ***“the upper regions”*** or ***“the heights above”***. This does not tell us much, but information found in the New Testament does roll back the curtain of mystery and allow us to see enough of life beyond to cause every right-thinking person to earnestly ***“lay hold on to eternal life”*** by fighting ***“the good fight of faith”*** (1 Timothy 6:12).

Men, since time began, have so longed for some glimpse beyond the grave. In God’s plan, Jesus was destined to abolish death as well as to bring life and immortality to light through the Gospel (2 Timothy 1:10). From the celestial regions the Son of God descended to become Incarnate (John 3:13). In His ascension He ***“sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens”*** (Hebrews 8:1), and today He is ***“on the right hand of God,”*** having gone into Heaven (1 Peter 3:22), now glorified with the glory He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5).

The experience of the righteous there is emphasized in the concept of *life*. This *life* is of a quality that far transcends that which has been known

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here. It is far more than just eternal existence. Hell is indeed that much! It is life in the complete, absolute, and infinite reality. Finite minds cannot grasp the infinite, but words of human accommodation tell us that the final abode is pictured as a **rest** (Hebrews 3:11,18; 4:1,3,8,9). Those who die in the Lord are said to be the ones that are **“Blessed”** and are able to **“rest from their labors”** (Revelation 14:13). To enter into that eternal state does not mean to come to idleness. It means that we obtain renewed strength and refreshment after the toil of this life that we might joyfully **“serve Him day and night”** (Revelation 7:15) forever and ever!

“Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:3,4). Here we see God will dwell immediately and in intimate fellowship with His people! He will not allow any of the distressing and heartbreaking experiences connected with this life and its sin, for neither can sin enter therein (Revelation 21:27).

That holy city, New Jerusalem, will provide perfect protection for His people with its high walls foursquare. In beautiful imagery too great for human imagination, it is described in Revelation 21:10-22:5. It is as a garden, a paradise growing the Tree of Life. In the beginning of the Word of God, we see Paradise lost! At the close, by virtue of the victorious Lamb, those made righteous by Him enter again into the immediate fellowship and eternal presence of God. **Paradise is regained!** There is much more we would like to know, but this much we do know. In the words of John, we state: **“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God. Therefore the world knoweth us not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure”** (1 John 3:1-3). 

Perry N. Hall is a Gospel preacher living in Tyler, Texas, USA.

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The Foundation of God

Tom Holland

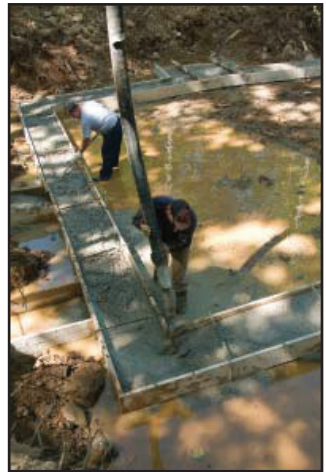
Foundations are important for building. Foundations are important for educational instructions. Foundations are essential in one's life. In an era of rapid and sometimes disruptive change, it is so reassuring to know that ***"the foundation of God standeth sure"*** (2 Timothy 2:19).

Our brethren in the first century were sometimes troubled by religious error the same as we are. There were preachers, teachers ***"who concerning the truth have (had) erred"*** (2 Timothy 2:18). The truth was not so vague or relative that it was impossible to ascertain departures from, or corruptions of, that truth. However, those who erred from the truth did not shake the foundation of God.

The Lord knew and knows those who ***"are His"*** (2 Timothy 2:19). There are people who know the Lord (2 Timothy 2:19). There are people who are known by the Lord, people who are children of God because they have been baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:26,27). There are faithful people who ***"abide in Christ"*** (John 15:4), regardless of opposition, rejection, trouble, trials, storms, or stresses in life.

It is reassuring to realize that the Lord knows His own. It is a consolation to know that God loves His people. It gives us hope to remember that the Lord knows, cares, aids, saves, and blesses His people.

Think how sad some will be in the Day of Judgment when the Lord says, ***"I never knew you"*** (Matthew 7:23). But think how glad we will be when our Lord knows us and claims His own — eternally! 



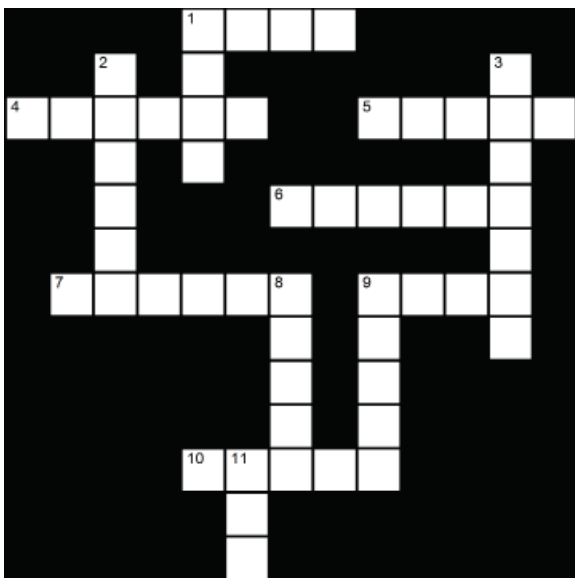
Tom Holland is a preacher and writer living in Brentwood, Tennessee, USA.



Bible Find

Louis Rushmore

SOME BIBLE COLORS



Across

1. Proverbs 20:29
4. Luke 16:19
5. Matthew 5:36
6. Genesis 44:2
7. Leviticus 13:30
9. Numbers 4:7
10. Genesis 1:30

Down

1. James 2:2
2. Exodus 26:11 NKJV
3. Matthew 27:28
8. Exodus 16:31
9. Genesis 30:32
11. Hebrews 11:29

**Answers
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THE CHURCH



"Called Out" and Called Together

Royce Frederick

"...I will build My church..." (Matthew 16:18). ***"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her"*** (Ephesians 5:25).

The word "church" means "the called out". It is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia*, when we use English letters. It is from the *ek*, "out of", and *kaleo*, "to call". We are "called out" by Christ.

But we are not called to go our separate ways. The word *ekklesia* also includes the idea of "assembled". In the first century A.D., an *ekklesia* was a group of citizens who were called out of the various parts of the city and assembled in one place to discuss matters of importance for the city.

Likewise, Christ called us out to assemble us. Throughout the entire world, all who have obeyed the Gospel are assembled spiritually into His

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one body, the church. ***“There is one body...”*** (Ephesians 4:4). ***“And He is the head of the body, the church...”*** (Colossians 1:18).

Christ also teaches us to assemble locally as His church wherever we may live on earth (see Romans 16:1,5,23; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 16:19; Colossians 4:15). All of the local churches are ***“the churches of Christ...”*** (Romans 16:16). He built it, He died for it, and He is the Head of it.

Christ shows us many purposes and benefits for assembling locally with other Christians. We assemble to GROW. ***“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine...”*** (Acts 2:42). Assembling in one place for instruction from God’s Word enables us to grow spiritually together. ***“So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people...”*** (Acts 11:26; see 13:1; 1 Corinthians 1:10; 4:17; 2 Peter 3:16-18).

We assemble to SHARE. ***“And they continued steadfastly in... fellowship...”*** (Acts 2:42). We are partners, brothers and sisters in God’s family. We share each other’s needs, sorrows, and joys. ***“Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need”*** (Acts 2:44-45; see 2:46; 4:32-37). ***“And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all members rejoice with it”*** (1 Corinthians 12:26). We help God’s work by giving on the first day of each week (1 Corinthians 16:1,2; 2 Corinthians 9:7). By God’s grace, we work together and accomplish much good unto His glory (Romans 12:4-15; 1 Corinthians 12:14-27; 15:58; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3; Ephesians 3:20,21; 1 Peter 4:10,11). 

Royce Frederick is the Editor of *International Gospel Teacher* and lives in Fort Worth, Texas, USA.

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Why Are We Members of the Church of Christ?

Owen D. Olbricht



Most people are inquisitive. Some who want to know why others are members of a certain religion may ask why we are members of the church of Christ. This is a good question and deserves a Bible answer, which we as members should be prepared to give (1 Peter 3:11). The query as to why we are members of the church of Christ could imply two different questions: **“Why did we choose to be a member of the church of Christ?”** or **“Why did certain actions make us a member of the church of Christ instead of some other church?”**

Why Be Members of the Church of Christ?

The New Testament teaches that there is only one body (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:10; Ephesians 2:16; 3:6; 4:4; Colossians 3:15), which is the church (Ephesians 1:20-22; Colossians 1:18, 24). We entered into

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that one body, the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27) by being baptized. Expressed another way, through baptism we entered into Christ (Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:26,27), thus becoming a member of the one body, the church of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:20,27) that is in Christ (Romans 12:5).

The one baptism (Ephesians 4:4) taught by Jesus (Matthew 28:19, Mark 16:15,16) makes us members of only one body (1 Corinthians 12:13). Before we are baptized, we must hear and believe the Gospel (Mark 16:15,16; Acts 8:12), repent, and confess Jesus (Acts 2:38; Romans 10:9,10). We are members of the church or body of Christ because it is the only body — church — we can enter when we receive Jesus' one baptism. In this way, we are transferred from darkness into Jesus' kingdom (Colossians 1:13), His church (Matthew 16:18,19) when we are born of water and spirit (John 3:5).

We are members of the church of Christ because Jesus' one baptism put us into one body, His church. If the baptism taught by Jesus would have put us into another church, we would be members of it.

Why Did We Choose to Be Members?

We are members of the church of Christ because of Jesus' relationship to His church, since He:

- Is the Builder of His church (Matthew 16:18).
- Shed His blood for His church (Acts 20:28).
- Has glory in His church (Ephesians 3:21).
- Is Head over it, the one church that submits to Him (Ephesians 5:23,24).
- Is its Savior (Ephesians 5:23).
- Loves His church (Ephesians 5:25).
- Gave Himself for His church (Ephesians 5:25).
- Sanctified and cleansed His church with the washing of water by the Word (Ephesians 5:26).
- Will present His church to Himself without spot or wrinkle, and holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:27).
- Has the names of those in His church enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:22,23).

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We are in the church of Christ because of the benefits we receive and of the relationship we have with Jesus as members of His church.

Most Important Reason

The last reason given above might be our most important reason of all. The church is made of the ***“firstborn ones”***. As in the Old Testament the firstborn were the most favored in their family, the church of Christ also is made up of Jesus’ most favored, first born people who are enrolled in heaven, thus in heaven’s Book of Life (Hebrews 12:22,23).



As members of Jesus’ church, we will get to enter the new, heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2) because our names are written in the Lamb’s book (Revelation 21:27). If our names are not there, we will be punished. ***“And anyone not found written in the Book of life was cast into the lake of fire”*** (Revelation 20:15).

We are in the church of Christ because we were baptized into it and because we do not want to be cast into the lake of fire. We enjoy the present blessings of being in it, and we want to be eternally in heaven with Jesus. ✝

Owen D. Olbricht is a preacher and writer living in Sherwood, Arkansas, USA.

What is Truth?

Randall Caselman

Pilate asked, “**What is truth?**” Are there absolutes? Can we know truth, ascertain truth? Is there authenticity? Reality? Or will the sun one day rise in the west just to be different? Can the carpenter trust the T-square? Can rules and theories be constructed on laws of mathematics? Can we trust $2 + 2$ equals 4, or will there come a time when this equation will be untrue? Does one-part hydrogen and two-parts oxygen always equal water, or will the chemist be forced to accept another truth?

You see truth is knowable, obtainable, and trustworthy. Truth can be trusted by mankind. Truth never fails us. Truth is always true. This is a fact in every area of human endeavor – including religion.

In banking, science, medicine, academics, and everyday life, we want truth, absolute accuracy. Who is satisfied with 99% accuracy today? Not me! Not you! For instance: 99.9 percent good enough means...

- Over two million documents lost by the IRS this year
- 22,000 checks deducted from wrong bank accounts in the next 60 minutes
- 12 babies given to the wrong parents each day
- 268,500 defective tires shipped this year
- 103,260 income tax returns processed incorrectly this year
- Two unsafe plane landings at O'Hare International Airport in Chicago daily
- 18,322 pieces of mishandled mail in the next hour
- 291 pacemaker operations performed incorrectly this year
- Over 20,000 incorrect drug prescriptions written in the next 12 months
- 107 incorrect medical procedures performed by the end of the day today
- 315 misspelled entries in *Webster's Unabridged New International Dictionary*

In matters of religion we have become a generation that is satisfied with being spoon-fed by false teachers, rather than to search out truth for

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ourselves from the Word. This is work. ***“Sanctify them by the truth. Thy word is truth”*** (John 17:17). ***“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”*** (Philippians 2:12).

God’s truth never fails. God’s Word cannot be broken. ***“Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words shall never pass away”*** (Matthew 24:35).

What will we do with truth? Know it. ***“You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free”*** (John 8:32). Buy it. ***“Buy the truth and sell it not”*** (Proverbs 23:23). Study it. ***“Study to show thyself approved of God, handling right the word of truth”*** (2 Timothy 2:15). Worship in it. ***“God is Spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth”*** (John 4:24).

What does truth do for us? Guides us. ***“When the Spirit of Truth is come, He will guide you into all truth”*** (John 16:13). Sanctifies us. ***“Sanctify them through thy truth. Thy Word is truth”*** (John 17:17). Purifies us. ***“You have purified your souls in obeying the truth”*** (1 Peter 1:22). Sets us free. ***“You shall know the truth and truth shall make you free”*** (John 8:32). Judges us. ***“The judgment of God is according to truth. The words I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”*** (Romans 2:2; John 12:48).

Truth is an investment. In what are we investing? Truth or lies? I want to know, don’t you? We are a generation that is so busy climbing ladders that we haven’t taken the time to see against which wall our ladder is leaning. Scripture tells us there is a way that seems right to man but the end is death, destruction, eternal separation from God (Proverbs 14:12). Jesus said it is the truth of the ***“straight and narrow that leads us to life eternally”*** (Matthew 7:13-14). Paul informs us that ***“the grace of God is found within truth. All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God’s grace in all its truth”*** (Colossians 1:6).

Pilate asked, ***“What is truth,”*** but walked away. He didn’t wait for the answer. Are we waiting for the answer? It is available. 

Randall Caselman preaches for the Lord’s church in Bella Vista, Arkansas, USA.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

By Faith or Feelings?

David R. Pharr

Paul said, *“For we walk by faith, not by sight”* (2 Corinthians 5:7). To walk by faith means to live according to God’s Word. Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Romans 10:17). There is no other way to walk by faith except to live in harmony with the Scriptures.

To walk by “sight” means to be guided by the physical senses. It is to live according to what can be seen, or sensed by the flesh, and in the reasoning of the human mind. One who walks by sight rejects the truth of the Bible and instead follows the inclinations of his own mind. This is walking by feelings instead of “by faith.”

It is not uncommon for people to make religious decisions on the basis of their feelings. One may say, “This is what I feel I should do.” Or it might be claimed, “I know I am right because I feel it in my heart.” Some have even directly and knowingly refused the plain statements of Scripture because of what they have “felt”. Such trusting upon feelings is the same as walking by sight. We must walk by faith, not by feelings.

Some have been led to think that the Spirit’s guidance is through feelings or impulses. People will sometimes make decisions on the basis of their own intuitions and suppose they have been inspired by the Spirit. When people start trusting such impulses, they are not walking by faith but by their own inclinations. One is walking by faith when he is following the Bible. The Holy Spirit will never inspire or stimulate our hearts apart from the Scriptures. Walking by faith means to trust the Lord and do what He requires. *“Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding”* (Proverbs 3:5).

But someone may say, “I really believe the Spirit guides me from within. I believe this, so it must be ‘by faith.’” Such is not a reliable conclusion. Just believing something does not make it “by faith”. One may strongly believe a lie. He may have faith in a lie, but it is still a lie! The only saving faith is that which believes the truth (John 8:32,33; Romans 10:17). The only source of spiritual truth is the Bible (John 17:17). If we walk by faith, we won’t be guided by sight, feelings, or impulses, but by *“Thus says the Lord”*. 

David R. Pharr is a Gospel preacher living in Rock Hill, South Carolina, USA.

DOCTRINE TO LIVE BY

When He Appears

Clarence DeLoach, Jr.

The Second Coming of Christ to the early Christians was not some theological speculation to argue and to debate. It was their earnest expectation. Consider these passages. ***“From which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”*** (Philippians 3:20). ***“Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body”*** (Romans 8:23). ***“Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of the Lord”*** (2 Peter 3:11,12). It is evident from these Scriptures that the early Christians looked for, waited for, and eagerly anticipated the coming of Jesus.

John said, ***“When He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself”*** (1 John 3:2,3). Belief in the Second Coming of Christ, not just in the head, but in the heart, will provide strength for living the Christian life.

1. **It will provide motivation.** It will give us impetus to reach for the prize. What greater motive for faithfulness in service than to be ready when He appears? ***“Each man’s work will become evident, for the day will show it”*** (1 Corinthians 3:13-14). What greater joy than to hear the words, ***“Well done, good and faithful servant – enter into the joy of the Lord”*** (Matthew 25:23).

2. **It provides accountability.** We are accountable for our ministries, so, ***“Look to yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward”*** (2 John 8). Knowing that we will answer should keep us alert and pursuing the prize. ***“Each of us shall give an account of himself to God”*** (Romans 14:12).

3. **It provides security.** We need not worry or fret about the future. Jesus said, ***“I will come again”*** (John 14:3). That’s our hope, confidence, and security. We belong to Christ, and He is coming for us! Our inheritance is not in this world, where there is no security. We have one that is imperishable, undefiled, unfaded, and reserved in heaven (1 Peter 1:4). That is our blessed assurance. Keep this hope alive. 

Clarence DeLoach, Jr. lives and preaches in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses [Amos 4]

The question is asked, "How does God work?" Any person, place, or thing can be used as a tool of God to bless obedient children, to correct or punish disobedient children, and to destroy those who oppose Him or are beyond salvaging.

Luke 12:48 warns, **"For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required..."** Much has been given to America. As atheism and humanism increase their control of our culture, let us be aware of the disasters that God has brought on disobedient people of the past. Consider this chapter of His dealings with Israel — His children — in His efforts to turn them back to Himself:

"... I gave you cleanness of teeth in all your cities,
And lack of bread in all your places;

Yet you have not returned to Me," says the Lord.

"I also withheld rain from you,
When there were still three months to the harvest.
I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city.
One part was rained upon,
And where it did not rain the part withered.
So two or three cities wandered to another city to drink water,
But they were not satisfied;

Yet you have not returned to Me," says the Lord.

"I blasted you with blight and mildew.
When your gardens increased, your vineyards, your fig trees,
and your olive trees, the locust devoured them;

Yet you have not returned to Me," says the Lord.

"I sent among you a plague after the manner of Egypt;
Your young men I killed with a sword, along with your captive horses;
I made the stench of your camps come up into your nostrils;

Yet you have not returned to Me," says the Lord.

"I overthrew some of you,
As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,
And you were like a firebrand plucked from the burning;

Yet you have not returned to Me," says the Lord.

"Therefore thus will I do to you, O Israel;
Because I will do this to you,
Prepare to meet your God, O Israel!"

Souls to Be Won for Christ

Dale Grissom

Motivation is one of the most necessary elements in effective soul winning, yet is also the quality that is lacking in most of us. Motivation is what gives us that nudge we need to talk to a friend or a family member about his eternal destiny. It is the “boost” that gets us past just caring about a lost soul and actually doing what we can to keep him from hell.

Most of us try to avoid confrontation, so when we are urged to “confront the lost with the gospel”, we feel uncomfortable. Just as we are to love the sinner but not the sin, we can confront without being confrontational. We can invite people to come to services with us so they can hear the Word being preached. In addition, we should prepare ourselves through diligent study of God’s Word so we can confidently and lovingly present the Gospel. The apostle Paul boldly spoke of its power in Romans 1:16 when he wrote, ***“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”***

We don’t have to know everything about the Bible in order to teach others, but we do need to familiarize ourselves with the basics: Christ promised to build His church (Matthew 16:13-20); that church was established (Acts 2); numerous examples of conversions are contained in the Book of Acts. Patterns and guidelines for acceptable worship and for living the Christian life are found throughout the New Testament.

Brethren, we simply must stop making excuses. We must study in order to know the Word and to be able to teach it; we cannot teach what we do not know. ***“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and it is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”*** (Hebrews 4:12). **Christians are produced and souls added to the church when the Gospel is taught to good and honest hearts.** We dare not shun our responsibility to teach it.✚

Swapping Sheep or Making Disciples?

Patrick Morrison

Regretfully, it seems that many within the Lord's church have forgotten our primary responsibility and privilege: ***"Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all nations..."*** (Matthew 28:19 ASV). Of all the many good things that our Lord came to do while upon earth, His central focus was ***"to seek and to save that which was lost"*** (Luke 19:10). We have gotten so far away from trying to reach and teach the lost, and have instead focused on recruiting members from other congregations of the Lord's people.

Paul Harvey once said, ***"We have gone from being fishers of men to keepers of the aquarium."*** Instead of trying to grow the church through evangelism and restoring the erring, many seem to be content with turning the church into a social or civic organization. ***The church is supposed***



to be a hospital for sinners, not a country club for saints (Luke 5:31-32). I am told that Christians in Africa will walk for hours to attend services, where they will sit for hours on a wooden bench with no back support or padding, in open-air buildings that do little but keep the rain off of them. Some here in America won't even attend a service when they can travel by air-conditioned car for about a five-minute drive, to sit on a padded pew

in an air-conditioned building for a service that might last an hour. To top it off, some want their coffee bars (as one congregation announced, "Java with Jesus"), their gymnasiums, and their playgrounds to entertain their children. Is it any wonder that when we are not busy making disciples,

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

then we focus our attention on catering to the ones in the fold? And, when the focus of a congregation turns inward, it seems it is not long before the spiritual gives way to the social and physical.

What constitutes growth in the kingdom of our Lord? Is a congregation growing when it converts no one, yet has some who place membership with them? I realize that people move from various locales, and therefore, must change congregations. I also realize that there are those who are looking for a congregation that will provide them the opportunity to be of greatest service in the kingdom. However, has the kingdom of God grown at all when one family places membership with another congregation? One congregation may “grow” at the expense of and to the detriment of another congregation. **Swapping sheep does not constitute church growth** in the eyes of God, for we are all members of the one body already (1 Corinthians 12:13,20). **Moving sheep from one pasture to another has not increased the size of the flock at all.** Sadly, there are some who actively attempt to recruit members away from other congregations. Such is a shameful practice, but I suppose those who are successful feel as though the congregation where they attend is “growing” and being “blessed by God”. Have we become so deaf and blind to the plight of the lost that we are more concerned about making our pitch to those who are already members of the church as to why they should place membership with us? Not only should this shame us to no end, but it should also cause us to tremble, for **if we are not trying to make disciples, then we are in blatant violation of our Lord’s command!**

The last words our Lord spoke before ascending to the right hand of the throne on high were **to take the Gospel to the world** (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:18; Luke 24:47). **The church has to move beyond the “Field of Dreams” mentality (“If you build it, they will come”).** The field of souls lies beyond the walls of the church building, and it’s time for us to lift up our eyes, and look upon the fields which are ripe for the harvest (John 4:35)! 

Patrick Morrison preaches for the Sixth Avenue Church of Christ in Jasper, Alabama, USA.

CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP SPREAD THE GOSPEL?

Janet Barrier

We often ask ourselves what we can do as women to spread the Gospel when we feel like no one is interested or that everyone has heard. There are several things we can do.

- We can do some standard activities such as visit our neighbors, encourage those at work, visit the hospital, visit nursing homes, and comfort those who have had a death in the family. We can take food baskets for the waiting rooms in hospitals; include a copy of *The Voice of Truth International* or a tract. We can take pizza at night or biscuits from a fast-food place for breakfast to those visiting with family members in ICU. Be sure to leave a card with the information about your congregation.
- We can give money to missionaries for whatever they need, and it will be **“accounted to you for righteousness”** (Philippians 4:15-17). Women can give the wife of a missionary some money to spend for needs that she has in her work.
- Christian ladies can help send things for the missionary to take, such as old reading glasses, flip flops, other types of shoes, teaching packets, flip charts, Bible storybooks, colors, coloring books, and medicines like Tylenol, aspirin, Neosporin, and Band-Aids.
- If you teach a children’s class in the U.S., read the missionary reports to the children. Let them get to know the missionary **and** the people overseas that the congregation supports. Send cards to the missionary and the family of the local man overseas. Let them know that you are thinking about them.



CHRISTIANITY IN ACTION

- We can even help teach the boys to preach. Even in a 4 to 5-year-old class, let the boys retell the lesson of the day with the picture they colored. Let them stand up while doing this, and they will think they are preaching and spreading the Gospel.
- Help send young people overseas, if asked by the missionary to go with them. Many people gave Gracie, my 13-year-old granddaughter, money before her trip to Burma. She bought teaching materials for her lessons, visual aids, small gifts for the children, and stickers for when they would say their memory verses. We always leave the teaching materials with the local people for them to use after we are gone.
- Women can go to seminars at local colleges and universities like Heritage Christian University or Freed-Hardeman University that have special days for missions. Attend the Heritage Christian University Center For Missions Training and Information in Florence, Alabama. Attend Evangelism University in Savannah, Tennessee.
- Attend mission workshops, like Maywood Missionary Retreat held in Hamilton, Alabama to learn how to become a better missionary and give support to the missionaries attending. Help cook and clean up for these types of events.
- You can volunteer your youth group to help fold, stamp, and mail reports for missionaries.
- Even if you are older and feel like you can't help in any way, there is always something you can do. Many encourage by writing cards or calling those who go on the mission trips. An elderly woman from Jasper, Alabama, Anne Harris, asked everyone she knew to help her to send 150 toboggans for children who were cancer patients in Europe. She also helps at the Maywood retreat in any way that she can, by cleaning up and going to Walmart to pick up supplies, etc.

Sisters, we can be a workforce for the spreading of the Gospel. Let's do it!



Editor's Note: Janet Barrier is the wife of missionary Wayne Barrier. Their home is in Florence, Alabama, USA, but their work is in taking the Gospel around the globe. Janet has helped to influence many other Christian women to become more actively involved in teaching and promoting the Gospel.

How Do You Measure Up?

Make a joyful shout to the Lord, all you lands!

Serve the Lord with gladness;

Come before His presence with singing.

Know that the Lord, He is God;

It is He who has made us, and
not we ourselves;

We are His people and the
sheep of His pasture.

Enter into His gates with
thanksgiving,
And into His courts with
praise.

Be thankful to Him,
and bless His name.

For the Lord is good;
His mercy is everlasting,
And His truth endures to
all generations.

Psalm 100

Take This Once a Week for the Rest of Your Life

Danny Boggs



On the first day of the week, first-century disciples of Jesus gathered to break bread (Acts 20:7). Under the direction of the apostles, every Sunday was a day to consume the Lord's Supper. Call that the cold, hard fact, if you will. But then let your heart warm to the occasion's purposes.

"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way also He took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

WORSHIP

We eat and drink to remember Jesus. We remember what He did with His body. We remember what He did with His blood. We proclaim His death to everyone assembled. We proclaim it, knowing that He is not dead anymore, and He is coming again.

“Whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.” (1 Corinthians 11:27-32)

This is no ordinary meal. It won't satisfy much physical hunger, and it is perilously pointless without serious thought about the body and blood of Christ. This is an occasion of self-examination. ***He died for Me!*** What difference did that make in the last seven days? What difference will it make over the next seven? What difference is it making at this very moment?

A careless attitude toward the Lord's Supper is bound up with a cavalier attitude toward life. If I can't find the time or the will to be present regularly for the communion, or if I can't discipline my heart and mind to engage in it thoughtfully, I'm weak. I'm sick. I may already be dead.

This self-examination is really an invitation to the Lord to judge and discipline me right now. I can let Him diagnose and heal today, or I can suffer condemnation one day, along with the world.

We eat and drink for remembrance, proclamation, and introspection. We need to remember! We need to proclaim! We need to examine ourselves!

The Lord formulated His Supper for optimum spiritual health. For best results, the Great Physician says, “Take this once a week for the rest of your life.” 

Danny Boggs preaches for the Hillcrest Church of Christ in Neosho, Missouri, USA.

WORSHIP

PLAYING WITH FIRE

Rick Cunningham



WORSHIP

Aaron, Moses' brother, was the first priest of the Mosaic covenant. Aaron married Elisheba, and together they had four sons, Nadab, Abihu, Eleazer, and Ithamar. Their sons also became priests.

When Moses went up on Mount Sinai, he alone met with God and received the covenant agreement. But Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and six men from each tribe of Israel went part way up the mountain to "see" God, or more specifically, to see the place of God's presence. Moses wrote in Exodus 24:9-11, ***"Moses, Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself. But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God and they ate and drank."*** So a few men, including Nadab and Abihu, ate and drank on Mount Sinai in God's presence, but God did not raise His hand against them. However, God did raise His hand against Nadab and Abihu later.

As these two priests were working in the tabernacle, they were putting fire in their censers to burn the incense used in worship. The Lord had commanded that the fire was to be taken from the altar, but Nadab and Abihu used unauthorized fire. Moses wrote in Leviticus 10:1,2, ***"Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the Lord, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the Lord and consumed them, and they died before the Lord."*** **Unauthorized fire, or any unauthorized act of worship, is an affront to God.**

This biblical story is a warning to all who would approach God. God specifies what men are to do. Doing anything additionally or instead of what He has commanded is regarded by God as rebellion. Nadab and Abihu learned this lesson the hard way. **Those who implement unauthorized acts of worship are playing with fire.** ✝

Rick Cunningham is a Gospel preacher living in Big Spring, Texas, USA.

UNAUTHORIZED FIRE, OR ANY UNAUTHORIZED ACT OF WORSHIP, IS AN AFFRONT TO GOD. THOSE WHO IMPLEMENT UNAUTHORIZED ACTS OF WORSHIP ARE PLAYING WITH FIRE.

WORSHIP

"Worship in Truth"

Cecil May, Jr.



"Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). ***"The true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth"*** (John 4:23). Are these uses of "truth" and "true" related?

Many understand ***"worship in spirit and truth"*** to mean "worship from the heart" (in spirit) and "worship as Scripture directs" (in truth). The context; however, implies a contrast with the former covenant (John 1:17; 4:21,23). But under the old covenant worship was required to be offered genuinely from the heart and according as God had directed in Scripture. Both grace and truth were in evidence in many ways under Moses, as well as in Christ. What is the contrast that is being drawn? An application of ***"spirit"*** and ***"truth"*** in Scripture that does specifically make a contrast with the old is perhaps applicable here.

WORSHIP

Examples of the New Testament Use of Spirit

“For we are the real circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh” (Philippians 3:3). The old covenant is *“the letter”* and the new covenant is *“the spirit”* (2 Corinthians 3:4-11).

Examples of the New Testament Use of Truth

The Mosaic covenant’s priesthood and repeated sacrifices were shadows or figures; Christ’s priesthood and once-for-all sacrifice is the real, the true (Hebrews 8:2; 9:22). Moses gave manna; Christ is the *“true bread”* (John 6:30).

Following this usage, to worship in spirit is to worship according to the new covenant, the spirit, and not according to the old covenant, the letter, the flesh. To worship in truth is to worship according to the realities of the new covenant, not the figures of the old.

The law that came by Moses was true in the sense that it contained no falsehood, but Jesus Christ brought **the true** in place of **the shadow**. Now that Christ has come, the fleshly sacrifices, the elaborate Levitical ritual, the aromatic incense, and the Temple orchestra and choir are all replaced by the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ and by the offering of our sacrifice of praise, the fruit of our lips and our good works (Hebrews 13:15,16). ✝

Cecil May, Jr. is Dean-Emeritus of the Bible Department at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

The law that came by Moses was true
in the sense that it contained no
falsehood, but Jesus Christ brought
the true in place of the shadow.

PROVERBS 17:22



Joe is a very poor golfer. One day he hit his ball off the first tee and watched as it sliced to the right and disappeared through an open window in a house right next to the golf course!

He got another ball out of his bag and played on.

On the eighth hole a police officer walked up to him and said, “Did you hit a golf ball through a window back there?”

Joe sheepishly replied, “Yes, I did.”

“Well,” the officer said, “that ball knocked a lamp over, scaring the dog, which raced out of the house onto the highway. A driver rammed into a brick wall to avoid the dog, sending three people to the hospital. And it’s all because you sliced the ball.”

“Oh, no!” said Joe. “Is there anything I can do?”

“There sure is,” said the cop.

“Try keeping your head down and close up your stance a bit.”



A woman was getting swamped with calls from strangers. She found out that a billing service had launched an 800 number that was identical to hers, so she called the company to complain about the problem. She was told to get a new number.

The woman pleaded, “But I’ve had mine for twenty-five years. Couldn’t you change yours?”

The company refused. The woman then said, “That’s fine. From now on, I’m going to tell everyone who calls that their bill is paid in full.”

The company got a new number the next day.



A blonde lady had just completed a CPR course and was on the lookout for a chance to try it out. As she left a shopping center she saw a man lying on the floor with a lot of people gathered around him.

She ran to the man and screamed, “I know first aid!” She threw her bag

PROVERBS 17:22

down, loosened all his tight clothing, and got ready to start mouth-to-mouth resuscitation.

As she began, a huge policeman tapped her on the shoulder and said, “Do you mind? I’m trying to arrest this man.”



A lady noticed her husband sucking in his stomach as he was standing on the bathroom scales. Thinking he was trying to weigh less with this maneuver, she commented to him, “I really don’t think that’s going to help.”

“Sure it does,” he said. “It’s the only way I can see the numbers.”



A husband and wife were in a busy shopping center just before Christmas. As she was standing in line, he wandered off, saying something about being back in a little bit.

After the wife got through the line, the husband wasn’t back yet. Since they still had more shopping to do, she called on the cell phone. She said, “Where are you?”

He said, “You remember the jewelry store we went into about 10 years ago, and you fell in love with

that diamond necklace? I couldn’t afford it at the time, and I said that one day I would get it for you.”

Tears started to flow down the wife’s cheeks. Speaking softly and with some difficulty, she said, “Yes, I do remember that shop, and I still remember that beautiful diamond necklace.”

“Good, I’m in the sandwich shop next to that.”



While a telephone repairman worked nearby, three preachers sat discussing the best positions for prayer.

“Kneeling is definitely best,” claimed one.

“No,” another responded. “I get the best results standing with my hands outstretched to heaven.”

The third preacher insisted, “You’re both wrong. The most effective prayer position is lying prostrate, face down on the floor.”

The repairman could contain himself no longer. “Gentlemen,” he interrupted, “the best praying I ever did was hanging upside down from a telephone pole.”

HELL
Is
Not
Funny

Charles Box

A few days ago, at a restaurant, two men were behind me. One of them was telling some story, and I heard very little of it. At the end of the story the man closest to me said in a much louder voice, “THAT’S AS FUNNY AS HELL.” The language that people use is often a disgrace to God, our Creator, and what is said is often just very ignorant. The man who used the above statement was clueless of the fact that if the story was as funny as hell, he was saying it was a horrible story; in fact no story could have been worse. Hell is a place of tormenting fire (Luke 16:24). Hell is a place of everlasting fire (Matthew 25:41). Hell is a fire that will not be quenched (Mark 9:46) “As funny as hell” does not sound good at all!

Another expression that Christians should not use in a flippant way is **“Oh, my God.”** ***“O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save***

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me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me” (Psalm 7:1). If the expression “Oh, my God” is used in reverence, it is a wonderful statement. Sadly, people say or write OMG without a thought of reverence and respect for the God of heaven! Let us resolve to do better.

We must also do better in using words like “damn” and “ass”. If we use the word “dam”, there had better be some water behind it! If not, we must be using the word in the sense of condemned. *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:16).

If you use the word “ass”, you had better be reading a verse from the King James Bible, and there had better be a donkey in that verse. Jesus said, *“Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me”* (Matthew 21:2). Before you write LMAO you should think about how disrespectful that is to God.

Heart trouble is a very serious problem in the United States. The reason people use filthy language has to do with the spiritual heart. So, in a spiritual way, cursing and filthy language come from your heart. *“A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh”* (Luke 6:45).

God’s people must stop listening to music, watching TV shows, or attending movies that fill their hearts with cursing and filthy language. Those who are in Christ are new creatures. *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Christians have been transformed. *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect,*

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will of God” (Romans 12:1,2). Is your tongue new and transformed? Crude and vulgar language have no place in the life of a Christian. Do the words that come out of your mouth glorify Jesus? ***“For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned”*** (Matthew 12:37).

To become a Christian,

● **Hear the word:** ***“... It is written in the prophets, ‘And they shall all be taught by God.’ Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me”*** (John 6:45).

● **Believe in God and in Jesus:** ***“But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”*** (Hebrews 11:6).

● **Repent of your sins:** ***“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead”*** (Acts 17:30,31).

● **Confess Jesus as Lord:** ***“Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven”*** (Matthew 10:32).

● **Be baptized into Christ:** ***“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”*** (Romans 6:3,4).

“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15,16).

“Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer” (Psalm 19:14).



Charles Box, Walnut Street Church of Christ, 306 Walnut Street, Greenville, Alabama 36037 USA

Have You Learned Contentment?

Greely Kirkpatrick

In Philippians 4 the apostle Paul concludes this letter to his “sweetheart” church by thanking it for its gift. He was pleased that the church had shared with him in his distress, as he was in a Roman prison at the time he received their help. However, he is sure to let them know that he was content with or without physical help. Listen to him in Philippians 4:11, ***“Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.”***

How had Paul learned such a thing? By listening to philosophers expound their theories? By attending college for four years? By reading a book or hearing a sermon? NO! He had learned such a lesson through experience and through the strength of Christ in his life. This is why he knew how to be abased and to abound. It was also because of Christ’s power living in him and strengthening him. Philippians 4:13 says, ***“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”*** In other words, I can be content with much or I can be content with little. These are not the determining factors regarding contentment. The REAL factor was Christ living in him and empowering him to be content, whether full or empty.

Have you learned this secret to contentment? Have you learned from experience that with Christ’s power in you such is possible? Paul



is saying to you and me that peace is not contingent on outward circumstances, but on inward joy. Someone has said, “Peace is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of God.” 

Greely Kirkpatrick is a part of the Lord’s church in Sparta, Missouri, USA.

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“...WITH THANKSGIVING...”

Dan Winkler

“In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth understanding, shall guard your hearts and thoughts in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 4:6,7)

What a passage! What a promise! Don't worry about anything. Talk to God about everything. Then, get ready for a peace of mind like you never thought possible! The key to this whole wonderful process is the qualifier, ***“with thanksgiving.”***

(1) PROBLEMS? Whose life isn't ***“full of trouble”*** (Job 14:1)? Insecurity? A want of health? Tears of grief? Strained relationships? Still, we are not to ***“be anxious.”***

(2) PRAY! God ***“is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think”*** (Ephesians 3:20). Creation. The flood. The miracle of one called Jesus. ***“Great is our Lord, and mighty in power”*** (Psalm 147:5). And He is the one to whom we can pour out our hearts ***“by prayer and supplication”***.

(3) PRAISE! ***“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights”*** (James 1:17). Life. Families. Christianity. Hope. To reflect ***“with thanksgiving”*** on all that God has already done for us helps us turn to Him again with our cares and our future.

(4) PEACE! ***“In me,”*** Jesus said, ***“ye may have peace”*** (John 16:33). But, according to the passage above, how does this peace come into our hearts? With gratitude, we remember what God has meant to us in the past. We are, then, encouraged to entrust Him with our future and enjoy ***“the peace...which passeth understanding”***.

(5) GRATITUDE. It helps us enjoy the memories of yesterday, bear the difficulties of today, and dream amidst the uncertainties of tomorrow. So, let's be found ***“giving thanks always for all things”*** (Ephesians 5:20)! ✝

Dan Winkler preaches for the Lord's church in Huntingdon, Tennessee, USA.

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HURTING HEARTS HUNTING HEAVEN'S HELP

Keith Parker

What do you do when you don't know what to do? Let me suggest something – pray.

That's what Nehemiah did. Remember the story? Nehemiah appeared before a king. The king asked him what he wanted. I love what Nehemiah did. Before he answered, he prayed. Listen to the account. *“The king said to me, ‘What is it you want?’ Then I prayed to the God of heaven and I answered the king, ‘If it pleases the king and if your servant has found favor in his sight, let him send me to the city in Judah where my fathers are buried so that I can rebuild it”* (Nehemiah 2:4-5).

Imagine you're standing before a king who has asked you a question. He's waiting on your answer. He's a busy man. There are battles to fight, wars to win, and cities to conquer. He's asked you a question – what would you do?

Nehemiah prayed. Oh, it wasn't a long, drawn-out prayer. It wasn't “15 minutes with the Master.” It wasn't a “Dear God, thank you for this day and all its many blessings” type request. It was precise. To the point. Short. Quick. “Please God, help.” It was a hurting heart asking for heaven's help.

Have you ever felt the need for heaven's urgent help? Maybe you're teaching a friend about Jesus... or you're having a conversation with your boss... or you're trying to win back a backslidden brother... or you're involved in a disagreement with a friend... or you need wisdom in advising your children. And you don't have time for a long, intimate conversation with God, just time for a “Please help, dear God, I need wisdom” type request. Do what Nehemiah did – pray. When all else fails – or, better yet – before trying anything else, pray. When you have a hurting heart and you're hunting heaven's help – PRAY.

You see, brothers and sisters, our prayers don't have to be eternal to be spiritual. 

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



Prayer =

That Continual Relationship with God

Betty Burton Choate

The foundation of “Daily Christian Living” is our personal relationship with God, our Father. Yes, the demands of daily life occupy much of our primary focus throughout the day but, as a Christian, the underlying consciousness of God is always there. In the face of challenge, a spontaneous cry of, “Oh, God, please help me!” may flood our minds. Or an ecstatic, “Thank you, Father!” may be the instant mental outreach to Him when some very good thing happens. For His part, in response, many events of the day may bring to mind His words to us, stored in our hearts: **“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”** or **“As you would that men do to you, do you also to them.”** We are often privileged to **“Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ.”**

Thinking about these heavenly interweavings of daily life, I remember the working relationship I had with my earthly father. We built many things together. Often we worked in silence, both of us knowing what our part was and what needed to be done. Sometimes a problem would develop and Daddy would speak with calm reassurance, “We can fix that.” We had back and forth exchanges about particular things we were doing, reaching understanding and agreement (even when, as a novice, I didn’t fully understand), and we moved on to completion of the job.

Daily life with God is much like that, to me. There is the job that obviously needs to be done. There is my part, and God’s greater part that

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is beyond my abilities. We work together, moving on toward completion even when, with my limited human vision and understanding, I don't see the road ahead, because God is taking care of what is beyond my capabilities. And when there is a problem, His comforting reassurance is there: "We can fix that..." or in His words, **"All things work together for good to those that love the Lord..."**

And yes, in the quiet times, Daddy and I would just sit down and talk about the work and about our concerns and about anything else that was uppermost in our minds. Those were precious times of sharing, of 100% focus on each other, no distractions allowed!

How precious also should be those times of uninterrupted sharing with God in prayer! I tell Him how much I love Him, thank Him for all He has done, for the many answers to my prayers. I thank Him for letting me be His child through His Son, Jesus, and for all that He has promised in this world and in the next. I talk to him about each family member and their individual needs. I express my thanksgiving for the spiritual Family He created, for all that we can do — and are doing — together to help tell the world about the salvation He provides through Jesus. I pray for the church, for an awakening to the zeal that must be there if we are to complete the work God has entrusted to our care. I voice my grave concerns for our nation, remembering God's providential work that brought this country into existence and the work made possible in the past years through the flourishing of the church here. I pray for the world, for the turmoil that tears people apart, and for the growing acceptance of blasphemous sin. My heart burns with the pain that this rejection of God brings, and I grieve with Him because I know that His pain is so much deeper than mine.

I am conscious of His indwelling Spirit within me, **"making intercession for [me] with groanings which cannot be uttered,"** and of my reaching up through the blood and mediation of my Brother, through Whose name and authority I dare to approach the Almighty God of heaven. The circle is complete: **my soul, in the Spirit, through Jesus, reaching up to our Father, and His love and care reaching down in response to me.** 

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, long-time missionary to India.

Come — See Where He Lay

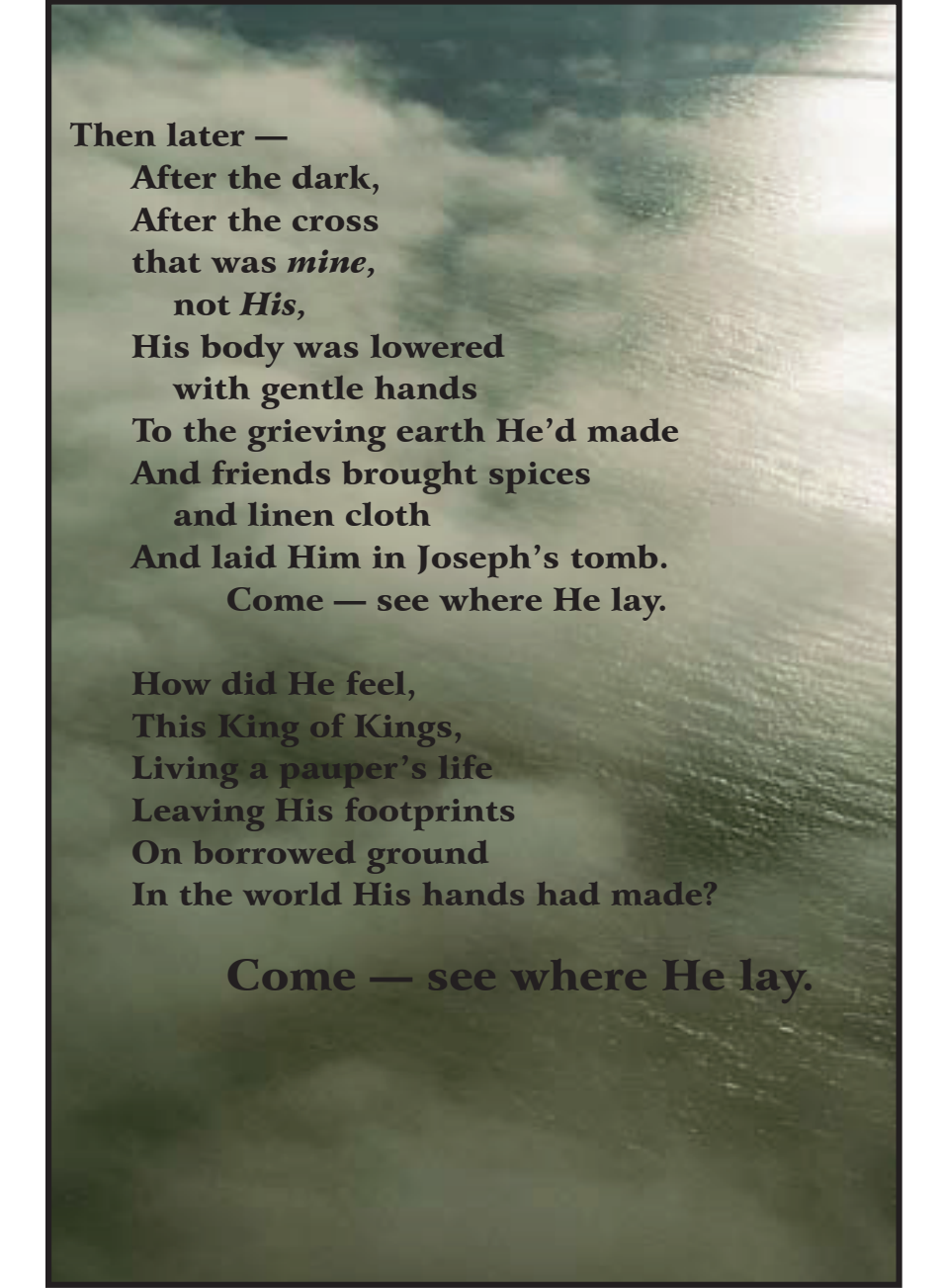
Betty Burton Choate

**He was the Son of God
Yet He was born in a stable
And that soft baby form
Left its first imprint
In a bed of straw.**

Come — see where He lay.

**Little boy feet pattered around
In the dust of Nazareth.
Then, leaving that home
 with its childish mat,
The noble head of the Man
Found rest with friends
In Cana of Galilee,
At Peter's house,
Then in a boat, storm-swept and dark.
 Judean roads knew His footprints
 and the way to Bethlehem;
Mary and Martha made a place,
Simon and others too,
 But all were borrowed,
No house was His own.**

Come — see where He lay.



Then later —

After the dark,
After the cross
that was *mine*,
not *His*,

His body was lowered
with gentle hands
To the grieving earth He'd made
And friends brought spices
and linen cloth
And laid Him in Joseph's tomb.
Come — see where He lay.

How did He feel,
This King of Kings,
Living a pauper's life
Leaving His footprints
On borrowed ground
In the world His hands had made?

Come — see where He lay.

“Train Up a Child”

Dan R. Owen

The ancient truism of Proverbs 22:6 gives the wisdom of childrearing in a nutshell. The word translated “train” means to cause someone to become accustomed to something. It involves practice, repetition, instruction, correction, example, and time doing things in specific ways. This kind of training causes one to be accustomed to the way of godliness so that he feels “right” when walking that familiar path in which he was trained and feel that something is “not right” if he veers from it, so that he tends to gravitate back to the familiar path. All parents have this challenge before them, but the training they give looks different in different stages of life. At all stages it demands our presence and our interest.

We train our babies by just mentioning the word “God” to them in contexts of love and when we identify created things. We also take them with us through the godly customs of prayer, worship, and Bible class so that they begin to experience this routine even when they don’t understand it.

For preschool and primary children, we train them by the regular routines of worship and Sunday school, along with regular routines of prayer at mealtime and bedtime, and continued conversation about God as He relates to the world around them. We train them with songs about God and simple Bible stories. We also praise them and tell them of God’s approval for good behavior and His disapproval for bad behavior.

For junior age or preteen kids, we train them by showering them with Bible stories, Bible facts, and Bible information. We continue in the routines of worship and Sunday school. We begin to show them and tell them how to pray on a more personal level and allow them to practice. We convey our spiritual expectations for them as they grow older, and we involve them with us in actual acts of service for the Lord. We begin to teach them to give to God. As we correct them, we talk to them about the “whys” of right behavior.

For adolescents, we must begin to take a different approach. We must work hard to maintain a talking relationship during a time at which they try

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to withdraw and become independent. We must give them more freedom along with very clear expectations and boundaries, and we must hold them accountable for their behavior. We must spend time with them, reassure them of our love, and tell them about our dreams for them. They must see a consistent example from us, hear us admit our wrongs and express repentance, and know that we are sincere in our attempt to walk with God.



Even in adulthood, we continue to have great influence over our children. We do this by being present in their lives, by conveying supportiveness for all that is good, and by helping where we can. Parents who have a positive relationship with adult children and provide a good and loving example of Christianity, have a very powerful influence in the lives of adult children. This influence is multiplied by loving grandparents as they love their children's children.

Parents should know that it is never over. As long as parents live, they can exert positive spiritual influence in their children's lives. What we tell our children is vital because the kingdom seed is the Word of God. But what they SEE in our lives at every stage will direct them as nothing else can. ✝

Dan R. Owen preaches for the Broadway Church of Christ in Paducah, Kentucky, USA.

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Husbands, Wives, and Children

Wayne Barrier

A model is provided in the Bible for some fundamental requirements of a Christian home. We certainly need some reliable and effective guidance in this area of life. Problems in the home and the family are resulting in masses of unhappy, dysfunctional, unhealthy men, women, and children in our society. Writers offer dozens of new books every year to address these problems. Schools are struggling to maintain order and produce educational results that should be easily achieved. Crime, violence, and gang activity negatively impact millions of people every year in our country. Millions of children struggle in homes overwhelmed by behavioral problems involving family members. Drug use and abuse is destroying masses of children and adults. Employee performance is marginal in almost every economic sector, because of worker absence, poor attitudes, inadequate skills, and poor quality job performance. Answers to these horrible problems are hard to find.

One of the root causes of many of these problems is the failed home in our society. A return to some simple, “old fashioned” basic teachings from the Bible could greatly change our homes for good. Consider the straightforward, easily-understood teaching of Paul in Ephesians 5 and 6. First, to wives he says in Ephesians 5:22-25, *“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is the head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.”* Also, Ephesians 5:33b states, *“...and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”* Additionally, Titus 2:3-5 reads, *“...older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things, that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands.”* These are very unpopular, old-fashioned, politically and socially incorrect concepts. They do not fit the present-day,

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humanistic model of a wife's role in the home. They are, however, words from our Creator, Sustainer, and ultimate Judge for eternity.

Next, we can read Paul's teachings to husbands as recorded in Ephesians 5:25-33a, which says,

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own body, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself..."

Again, these teachings are considered obsolete and backward by many modern experts and scholars. These scriptural words of instruction are from God, and they are not subject to human failure and weakness. God is all-knowing and wise.

The same text provides some basic teaching concerning children. Ephesians 6:1-4 states, *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise; that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth. And you fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in training and admonition of the Lord."*

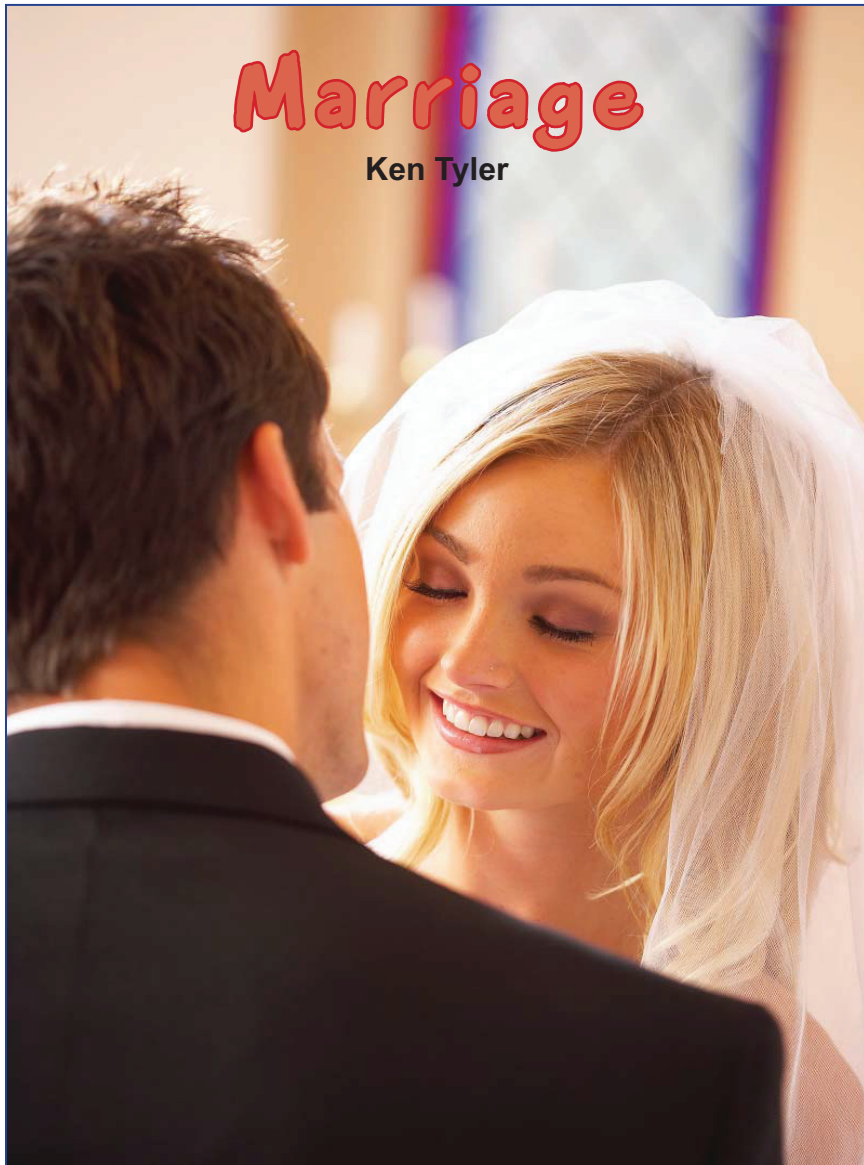
These instructions are simple and fundamental. We must respect God's model and plan for our homes if we hope to succeed in our marriages and childrearing. Much more is said in God's Word about this all-important area of life and Christianity. Study, and let God's Word guide you. 

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

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Marriage

Ken Tyler



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Marriage is a divine institution (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-24). When carried out according to God's plan, it is truly a beautiful relationship. As a matter of fact, in Ephesians 5:22-23 the husband and wife relationship is likened unto that of Christ to His bride, the church.

Marriage is beautiful, that is, unless it has been perverted. Sadly, we must say this to be the condition of so many marriages today. I'm sure you could give example after example of homes that are broken. We should be alarmed over the condition of the home and try to do something to help the situation.

M.F. McKnight defined marriage as "an agreement by which a man and woman consent to live together as husband and wife for the purpose of establishing a home, mutually accepting all of the responsibilities that the relationship involves and rightfully expecting all the privileges incident thereto."

All of us must realize that in God's plan marriage is "till death us do part." Listen carefully to Romans 7:2-3.

"For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then, if while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man."

We are told by Jesus in Matthew 19:6, ***"...What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."***

When two marry, it is to be until death parts them, and every couple must realize this before becoming husband and wife. Many enter into marriage as a trial-and-error proposition, and then, instead of trying to work out the problems that arise, they just simply say, "We are incompatible." They break off the relationship. Marriage is not to be taken lightly. We must wake up before divorce completely destroys the home and our nation. 

Ken Tyler is the preacher for the church of Christ in Arab, Alabama, USA.

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"Let Down Your Nets"

Gary C. Hampton

Jesus taught the multitudes from Peter's boat. He then commanded him, ***"Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."*** Peter answered, ***"Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing: nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net"*** (Luke 5:4-5). The resulting catch was large enough to fill and almost sink two boats.

There is a sense in which the Lord has told us to let down our nets in teaching. We need to begin with our own children in our own homes and in Bible classes. God told Israel:

"Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on you hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth." (Deuteronomy 11:18-21)

Christian fathers need to follow Paul's directive. ***"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord"*** (Ephesians 6:4).

Christ's followers must make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:46-48). We might be tempted to tell the Lord we have been ***"toiling all night and caught nothing."*** Such a response overlooks the real source of fruit produced by sowing the seed of the kingdom (1 Corinthians 3:6,7). The early church understood and, though persecuted and scattered, they ***"went everywhere preaching the Word"*** (Acts 8:4).

Let us resolve to teach our children and look for openings to teach others. ***"Let down your nets"*** and pray for the Lord to give us a bountiful catch. ✝

Gary C. Hampton preaches for the Siwell Road congregation in Jackson, Mississippi, USA.



5-MINUTE BIBLE STUDY

Paula Bates

The Lord Knows Me

1. "O Lord, You have searched me and _____ me. You know my sitting down and rising up; You understand my _____ afar off." Psalm 139:1,2
2. "But _____ knowing their thoughts, said, 'Why do you think _____ in your _____?'" Matthew 9:4
3. "But Jesus did not _____ himself to them, because He knew all _____, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He _____ what was in man." John 2:24, 25
4. "But I know your _____ place, your _____ out and your _____ in, and your rage against me." 2 Kings 19:27
5. "'But there are some of you who do not _____.' For Jesus knew from the _____ who they were who did not believe, and who would _____ him." John 6:64
6. "And they prayed and said, 'You, O Lord, who know the _____ of all, show which of these two You have _____.'" Acts 1:24



Answers:

1. Known, thought
2. Jesus, evil, hearts
3. Commit, men, knew
4. Dwelling, going, coming
5. Believe, beginning, betray
6. Hearts, chosen

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 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 our 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 that causes anyone to stumble. The thought was so terrible to Paul that he would not eat meat, 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, USA.

The Christian's Bank Note

Charles Cash



This Scripture has been referred to as the “Christian’s bank note”. It speaks of assurance, providence, and care!

The president of the Bank – “My God.” Paul could say “my God” because of his personal experience. It’s evident that there is a vast difference between knowing of someone and truly knowing that person. He is “my God” only when I am “His child”. I possess Him only when He possesses me. Note the possessive, personal pronouns throughout Scripture. In addition, all God promises to do for the world, for humanity, can be claimed by our own personal pronoun. **“For God so loved me that He gave His only begotten son...”** The God of heaven and earth is “my God”.

The Promise to Pay – “Shall Supply.” The word “supply” here is translated from the same word translated “full” in the previous verse. Our cup “runs over”. Paul said the same thing in a more emphatic way to the

TEXTUAL STUDIES

Ephesians when he wrote, ***“Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us”*** (3:20). What a wonderful reality! God will do immeasurably more than we can ever even dream of.

The amount – *“All Your Needs.”* Not all your wants, but all your needs. This calls for a joyous trust and confidence in God. Our needs, both spiritual and material, will be supplied. Do we really believe that? Has God not shown that to us time and time again? Jesus said, ***“Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?...If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will He not much more clothe you? O you of little faith. So do not worry...”*** (Matthew 6:26,30,31). “Trust me,” God is saying!

The Capital of the Bank – *“According to His Riches in Glory.”* There is never any capital shortage with God. His treasure house is as inexhaustible and boundless as His infinite love and grace. The words ***“rich”*** and ***“riches”*** appear six times in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians: ***“In Him we have...the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that He lavished on us...”*** (1:7,8), ***“the riches of His glorious inheritance...”*** (1:18), ***“God, who is rich in mercy...”*** (2:4), ***“the incomparable riches of His grace...”*** (2:7), ***“the unsearchable riches of Christ...”*** (3:8), and ***“I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being”*** (3:16). Oh, what riches God has for us.

The Cashier’s Name – *“Christ Jesus.”* Through Jesus, our Savior, these great and inexhaustible blessings flow. All blessings come through Christ Jesus, through our union with Him! ***“For no matter how many promises God has made, they are ‘yes’ in Christ. And so through Him the ‘Amen’ is spoken by us to the glory of God”*** (2 Corinthians 1:20).

No wonder Paul broke forth in the ascription of praise, ***“Unto our God and Father be the glory for ever and ever. Amen”*** (Philippians 4:20). 

Charles Cash works with the Bella Vista Church of Christ in Bella Vista, Arkansas, USA.

TEXTUAL STUDIES

We Are Priests

Dwight Fuqua

Christians are disciples. Christians are sheep. Christians are epistles. Christians are workers. According to the New Testament, Christians are many things. These descriptions provide insight into our relationships and roles. In this study we want to explore the fact that Christians are priests. Consider these thoughts:

First, we are **“a holy priesthood”**. Peter wrote, **“...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 2:5). As God’s priests, we are **“holy”**. Thayer says that this word (hagios) means “set apart for God, to be, as it were, exclusively his.”

Second, we are **“a royal priesthood.”** Peter wrote, **“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”** (1 Peter 2:9). “Royal” (basileios) suggests that which pertains to a king. We are priests of **“the King of kings.”**

Third, these passages identify what we do as priests. We **“offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ”** (verse 5). Your role as God’s priest is to **“proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”** (verse (9)).

Fourth, we do not become priests and we are not priests by our own merit. Christ **“loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father”** (Revelation 1:5,6). John then added, **“to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever.”** We praise Him because He **“made us kings and priests to our God”** (Revelation 5:10).

Those who exalt some men above others, i.e. the clergy-laity system, have failed to realize that every Christian is a priest! Those who do not **“offer up spiritual sacrifices”** and who do not **“proclaim the praises”** of God are failing to fulfill their role as priests!

Brothers and sisters, we are priests!



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



Scavenger Hunt

through Judges

Rebecca Rushmore

(Answers inside back cover)

1. How many kings, with their thumbs and big toes cut off, gathered scraps under the table of King Adoni-Bezek?
2. How old was Joshua when he died?
3. Name the two false gods the children of Israel worshiped in Canaan.
4. Who killed Sisera, the commander of the army of the king of Canaan? How?
5. What name was Gideon given after he tore down an altar to Baal?
6. What did Jephthah vow to offer as a burnt sacrifice on his return from battle?
7. Name the father of Samson.
8. How many foxes did Samson use to burn the land of the Philistines?
9. Name the god of the Philistines.
10. About how many Philistine men and women were killed when Samson collapsed their temple?

Mnason, an Old Disciple

Hershel Dyer

Mnason was an “*old disciple*” who travelled with Paul and his companions from Caesarea to Jerusalem (Acts 21:16). As indicated in the reference, Paul and his friends lodged with Mnason when they arrived at Jerusalem.

Whether Mnason was old in years or just one who had been a longtime disciple is uncertain. The Greek text may be construed either way. Suffice it to say that Mnason, though mentioned only once, must be typical of many whom we have known.

For one thing, he loved those who preached and labored to spread the Gospel of Christ. Paul, Luke and the others with them were men ready to suffer reproach, and even death, in order to get the Gospel to the lost.

He was also ready to open the doors of his home to such persons. To lodge and feed those who went about spreading the Word must have been a joy to him.

What rare privileges Mnason enjoyed! To have a home in Jerusalem at the time when the apostles and other inspired men were there; to hear Paul and the others tell those marvelous accounts of conversion, some of which are recorded in the book of Acts.

Although we today have not the presence of apostles and prophets, we do have the opportunity to serve as men did in those days. We can love the Gospel and its spread just as much; we can show our hospitality to the friends and servants of Christ with equal readiness.

We have some modern “Mnasons,” both men and women! To know them is one of the joys of my life. 

Hershel Dyer is a Gospel preacher living in Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA.

***“Be hospitable to one another
without grumbling” (1 Peter 4:9)***

BIBLE CHARACTERS

Do You Know His Father?

John Gipson

Every Bible student knows Samuel. He was the answer to his mother's prayer and vow. Hannah promised that if God would give her a son that she would dedicate him to the Lord all of his life, and what a man of God he became! He was the first of the prophets and was considered in Old Testament times to be the greatest figure since Moses (Jeremiah 15:1).

Samuel's mother, Hannah, is well-known to all of us, but do you know his father? What was his name? What kind of man was he?

He loved his wife. He could truthfully say to Hannah, *"Am I not more to you than ten sons?"* That's the kind of husband every wife should have, according to the New Testament. *"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her"* (Ephesians 5:25).

He led his family in worshiping God. *"Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship..."* (1 Samuel 1:3). He worshiped where God said to worship and in the manner prescribed by God. And, he took his family with him! None other than Jesus emphasized, *"It is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.'"* The father of Samuel kept this great commandment and set an example for the rest of the family.

When he worshiped, he gave offerings to God. *"Now this man used to go up year by year from his city to worship and to sacrifice to the LORD of hosts at Shiloh, where the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were priests of the LORD."* Worship and sacrifice go hand in hand in serving God. Now Hophni and Phinehas, even though priests, were corrupt men, as Chapter 1 of 1 Samuel shows. Samuel's father could have said, "I'm not about to contribute as long as these worthless men are priests," but he didn't. He knew he wasn't offering to these men, but to the Lord of hosts!

Samuel's father's name was Elkanah. He was a man who knew what a father ought to be. Let me urge each father to follow in his footsteps. It will bless your family! 

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

BIBLE CHARACTERS

Stephen

Jack Harriman

Stephen was one of seven men appointed to take care of a certain group of widows who were being neglected. He became a powerful miracle worker, preacher, and defender of the faith. We remember him best as the first Christian to die for the faith. His account is told in Acts 6 and 7.

Only recently did I see the greatness of this man as Luke presents him in Chapter 6. He is said to be a man full of faith (v. 5), full of the Holy Spirit (v. 5), full of wisdom (v. 3,10), full of grace (v. 8), full of power (v. 8), and full of light (v. 15). From Chapter 7, three more can be added. He was full of the Scripture, full of courage, and full of love.

Alexander Whyte said of Stephen:

In the stoning of Stephen there was lost to the church another apostle Paul. Stephen was a young man of such original genius and such special grace that there was nothing he might not have attained to had he been allowed to live. His wonderful openness of mind; his perfect freedom from all the prejudices and superstitions of his day; his courage; his eloquence; his spotless character with a certain sweet and, at the same time, majestic manner; combined to set Stephen in the very front rank, both of service and of risk. In all these things, and especially in the openness, receptiveness, and ripeness of his mind, Stephen far outstripped even such pillar apostles as Peter and James and John themselves... All of these things made Stephen the foremost man of his day, and, as a consequence, the first man to be struck at and struck down.

And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not charge them with this sin.' And when he had said this, he fell asleep" (Acts 7:59,60). 

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

Is the Sabbath the Day Christians Should Observe?

Maxie B. Boren

A rather significant number of people in the denominational world believe the Sabbath day is to be observed by the followers of Christ. So adamant are they in their view on the matter that the largest group of those so believing call themselves “Seventh Day Adventists”. But is their position true? What does the Bible teach on the subject?

The first mention of the seventh day, later designated “the Sabbath”, is in Genesis 2:1-3. There, as the context clearly indicates, the “seventh day” was the day God rested from His creation work, and to “rest” is essentially what the word “Sabbath” means. While verse 3 informs us that God blessed that day and sanctified it, there is nothing in the verse to indicate any man was instructed by Him to start observing it at that time in history as a religious holy day. This is as an important point to note: **In the context of the passage under consideration, the observance of the seventh day was not enjoined upon anyone.**

The seventh day of the week was first called “*the holy Sabbath unto the Lord*” in the context of Exodus 16:23-30, in conjunction with instructions God gave to the children of Israel pertaining to the gathering of manna while they were in the wilderness after exiting Egypt. Again, nothing in the context there taught a religious observance of the day, except they were to gather the manna for six days and then rest on the seventh day.

But in Exodus 20:8-11, in the law God gave through Moses to the people of Israel, it was indeed made binding on them to sanctify and keep the Sabbath day in remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:2-6,13-16). Yet I’ve never known a “Sabbath day” advocate in modern times that embraces that facet of the old law. Why not? If one is going to insist upon “Sabbath day” observance, then the law given to Moses regarding it should be followed!

BIBLE QUESTIONS

When the Pharisees called Jesus in question about His disciples plucking grain on the Sabbath, the Savior concluded His response to them by saying, ***“The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath”*** (Mark 2:23-28). And what did Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath, purpose to do about the whole law given through Moses, of which the Sabbath was a part? He came to ***fulfill*** the law (Matthew 5:17), and He did so (Luke 24:44,45)! Thus, the New Testament is replete with Scriptures that teach the Law of Moses was fulfilled, taken out of the way and ***“nailed to the cross”***. (Read carefully and thoughtfully Colossians 2:8-17; Galatians 3:10-29; 4:21-31; 5:1-5; Hebrews 7:11 through 10:18; 12:18-28; Romans 3:20-27; 7:1 through 8:4; 10:1-4; Ephesians 2:11-18; Acts 15:1-11; and 2 Corinthians 3:1-18.) There is no way an honest seeker of truth can read the above passages and still take the position that Christians are “bound” by the law given through Moses. And remember, the observance of the Sabbath is tied to that law.

No one today is under the Law of Moses, which includes the observance of the Sabbath, though many may think so. The Gentiles were never commanded to keep “the Sabbath”. It was a law given to Israel only, until Christ came (read Galatians 3:16-19,23-25). When He came, He fulfilled the Old Law and established His law...the New Covenant. All men, both Jews and Gentiles, today, are amenable to the law of Christ, whether they accept that fact or not (Matthew 28:18; John 17:2a; Acts 2:36; 17:31; etc.) The law of Christ does not include any command or instruction for Christians to observe the seventh day. Christ arose from the dead on the *first day* of the week (Matthew 28:1ff; Mark 16:1ff; Luke 24:1ff; John 20:1ff). The church was established on Pentecost, which always came on the *first day* of the week (see Acts 2; and Leviticus 23:15-16 wherein Pentecost is the subject). The early church assembled on that day (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2). The vast majority of scholars concur that is the day referred to as ***“the Lord’s day”*** in Revelation 1:10. Apart from the sacred record of the Bible, which should be sufficient for any honest seeker of truth, secular history pertaining to “Christianity” shows beyond question that the day observed from the first century A.D. even to the present was “the first day” of the week, not “the seventh.”

BIBLE QUESTIONS

Further, it is fallacious to refer to “the first day of the week” as the “Christian Sabbath”. Neither such terminology nor idea is found in the New Testament. We believe in ***“speaking where the Bible speaks and being silent where the Bible is silent.”*** Peter wrote, ***“If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God”*** (1 Peter 4:11). And since the Word of God does not include either the terminology or the concept of “the Christian Sabbath”, let us not use such an expression.

We need to bear in mind that the seven day “week” is biblical, but the “naming” of the seven days of the week is not. Though much is lost in antiquity concerning the origin of the days’ names, most scholars believe these designations were taken from the planets. Sunday is a prime example. Many pagans worshipped the sun, and undoubtedly selected one of the days to be so designated. “The names given to the days from the planets, which came into common use in the first pre-Christian century, were avoided by the Christians... language of the church avoided the names derived from the planets... and the use of numerals was constant” (*The New Schaff Herzog Encyclopedia Of Religious Knowledge*, 283,284). Thus, even today, “the first day of the week” should be preferred among us instead of “Sunday”. But because the vast majority of people use the “names” of the days instead of the “numerals”, it is extremely difficult for us not to do the same in order to be understood in conversing with people. Life in the present day and age almost necessitates that we go along with what has been so universally established through the centuries as “the name of the day”. As long as we understand it as simply a designation to specify “the first day of the week” and attach no pagan significance to it as a “SUN worship day”, then I suppose there is no real harm done. ✝

Maxie B. Boren is a Gospel preacher and serves as an elder in the Brown Trail church of Christ in Bedford, Texas, USA.

*No one today is under the Law of Moses,
which includes the observance of the Sabbath.*

BIBLE QUESTIONS

Can We as Christians Today Really KNOW that We Are in a Saved Condition?

Dean Fugett

Jesus said, ***“If you continue in my word, then are you my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31,32). Then He adds, “If the Son makes you free, then are you free indeed!” (John 8:36).*** In these passages Jesus says that there is a body of knowledge known as “truth”, that this truth is knowable, and that this knowledge produces freedom when appropriated. The context reveals that this freedom is freedom from sin. In verse 34, Jesus had said, ***“...Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.”*** He then made the statement that if the Son makes one free, he is free indeed! Therefore, we know that He is speaking of freedom from sin. Freedom from sin is freedom to be righteous. Note Paul’s comments from Romans 6:16-18: ***“Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that 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.”***

In John 17:3, Jesus said, ***“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”*** To help us understand what it means to “know” God, John gives this statement in 1 John 2:3-5: ***“By this we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that says, ‘I know him,’ and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But, whoever keeps his word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in him.”*** If we can know anything, we can know God’s will for our salvation. So said Jesus! We can also keep His commandments. ***“If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15).*** If we keep His commandments, we are saved and safe! Anyone can know if he is keeping the commandments of God, just as he can know if he is obeying the laws of the land, just as he can know the rules of any game.

BIBLE QUESTIONS

We can also know that if we are not keeping His commandments, we are not in Him, and we are not His. The doctrine that there is nothing that we can do that will endanger our eternal salvation and hope of heaven is a pernicious and damnable doctrine. It is of the devil and not from the Son. Don't let anyone deceive you with such false teaching. †

Dean Fugett preaches for the church of Christ in Cave City, Arkansas, USA.

How is Baptism an Identification with the Death of Jesus?

Louis Rushmore

New Testament passages provide a clear answer for this question. Especially two passages enlighten us about the relationship of baptism to the death of our Lord.

“...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. For he who has died has been freed from sin. Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.” (Romans 6:3-8 NKJV; see also Colossians 2:12).

Baptism places one into the likeness of the death of Christ. We also imitate the resurrection of our Lord as we arise from the watery grave of baptism. He walked anew in physical life, while baptized believers walk anew in spiritual life. Baptized believers leave their past sins (Romans 3:25) in the spiritual grave of baptism. One cannot live for Christ until he has united with Christ in His death through baptism.

No wonder other passages throughout the New Testament emphasize that salvation (from past sins) occurs at the point of baptism. Honestly and thoughtfully read these following passages: Mark 16:16 ; Acts 2:38; 22:16.

Notice also, ***“There is also an antitype which now saves us — baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”*** (1 Peter 3:21). Bible baptism (immersion) may appear to the uninformed to be a bath, for the cleansing of the body, but Bible baptism has as its purpose the cleansing of the soul from sin. It does that by uniting one spiritually with Jesus Christ in His death, which is where He shed His sin-cleansing blood (John 19:34; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 1:7). †

BIBLE QUESTIONS

How Does God Answer Prayers?

Dennis Gulleddge



The Bible says, ***“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him”*** (1 John 5:14-15). Also, ***“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much”*** (James 5:16).

God answers the prayers of His spiritual family. This does not mean that He answers them all the same way, nor in the way that we might expect. First, sometimes He answers

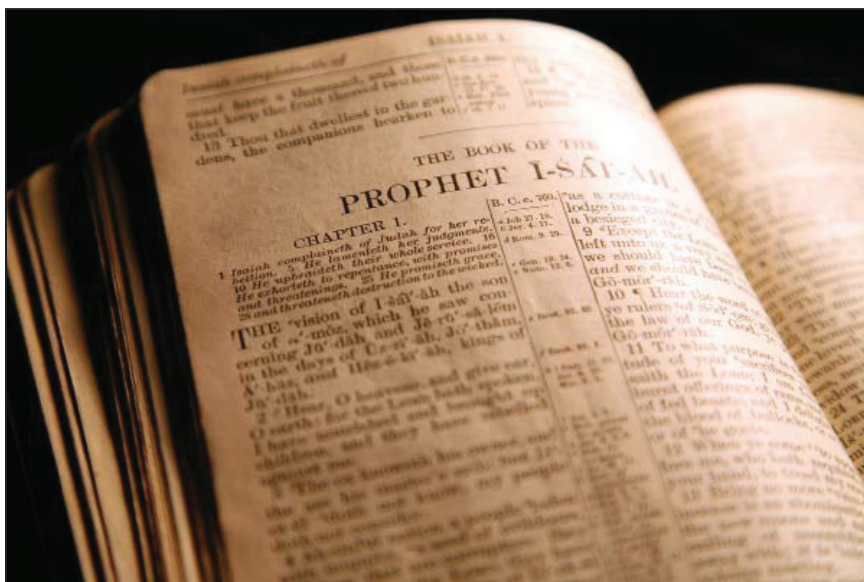
“yes” to our requests, as in the case of Peter’s prayer from prison (Acts 12:5-12). Second, God sometimes answers “no”. The “no” is just as much of an answer to a prayer as is a “yes”. In Deuteronomy 3:23-35, Moses asked God to allow him entrance into the land of promise. God denied him. Centuries later Moses, in spirit, along with Elijah appeared with Jesus to discuss His approaching crucifixion (Matthew 17:3). So, God’s answer of “no” to our prayers may mean that He has something better in store for us. Finally, God in His own infinite wisdom may see fit to delay answering our prayers. The classic case is that of Job, whose prayers received a long-delayed answer. Job made his impassioned petitions to God, but he did not realize that God had a purpose in mind (Job 2:4-6). 

Dennis Gulleddge preaches for the church of Christ in Mabelvale, Arkansas, USA.

“A Fresh Look”

Isaiah 6:1-8

Bobby Dockery



Introduction:

- A. The year King Uzziah died was a year of crisis in the ministry of Isaiah. He had been preaching long enough to become disillusioned.
- B. On the top of his personal anxieties, national calamity struck. King Uzziah died — not in his palace, but in a leper house.
- C. In grief and discouragement, Isaiah sought the presence of God. He was renewed by the fresh look he had at the majesty of God.

Body:

I. A FRESH LOOK AT GOD (vss. 1-4).

- A. The God whom Isaiah saw was a God of indescribable power.

CHARTS & OUTLINES

- B. Isaiah suggests God's power by describing two things:
 - 1. The hem of God's robe (Exodus 28:33,34; Psalm 104:1,2)
 - 2. The Seraphim above God's throne (Hebrews 12:28,29; Psalm 89:7)

II. A FRESH LOOK AT CIRCUMSTANCES.

- A. The year king Uzziah died was a dark, unsettled time. He had ruled for 52 years — a time of prosperity and stability. The future was uncertain.
- B. We face uncertain times of our own:
 - 1. The ominous specter of world terrorism.
 - 2. The worrisome condition of the world economy.
 - 3. The festering corruption of modern culture.
- C. How should we react? With trust in God (Romans 8:31-39)!

III. A FRESH LOOK AT OURSELVES (vs. 5).

- A. ***"Woe is me!"*** Isaiah knew he was a sinner who could not hide from God.
- B. In recognizing his sin, he acknowledged his need for God.

IV. IV. A FRESH LOOK AT FORGIVENESS (vss. 6,7).

- A. Isaiah was deeply conscious of his guilt.
- B. But God's grace was great enough for his sin (Romans 5:8.)

V. V. A FRESH LOOK AT OUR MISSION (vs. 8).

- A. Isaiah realized he was a debtor — that he had a job to do! ***"Here am I send me!"***
- B. People had to be told; the good news had to be shared (Romans 1:14,15; Matthew 28:19,20).

Conclusion: At times we may become wearied by the struggle and tempted to lose heart. At such times we need to take a fresh look at the Savior!✝

Bobby Dockery is a writer and preacher living in Fayetteville, Arkansas, USA, and has been heavily involved in mission work for many years.

***"I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name;
You are Mine (Isaiah 49:1).***

CHARTS & OUTLINES



The Goodness of God

Romans 2:4

Mark N. Posey

Introduction:

Considered honestly, the goodness of God should melt our hearts (Romans 2:4). God has been so good to us when we possessed no goodness, needing His mercy. He loves, cares, and provides for us, even though we go against His revealed will. He is our Father in the truest sense of the term. Since God is so benevolent, should we not give Him our best? Should we not investigate His Word, obey His commands, share His love, and long for His company in heaven? I am sure all would agree! Therefore, as we daily prepare for eternity, let us consider some of the blessings He has given us this side of eternity.

1. **Jesus.** Paul was deeply appreciative for Jesus. He said, ***“Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift.”*** The word ***“gave”*** found in John

CHARTS & OUTLINES

3:16, identifies the greatest gift ever given. God **“gave”** (John 3:16) that the world might **“receive”** Jesus (Colossians 2:6); Jesus died (1 Corinthians 15:3) that the world might live (John 20:31). Jesus is the greatest gift ever known to mankind.

2. **Bible.** The Bible is the greatest book in existence because it is from the mind of God (2 Timothy 3:16). Its very name “Holy Bible” means “The Book.” Many have tried to destroy it; however, it has always endured. Skeptics have fought against it, and yet they have been forced to admit its wonderful impact upon humanity. Isaiah declared, ***“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand forever”*** (Isaiah 40:8). Thank God for His Word!

3. **Grace.** God’s grace is freely bestowed (Romans 3:24) and universally available to humanity (Titus 2:11). It brings salvation (Titus 2:11; Ephesians 2:8), but must be **“received”** (2 Corinthians 6:1) through **“faith”** (Ephesians 2:8). Grace is not some unconditional blanket God has thrown on the human race to tolerate anything or everything man might do! It’s a blessing from God to every single sinner who wills to partake of it and be saved by obeying the whole counsel of God.

4. **Church.** The church of Jesus Christ is the greatest institution in existence. It was founded by Christ (Matthew 16:18) in Jerusalem (Acts 2:5) in the year A.D. 33. Christ is its Head (Ephesians 1:22) and its Savior (Ephesians 5:23). The church wears the name of Christ (Romans 16:16). Its members wear His name (Ephesians 3:15; James 2:7). Its rule of faith and practice is the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17), and it strives daily to save lost souls (2 Timothy 2:2). You must be a member of Christ’s church to go to heaven (1 Corinthians 15:24). Thank God for the church of Jesus Christ.

5. **Hope.** The Christian’s only hope is heaven (Ephesians 4:4). Peter declared, ***“...be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you”*** (1 Peter 3:15). There can be no hope for those outside of Jesus (1 Thessalonians 4:13; Ephesians 2:12). However, for those in Christ, going to heaven is a **“living hope”** (1 Peter 1:3-4). 

Mark N. Posey preaches for the Austinville congregation of Christ’s church in Decatur, Alabama, USA.

... Family Pictures from the Life of Jesus ...

Brad Choate

Let us look at the motherhood story we read about with Mary and some of **the family pictures** we are shown in that story. Now some would elevate Mary herself to almost Deity, but we know that she was very humble, a servant of God. But she was blessed by God and bore Jesus into the world.

Less Than Ideal

Our first family photo is a birth photo, taken in a stable in Bethlehem: ***So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them*** (Luke 2:4–7).

Not everything goes according to plan with childbirth, and not even for Jesus. Yes, the prophecy was that He would be born in Bethlehem, but I'm sure Joseph and Mary never dreamed that their "hospital room" would be a stable!

At the Temple

Now we see a rare family photo of Jesus' childhood. He's at the temple,



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amazing the rabbis there. He's just been found again by a very distraught Mary, concerned for her Son. Joseph and Mary look pretty tired here, having travelled all the way back to the temple, but relieved to have found Him.

"His mother said to Him, 'Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.' And He said to them, 'Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?'" (Luke 2:48,49).



Wedding

We're now looking at a family photo of Jesus at the wedding in Cana. Jesus is the obedient son here, turning the water to wine at His mother's urging.

"His mother said to the servants, 'Whatever He says to you, do it.' Now there were set there six waterpots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews, containing twenty or thirty gallons apiece. Jesus said to them, 'Fill the waterpots with water.' And they filled them up to the brim. And He said to them, 'Draw some out now, and take it to the master of the feast.' And they took it. When the master of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and did

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not know where it came from (but the servants who had drawn the water knew), the master of the feast called the bridegroom. And he said to him, 'Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now!' This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciples believed in Him" (John 2:5-11).



Jesus Had a BIG Family!

Now, maybe Joseph and Mary were a little naïve and perhaps spoiled by their firstborn being perfect and all, because they went on to have a very big family! A fuzzy family photo is captured in the Gospel of Matthew.

"Coming to his home-town, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. 'Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?' they asked. 'Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?'" (Matthew 13:54-56)



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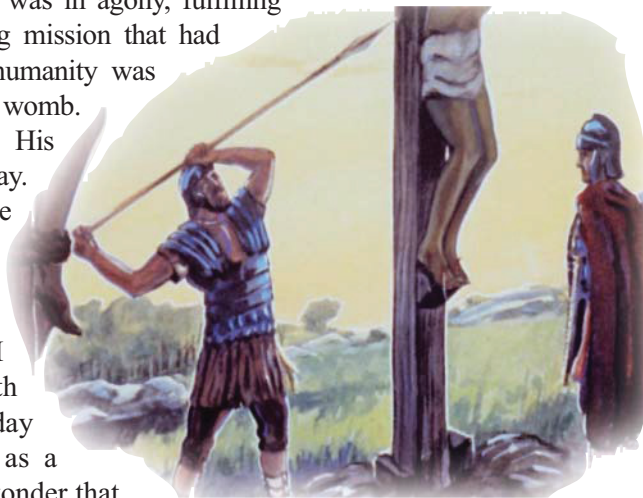
So, Jesus had at least 6 siblings by this account! Joseph must have been a very good carpenter or maybe this is why Jesus didn't have many material possessions! But Jesus loved children as we read about in His ministry. He had a lot of children around Him growing up!

Widow?

Joseph's story seems to end early in Jesus' life. Some believe He may have died prematurely. In any case, Jesus shows His love and concern for His mother, and provides for her, even as He faces death:

"Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, 'Woman, here is your son,' and to the disciple, 'Here is your mother.' From that time on, this disciple took her into his home" (John 19:25-27).

This family picture is one of the most touching and heart-breaking to me, because here we see that Mary — His mother — was present at the cross. Any parent knows that a child is an extension of yourself. A parent feels everything the child does — the joys and the pains of life. Mary was there as Jesus was in agony, fulfilling this earthly lifelong mission that had begun when His humanity was formed in her womb. She experienced His crucifixion that day. It's fitting that she was there, but what strength she must have had to endure this! I wonder if her faith was shaken that day as Peter's was... as a parent, I have to wonder that.



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But I believe, good Son that Jesus was, that He had revealed His plan to her, and that she was there to witness death being swallowed by victory. What a range of emotion she must have experienced in the course of three days, between His crucifixion and His resurrection!

Pentecost

Following Jesus' burial, resurrection, and ascension to Heaven, we get another family picture, taken on the day of Pentecost: ***Then the apostles***



returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and

Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers (Acts 1:12–14).

It's possible Mary was present to witness Jesus' ascension to Heaven, although she isn't specifically named. Mary was with the 120 disciples as they met together in the upper room and it is possible she was present when the Holy Spirit was given to the Apostles. I imagine she was present at every opportunity to see her triumphant Son and the fulfillment of His mission on earth.

His Extended Family

There's one last picture here, but it hasn't been taken yet. See, Jesus may have had a big physical family, but it is dwarfed by His spiritual family:

"Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. Then he

FROM THE HEART OF

looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother” (Mark 3:31–35).

We are in this photo. There are millions of us and perhaps millions more to come. And now, we sit here today to fellowship around a table, with a meal prepared for us. Just like a family does. We will remember our Brother and His sacrifice for us. The cost of it. The gift it bought, given freely to us. We will think of the homecoming we will have one day, as we return home to a Heavenly Father and to a big Brother; the carpenter who has prepared a house for us.



“...on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread...” (Acts 20:7)

On this day, Christians all over the world come together as a church to remember the Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection. In Matthew 18:20, Jesus promised, ***“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”***

Looking back to the beginning of this memorial, we read in Matt. 26:26-28: ***“...Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom” .***

FROM THE HEART OF

Prayer for the bread

Our Father in heaven, You are so gracious to us, to welcome us into Your family, to adopt us, to redeem us, to forgive us. We are unworthy of such love. But as a Father who loves His children, You forgive our wrongs and we are humbled. We thank You for the sacrifice of Your Son, and the death of His body that this bread represents. Bless it as we partake of it together, now in remembrance of Him and in His name. Amen.



Prayer for the cup

Our Father in heaven, thank You for this cup and the blood of Jesus that it represents, the blood that cleanses us of our sin and restores us to You. We are made spiritual brothers and sisters through it and we are grateful for it. Bless this cup as we partake of it together, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayer for the offering

We are called to be a family, and family takes care of one another. We are called to provide to those in need, and the church does that through the efforts of many volunteers among us, through the faithful donations you provide. These things are used in faith to further God's kingdom in this community. Thank you for your help in making this possible. Please bow with me as we pray for the offering.

Our Father in heaven. We ask that You bless the offering we make today; that it is used first to bring others to Christ; that it will bring food to the hungry and clothing to the naked; that it will be fruitful and multiply and give us the tools to magnify Your light; and that we will grow Your family in this place and abroad. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. 

Brad Choate is the son of J.C. Choate and a deacon in the Tri-Valley Church of Christ in Livermore, California, U.S.A.

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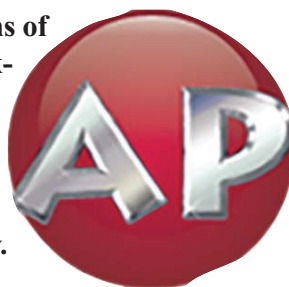


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ANSWERS TO PUZZLES

Verse Search (from page 34)

1. Sexual immorality; a man had his father's wife.
2. They were puffed up. They should have mourned.
3. Absent, present
4. Deliver them to Satan
5. Leaven
6. Leaven, whole
7. Christ
8. Sincerity and truth
9. Do not keep company or eat with them
10. Covetous, idolater, reviler, drunkard or extortioner
11. We are not to be judges of those outside the body.
12. God

Bible Find (from page 41)



Scavenger Hunt (from page 88)

Answers:

- | | | | |
|--|---------|--|--------------|
| 1. 70; | 1:7 | 5. Jerubbaal | 6:28-32, 7:1 |
| 2. 110; | 2:8 | 6. whatever came out of the house to greet him | 11:30-31 |
| 3. Baal, the Ashtoreths | 2:11-13 | 7. Manoah | 13:1-24 |
| 4. Jael; drove a tent peg through his temple while he was sleeping | 4:17-22 | 8. 300 | 15:3-5 |
| | | 9. Dagon | 16:23 |
| | | 10. 3000 | 16:25-30 |

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

The Scars in the Hands of Jesus

Words and Music by Marijohn Wilkin (*Songs of Faith and Praise*)

**My eyes haven't seen, nor have my ears heard
What my Father has in store;
But when I hear the song of a sweet singing bird,
I'm closer than I've been before
To that heavenly home,
Built by God alone,
According to His perfect plan,
Where the only thing there that's been made by man
Are the scars in the hands of Jesus.**

Refrain:

**Yes, I'm headed for a home,
Built by God alone;
Hallelujah! Praise the Lord, I am!
Where the only thing there that's been made by man
Are the scars in the hands of Jesus.**

**When I see a mountain covered with snow
That's fallen from heaven above,
It makes me feel small,
Hardly nothing at all,
To know I'll be a part of that mansion world
Where the gates of pearl
Are opened by an angel band,
And the only thing there that's been made by man
Are the scars in the hands of Jesus.**

Cover: a crown of thorns from Jerusalem and a replica of a Roman spike used in crucifixions.