Volume Ninety-Nine

The Voice of Truth International

Helping the Blind to See!

What Makes a Nation Great?

Alexander Blackburn (1844-1921)

Not serried ranks with flags unfurled,

Not armored ships that gird the world,

Not hoarded wealth nor busy mills,

Not sages wise, nor schools nor laws,

Not boasted deeds in freedom's cause–

All these may be, and yet the state

In the eye of God be far from great.

That land is great which knows the Lord,

Whose songs are guided by His Word;

Where justice rules twixt man and man,

Where love controls in art and plan;

Where, breathing in his native air,

Each soul finds joy in praise and prayer–

Thus, may our country, good and great,

Be God's delight–man's best estate.

Jesus said:

Upon this rock I will build my...

A. Church — Mat. 16:18

B. Churches — Eph. 5:25

C. Denominations — Eph. 5:32

D. Church of your choice — Act. 12:1

Main chart idea and design by Paul Mays, Roanoke, VA. Chart prepared for VOTI by Robert C. Lupo, Sneedville, TN

Freedom From Bondage
1 Corinthians 10:1-12

Exo. 1:8-14 | **1Co. 10:1-2** | **1Co. 10:3-5**

John 8:34 | **Rom. 6:1-6** | **1Co. 10:6-12**

Heb. 2:3 (No Escape If Neglect God's Salvation)
Rom. 6:15-18 (Obey, Freed, Servant of Righteousness)
Rev. 22:14 (Blessed Are They That Wash Their Robes)

Jno. 3:3-5 (Born of Water/Spirit or Truth - Jam. 1:18)
Acts 2:41, 47 (Believe, Baptized, Added to the Church)
Heb. 3:7-4:11 (Warning—Falling Away Possible... Rest Remains For Faithful)

Chart by Robert C. Lupo, Sneedville, TN

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

Please, Baptize Me!

Louis Rushmore

Without the companions of **conviction** and **conversion**, true redemption or salvation remains elusive. *Firm conviction* and *authentic conversion* will lead a person to obey the Gospel even when it may be inconvenient or dangerous to do so.

Zealous disciples of Jesus Christ **left something on purpose**—a worldly lifestyle, a family religion, maybe even family or possibly a vocation. ***"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me"*** (Matthew 10:37-38 NKJV). The apostles left even honorable occupations (e.g., fishing) to more effectively devote themselves to fulltime service in the ministry of our Lord. What the apostle Paul suffered illustrates the extent to which conviction and conversion can manifest itself in unmitigated Christian zeal. ***"But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ"*** (Philippians 3:7-8). Much earlier, the apostle Peter contemplated the sacrifice that he and the other apostles were experiencing in the face of conviction regarding and conversion to the Christ.

> ***Then Peter answered and said to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?" So Je-***

sus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life." (Matthew 19:27-29)

Many are the militant Christians from the first century after the establishment of the Lord's church through the present who demonstrate **in their daily lives**—without apology—the effect of their **conviction and conversion**.

Zealous disciples of Jesus Christ **adamantly refuse to go back** to their former ways outside of Christ (Ephesians 2:12). ***"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"*** (Romans 6:1-2). ***"How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him"*** (Hebrews 2:3). ***"But Jesus said to him, 'No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God'"*** (Luke 9:62). Soldiers of Christ (2 Timothy 2:3), sheathed in the Gospel armor (Ephesians 6:10-17), boldly and steadily march forward with the Captain of their salvation (Hebrews 2:10) into the thickest and most heated spiritual war (2 Corinthians 10:4-5; 1 Timothy 1:18). The Gospel armor provides no protection for the back; retreat simply is not an option. We will overcome with the Lamb of God (Revelation 17:14).

Zealous disciples of Jesus Christ are **determined to be Christians only**—nothing more and nothing less! They cannot be bribed to be otherwise, and neither can they be dissuaded from their conviction and conversion by persecution of any sort and to any degree.

But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. "And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled." But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good

conduct in Christ may be ashamed. For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. (1 Peter 3:14-17)

"Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter" (1 Peter 4:16). Militant disciples of Christ are determined to be Christians no matter what the world may inflict upon them—even death (Revelation 2:10).

How, though, does a person become such a one who is willing to leave his or her former ways **on purpose**, even if it is inconvenient? Further, how does one arrive at the determination that he or she **will not go back** to the way things were? What leads a man or a woman to become a Christian—**a Christian only**—nothing more and nothing less? Upon becoming acquainted with the pure Gospel of Christ, a soul's response—**conviction and conversion**—results in salvation and active service (John 15:8; James 4:17; Romans 2:13) of our Lord Jesus Christ. ***"But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves"*** (James 1:22).

In Acts 2 on the birthday of the church, preaching the Gospel ***"cut to the heart"*** (v. 37) about 3,000 souls (v. 41). They inquired, ***"What shall we do?"*** (v. 37). The apostle Peter responded in the next verse, ***"…Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins…"*** Hence, they were baptized and consequently added to the church by our Lord (v. 47). The point here for our consideration is that these people's response to the Gospel was ***conviction*** and ***conversion***. They were proactive and desired to be saved from their sins because they possessed conviction and conversion. Later, in Acts 8, the Ethiopian treasurer was proactive in his own salvation as well. Upon being acquainted with the Gospel of Christ by Philip, he evidenced ***conviction*** leading to his ***conversion*** when he asked to be baptized (v. 36).

Rather than asking or even begging someone to be baptized for the remission of their sins, it is a wonderful thing when someone essentially says, **"Please, baptize me!"** Earnest ***conviction*** and ***conversion*** that results from one's response to the Gospel of Christ resembles the ***"good ground"*** of the Parable of the Soils or the Sower (Matthew 13:8). ***"But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty"*** (Matthew 13:23). Without *firm conviction* and *authentic conversion*, though immersed (Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12), souls will fall away and be lost (2 Peter 2:20-22)—resembling the ***"stony places"*** and ***"thorns"*** in our Lord's parable (Matthew 13:5-7). If percentages can legitimately be extrapolated from the Parable of the Soils, at best, only a third of those who respond favorably to the Gospel—as a result of unwavering conviction upon which they base their conversion—are reliable Christians upon whom our Lord can depend.

Brethren, please examine your personal conviction and conversion (2 Corinthians 13:5). Furthermore, Brethren, please try to instill firm conviction and authentic conversion in those to whom you take the Gospel of Christ. **Without the companions of conviction and conversion, true redemption or salvation remains elusive.**

Passing On Our Faith

Jerry Bates

Most Christians are concerned with the spiritual welfare of their children. Many Christians are also aware of the statistic that the majority of young people raised in the church, possibly even 80%, eventually leave God and His church. This statistic should certainly alarm us and cause us to question how we are raising our own children. While there is no way to guarantee the future faithfulness of our children, we need to realize that we as parents have a very strong influence over their beliefs.

All parents have a strong influence over their children, both good and bad. For example, there is a series of hand-carved underground temples, the Ellora caves, in India that were built nearly 1,400 years ago and took 200 years to construct. These caves were carved out of solid rock and were originally built as holy places for adherents to Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism. However, these caves were not built by one or two generations of workers; rather, ten generations were involved in their construction. These people were worshipping different gods and practicing different religions, and yet, they were able to pass down their commitment to this project to several future generations. They passed along their commitment to their gods, their motivation to continue the project and their plans for completion. If these ancient people could do this, surely, we can pass along our commitment to the true God. Let us look at some ways that can help reach that worthwhile goal.

First of all, parents must be involved in the lives of their children. Absentee parents certainly have little influence over their children. Parents

need to give some time to their children so that they will look up to their parents as role models and examples to follow. When parents spend most of their time working and spend little time with their children, the only lesson they will probably teach is that money and the material things of this world are of supreme importance. We must realize that **passing along our heritage of faith does not happen by accident.**

The Ellora caves, in India were built nearly 1,400 years ago and took 200 years to construct.

Secondly, we must spend quality time. In other words, the time spent with our children must teach them that spiritual things are of supreme importance. How do we do that? We cannot pass along our faith by simply taking them to church on Sunday. It seems that many think that is all which is necessary. Such parents imagine that if they take their children to church on Sundays, they will hear sermons and Bible lessons, and they will automatically become Christians and remain faithful as adults. Those parents further suppose that if their children do not remain faithful, the church is to blame. However, those ideas are not true. We cannot expect the church alone to effectively train our children in the right way. In

Deuteronomy 6:6-7, we find Moses' instruction to the Jews as to how to pass their faith on to their children. He wrote, ***"And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up."*** Notice, that parents are to teach their children **diligently.** This word means to repeat or to do something time after time. Parents must teach their children at all hours of the day, not just on Sunday or during a devotional time. Often, the greatest lessons we can teach our children are at the seemingly insignificant times. Our religion must influence our behavior at all times. Unless our children see that our commitment to God comes before other commitments, our words will be useless.

Thirdly, we must treat our children with kindness and love. At first, one might think that most parents do this. However, some treat them harshly, demanding complete obedience, while others virtually idolize their children, allowing their desires to rule the house. Paul wrote in Ephesians 6:4, ***"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."*** This verse emphasizes the above exhortation. As parents, we must not anger our children by excessive rules and punishments. Rather, we must train our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This includes rules or guidelines accompanied by appropriate discipline, teaching and example. Parents must guide their children in the right way by instructing them in God's Truth. However, as we mentioned earlier, teaching without example is worthless. Parents must live what they teach, and children must be able to see that. Only by doing this will teaching be laid to the heart of the child.

Training our children in the admonition of the Lord is the most important legacy we can leave them. Never should we leave this responsibility to the church, to someone else or to neglect this obligation by emphasizing material rather than spiritual goals. While providing our children with a quality education and with material blessings are certainly necessary and good, **nothing is more important than spiritual training**. To neglect that is the greatest tragedy of all. ***"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?"*** (Matthew 16:26).✠

1932—2008

THE LORD'S FERVENT PRAYER

J.C. Choate

Listen to the words of Jesus: ***"…As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world …Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me"*** (John 17: 18, 20-21).

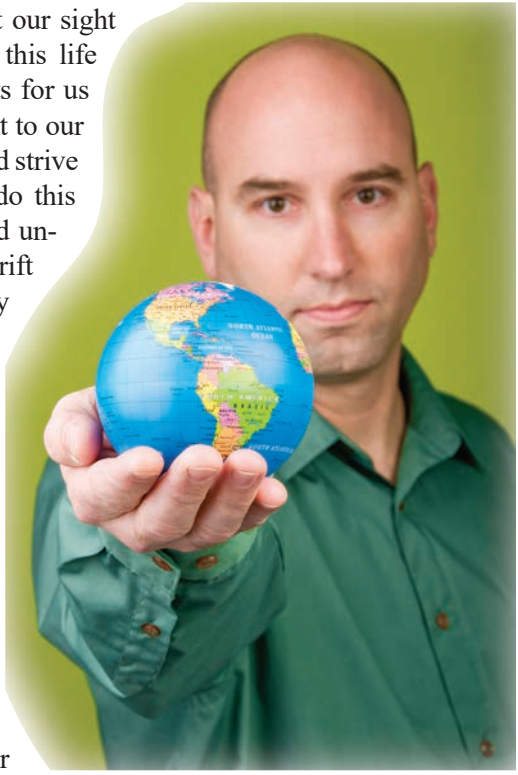
Christ came into the world for one purpose: **to save mankind.** All that He did while on this earth was done to bring about this result. In the prayer we just read, we can see this truth pointed out clearly. Why did God send His Son into the world? For the same reason that Christ sent His apostles forth: ***"Go and preach…he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."*** **Christians have no other mission in life but to obey their Lord and to lead others to Him.**

Yet, how far away we have gotten through the years! Today, we as Christians live and work for the comforts of life, first. We seek security in a world that has never known security. We play with the true religion of Christ, bringing it down to a commonplace thing. We can see no further than the scant hour or two we spend in "worship" on Sundays. Our goals have fallen far short of the goals of the early disciples—to gain the crown of life, no matter what obstacles stand in the way.

Because we have aimed ourselves in the wrong direction, as a body of believers, we are not united in the sense that Christ prayed we would be. Nowadays, one Christian seeks for one thing in life while another seeks

for something else, and they can never be united on one major goal to the extent that they will put every ounce of effort they possess into the work of reaching that goal. However, Christ prayed, fervently and earnestly, that even as He and the Father are one, we might be one also. What does this mean? It means that from the beginning of time, **God's purpose was to make a way for man to be saved.** Jesus had the same purpose as His guide during the entire time He walked upon the earth. He allowed Himself to be shamefully and cruelly crucified in order that one thing might be made possible: that you and I might have a way of escape from an eternity in hell!

All of this was done to give us the hope of eternal life. Does it mean less to us, the beneficiaries, than it does to our Benefactors? Surely we are not such ingrates as that! If we are not grateful, let us open our eyes to the great task that has been set before us.



Is it possible for us to lift our sight above the material things of this life and to see the home that waits for us if, and ***only if,*** we are obedient to our Master? Every one of us should strive with all that is within us to do this very thing, because unless and until we do, we'll continue to drift along in the unconcerned way we have gone in the past.

Just think what we could do if all of us would put Christianity first and foremost in our lives! Here in America, we would be a body of one-and-a-half million courageous soldiers of the cross —not even counting the many Christians in other countries. The preachers in our midst wouldn't have to spend the major part of their

time keeping the weak Christians faithful because all of us would be out working to win our neighbors and friends to Christ. We would use every minute of time possible in building up the kingdom. We would sacrifice in our giving so that the church would be financially able to carry out its task of reaching the lost souls of **the world.** We would be such shining lights of real conversion that the people around about us would flock to the kingdom in order that they might have a part in such a wonderful thing! Why were people drawn so irresistibly to Jesus during His lifetime? Because He was living proof that He was willing to give His all for the sake of the truth He preached. I am convinced that this dedication of first century Christians—even in the face of death—was what so impressed onlookers that ***"the world was turned upside down"*** by the spreading and acceptance of the Gospel.

Our very lack of having world conversion as our goal is the thing that is dulling our influence every way we turn. If we today literally lived to see others converted from sin to righteousness, it wouldn't be so hard to accomplish. However, when we preach that we have the truth and want all men to accept it, and then live like we don't much care what happens next in the spiritual realm, you can see what the end result will be. In the eyes of all of these who are watching us, we, by our manner of unconcerned life, make the effect of the truth void.

Why is it necessary that we be united, even as God and His Son are one? Jesus said, ***"That the world may believe that thou has sent me."*** So, if we fail to march forward, even as one man, we will fail in reaching the world with the message of the Gospel. It's just that simple. Either we put everything else behind us and march, or we fail, and if we fail, not only have we lost the world, but ourselves in the bargain.

Notice further, did Christ pray "that the people in Jerusalem may believe" or "that the people in Judea may believe?" No! He prayed, ***"That the world may believe."*** The field in which we are to work is not just our hometown or our home state but the whole world. The Gospel of Christ is too great for one area; the entire world and all mankind is its home. That's where it belongs, and when we try to confine it to one area, either by our neglect or by our lack of faith, we are doing nothing less than limiting the power of God! Think about it! We hold within our grasp a power much greater than any other, and yet, we smother it down with our smallness.

Think about this. The sacrifice that would make it possible for humans to be forgiven of their sins had been planned since the foundation of the world! All of God's work, from Genesis to the last chapters of the Gospel accounts, had been done with that goal in mind! Then, the completion of that work—taking the message to humanity—was ***entrusted*** to the hands of humans! Does its message die with me? Does it go further than to your heart? **What will we do with God's treasure?** The light of truth that we possess is strong enough to illuminate the whole world, but how often do we put a bushel over it so that even those in our own area cannot see its radiance?

Christ taught in principle that we should march as a united front and let the world, all of it, see and believe. When will we begin to carry out our work? I pray that we'll not realize too late that it is our task, and that we must be up and about the Master's business if we expect to be rewarded. One thing is certain. We can't *earn* eternal life, but God has never promised it to shiftless, lazy bums who won't lift a finger in His vineyard after the "great task of being baptized." So often we preach "faith and works" and then practice "faith only."

It seems to me that the prayer we have been considering should make a deep impression upon our minds and move us to strive to be obedient. The circumstances under which it was uttered should make us even more aware of the grave importance of its every word. Christ was praying in the very shadow of the cross. He knew that torture, torment and death—all that the human body could endure—lay just ahead of Him. Therefore, in this, His last major request to the Father on the disciples' behalf, He was praying for the things uppermost in His mind. His words to God expressed fully His desire for His followers, not only for the eleven around Him at that time, but for all who should believe on Him—for you and me. He wanted God to help us carry out the work He left in our hands, and He prayed to that end.

Of one thing we can be sure. God will do His part, if we will do ours. ✠

…That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me"

5-Minute Bible Study

Rejoicing

Paula Bates

1. And they agreed with him, and when they had called in the apostles, they _____ them and charged them not to speak in the name of _____ and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, _____ that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease _____ and preaching that the Christ is Jesus. Acts 5:40-42
2. I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have received your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. Not that I am speaking of being in _____, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be _____. Philippians 4:10-11
3. _____ in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in _____. Contribute to the needs of the _____ and seek to show hospitality. Romans 12:12-13
4. Beloved, think it not strange concerning the _____ trial which is to try you, as though something strange were happening to you. But _____insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that when his glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. If you are reproached for the name of _____ blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part he is blasphemed, but on your part he is _____. I Peter 4:12-14
5. But Christ as a son over his own _____, whose own house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of our _____ firm unto the end. Hebrews 3:6

Answers:

1. Beat, Jesus, rejoicing teaching
2. Need, content
3. Rejoicing, prayer, saints
4. Fiery, rejoice, Christ, glorified
5. House, hope

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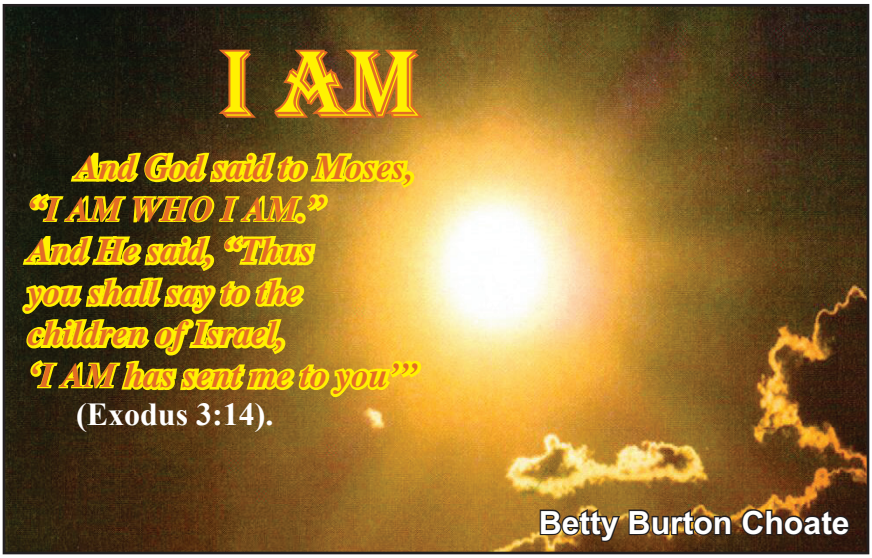

"I Am," **the eternal existent Elohim is our God!** ***"What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit*** [care for] ***him? For You have made him a little lower than Elohim*** [in the original Hebrew], ***and You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet…"*** (Psalm 8:4-6). This passage is speaking of humans—that man was made to be the highest of God's creation, only lower than God Himself, and in that state of perfection, he was given authority over everything else in creation. In Hebrews 2:6-11 we read, ***"'What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet.'"***

"For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him." [Because of the disobedience of Adam and Eve, the ruling authority originally intended was withheld from humanity, and chaos

ensued throughout creation. Man, who was created ***"in the image of God"*** became ***"a little lower than the angels,"*** subject to death.]

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone. For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren…"

Through our Lord's coming and dying in our place, as we are born anew into the Family of God—the church—we are restored to our status in creation: being again "in the image of Elohim."

How are humans *like God,* in ways that nothing else in creation can claim? There is self awareness, and awareness and understanding of countless other elements of creation; humans can discern right from wrong, good from evil; humans can learn and grow in their mastery of the elements of creation.

Above all, there is awareness of God and of our need for Him. In every human soul there is a hole, a vacuum, demanding to be filled with God. In every culture throughout time, humans have worshiped God or gods they have created in their ignorance, trying to fill that void. Interestingly, even those who claim to be atheists spend much of their time and effort trying to *disprove* the existence of God—but believed or denied, He never goes away!

Recently, I came across an observation (*The Book of Mysteries* by Jonathan Cahn) that was interesting. The Hebrew name for God is YHVH, which means "I AM." Without realizing it, humans are continually using God's name: We say, "*I am* going…," "*I am* thinking…," *I am* happy…" What should these words be saying to us? First, they should be a continual reminder that everything we do is done in the presence of the great I AM; and, second, they should keep us aware that humans were created **in His image:** He could not make us *eternal* as He is, but He made us ***immortal:*** that is, **once a living soul comes into existence at conception, it will never die!** "I am—I exist!"

Betty Burton Choate is the widow of J.C. Choate, in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

How Many Gods Are There?

J. Randal Matheny

Only one God exists (Isaiah 46:9). There are not many gods (Isaiah 44:6). The one true God created the entire universe (Genesis 1:1). He Himself is not created, but He created all things (Isaiah 43:10). All other things that are called gods are nothing but idols created by man (1 Corinthians 8:4). Human beings should not worship things they have created (Exodus 20:3).

The one God has revealed Himself to mankind. He gave His favorite creature freewill. This is the ability to choose between different options and to act according to his choices. The first two people created were Adam and Eve. They chose to disobey God (Genesis 3:1-19). This choice brought death to them and to all mankind as a result (1 Corinthians 5:21).

Today, no one lives according to God's will (Romans 3:10). This is sin (Romans 3:23). Sin is rebellion against God (1 John 3:4). Sin separates us from God (Isaiah 59:1-2). We need someone to restore us to God's glorious presence (1 Timothy 2:5; Ephesians 2:16).

God revealed to mankind that He loves His favorite creature (Romans 5:8). He decided, even before man's bad decision, to restore human beings to Himself (Titus 1:2). He created a plan of rescue even before creating the universe. When man sinned, God put that plan into action (1 Peter 1:20).

Over time, God revealed Himself (Titus 1:3) as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). They are not three gods, but the one God. They are one in each other (John 10:30). They act in the same direction, have the same nature and demonstrate the same character. The Father planned it all (John 3:16), the Son executed the plan by dying on the cross (Philippians 2:8) and the Spirit carried forward the mission of proclaiming the Gospel (Acts 4:31) and transforming people (1 Corinthians 12:13).

We cannot fix our problem of sin (Jeremiah 10:23). The Son, Jesus Christ, became a man (John 1:14; Galatians 4:4) and died in our place (1 Thessalonians 5:0). He took on our punishment (Hebrews 12:2). If we follow Him as Lord, we may receive Him as Savior (1 John 4:14).

The earth is not eternal. One day God will destroy it and all material creation (2 Peter 3:10-12). This planet serves as our place of decision to believe and to obey God or not. Someday God will send the Son back to take His people to Heaven to live with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) and to send the disobedient to eternal punishment (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). He has not told us when this will happen (Matthew 24:36), so we must be prepared at all times (Titus 2:13). That means we must believe the Good News (John 8:24), change our lives (Luke 13:3), be immersed in water in order to be saved (Acts 2:38; Colossians 2:12) and serve the Lord faithfully (Revelation 2:10). This is the message of the Bible.

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The Grace of Golgotha

Royce Frederick

Jesus suffered the agony and humiliation of public execution at ***"a place called Golgotha, that is to say, Place of a Skull"*** (Matthew 27:33). The religious leaders had labeled Him as an enemy of Moses. The civil government, by consenting to the crucifixion, had labeled Him an enemy of Rome. After the nails were driven through His flesh and He had been raised high above the crowd, Jesus pleaded, ***"Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they do"*** (Luke 23:34).

If Jesus of Nazareth had been an impostor, the crucifixion would surely have exposed that fact. The agony of the cross revealed His true character and grace. Instead of retaliating, He appealed to His Father to pardon His murderers. The execution, which His enemies had hoped would end His influence, became the very means by which He draws people unto Himself even today (John 12:32).

In the early days of His ministry, Jesus preached a sermon in which He had said, ***"…pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you"*** (Matthew 5:44). Through the cross, we can see that those were not empty words. The message He preached on that mountain in Galilee, He practiced on mount Calvary. **If our Lord could forgive His persecutors in the very midst of His agony, can we be excused for bearing grudges and bitterness over the small abuses which come our way?**

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He Could Have, But He Didn't

Ernest S. Underwood

Did you ever consider some things that Jesus could have done as He lived here on this earth, but that He didn't do? He could have become a political king. Some tried to force Him to do this. Being a carpenter, He could have had a fine house. He could have taken up a ***love offering*** when He healed. In each of these, and many more, He didn't do these things.

There is yet another thing He could have done but didn't. On the night He was betrayed, and after observing the Passover with the apostles, they all, except Judas, walked down into the Kidron Valley and a short way up the side of the Mount of Olives to Gethsemane. When I visited Gethsemane a few years back, I was struck with an amazing fact. While Jesus was in the Garden, He could have seen those who were coming to arrest Him as they made their way to the Garden also. John states that they ***"came there with lanterns, torches and weapons."*** He knew that they were coming, and He knew why they were coming. He could have run. He could have just gone farther up the side of the hill and gone down toward Bethany. He could have just kept on going up into Galilee, but He didn't! He stayed, was given a mock trial, was scourged and was crucified when He could have escaped. Why? ***"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends."*** How great is your love for Him?

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Ignorant and Uneducated

Cecil May, Jr.

A broadcaster was giving reasons why he thought a person was not qualified for an office he was seeking. He included, "He doesn't believe in evolution." The unstated conclusion he expected us to draw was, "He is ignorant, uneducated and, therefore, unfit to hold any office.

The statement, "He doesn't believe in evolution," regarding most people, is not true. Evolution is a common occurrence. Every educated person "believes in it." It accounts for different breeds of dogs, for Angus beef cattle and Jersey milk cows, etc., and on that scale, within species and "kinds," it is readily observable.

What the accused person likely did not believe, as I do not, is that evolution is sufficient to account for the great diversity of plant, animal and human life, where supposedly something came from nothing. That theory of evolution supposes life was accidently produced by nonlife, and for instance, something so complex and perfectly designed as the eye came into being by accident. The eye alone would take hundreds of beneficial accidents all happening at the same moment.

Intelligent design is more reasonable, and therefore, it is more scientific than the theory of evolution as an explanation for the existence of anything. That the complexities of the universe and life all happened accidentally is more of a religion than a scientific theory.

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Does God Exist?

David Conley

I heard this story this week and thought you might enjoy the "insight". The story went something like this.

> A gentleman was seated in his barber's chair. During the course of the haircut, the topic of the existence of God came up in conversation. The barber stated, "I do not believe that God exists." The gentleman, shocked at this statement, asked "Why not?" "Well," replied the barber, "all you have to do is go out into the street and see the pain and suffering that humans endure. If God existed, He would not allow this to happen!"
>
> The gentleman did not want to engage in an argument, so he did not respond. After the haircut, the gentleman left the barber shop. He saw, sitting on the sidewalk, a man with dirty clothes and long hair. He turned and went back into the barber shop. "Barbers do not exist!" he exclaimed. "What do you mean?" said the barber. "Of course we exist! Here I am standing right here to prove it!" The gentleman replied, "There is a man with long hair sitting on the street! If barbers existed, he would not have long, unkept hair!" "That's a ridiculous conclusion" said the barber. "People don't always come to me to get their hair cut!" "That's right" the gentleman responded, "and people don't always come to God!"

If **all** people **always** went to God and submitted to His Will, then **every** person on the planet would not be hungry! **All** the sick and dying would be well cared for! There would be **no poverty**! God's Will would be ***"done on earth as it is in heaven"***! However, **most** do not submit to God's will. Hence, the earth endures many things that God does not desire that it endure! **God does exist! Glory to Him!**

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The Ancient Beetles

David P. Everson

No, we are not talking about the "Lads from Liverpool" in later life, but the hard-shelled, creepy crawly and, for some gross, "bugs." Beetles, the Order Coleoptera, comprise the largest order of any of all of the animals in God's creation. There are 300,000 currently known beetles with some estimates of as many as 4-5 million unnamed species still to be discovered around the world. Some zoologists feel that beetles may make up over half of all animals on earth; so, they are very important in the natural world.

Scientists are making news with some interpretations about the beetles that they had not predicted from their view of a gradual evolution of life. Of course, as creationists, we acknowledge that the creation of all living things occurred during the week-long creation event with all of the other life-forms that have been discovered to date. Let's take a general look at the beetles to see where the atheistic scientists of the world have erred in their interpretations.

The Order Coleoptera was named by Aristotle and means "sheath-winged," which refers to part of the hard covering over the wings—part of the exoskeleton insects have. Beetles are insects as they have the characteristic six jointed legs of all animals in this group. As with many insects, beetles have complete metamorphoses, going through the egg, larva (several immature phases called instars), pupa and finally the adult stage.

Research into the beetles using fossils and DNA evidence of living beetles has led the atheistic worldview to now feel that the beetles are millions of years older that the dinosaurs. This changed the view of beetles from recent newcomers of 140 million years ago to 70 million years before the T-Rex at supposedly 300 million years ago, says a new report published in the December 21, 2007 journal *Science*. As Dave Mosher of *LiveScience* says, "New research hints that modern-day versions of the insects are far older than any tyrannosaur that trod the Earth."

So again, the assumptions of the gradual changes of living things over millions and millions are years by evolution appear not to be supported by the evidence. The beetles that appear in the fossil record are fully formed, modern-appearing with have no evidence of from what they evolved. As Dave Mosher says, "The new genetic maps suggest that a common ancestor to beetles crept up well before its descendants showed up in the fossil record." Maybe that is because there were no ancestors for them! God created them fully formed with the plants that they need to live and that they benefit.

Beetles provide food for many animals, a role that they share with most other insects. Yet, the beetles play other important roles in the environment. Many are pollinators, helping to provide our food. Dung beetles feed on and reproduce in the dung of herbivores, thereby removing millions of tons of dung that would accumulate and destroy valuable pastureland. Burying beetles enter dead animal carcasses, which are then used as food by the adults and their growing offspring. This helps to get rid of carcasses that would otherwise contaminate and foul the environment.

Various nest-dwellers and fur external parasites rid their bird and mammal hosts of parasitic insects, such as fleas, bed bugs and lice. Some beetles are effective as biological control agents, such as the ladybug beetles that feed on aphids. Carabid beetles, such as the "caterpillar-hunters" are often helpful in reducing populations of harmful caterpillars, such as gypsy moth caterpillars and firefly larvae called glowworms, and eat slugs and snails that damage such crops as tomatoes and lettuce. These are just a few examples of the beneficial aspects of beetles, in addition to the delight we can find in their beauty and remarkable diversity!

Beetles show tremendous strategies of defense, using camouflage, mimicry, toxicity and even active mechanisms, which God created in them that are so complex as to cause many scientists to scratch their heads with wonder. So, as we observe the creation of the ***"creeping thing, and beast of the earth after his kind: and it was so"*** (Genesis 1:24), let us always praise the Creator for His marvelous works.

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The Divine Origin of the Bible

Kevin Moore

The Bible claims to have come from God and to be all-sufficient to meet man's spiritual needs (2 Timothy 3:14-17). The writers of the Bible alleged to have received their information from God's Spirit (2 Peter 1:16-21). The apostle Paul affirmed that the Holy Spirit revealed God's message to specially chosen men, and when we read what was written, then, we can understand this divinely inspired revelation (Ephesians 3:1-5). While these statements, in and of themselves, are not absolute proof that the Bible is in fact what it contends to be, the absence of any such claims would be a strong argument against it. However, how can one know for sure whether or not these claims are genuine? Is there any proof?

The Bible's Remarkable Unity

The 66 books of the Bible were written over a period of about 1,600 years by at least 40 different writers. The writers of the Bible were separated by time, geography, language and culture, and yet, they participated in writing a book that is perfectly united in theme and in purpose. If the Bible were merely the product of 40 different human minds, we would expect it to be a disjointed compilation of contradictory ideas and themes. **The unity of the Bible is convincing proof that it is the product of a single, superior Mind** (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Impeccable Accuracy of the Bible

Archaeology has confirmed the Bible's credibility time and time again. For example, there are over 40 references in the Bible to the Hittites (Genesis 23:10; 26:34; etc.), and the Bible was the only historical document that mentioned these people until 1906 when the ancient capital of the Hittite nation was discovered in central Turkey. Another instance is the Assyrian king, Sargon, who is mentioned in the Bible only in Isaiah 20:1, but he was never mentioned in any other extant historical records until 1843 when his temple, palace and numerous records were discovered near Nineveh. In the late 1800s, Sir William Ramsay set out

on an archaeological expedition in Asia Minor to disprove the historical accuracy of the Book of Acts, but after years of exploration, he was forced to conclude that Acts is accurate in every detail. *Time* magazine reported, "…an inscription unearthed in 1961 at Caesarea confirmed for the first time that Pilate was a first century Roman governor, as the Bible reports" (15 August 1988, p. 51). Unlike the writings of men throughout history, **the Bible is not filled with mistakes and inaccurate information.**

Fulfilled Predictive Prophecy

There are over 800 prophecies in the Old Testament, many relating to the rise and fall of various governments or individuals, each of which has been fulfilled in every detail. Over 300 Old Testament prophecies relate to the initial coming of the Messiah (Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39). Mathematician Peter W. Stoner has estimated that if only eight of these prophecies were considered, the chances of one person fulfilling all of them is one in 100,000,000,000,000,000. **It is statistically, mathematically and humanly impossible that the fulfilled Bible prophecies happened by accident!**

Indestructibility of the Bible

There has never been a book that has been under more attacks and attempted destruction than the Bible. Around 100 B.C., Syrian King Antiochus Epiphanes burned all copies of Scriptures that could be found and made it a capital crime (punishable by death) to possess a copy. In A.D. 303, Roman Emperor Diocletian ordered all Bibles destroyed and set out to exterminate Christianity. He had a medal engraved which stated, "The Christian religion is destroyed and the worship of the gods restored." In the 1700s, Voltaire said, "In less than a hundred years the Bible will be discarded and Christianity swept from the earth." **But despite all these attacks and more, the Bible is still thriving.** All along, they have affirmed that ***"the word of the LORD endures forever"*** (1 Peter 1:23-25).

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Despite its age (the last writing completed more than 1900 years ago), the Bible, having been translated into more languages than any other book, is still the number one seller in the world!

Blessed Is He that Readeth

Rodney Nulph

"The studious perusal of the Sacred Volume will make better citizens, better fathers and better husbands" is a quote that has been attributed to Thomas Jefferson. That quote has come under attack by some as something someone heard him say, but not a direct quote of the former President. Whether Jefferson said it or not does not take away from the truth of the quote. Reading, studying and applying the Bible will always make mankind better! In giving the Revelation, Jesus reminded, ***"Blessed is he that readeth…"*** (Revelation 1:3). While Bible reading is often encouraged among religious folks, many times newcomers to the Bible have no idea where to start or how to start. May I offer some suggestions in the reading of your Bible.

Firstly, **read regularly**. To become a proficient Bible reader, one must make the necessary time to read. God's Word is our spiritual food (1 Peter 2:2; Matthew 4:4; Job 23:12) that nourishes our thoughts, deeds and way of life. If we do not eat the proper food physically, our bodies suffer, and if we do not eat the proper food spiritually, our spirituality suffers. D.L. Moody was once told by a man that he just did not have time to read the Bible every day. Mr. Moody replied, "My friend, if you are too busy to read the Bible every day, then you are busier than Almighty God ever intended any human to be, and you had better let some things go, and make the time!"

Secondly, **read slowly**. Sometimes the goal to "get through the Bible in a year" prohibits us from really understanding what we read. There are no prizes awarded by God for the most times we read the Bible in a year! Someone correctly said, "It does not matter how much of the Word of God you go through, but how much of the Word of God that goes through you."

Thirdly, **read systematically**. This may be the most common mistake made when it comes to reading the Bible. One day a person is in Genesis, the next day in Matthew and the next day in Psalms. A good outline of the entire Bible will help in this process. For example, group the prophets together as to the time in which they wrote and to whom they wrote. Habakkuk,

Zephaniah and Jeremiah all prophesied to Judah during the same time period; so, reading these three books together gives one the true picture of God's Word. Many other examples could be given, but however you choose to read, to get the most out of the time spent, read systematically.

Fourthly, **read inquiringly**. As you read, keep three major questions in mind with a goal to answer those questions from your reading. "Who is the writer?" "To whom is he writing?" "What is the major reason for this writing?" For example, when one reads Colossians, if he or she comprehends certain elements, understanding will be much fuller. Paul was in prison while he wrote. The church at Colosse was being influenced by the world around it (e.g., idolatry, Judaism, et al.), and as such, Christ was taking a ***back seat***. Thus, Paul wrote to magnify Christ and to show that in all things He must be first (Colossians 1:18). Seeking the answers to certain questions as one reads will make reading much more enjoyable and memorable.

Lastly, but certainly not least, **read prayerfully**. Spending time talking to God before He speaks to you will make your study much richer. Ask God for wisdom and understanding! A reverent talk with the Author will make the Book much sweeter!

Reading the Bible is such a daunting task if one seeks to understand what he reads. However, the blessings that come as a result from a serious study of God's Word cannot be matched. Bible readers are dealing with eternal things. Anything else besides the Bible will one day be destroyed, but God's Word lasts forever (Matthew 24:35). Read it to be wise, believe it to be saved, and practice it to be holy! Truly ***"Blessed is he that readeth…"***!

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Did You Know?

According to a 2016 Barna Group poll, 67% of Americans ages 21 and older admit to drinking alcoholic beverages. Sixty percent of those claiming to be practicing Christians admit to drinking alcoholic beverages. Of those who choose not to drink, only 14% abstain for religious reasons.

IS THE BIBLE THE WORD OF GOD?

Robert D. Rawson

There are many challenges to the Bible. These challenges are advanced by some who are well educated in some circles but uninformed in this area.

The Bible claims to be the Word of God. In evaluating this claim, we find: (1) unity of the Bible though written over a period of 1,600 years, (2) the facts of the Bible have been verified again and again and (3) the purpose of the Bible to help us live for God is a sacred purpose.

The accuracy of the Bible in matters of science, history and culture of the time is held to the highest standard. 'Life is in the blood' (Genesis 9:4), 'all men made of one blood' (Acts 17:26) and ***"as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also"*** (James 2:26) are statements that have been examined again and again and are found to be accurate.

An unbeliever, to be honest, must deal with these claims. Finding them to be accurate, why would he or she not move into belief and obedience (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 5:8-9)?

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Kenney's Pennies

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:1-3 NKJV). Interesting that Jesus said if this was not true, He would have told them. If Heaven is here on Earth, which it is not, then where did Jesus go?

The New Birth

Andy Robison

The Pharisees were a self-righteous party ascribing to themselves broad powers of enforcement of their traditions associated with God's laws (Matthew 15:7-9; 23:1-37). There was, however, at least one who seemed to be intent on doing right.

Nicodemus, one ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night and began by acknowledging the import of Christ's miracles. He said, ***"Rabbi, we know that you are a Teacher come from God…"*** (John 3:1-2). Later, this same man would take up for Jesus' right to speak for Himself before any possible condemnation (John 7:50-51), then would help Joseph of Arimathea with the burial of the Lord's body (John 19:38-40).

Jesus' answer seemed far removed from the statement of Nicodemus: ***"…Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"*** (John 3:3). Nicodemus tried to clarify, knowing only the physical birth (3:4). Jesus assured that it was a spiritual birth, ***"of water and the Spirit"*** (3:5). What is the new birth? Ascertaining it requires honesty with Scripture.

Consider that the Holy Spirit is the member of the Godhead responsible for inspiring the apostles and the prophets (John 14:26; 16:13; Ephesians 3:5; 1 Corinthians 2:9-13; 2 Peter 1:20-21). Without the Spirit's work in writing the Divine record, people living subsequent to the first century would know nothing about those events, or they might know a jumbled version from oral history. Perhaps that is one reason Paul said, ***"…no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit"*** (1 Corinthians 12:3). The Spirit revealed the Divine message to men in the first century, and they would record it for all time. I never would have heard of Jesus if it were not for the Bible—the Spirit-inspired Word. In that way, I cannot say ***"Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit."***

Then, note the power of 1 Peter 1:22-23. ***"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit…having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives***

and abides forever…" The new birth had taken place for Peter's audience because they obeyed the truth of God's Word ***"through the Spirit."*** That does not and cannot mean the Spirit came suddenly upon them. They were the ones who acted; they chose to obey. Yet, they had learned from the Spirit what to do. From the Spirit, they learned the truth (John 16:13).

The "water" to which Jesus referred in John 3:5 has to be the waters of baptism. Immediately after Jesus' discourse to Nicodemus, there is the record of John's baptism and statements of John pointing to something greater in Christ (John 3:22-36). The arrangement of paragraphs is no accident.

Water baptism was commanded on the first day of the church (Acts 2:38). Water baptism was requested by an Ethiopian eunuch who learned of Jesus (Acts 8:35-39). Water baptism was the means of Saul being cleansed from sins (Acts 22:16). Yet, the Bible ascribes no magical power to the water. In ***"baptism,"*** it is not ***"the removal of the filth of the flesh"*** that saves, but ***"the answer of a good conscience toward God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ"*** (1 Peter 3:21). The water in baptism would have no power were that not the intent of God. We would not know it was the intent of God without the revelation of the Spirit.

Further, a new life begins at baptism. In reenacting the resurrection of Christ, the old man of sin is buried, and the new man arises to walk in a new life (Romans 6:3-6). That sounds like a new birth, like being born again.

Those who were baptized were added to the church (Acts 2:41-47). Those who were translated from the power of darkness to Christ's kingdom (Colossians 1:13-14) were the ones who had been "***buried with Him in baptism…and raised with Him through faith in the working of God"*** (Colossians 2:11-12).

For Nicodemus, this was vital. He could not take pride in a Jewish birth. Neither nationality nor physical family could make one right in God's sight. Now, all must be born again (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 5:25-26).

Yet, baptism alone saves no one. It must be accompanied by genuine faith, repentance, confession, and followed by a faithful lifestyle (John 3:16; Acts 17:30-31; Matthew 10:32-33; 1 Corinthians 15:58).

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God's Seven Water Tests

T. Pierce Brown

Those who ridicule God's command to be baptized in order to be forgiven would do well to consider at least seven occasions when God used water to separate those who followed Him from those who rejected Him. The first outstanding example is the flood. If one only read the Old Testament story, he could easily see that principle. It is made more certain, striking and significant when we read of it again in Hebrews 11:7 and especially in 1 Peter 3:20-21 where we are told in specific terms that the water that saved them from the wicked world is a type of the baptism that saves us.

The second outstanding example of the use of water to separate God's people from others is in the story of Israel crossing the Red Sea. In Exodus 14:30, we find, ***"Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the Egyptians and they saw the Egyptians dead upon the seashore."*** Paul referred to this in 1 Corinthians 10:2 when he wrote, ***"They were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea."***

The third example is in Judges 7 where God had Gideon's army to undergo a "water test." Those who were watchful and careful and lapped the water in their hands were separated from those who did not. There are many lessons we can get from that account, such as the fact that God does not need large numbers to do any job He wishes to do, but our lesson today is simply that He used water to choose His warriors. The others he rejected.

One of the most outstanding examples is that of Naaman, the leper, in 2 Kings 5. He was commanded to go and dip seven times in the Jordan to cure his leprosy. Many sermons could be preached on the necessity of doing what is commanded, where it is commanded and in the manner it is commanded. Those are all very important lessons. No river but Jordan would do. No use of water other than dipping would do. No number but

seven times was proper. One could scoff at the whole process and call it "a water cure" or any other term he may choose. The simple fact is that although he was cured by God's grace when he accepted it in obedient faith, water was the point or place where the cleansing was done.

In John 9:7 when Jesus told the blind man to go and wash in the pool of Siloam, those who stood by might have scoffed and said, "Water cannot give sight. There is no power in the water, so forget it, or wait until you are cured to wash." It is clear for any who will read it honestly that washing in the pool of Siloam stood between the blind man and his recovery. Whether they or we can see any sense in it, an honest student cannot miss the fact that Jesus used water as a test of his faith and as a means by which he received sight.

In John's baptism, we find another strong example of the use of water separating those who rejected God and those who received Him. Luke 7:29-30 says, ***"And all the people when they heard, and all the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected for themselves the counsel of God, being not baptized of him."***

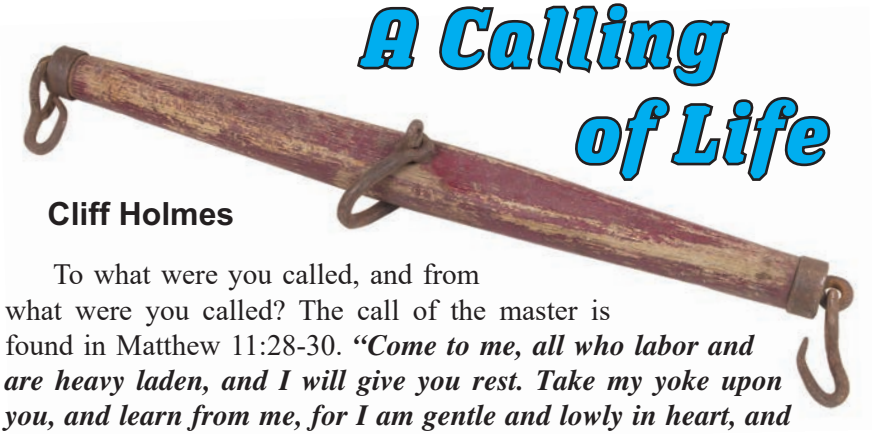
The greatest and most significant water test God used is the one in Mark 16:16, where Jesus plainly says, ***"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved."*** If one simply wants to do God's will and reads that in connection with the cases of conversion, such as Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16, where it plainly says that baptism is for the remission of sins, to wash away sins, one can see that God is still using the water test to separate His people from those who reject Him. Have you passed God's water test?

T. Pierce Brown (1923-2008) lived and preached in Cookeville, Tennessee, USA.

Did You Know?

Carl Linnaeus introduced and formalized binomial nomenclature in 1735. This is the system the scientific world uses to classify or to group living things. Thousands of years before Linnaeus created a naming system for living things, God grouped all living things by (1) things that fly, (2) things that swim and (3) things that move on land (Genesis 1:20-25).

A Calling of Life



Cliff Holmes

To what were you called, and from what were you called? The call of the master is found in Matthew 11:28-30. ***"Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."*** We are called from labor to rest (Matthew 11:28).

We are called from death to life (1 John 3:14). ***"We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love, abides in death."*** We are called from bondage to liberty (Galatians 5:13). ***"For you were called to freedom brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another."*** We are called from darkness into light (1 Peter 2:9). ***"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."*** We are called to the fellowship of His son (1 Corinthians 1:9). ***"God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord."*** Above all, we are called by Jesus Christ from bondage to peace.

Friends and Dear Readers, have you answered the call of Jesus Christ? Our Precious Lord calls upon each person to believe that He is the Son of God (John 8:24) and to be baptized into Him (Galatians 3:27) and His death (Romans 6:3-5). ***"He who believes and is baptized will be saved…"*** (Mark 16:16).

Cliff Holmes has served variously over the years as a minister, a deacon and a song leader. He resides in Decatur, Alabama, USA.

1. What was a major problem of the church in Corinth? (v. 18)
2. What was the problem with how Christians in Corinth partook of the Lord's Supper? (v. 21)
3. By doing this, what were they doing to the church and to the poor? (v. 22)
4. What do the bread and the cup represent? (vs. 24-25)
5. How are we to partake of the Lord's Supper? (vs. 24-25).
6. What are we doing when we partake of the Lord's Supper? (v. 26)
7. What must we do to ourselves when we partake of the Lord's Supper? (v. 28)
8. What happens when we partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner? (v. 29)
9. What does it mean to partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner? (v. 29)
10. Due to their misuse of the Lord's Supper, what did Paul say had happened to the Corinthians? (v. 30)
11. What did Paul say the Corinthians should do when they came together to eat? (v. 33)
12. If someone is hungry, what should he do? (v. 34)

(See the back cover for answers)

17 Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. 18 For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. 19 For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. 20 Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. 21 For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which he was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you, do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. 29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

33 Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. 34 But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.

NOTES: The primary topic of this section is the correct attitude in partaking the Lord's Supper. The Corinthians had so changed the supper that it was little more than a common meal. In so doing, they further emphasized the divisions that were present in the church. The church faces several problems today based on the Lord's Supper, but we do not have room to deal with those here. The two main purposes of the Lord's Supper are to remember the sacrifice of Christ for us and to promote the unity of the body.

Three Things to Remember about Elders

Hiram Kemp

Jesus gave the apostles permission to bind and to loose the things that were already bound and loosed in Heaven (Matthew 16:19; 18:18). When we read of things done and taught by the apostles in the New Testament, we know that the things they were doing had been approved by God. As Paul and Barnabas established churches throughout the first century world, they went on a second missionary trip and established elderships in every city where formerly a church had been begun (Acts 14:23). The New Testament gives us the qualifications for men who would serve as elders in the church (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

It is God's design that each congregation have or develop qualified men who can serve in the eldership and lead God's people. The denominational world has a false idea of what makes a man an elder or a pastor. The words for pastor, elder, bishop, overseer and presbyter are sometimes used interchangeably throughout the New Testament to refer to the same office in various ways. Each word emphasizes an aspect of an elder's function. Yet, sometimes Christians forget who elders are and what their work entails (2 Peter 1:12-13). Notice three things the New Testament teaches about those who serve as elders.

Elders Watch for Our Souls

"Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you" (Hebrews 13:17). As the Book of Hebrews concludes, the writer wanted to admonish Christians to obey their leaders. While the passage does not

mention elders explicitly, its message certainly applies to them. Elders watch for the souls of the members whom they shepherd. It should be the goal of each member to live in such a way that an elder's job will be easier, not harder (1 Thessalonians 3:8). Scripture is clear that we will all give account of ourselves to God (Romans 14:12). Nevertheless, elders will also give an account of us as members and how we worked with them or failed to do so. Elders want to give a favorable account of each member, but we must live in such a way that this can be done. What will the elders say about you or me as members?

Elders Are Worthy of Honor

"We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you" (1 Thessalonians 5:12). ***"Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching"*** (1 Timothy 5:17). Elders are held in high esteem by God, and we should view them the same way. God rebuked His people in the past for not seeing things as He sees them (Isaiah 55:8-9). Paul's encouragement in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 to know those who are over us is not simply to know their names but to recognize them. We should count elders worthy of double honor. **It is hard enough to watch for one's own soul but to look after the souls of others is an even more daunting task.** Jesus taught that the greatest in His kingdom are those who serve (Matthew 23:11). As elders serve the local church and make countless sacrifices to lead us in pleasing God, we should let them know how much we appreciate them and their service (Philippians 1:3). The word translated "value" in 1 Timothy 5:17 means to attach value to someone or to something. Do we know how privileged we are to have godly elders?

Elders Need Our Prayers

"In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how

he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all" (Acts 20:35-36). Paul called the elders of Ephesus to Miletus to speak to them for his final time (Acts 20:17, 25). He gave them many commands and warnings. As he ended his discourse to them, he bowed down, and they prayed together. These men were godly leaders, trained by the apostle Paul, but they still needed prayer. Elders need our prayers. Pray for the elders that they will lead the congregation the way God desires. Pray that in areas of judgment they will do the most expedient thing and make the wisest decisions (James 1:5). Pray for their families as their wives and children are sometimes burdened because the leaders of their families invest so much time in the lives of others. Pray that they will continue to grow spiritually and enjoy the necessary physical health to carry out their duties (3 John 2). Christians must pray for each other regardless of the way we serve in the church (1 Thessalonians 5:25). However, when you pray, do not forget to include the elders.

Conclusion

Elders are not perfect. Elders are human like the rest of us. Elders struggle with temptation (James 1:14). Satan wants to devour them and discourage them from the work they are doing. We, as members who serve under the oversight of the elders, would do well to remind our elders that they are doing a good work and will receive an eternal crown when the Chief Shepherd appears (1 Timothy 3:1; 1 Peter 5:4). Find ways to encourage and hold up the hands of the elders so that they might continue to shepherd to the glory of God (Exodus 17:11-12).

Hiram Kemp preaches for the South Florida Avenue Church of Christ in Lakeland, Florida, USA.

Let's Get Together

Justin Odom

I like the account in Genesis 2:18-22.

And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man.

One has to wonder, did God not know that Adam was alone? Did God think just making one human was enough, only to realize that He needed to create two? Well, of course God doesn't make mistakes. Adam needed to understand the value of another creation like him. After naming the animals, Adam noticed that he was alone; this made the creation of Eve all the more special to him.

God has never expected His people to be alone. Naturally, this is the case with marriage, but the same is true in the spiritual realm. Have you ever wondered why Jesus established His church (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47)? The word "church" means "a calling out, especially a religious meeting." The church constitutes the people, not the physical building. I've encountered people that said they could stay home and worship God alone on Sunday. You can't do this and be called a church. God knew that we needed each other and ordained that His people meet on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2) in order to be built up spiritually as we offer our worship to God.

The Church

When people forsake or ignore the worship of the church, they are neglecting the blessings that God designed for us. Take note of Hebrews 10:24-25. ***"And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching."***

Well, one might argue they meet with the saints on Sunday morning, and that's good enough. Sunday nights, Wednesday nights and other times outside of Sunday morning aren't all that important, some claim. Really? The first-century church took advantage of every time they could get together. ***"So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart"*** (Acts 2:46). As the church, we need to be together! This is God's design ✝

Justin Odom is a Gospel preacher in the USA.

[**Editor's Note:** The basic meaning of *ekklesia*, translated "church," is "properly, a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly" (*Thayer's Greek Lexicon*). "Church" (assembly) doesn't happen **apart** from other Christians but is the result of assembling together (1 Corinthians 11:17-18, 20, 33-34; 14:26). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Kenney's Pennies

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:43-45, NKJV). If Jesus could pray for His enemies, then what stops us?

PREACHING THE KINGDOM

Maxie B. Boren

Just a very few years ago, it was a rather popular thing among some to say, "Let's just preach Christ, but not the church." Thankfully, that inane "tell-tale" slogan of liberal philosophy is not heard very much anymore. Hopefully, it won't be heard again. The whole premise was fallacious. Christ and His church are inseparable. One can't be preached, completely, without the other being preached. They go together.

Notice Acts 8:12, which reads, ***"But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God*** [i.e., the church] ***and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women."*** Later on in Acts, Luke recorded that Paul resided for two years in his own hired dwelling in Rome, receiving all those who came to see him, ***"preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness…"*** (28:31).

Philip and Paul (both men enabled by the Holy Spirit to do great signs, and undoubtedly guided by Him in the message they proclaimed, Acts 6:5-10; 8:5-7, 13; Galatians 1:11-12; 1 Corinthians 2:10, 13) each preached Christ and the kingdom of God.

Even a casual reading of the New Testament would convince anyone that Jesus Christ is **the** Savior and Redeemer! (See Acts 2:36; 4:10-12; 13:23, 38; Romans 3:24-25; 1 Timothy 1:15.) It is equally plain that the saved are added to the church, "translated" into the kingdom, which has been purchased by Christ's blood (Colossians 1:13-14).

To be in Christ is to be in His church, which is the kingdom (Luke 1:32-33; Matthew 16:18-19; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 27; Ephesians 2:19-22). The church is the "house" (i.e., the family) of God (1 Timothy 3:15), and all of God's children are in His family. He gave them the name, "Christian" (Isaiah 62:2; Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16).

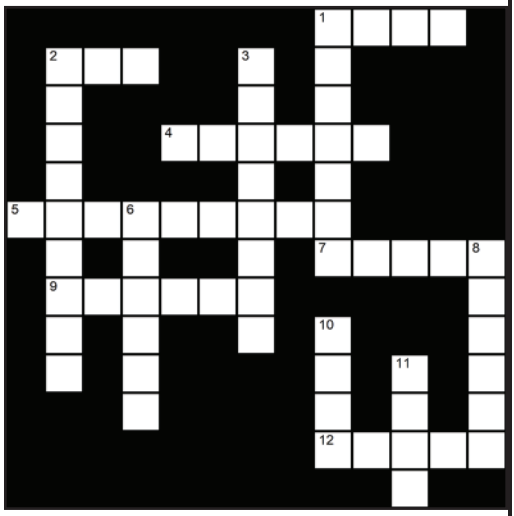
Let us always preach Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 1:18; 2:1-2; 15:1-3) as the very "heart" of our message, but let us also teach people the truth concerning the kingdom and what is necessary to become citizens thereof.

Maxie B. Boren (1932–2016) was a Gospel preacher and an elder in the Brown Trail congregation in Bedford, Texas, USA.

Bible Find

Martha Rushmore

Mothers



Across

1. The mother of Obed. Ruth 4:13, 21
2. The mother of Cain. Genesis 4:1
4. The mother of Joseph. Genesis 30:22-24
5. The mother of Solomon. 2 Samuel 12: 24
7. The mother of Ishmael. Genesis 16:15
9. The mother of Timothy. 2 Timothy 1:5
12. The mother of Isaac. Genesis 21:2-3

Down

1. The mother of Jacob and Esau. Genesis 25:19-26
2. The mother of John the Baptist. Luke 1:13
3. The mother of Moses. Exodus 6:20
6. The mother of Samuel. 1 Samuel 1:19-20
8. The mother of Amoni and Mephiboshet. 2 Samuel 21:8
10. The grandmother of Timothy and the mother of Eunice. 2 Timothy 1:2, 5
11. The mother of John Mark. Acts 12:12

Don't Be Taken by the Satan Explanation

Brian R. Kenyon

When Satan finally got Eve to seriously doubt both the goodness of God and His instruction to eat of every tree in the Garden of Eden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he said to her, ***"You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil"*** (Genesis 3:4-5). Satan explained that Eve would not actually die, contradicting what God said (Genesis 2:16-17). Satan went on to explain that God did not actually want good for Eve. After all, according to Satan, God knew the benefits she would gain from the fruit, and He did not want her to have anything good.

Adding to the deception, what Satan explained seemed to be true. Adam did not physically die until over 500 years later (Genesis 5:5). Adam and Eve did become like God, in the sense that they did know ***"good and evil"*** after eating that fruit (Genesis 3:22).

However, what Eve thought was a bargain did not work out very well (Genesis 3:6-24)! She and Adam were taken by **the Satan explanation! We must not let anyone talk us out of what the Bible plainly teaches**, whether it be on salvation, the necessity of baptism, church organization or marriage-divorce-and-remarriage.

Most Bible doctrines are very easy to understand. We need help to misunderstand—and plenty of that kind of help is available. However, let us stand on God's Word and not be taken by **the Satan explanation!** ✝

Brian R. Kenyon is the Director of the Florida School of Preaching in Lakeland, Florida, USA.

The Lesser of Two Evils

Marilyn LaStrape

Webster defines "evil" as "morally wrong or bad; immoral; wicked; harmful; injurious." *Vines* defines "evil" as "destructive, grievous; in the moral or ethical sense, wicked; depravity; maliciousness."

The lesser of two evils. What does that mean? In the eyes of the masses, it generally means an acknowledgment that two choices are as wrong as two left shoes, but one is less offensive to our integrity than the other. This compromise opposes our core values and beliefs. Evil has been sanitized, accepted, tolerated, ignored and legitimized.

The late Mack Lyon delivered a lesson, "Deliver Us from Evil," on the longtime Sunday, weekly TV series, "In Search of the Lord's Way." Publishing Designs, Inc. made this broadcast available in booklet form in February 2002. On page 11 Mack Lyon said:

> My friend, for too long we have denied the reality of evil in our world. For too long we have labored in vain to make right that which is evil in the sight of God. For too long we have been silent about what God has said is evil. Evil does exist. If we didn't know it before, we should have learned it on September 11. Still the accommodative mind tries to rationalize the events of that day as a possible good—we shouldn't hold anyone accountable for it, because it's debatable. But how big or disastrous or destructive must evil be before it fits our definition of evil? Is the reckless, brutal murder of one person evil? Or must the number be three thousand? Or five thousand? Or at what number between one and five thousand?

The creation account in Genesis 2:9 records, ***"And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food. The tree of life was also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."*** God's command to Adam was stated forthrightly in Genesis 2:16-17. ***"And the LORD God commanded***

the man, saying, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.'" Satan deceived Eve with his lying tongue in Genesis 3:4b-5 by telling her, ***"You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."***

God condemns all evil and all evildoers. Proverbs 28:5, 10 respectively declares, ***"Evil men do not understand justice, but those who seek the LORD understand all." "Whoever causes the upright to go astray in an evil way, he himself will fall into his own pit; but the blameless shall inherit good."*** First John 3:11-12 declares, ***"For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. Any why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous."***

In His Sermon on the Mount in the model prayer of Matthew 6:9-13, Jesus prayed in verse 13, ***"And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen."*** Jesus also said in John 3:19-20, ***"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the***

light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."

Romans 12:17, 21 respectively records, ***"Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men." "Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good."*** In Romans 13, God's instructions are marked, traced out and fixed regarding submission to governing authorities. Romans 13:1 reads, ***"Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God."*** Verses 2-3 state those who resist authority will bring judgment on themselves. Rulers are not a terror to good works but to evil. Be unafraid of authority if you are doing good, and you will have praise from them. Verse 4 gives the reason for this. ***"For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil."***

Isaiah 5:20 exclaims, ***"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!"*** In his article, "The True Meaning of Grace—The Wrath of God," Wayne Jackson wrote, God has an "**intense and sustained** disposition towards evil and those who abandon themselves to it."

Marilyn LaStrape is a Christian writer and author who resides in Hewitt, Texas, USA.

Robison's Rubies Are every person's morals just as good as another's, or is there a standard of morality? After World War II, many Nazis faced trials at Nuremberg. Their defense was essentially that nobody could judge their national morals. Their nation had told them to kill Jews, and they were just obeying. They reasoned that it was wrong for Germans to be judged another country's law. Judge Robert Jackson famously responded that they were not being judged by American or British or Russian law, but by a higher law that "rises above the provincial and the transient." If nations could make their own conflicting moral laws and all of them be just as right, who could say Hitler's Nazis were wrong? No, there is an absolute moral standard given by God. Some things are always right, and some things always wrong.

Doctrine To Live By

Solomon's View of Death

Denny Petrillo

In Ecclesiastes 9, Solomon made a powerful and humbling observation. All are going to die. It does not matter if the person was righteous or wicked. Such will not change the course set up by God. It is His plan that all will die (Hebrews 9:27), except for those who are alive when Christ comes again (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

In Ecclesiastes 9:5-6, Solomon made a number of observations about death, which also need to be considered in light of a number of erroneous doctrines being taught by the religious world today. First, Solomon stated that ***"the dead do not know anything."*** This statement has led some to argue for an unconscious state for the dead and for others to conclude that the wicked dead are annihilated. Such doctrines clearly contradict plain biblical teaching, which demonstrate continued existence and awareness for the dead (Isaiah 14:9; Luke 16:19-31). Instead, Solomon was noting that the dead are ignorant of what is taking place on the earth (***"under the sun,"*** v. 6). Whatever activities transpire after they died are beyond their knowledge. This truth should defeat a number of erroneous practices today.

(1) There is no biblical support to pray to the dead. The dead (even those declared as "saints") are unable to hear, let alone answer, one's prayers. Our access to God is found only through Christ (1 Timothy 2:5).

(2) There is no biblical support to attempt to contact the dead. There are those who claim to have powers to bring up the dead for conversation, help or advice. Such séances are worthless because the dead have no knowledge of or contact with the living.

(3) There is no biblical support to worship the dead. Archeology has discovered countless cultures that offered sacrifices, libations, food, tools and money to their dead. There is abundant evidence of shrines and other places of worship built to worship the dead.

(4) There is no biblical support for the notion that our dead loved ones are aware of events that occur in our lives. While some may sing about "holes in the floor of heaven," through which our loved ones observe our lives, the fact is the dead are not privy to earthly events, conversations and deeds.

Second, Solomon stated that the dead have no ***"reward"*** or ***"share in all that is done under the earth."*** Time is opportunity. Once death occurs, there remains no longer opportunity to change anything. One can neither change what was done on the earth nor can he change his judgment after death. This truth also defeats a number of erroneous beliefs today.

(1) Some religious groups (e.g., Mormons) teach that religious acts (such as baptism) can be done on behalf of those who are dead. This practice supposes one who foolishly rejected God's will during his lifetime can seize the benefits of baptism while he is suffering the punishment of God in Hell. However, the Scriptures plainly teach that each one is accountable only for his own deeds and that righteousness (or wickedness) is not transferable (Exodus 32:33; Ezekiel 18:1-20; John 5:28-29; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Revelation 20:11-14).

(2) Some religious groups (e.g., Catholics) teach that one can, through prayers and contributions, change the condition of their loved ones. This teaching says that one who has ended up in so-called purgatory can be freed from this place through the offerings of the living. However, Solomon made it clear that death ends all opportunities to change one's fate. A person will be judged solely upon what he has done while alive—be it good or evil (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14; Romans 2:6).

(3) Some religious groups teach that all will be reincarnated (e.g., Hinduism). However, Solomon made it clear that there will be no future opportunities. Each person has only one occasion to make something of his or her life. There will be no second opportunities as one supposedly comes back reincarnated. After one dies, the next event will be Judgment (Hebrews 9:27).

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Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses
(James 3:13-18)

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

As the "wisdom" of the world grows further and further from God's wisdom, the contrast between the two becomes more stark. The world is saying that forging ahead to get one's way is *wise;* there is the growing attitude that "I can do whatever is in 'my own interest,' even if it means lying, cheating, stealing...whatever." This attitude and behavior are destructive to all involved, to individuals, to families, to associates in every walk of life.

The contrast is God's wisdom, which motivates us to live pure lives, doing good to those around us, and practicing righteousness which results in peace. The world counts such behavior as weakness and mocks those who don't "stand up for themselves."

Since the creation, Satan has continually worked to corrupt every soul, every family, every culture throughout history. We look back on eras when slavery was rampant, when a wife or children could be killed at the whim of the man of the house, and we think that those were barbarious times. Yet, slavery continues today—the strong imprisoning the weak. A "woman's rights" over her own body makes it legal for her to murder the infant developing in her womb. As such sensual, demonic behavior grows, mercy, righteousness and peace disappear.

The Heart of an Evangelist

Therman Hodge

Matthew 14, Mark 4 and Luke 8 provide three accounts of the same parable. Matthew and Mark's accounts are labeled as *parables of the sower* for the productive seed, the Word of God, falls on good soil and produces some 30, some 60 and some 100-fold. There is a difference in Luke's account; the productive seed falls on the good soil, which represents good and honest hearts. With patience, the seed bears fruit.

The evangelist's heart must be right. Speaking ability is great, but without God's love it reminds us of the clanging of a hammer on metal. Others will really never care how much we know until they know how much we care. God loved lost souls and showed how much He loved them (John 3:16).

Jesus also loved lost souls and showed how much He loved them (John 10:15). He could have called twelve legions of angels to protect Himself (Matthew 26:53), but He gave His life while we were yet sinners (Romans 5). Our Lord endured the suffering and the shame of the cross for us (Matthew 27:32-44). He loved us so much that He was willing to take our sin upon Himself, even though because of that, God would forsake Him (Matthew 27:46).

The apostles loved lost souls and went everywhere preaching and teaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. James, the brother of John, was killed with the sword because he preached the Gospel (Acts 12:1-2). Peter was thrown into prison (Acts 12:3-5), and John was exiled to the Isle of Patmos ***"on account of the Word of God"*** (Revelation 1:9). Paul preached in many places and paid the price for showing his love (2 Corinthians 11:24-27); we must think like the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 9:22-23). They all had to have the **right heart** to endure everything to declare the Gospel. Likewise, we must display the love of God, Christ and the apostles if we are to be evangelists.

In addition, there are some great examples of prophets and men of

the Old Testament who showed their good and honest hearts—Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-8), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20:7-9), Hananiah [Shadrak], Mishael [Meshach] and Azariah [Abednego] (Daniel 3:14-18). We, too, today need the right heart to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Every heart has a *No Trespassing* sign. Have you ever walked through another person's heart? Look carefully as you approach someone else, and notice that there is a sign just outside the heart's door that reads, ***"Enter by invitation only!"*** Hearts of men are in every condition imaginable (hurt, hard, broken, sad, perplexed, confused, afraid, weary, sick, seeking, loving, kind).

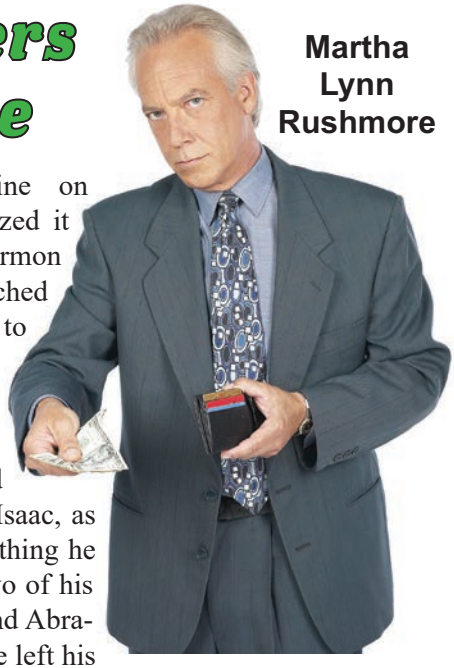
Not just anyone is welcomed inside one's heart. To gain entrance, it takes one with love in his eyes, understanding in his voice and sweetness in his ways. There is one Gospel, and yet, without the key to the heart's door, fifty Gospels would be of no value. Unfortunately, people associate closely for years without ever finding the key to each other's heart.

There are good and honest hearts in the world today who are looking for **the** answer to the most pressing questions—"Why am I here?" "Where am I going?" "How do I get there?" We as evangelists have the answer that they need. **The evangelist still stands as the link between the heart of God and the heart of man** (2 Corinthians 4:7). ***"How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?"*** (Romans 10:14 NKJV).

Therman Hodge is a Gospel preacher and a short-term missionary to several countries. He resides in Meridian, Mississippi, USA.

Twelve Givers of the Bible

Martha Lynn Rushmore



I found this sermon outline on Louis' bulletin board and recognized it immediately. I knew it was a sermon my late husband Bob Noland preached many times. So, I decided it needed to be put into an article.

1. **The first giver we find in Genesis 22:1-19 is Abraham, the willing giver.** He was told by God to offer his only son, Isaac, as a sacrifice. Abraham got everything he needed for his trip. He took two of his servants and Isaac with him, and Abraham headed for Mt. Moriah. He left his servants at the foot of the mountain, but Abraham took Isaac, the wood for the altar and whatever else he needed. On the way to offer the sacrifice, Isaac asked his father, ***"Where is the lamb?"*** Abraham's answer was, ***"God will provide."*** This shows the faith of Abraham.

2. **The next giver is the big little giver in Mark 12:42-44.** This was the poor widow who gave two mites (a few copper coins to us). This was all she had. It does not seem that she gave much according to our standards, but when you give all, the amount does not matter. She gave because she loved the Lord.

3. **Now, we come to the stingy giver in 1 Samuel 15:20-24.** This giver is King Saul and the Israelites that went to war against the Amalekites. God told them to destroy all, which meant everything and everyone, including the animals and the enemy king. The people and Saul

thought it would better to bring these spoils back to offer to God for sacrifices. However, God wants obedience.

4. **We find a sacrificial giver in 2 Samuel 24:24.** Now this was David. He refused to sacrifice something that cost him nothing. To sacrifice, we must give of ourselves or something that costs us. King David wanted to buy a threshing floor to build an altar to the Lord. Araunah wanted to give it to David, but David said, "No." If he could not buy the threshing floor, he would not take it. You see, it would not have been a sacrifice, because it wouldn't have cost him anything.

5. **Our next givers are covetous and found in Acts 5:1-11.** These givers were Ananias and Sapphira. They sold their land like Barnabas did, but instead of giving all to the church, they held some back. The problem was they tried to lie to God and say they had sold their land for less than they did. When Ananias went before the apostles to give the money, Peter asked Ananias why he lied to God. Immediately Ananias fell dead. Those at the door took him out and buried him. About three hours later, Sapphira came in and also said they had sold the land for so much. She did not know that Ananias had died. Peter asked her why she was lying to God. He told her those at the door who buried her husband were there and were going to bury her, too. She immediately fell dead and was taken out and buried.

6. **The sixth set of givers are consecrated givers in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5; 11:8-9.** This group of givers were those of the Macedonian church who first gave of themselves to the Lord. They did not have much riches, but they gave freely to the work of the Lord.

7. **In Acts 3:1-10, Peter and John were life givers.** They had gone into the Temple through the gate called Beautiful. There was a lame man at the gate begging alms. Peter told him they had no money but what they had they would give him. They made him well. He had been lame from birth, and now the beggar was able to jump, run and walk. They gave him freedom to move around and not to depend on others.

8. **Eighthly, we come to the voluntary giver, Zacchaeus in Luke 19:1-9.** Without being asked, he volunteered to give half of his goods to feed the poor. This was a great example of what Christianity is all about.

9. **In Matthew 6:2, we come to the reward givers who did so to be seen of men.** We are not to do good works for others to be seen of men. We are not to brag about our good deeds. If this is what we do, we will get our reward from men, not from God.

10. **The unpretentious giver is found in Luke 10:25-37.** This man is known to all of us as the Good Samaritan. There was a Jewish man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; he had been beaten and left for dead. A priest and a Levite saw him and passed him by on the other side of the road. These two "men of God" should have helped him. Thirdly, along came the Samaritan. He was considered worthless by Jews. He stopped to wash the man's sores. The Good Samaritan put the injured man on his animal and took him to an inn. He told the innkeeper to take care of this man and that when he came back he would pay him what was owed. Jesus was teaching a parable on "Who is my Neighbor?" Of course, the answer was that the one who took care of the man who was beaten and left for dead had acted the part of a neighbor.

11. **Then, there are the perfumed givers, the Philippians, whose gifts were *"an odor of sweet smell"* (Philippians 4:17-18).** These gifts given to Paul were an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.

12. **The greatest giver is God, Who gave *"his unspeakable gift"* (John 3:16).** God gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to come to this earth, to live among humans and to be crucified on the cross —a cruel death for all mankind. Jesus was the best gift this world has ever and will ever receive. Through His death on the cross, we have the promise of eternal life.

What kind of giver are you? Are you a giver for your reward from man or for your reward from the Lord? Let's be givers for the Lord.

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What Will You Give to the Lord?

Roger Wright

Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood." (Mark 12:41-44)

Have you ever heard someone say something like, "If I were rich, I would give a lot of money to the Lord's work"? I think of all kinds of good I would do…"? The question for us is this: Even if you are not rich, **what are you doing for the Lord with what you have?**

Jesus praised the widow who gave the two mites, a tiny amount of money, and He commended her for her generosity. **Whether rich or poor, we should give generously. Regardless of our social position, we should give sacrificially. No matter who we are, we should give as an act of loving worship to God who has blessed us with all things.**

Notice in the incident above, that Jesus made no promise that God would multiply her physical blessings because she gave all. Jesus made no promise that her life would be easier, or even that she would have enough to eat that night. He simply noted what she had done without any expectations, except the pleasure of God. Whatever she did or did not get back in this life, we know that her good works for the Lord did not go unnoticed. Likewise, whatever we prosper in this life though, we give sacrificially in the here and now, we know that our good works for the Lord will not go unnoticed or be disregarded in the last day.

We often spend too much time comparing ourselves, our gifts or our works with others. Realize that God our Father sees us as individuals. He knows what we are capable of doing. He loves us and expects us only to give our best, but He does expect our best.

Take a look at your life: your money and other resources, your abilities, and your time. Then, give sacrificially to God. Don't make a show of it. God rewards what is done in secret (Matthew 6:4). Trust in Him, not in yourself. Know that He is a great and awesome God whose power is unbounded. Throw yourself totally into His service and into His care every day. In doing so, God will see you and bless you for giving yourself to Him.

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Worship as Spiritual Discipline

Ed Gallagher

The life of faith requires discipline. The same is true of any worthwhile endeavor. Parents must discipline their children, athletes must discipline their bodies, students must discipline themselves to perform well in school and Christians wishing to grow in their faithfulness to God must discipline their spirits. Being a good student does not happen without work. Being a faithful Christian, one growing in his or her imitation of Christ and love of other people, one exhibiting more fully the fruit of the Spirit, does not happen without discipline.

Jesus provides the perfect example of one who was disciplined in terms of His spiritual life. His knowledge and understanding of Scripture amazed His elders even while He was very young (Luke 2:46–47). He continued to draw from Scripture throughout His ministry (Luke 4:18–19; 24:27), even in ways that frustrated and confounded His opponents (Matthew 4:1–11; Mark 12:24, 35–37). Such intimate acquaintance with Scripture surely reflected frequent study and meditation by Jesus. He also reserved time to pray, whether early in the morning (Mark 1:35) or during troubling times (Mark 14:32–42). Jesus also worshipped regularly, frequently appearing in synagogues (Matthew 4:23; Mark 1:21; 3:1; Luke 4:16). Each of these disciplines certainly contributed to His ***"increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men"*** (Luke 2:52).

These same practices should give shape and substance to the spiritual lives of Christians today. Here, I especially want to emphasize the spiritual discipline derived from regular participation in the public worship of the church. In some ways, simply the act of meeting together with the church each Sunday is a discipline that leads to spiritual maturity. Joining with other Christians each Lord's Day encourages us to love each other more

intimately, and seeing fellow disciples striving to live righteously and please God inspires us to do the same. The discipline of gathering with fellow Christians for worship every week leads to spiritual growth.

More than that, the individual actions that constitute our worship are themselves spiritual disciplines if we think about them in the appropriate way. Traditionally in churches of Christ, we have talked about five particular acts of worship: singing, praying, reading Scripture, giving and communion (Lord's Supper). Though Scripture does not provide a list of these actions as such, it does mention each of these elements as necessary parts of New Testament worship. **However, we should approach these acts not as requirements that must be fulfilled before we leave the assembly, but as disciplines through which we mature in our spirit, as opportunities for us to grow closer to God.**

When we sing, we proclaim the goodness of God and His rich blessings toward us, and we declare our allegiance to Him above all other masters in this world. Singing gives us the opportunity to remove the focus from ourselves, our needs, our desires and redirect our hearts toward God. We announce to the world—sometimes as loud as we can shout—that we serve a living God, an all-powerful Creator of the heavens and the earth. Other "gods" try to get our attention, but we worship only one God. We sing words like "All to Jesus I surrender." It may be that during the previous week we have not surrendered all things to Jesus. It may be that we have exalted other things (family, work, pleasure) over Jesus. It may be that the words of the song do not accurately reflect our lives. Yet, that does not mean that we should stop singing the song. No! We must sing it. We must transform our hearts by singing this song, so that we dedicate our lives to making true the words that we sing. Our songs can challenge us to live up to the standards of the words that our mouths proclaim. When we sing "Fairest Lord Jesus" or "How Great Thou Art," and at the same time we dedicate our hearts to these songs, we discipline our spirits to conform to these powerful words.

When someone leads a prayer in public worship, and we pray silently along with that person, the effect can be much like the singing. The prayer

leader says words that may not reflect our own lives. He thanks God for the blessings of life, when we may want to attribute our blessings to our own hard work. He thanks God for saving us from our sins, when we probably do not want to think about our sins and our need for God's salvation. He asks God to lead our lives, when we may prefer to direct our own steps. He asks God to deliver us from evil, when we may want to give in to temptation. As we pray along with this public prayer, if we think about the prayer as a spiritual discipline, it will help us to live the holy life to which we have been called.

Scripture has always formed an important element in our worship. The sermon takes Scripture as its basis and attempts to explain God's Word to God's people. Studying Scripture is how we come to know God. Clearly, our lives often diverge from the teachings we find in Scripture. Therefore, the regular public reading and proclamation of God's Word serves as a reminder of our own inadequacy and of our dependence on God's grace. It also molds us into the people God wants us to be.

Each Sunday, we take up a collection to help the work of the church. We give our money to God. There are other things on which we could spend this money. We could use it for our own pleasure. Yet, when the church takes up the collection and we throw our money into the plate or the basket, that action serves as a declaration that we serve only one God and to Him belongs all that we have. We do not serve Mammon, but only God (Matthew 6:24). We do not serve ourselves; we do not serve our pleasures. No false god will get our allegiance. The contribution is an opportunity for spiritual discipline.

The Lord's Supper is a rich symbol that can have a variety of meanings. One of its least appreciated meanings is that it calls us to imitate our Master's sacrifice. Paul criticized the Corinthian practice of taking the Lord's Supper because the Christians in Corinth were focusing on themselves and not on other people (1 Corinthians 11:17–34). The Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus to remind us of His self-sacrifice. It, then, should serve as a challenge to us to imitate that self-sacrifice. Just as Jesus sacrificed Himself for me, so also, I should sacrifice myself for others, particularly for my fellow

Christians, members of the body of Christ. If I do not, if I harbor bad feelings toward my brothers and sisters, and even while I eat the bread and drink the cup, I have anger toward another Christian, I am not taking the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:27). Instead, the sacrifice of Jesus provides the model for the way I should treat other people, and the Lord's Supper reminds me of this every week. If I am quick to judge others harshly, to be angry with others or to gossip about them, the bread and the cup—which represent the body and blood of my Lord—condemn such sins in me and inspire me to live like Jesus.

The public worship of the church is one of the most important spiritual disciplines in which we participate as Christians. It does not replace private devotion, including Bible reading and prayer, but meeting together with the saints is something that God not only expects but which is essential for our own spiritual development. Worshipping God regularly with other Christians and thinking about the acts of worship in which we participate will help us to live disciplined lives in imitation of our Lord.

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They Simply Sang

Dalton Key

When did instruments of music first make their appearance in public, post-New Testament worship? Of course, the term "post-New Testament" is used because of the obvious absence of mechanical instruments in Christian worship as chronicled by the New Testament Scriptures.

Some scholars believe that instruments were introduced into worship in A.D. 510. Others contend that Pope Vitalian introduced them in 660. Still others who are considered expert in the field of religious history point to 951, 1250 or even 1290 as possible dates.

What does it matter when instruments were first introduced? If they were brought in after the days of the New Testament, and thus without sanction, authority or consideration from inspired penmen, they came too late and with no justification.

The early church was taught and encouraged to sing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16); not a word of New Testament Scripture authorizes any other form of music in Christian worship.

We should have little interest in what worshipers were or were not doing in the sixth, seventh, tenth or thirteenth centuries. However, we should care, and we can be certain, what faithful brethren were doing in worship during the days of the apostles.

New Testament Christians were heeding the words of Heaven—words which still read today as they have read for centuries. ***"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord"*** (Ephesians 5:19). The early Christians simply sang, as should we also.

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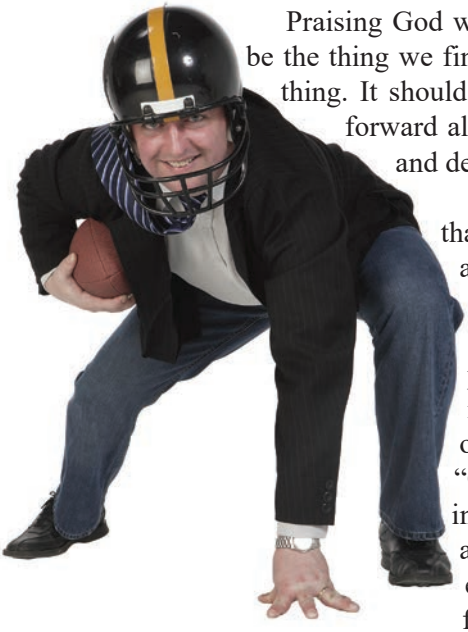
What We Need to Change to Make Worship More Enjoyable

Wes McAdams

For many Christians, the worship assembly feels like a **duty**, in the worst sense of the word. Coming to the worship assembly is something they feel they **must** do, but not something they **enjoy** doing. This has left many saying, "It shouldn't be this way; worship should be enjoyable!" I wholeheartedly agree! But I'm afraid the way many are trying to make worship more enjoyable is resulting in making worship shallow, meaningless and not even worship at all.

Why Worship Should Be Enjoyable



Praising God with our Christian families should be the thing we find more enjoyable than any other thing. It should be something to which we look forward all week long. It should be our joy and delight.

This is true for the same reason that the night a football team wins a big game, the fans can't wait to talk to one another about the big win. They call each other on the phone, they post about it on social media and when they see each other in person, they excitedly say, "Can you believe it? Wasn't that incredible!" They enjoy talking about it almost as much as they enjoyed watching the game in the first place.

Everyone who has ever enjoyed something knows this feeling. When we're on a great vacation we almost can't wait for it to be over so we can get home, tell people about it and show them the pictures. When we have a great meal, we can't wait to share with someone how great it was.

In fact, we could say, half the enjoyment is found in **expressing** our enjoyment. Isn't it frustrating and disappointing to experience something great, but yet be unable to share it with someone? C.S. Lewis wrote about this, saying, "We delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses, but completes the enjoyment."

When we truly enjoy God for who He is, then we will be longing, aching and dying to sing out to someone, "Isn't God awesome!" Then, when he or she answers back, "Yes! Yes, He is awesome!" we experience the greatest pleasure available in this life.

What We DON'T Need to Change

When people don't experience the pleasure that we intuitively know worship should bring, they often try to manufacture it through artificial means. They adjust the lighting, update the music style, incorporate drama and skits and use video and other technology—all in an effort to manipulate people's emotions and **help them enjoy worship**.

However, is this even worship? Are those who are enjoying this experience really enjoying God, or are they simply enjoying an entertaining show? If it takes a change in lighting or a change in music style for you to enjoy sharing with your church family how great God is, maybe you need to stop and ask yourself if what you're doing can even be called **worship**.

Worship comes from a heart that has been stirred by the goodness of God, as revealed through the Gospel, and **not** by a heart that has been manipulated by dimmed lights and talented performers.

What We DO Need to Change

If we want to make worship more enjoyable, here is what we do need to change—**our hearts!** We need to fill our hearts with the "word of Christ" so it dwells within us "richly," and then we'll be able to, "[sing]

psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in [our] ***hearts to God"*** (Colossians 3:16).

When we daily allow God to reveal Himself to us through the ***"word of Christ,"*** then our enjoyment grows and grows throughout the week, finally being completed when we assemble to **"**[address] ***one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in [our] hearts to God"*** (Ephesians 5:19). This weekly assembly is just the foretaste of the great assembly that will gather around God's throne in Heaven to enjoy Him forever!

Sadly, many of us don't think of the worship assembly in this way. We don't look forward to it. We're not longing, aching and dying to come together with our church family and sing to another, "Our God is an awesome God." Some are content to simply show up and say, "I've done my duty."

God is not honored by the praise of people who do not enjoy Him. If we don't enjoy worship, we don't need to change the music or the lights, but rather we need to change our hearts. We need to start enjoying God every moment of every day, and then, we will desperately long for our enjoyment to be completed by praising Him with our church family. ✝

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How Do You Measure Up?

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 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? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom."

"But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only. But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be."

Matthew 16:24-27; 24:36-39

Smith climbs to the top of Mt. Sinai to get close enough to talk to God. Looking up, he asks the Lord. "God, what does a million years mean to you?"

The Lord replies, "A minute."

Smith asks, "And what does a million dollars mean to you?"

The Lord replies, "A penny."

Smith asks, "Can I have a penny?"

The Lord replies, "In a minute."

"Sir, your daughter says she loves me, and she can't live without me, and she wants to marry me."

"And you're asking my permission to marry her?"

"No, I'm asking you to make her leave me alone."

One night at the dinner table, the wife commented, "When we were first married you took the small piece of steak and gave me the larger. Now you take the large one and leave me the smaller. You don't love me anymore."

"Nonsense, darling," replied the husband, "you just cook better now."

Hospital regulations require a wheel chair for patients being discharged. However, while working as a student nurse, I found one elderly gentleman already dressed and sitting on the bed with a suitcase at his feet, who insisted he didn't need my help to leave the hospital.

After a chat about rules being rules, he reluctantly let me wheel him to the elevator.

On the way down I asked him if his wife was meeting him.

I don't know," he said, "She's still upstairs in the bathroom changing out of her hospital gown."

A blonde is overweight, so her doctor puts her on a diet. "I want you to eat regularly for two days, then skip a day, and repeat this procedure for two weeks. The next time I see you, you'll have lost at least five pounds." When the blonde returns, she's lost nearly 20 pounds.

"Why that's amazing!" the doctor says. "Did you follow my instructions?"

The blonde nods.

"I'll tell you though, I thought I was going to drop dead that third day"

"From hunger, you mean?" asked the doctor.

"No, from all that skipping."

Two little boys, ages 8 and 10, were excessively mischievous. They

were always getting into trouble, and their parents knew if any mischief occurred in their town, the two boys were probably involved.

The boys' mother heard that a preacher in town had been successful in disciplining children, so she asked if he would speak with the boys. The preacher agreed, but he asked to see them individually.

The mother sent the 8-year-old in the morning, and the older boy was to see the preacher in the afternoon. The preacher, a huge man with a deep booming voice, sat the younger boy down and asked him sternly, "Do you know where God is, son?"

The boy made no response, sitting there wide-eyed with his mouth hanging open. So the preacher repeated the question in an even sterner tone, "Where is God?" Again, the boy made no attempt to answer. The preacher then shook his finger in the boy's face and bellowed, "WHERE is GOD?"

The boy screamed, bolted from the room, ran directly home, and dove into his closet, slamming the door behind him. When his other brother found him in the closet, he asked, "What happened?"

The younger brother, gasping for breath, replied, "We are in BIG trouble this time! GOD is missing, and they think WE did it!"

The little girl asked her mother, "How did the human race appear?"

The mother answered, "God made Adam and Eve and they had children, so was all mankind made."

Two days later the girl asked her father the same question. The father answered, "Many years ago there were monkeys from which the human race evolved."

The confused girl returned to her mother and said, "Mom, how is it possible that you told me the human race was created by God, and Dad said they developed from monkeys?"

The mother answered, "Well, dear, it is very simple. I told you about my side of the family and your father told you about his."

The teacher is droning away in the classroom when he notices a student sleeping way up in the back row. The teacher shouts to the sleeping student's neighbor, "Hey, wake that student up!

The neighbor yells back, "You put him to sleep—you wake him up!"

Sentence Thoughts

Lots of people love their jobs. It's the work they hate.

Based on my figures, I can retire five years after I die.

In a store: Unattended children will be given espresso and a free kitten.

Skinny people are easier to kidnap. Stay safe—eat cake and ice cream.

These days about half the stuff in my shopping cart says, "For fast relief."

The most efficient labor-saving device is still money.

I think senility is going to be a fairly smooth transition for me.

"Be in Subjection"

Romans 13

Paul Holland

Interpersonal relationships are the source of the strongest bonds of love and the most intense animosities and hostilities. When Paul wrote Romans, he was writing to a church that was composed of both Jews and Gentiles. In chapters 9-11, he taught them about unity from a theological perspective. Then, he had to teach them about unity from a practical perspective.

"Be in subjection." That idea of humility and subjection runs through this whole chapter, as it runs through our whole lives. First, be in subjection to the "governing authorities."

> ***Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor."*** (vs. 1-7).

Why be in subjection to the ***"governing authorities"***? Because God set them in place (vs. 1). Therefore, to oppose the governing authorities is to oppose God (vs. 2). Governing authorities are not a threat to those who do good but rather to those who do evil (vs. 3). Governing authorities

are ministers of God, to bring wrath on those who practice evil, even if they have to use the sword (vs. 4). Therefore, be in subjection to those authorities for the sake of your conscience as well as avoiding the wrath of God (vs. 5). Part of that submission certainly includes the payment of taxes, custom, fear and honor (vs. 6-7).

"Be in subjection." Don't cheat people out of what you owe them. Don't embezzle. Love one another (vs. 8). Why? Because loving your neighbor really brings everything to a completion that the Law required. Think, Paul suggests, about the Ten Commandments, which related to interpersonal relationships (vs. 9). They can all be summed up in the commandment found in Leviticus 19:18, ***"Love your neighbor as yourself."***

Consequently, love does not wrong one's neighbor (vs. 10). Speaking of neighbors, Paul called on Christians to awake from any spiritual lethargy because salvation is nearer than when they first became Christians (vs. 11). Indeed, two thousand years later, we can honestly say it is even nearer! The night that hovers over this world is nearly gone, and the day of eternity is near (vs. 12). Christians need to lay aside works of darkness, which Paul illustrated, and put on the ***"armor of light,"*** which he listed in more detail in Ephesians 6.

However, as for the works of darkness, works which hinder one's love for his neighbor and impede unity among Christians (the subject of chapters 14-15), are given in verses 13-14. ***"Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts."*** Christians should behave as those who have nothing to fear, not engaging in carousing, drunkenness, promiscuity or sensuality, nor in strife and jealousy. Those are works of the flesh, works of darkness, and they hinder expressions of true love between Christians as well as all humanity.

Rather, everyone needs to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, as Paul taught back in Romans 6:3-4 and again in Galatians 3:26-27. Do not walk according to the flesh, fulfilling its lusts (vs. 14). If we are in subjection to Christ, then these good behaviors will come naturally.

Paul Holland works with the church of Christ in Swartz Creek, Michigan, USA.

Four Questions

David A. Sargent

For several days, Doug Greenway was repeatedly asked four questions to assess his condition. He writes:

"I had brain surgery on December 11 and spent four nights in the ICU. Every 30 minutes one of the nurses would come in and ask what I thought were dumb questions. They knew I was having blood pressure problems from the surgery and did not want to miss it if I began to decline mentally." The four questions were:

1. Can you tell me your name?
2. Do you know where you are?
3. Do you know why you are here?
4. Can you give me a "thumbs up"?

Consider some spiritual applications of these basic questions:

1. Can you tell me your name? Who are you? Your ability to recall your name can be an indicator of your health, but it's your identity in relation to Christ that is most important. For ***"salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved"*** (Acts 4:12). That name is Jesus Christ. Only through Jesus can we be saved (John 14:6).

2. Do you know where you are? Are you "in" or "outside" of Christ? In Christ is found every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3). Outside of Christ there is no hope (Ephesians 2:12). Penitent believers are baptized into Christ (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26-27). Are you in Christ? Are you following Him faithfully?

3. Do you know why you are here? People have sought to answer that question in a myriad of ways since the world began. The correct answer is: We are here to glorify the God who made us. ***"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God"*** (1 Corinthians 10:31). We glorify God by being Christians, Christ-followers (1 Peter 4:16).

4. Can you give me a "thumbs up"? Are you doing well in living by God's

priorities? The apostle Paul gave a "thumbs up" near the end of his life:

> ***For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing"*** (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

The key to answering these questions correctly is Christ, for God loves us so much that He gave His Son to die on the cross for our sins (John 3:16). It is through the gift of Jesus that we understand what life is all about and how to receive eternal life through Him.

God will save and give eternal life to those who place their faith and trust in Jesus: ***"…Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household"*** (Acts 16:30-31). Turn from sins in repentance: ***"Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent…"*** (Acts 17:30-31). Confess Jesus before men: ***"…if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation"*** (Romans 10:9-10). Be baptized (immersed) into Christ for the forgiveness of sins: ***"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit"*** (Acts 2:38). God will continue to cleanse from sin those who continue to walk in the light of His word: ***"… if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"*** (1 John 1:7-9).

So ask yourself these four questions. Answer them by saying "Yes" to Jesus through your trusting obedience. Won't You? ✠

David A. Sargent works with the Church of Christ at Creekwood in Mobile, Alabama, USA.

The Christian Woman and Modesty

John P. Simpson

"In like manner, that woman adorn themselves in modest apparel..." (1 Timothy 2:9.)

What is modest apparel? The word translated "modest" (*aidos*) in this passage means:

1. Having regard for others.
2. That which would always restrain a good man of an unworthy act; and would sometimes restrain a bad man.
3. Opposite to anything which would likely arouse or distract the thoughts of others (*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 14).

It seems that no further definition should be necessary for the prudent and consecrated Christian who wants to comply with biblical instruction.

Your Dress May Cause Others to Sin

Someone wrote, "The darkest chapter in King David's life had for its introduction a woman who exposed her body for public viewing. Bathsheba still has many modern daughters who lead men to lust, sin and finally to damnation."

Parents, if you allow your daughters to grow up parading in scanty undress, they will have no sense of propriety,

shame or embarrassment about publicly disrobing as adults. Neither will they learn how to deal with lust, sexuality or Christian feminine influence. They will be thoroughly programmed in ***going the way of all flesh***.

If Modest, Your Dress May Point Others to God

Is modesty required only for those past forty, wrinkled and infirm? Or, is it biblically bound also upon the young and restless whom God has endowed with native beauty and charm? Do sunshine, warm weather or water automatically make God's instruction void and release the Christian from his or her obligation to total abstinence from immodesty (1 Timothy 2:9-10)?

If modesty is characteristic of ***"women professing godliness"*** (1 Timothy 2:10), it is axiomatic that those who dress immodestly are professing ungodliness. The word translated "profess" (*epaggellomai*) in this passage literally means that one has laid claim to and has given herself out as an expert in the practice of Christianity, through public pronouncement of modest dress (*Arndt-Gingrich Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 280).

"In like manner, that woman adorn themselves in modest apparel…" (1 Timothy 2:9)

A good-hearted person can embrace a minimum of half a dozen passages of Scripture and present himself or herself for New Testament baptism; he or she has to embrace only this one passage to present himself or herself in proper Christian attire. More positive teaching at home, in Bible classes, and preaching from our pulpits on this and related passages is imperative to produce proper public Christian decorum in this permissive generation.

The Christian's case for total abstinence from immodesty can be opened and closed with this one passage. However, many other New Testament passages dealing with influence, purity and chastity support and strengthen it. God knew that our men and women could affect the effectiveness and destiny of the church through their modest or immodest dress. ✝

John P. Simpson resides in Memphis, Tennessee, USA.

Expressing Our Love While There Is Time

Raymond Elliott

The apostle Paul was in a Roman prison when he wrote the letter of 2 Timothy to his ***"son in the faith,"*** Timothy. This is the last recorded letter Paul ever wrote. In the 2 Timothy 4:9 and 21, there are two statements made by Paul that greatly encouraged the younger evangelist to make every effort possible to come see him before it was too late. Paul wrote, ***"be diligent to come to me quickly"*** (v. 9) and ***"Do your utmost to come before winter…"*** (21). There are two reasons implied in these statements for Timothy to make every effort to go to Paul as soon as possible. One is that winter would not be the time to travel by boat. The wintry storms made it very dangerous to travel on the seas. Paul had experienced shipwreck during that season of the year (Acts 27). No doubt, the most important reason for Timothy to make haste to come to him as quickly as possible is found in the words of Paul in verses 6-8. ***"For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand."*** Should Timothy tarry too long, it would be too late to see Paul alive, for his "departure" was at hand, that is, his death was imminent.

In life, there are words we need to express and actions we should take before it is too late, that is, we should do them before "winter" comes.

- Husbands and wives should express their love for one another daily. There is always the possibility of a heart attack, a stroke or an accident that could take the life of your mate. The last words spoken to your husband or wife could be, "I love you."
- Parents need to express their love to their children, regardless of their age. They need to know you care for them, not only by the physical and material things you provide for them, but a hug and "I love you" will give assurance that you really do love them. As a Christian, you desire that they live for Jesus Christ so the family can be together with God in eternity.

- Children need to express their love and appreciation to their parents as well. They should respect and honor them (Ephesians 6:1-2). Aged parents, especially, desire to hear from their adult children who live long distances from them.
- Siblings should stay in contact with one another. Efforts should be made to be together whenever possible. It is very difficult to give up a brother or sister to death. Wishing that you had expressed your love and care for one another after death has separated you from a loved one is of no avail. That is why you need to do it before "winter" comes, otherwise it will be too late.
- Also, brothers and sisters *in Christ* should express their love to one another. We are ***"children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"*** (Galatians 3:26). We are to love one another as Christ has loved us (John 14:12). We are the family of God.

Those who have not given their lives to Christ and who have not obeyed the Gospel (Romans 1:16; Acts 2:36-38) should no longer tarry, because "winter" (death) might overtake them (Hebrews 9:27), and they would pass into eternity without God. "Winter" (death) is coming to us all. Now is the time for us to express our heartfelt feelings to our loved ones and to do what we can to help others while we still have the time and opportunity (John 9:4; Galatians 6:10).

The clock of life is wound but once
And no man has the power
To tell just when the hands will stop
At late or early hour.
Now is the only time you own
Live, love, toil with a will
Place no faith in tomorrow
For the hands may then be still.

~ Kenneth L. Fielder

Raymond Elliott preaches for the Capitol Heights congregation in Montgomery, Alabama, USA.

Ten Precepts to Teach Your Kids

Ronald D. Reeves

One of our greatest gifts from the Lord and one of our greatest responsibilities that we bear involve our children and our nurturing care of them. An unidentified author, respectful of the burdens of parenthood, suggested the following things to teach our children.

1. Love God as the Lord of your life with all your heart, soul, mind and strength (Mark 12:30).
2. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).
3. Love God's Book above all other books, and hunger and thirst for its message (Matthew 5:6).
4. Honor your father and mother, and obey them in the Lord (Ephesians 6:1-2).
5. Love and respect your fellow men, even as you do yourselves (Matthew 22:39).
6. Earn your bread in the sweat of your face (Genesis 3:19).
7. Live a life of integrity, truthfulness and honor (Job 26:5).
8. Help the weak, the poor and the unfortunate around you (Romans 15:1).
9. Be good citizens and accept your social and civic responsibilities (1 Peter 2:13).
10. Be loyal soldiers of Jesus (2 Timothy 2:3-4).

Though not an exhaustive listing of personal duties in this realm of activity, this brief listing will surely provide a wonderful beginning to the task of parenting. May all parents be blessed!

Ronald D. Reeves is a longtime preacher who lives in Arkansas, USA.

Our Children

Ken Tyler

"Children," what a wonderful word! We are told in Psalm 127:3-5, ***"…Children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them…"*** We see from these verses that children are wonderful blessings who bring much joy to our lives. Jesus said, ***"…Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven,"*** and on another occasion He said, ***"…Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of God"*** (Matthew 18:3; 19:14). In these verses, Jesus pointed out how beautiful and wonderful little children are.

All of us know that children grow up so fast. It seems that in a matter of no time they are teenagers, and then before you know it, they have graduated from high school and gone from home. I think one of the greatest mistakes many of us make is not spending enough time with our children. We live in a hectic world with great demands, and it seems there is just not enough time. Too often, the family is neglected. I am convinced this is one of the main reasons divorce has increased in leaps and bounds the last few years. Families do not have or take time for one another. The children suffer, and the marriage relationship suffers.

I don't know what the answer is to your particular situation, but let me stress these things. Don't neglect your children. Spend as much time with them as you possibly can. Don't miss their birthday parties, take them fishing, encourage them at school and support them in their recreational activities. Our children need us. Soon those 18 years will be gone. I hope we won't look back and say, "Why didn't I spend more time with my children?"

The story is told of a little fellow returning home from school who visited his father in the workshop back of the garage. His dad gave him a

piece of gum and told him to run on. Later, he came back, and his father gave him a quarter. A third time he returned, and his dad snapped, "Son, I gave you gum and twenty-five cents, what more do you want?" The little boy replied, **"Daddy, I want you."** May we never forget that it takes time to be a parent, to mold character, to build a boy or girl.

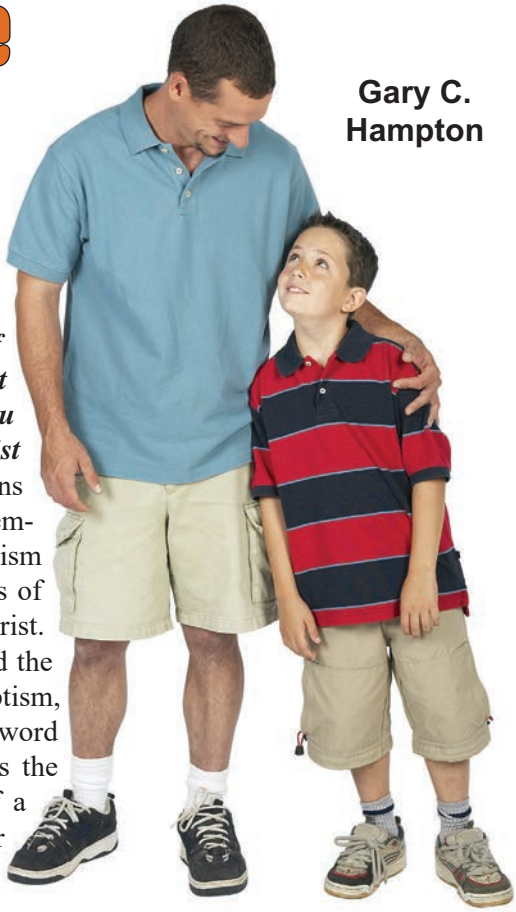
Ken Tyler is the preacher for the Lord's church in Arab, Alabama, USA.

Kenney's Pennies

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness" (2 Peter 3:10-11). There were those who did not think the flood would happen either. When you study the evidence for a global flood, you are confirming this testimony too.

The Cause of our Sonship

Gary C. Hampton



"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:26-27). Paul's statement demonstrates that prior to baptism the Christians in the churches of Galatia were outside of Christ. They became children of God the day they put on Christ in baptism, according to verse 27. The word "for," in that verse, "adduces the cause or gives the reason of a preceding statement" (Thayer 109). The present tense is used consistently in verse 26. Paul described the current condition of those in the churches of Galatia by saying they were sons of God. Baptism, therefore, is essential to make one a child of God and place him in Christ.

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

What Is a Sin Unto Death?

J.D. Conley

The apostle Paul wrote these inspired words, ***"If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin; and there is a sin unto death"*** (1 John 5:16-17). What is the proper understanding of this verse?

This passage needn't be puzzling to us. The subject is praying on behalf of a brother or sister in Christ. In doing so, our prayer may be effective or ineffective, depending on the circumstances. One thing is certain, there is ***"a sin unto death."*** Yet, what sin is it, and what is meant

by the term ***"death?"*** The sin is not classified and should be understood as sin in general, since any sin could be ***"sin unto the death."*** Even though any sin could be engaged in impenitently up until the moment of physical death, ***"death"*** here refers to spiritual death. It is this sin for which it is useless to pray because the sinner will neither confess it nor repent of it (James 5:16ff; 1 John 1:9; Revelation 2:5). His or her persistent sinning has brought about spiritual death, and he or she will physically die enslaved in sin if failing to turn from the sin. Thus, the ***"sin unto death"*** is an attitude of heart. Any Christian who sins and steadfastly refuses to repent is spiritually dead (John 12:37ff; Ephesians 4:9; 1 Timothy 4:2; Hebrews 3:7ff). Hence, it is futile to pray for such a hardened brother or sister. For this reason, John stated, ***"I do not say that he should pray for it."*** Although John does not prohibit us from praying for such a person and his or her sin, we are not commanded to do so. If we do pray for such a person, there is no assurance that God will hear, much less answer, our prayer.

However, this passage also mentions ***"a sin not unto death"*** and for this occasion, prayer is useful. Any Christian who confesses sin and repents should be and needs to be the object of our prayers. A tender-hearted brother or sister who shows contrition for sin obviously retains a spiritual pulse. For them, there is hope and joyful expectation of forgiveness and ultimately eternal salvation.

To sincerely ask if you have sinned ***"a sin unto death"*** is a strong indication you have not. It's those whose ***"conscience*** [has been] ***seared with a hot iron"*** (1 Timothy 4:2) who are ***"past feeling"*** (Ephesians 4:19) that have sinned ***"a sin unto death."*** May God help us to always remember that the ***"wages of sin is death"*** (Romans 6: 23).

J.D. Conley preaches for the Harmar Hill Church of Christ in Marietta, Ohio, USA.

A wide variety of living organisms use bioluminescence (light produced by a living organism). Depending on the creature, the light it produces may be used for camouflage, attracting prey or a mate, defense, warning, communication, and illumination. "The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1 NKJV).

Scavenger Hunt

through Ephesians

Rebecca Rushmore

(Answers inside back cover)

1. Where is every spiritual blessing found?
2. Where is Christ now?
3. What is the gift of God?
4. Through whom did God create all things?
5. Name the seven ‘ones’ of Chapter 4.
6. Who are we to imitate?
7. What are Christians to do to the “unfruitful works of darkness?”
8. What is the command for husbands toward their wives?
9. How are fathers commanded to bring up their children?
10. To what piece of armor is the Word of God compared?

Noah

Tom Baxley

Noah is an important figure to the Bible record for a few reasons. First of all, he demonstrated the fact that faith and obedience go hand-in-hand. God told Noah a flood was coming and what he needed to do to survive the flood; he did it and preserved his life. Second, Noah shows that what is popular is not always right and what is right is not always popular. Noah preached for decades, but in the end, only his family heeded the message he preached. The rest of the world perished. Finally, Noah serves as a warning to all of God's people to watch themselves. Nobody is immune to sin and temptation. Coming off the boat where his life was spared, he made an altar and sacrificed to God. Not long after this event, Noah planted a vineyard and got drunk. Noah, the man who was perfect in his generation and walked with God, still had faults.

Tom Baxley preaches for the Highway Nine Church of Christ in Piedmont, Alabama, USA.

Praise the Lord!

Cecil May, Jr.

The preacher strongly stated a powerful truth. A visitor was so moved that he exclaimed aloud, "Praise the Lord." An usher approached his pew, put a finger to his lips, and said, "Shhh! We don't do that here."

Satan's Bid for Your Soul

John Stacy

Jesus told Peter that Satan asked to have him so he could sift him as wheat (Luke 22:31-32). If Satan would go after the soul of Peter, then he will go after you and me. In Luke 4:1-13, the Devil even went after the Lord. If he is bold and powerful enough to try to keep the Son of God from going to the cross, you and I ought to be on guard. Peter said, ***"Be sober, be vigilant, your adversary the Devil, as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour"*** (1 Peter 5:8).

First of all, the Devil will try to keep you from being saved. If you are not a Christian at this time, there is only one reason. The Devil is at work in your life. Jesus, explaining the Parable of the Sower, said this, ***"…Then comes the Devil, and takes away the Word out of our hearts, lest they should believe and be saved"*** (Luke 8:12). Satan, the god of this world, blinds the minds of the unbelieving, keeping them from the light of the Gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4).

He blinds the minds of men by painting a very alluring picture of sin. You know the old Satanic line. "Smoke this, drink this, snort this and you'll be happy. Do this, go there and you'll be a part of the of the **in crowd**." The Devil never shows the other side of sin. Satan says, "Don't become a Christian, sin is too much fun." Listen to James 1:15, ***"Then when lust is conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin when it is finished brings forth death."*** Yes, ***"the wages of sin is death"*** (Romans 6:23). The soul that sins, it shall surely die (Ezekiel 18:20). Paul said that the pleasures of sin last only for a season (Hebrews 11:25).

If the Devil can't keep you from being saved through the allurement of sin, he may try to get you to delay doing something through procrastination. There are a lot of people who will die and go to Hell because they were going to obey the Gospel someday. They don't plan on going to Hell. Yet, Paul wrote, ***"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation…?"*** (Hebrews 2:3). Neglect. What a small but powerful word! The song says:

Tomorrow's sun may never rise
To bless thy long-deluded sight.
This is the time, O then be wise
Be saved, O tonight

Felix told Paul, ***"When I have a more convenient season, I will call on thee"*** (Acts 24:25). Agrippa put off Gospel obedience by saying, ***"You almost persuade me to be a Christian…"*** (Acts 26:28). Solomon said, ***"Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth"*** (Proverbs 27:1). ***"Now is the day of salvation"*** (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Satan will ty to keep men from salvation by pointing them to some hypocrite in the church. Or, maybe he will use a gossiper to keep a lost soul away by using a tongue that should be torn from an ungodly mouth.

The Devil has done well with baptism. He'll keep men out of the baptistry at all costs. He'll argue that faith alone is sufficient. Not so; see James 2:24. He'll tell you that if you are baptized you'll be a Campbellite, a waterdog or one who believes in baptismal regeneration. In spite of all Satan's efforts, Jesus said, ***"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved"*** (Mark 16:16). ***"Arise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord"*** (Acts 22:16).

Peter commanded repentance and baptism ***"for the remission of sins"*** (Acts 2:38). The Ethiopian eunuch came up out of the waters of baptism rejoicing (Acts 8:35-39). After baptism, we arise to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-5). Every example of conversion in the Book of Acts ended with baptism. See Matthew 28:18-20.

Secondly, the Devil will try to get you to doubt your salvation. He has captured a lot of souls by using that tactic. As Christians, we can have that blessed assurance about which we sing. Jesus said, ***"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent"*** (John 17:3). John later wrote, ***"And this is the testimony that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life, he who does not have the Son of God does not have life…"*** (1 John 5:11-13).

Over the years, I have talked with many brethren who had doubts about their salvation. Most questioned their baptism. They seemed to be unsure about whether they knew what they were doing. My advice has always been

to encourage them to be rebaptized if that would take away their doubt. I sometimes think, too, that we have come to believe we must understand everything in order to be a candidate for baptism. I ask, though, how much did those on Pentecost understand! They had a knowledge of the most elemental teachings of the Gospel. We all start out as babes in Christ. Hopefully, we will grow and mature as the years go by (1 Peter 2:2; Hebrews 5:12-14).

Thirdly, the Devil will try to take away the joy of salvation. He'll ask you if you are having any fun as a Christian? Or, he'll ask, are you very popular since you became a Christian? He got the Israelites to murmur in the wilderness (1 Corinthians 10:10). They wished they were back in Egypt, eating onions, cucumbers, leeks and garlic. He took away their joy. Isaiah taught us that with joy we draw water out of the wells of salvation (Isaiah 12:3). Following his conversion, the Ethiopian eunuch went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:35-39). The Philippian jailer and his family rejoiced after conversion (Acts 16: 30-34). Christians are to ***"rejoice always"*** (1 Thessalonians 5:16). Christians will be glad or joyful when they see the Lord (John 20:20). I once read of a sign somewhere in Kentucky. It said, "Welcome to (a certain town) with 1,200 happy people and three old grouches." I think the reason we have so many grouches in the church today is that Satan has robbed many of their Christian joy. Thus, many like David need to shout, ***"Restore unto me the joy of my salvation!"*** (Psalm 51:12). We don't need grouchy Christians in the church today!

In the fourth place, Satan will try to keep you from looking and acting like a Christian. He'll convince us that we will not win the lost unless we look like them, dress like them and act like them. He will argue that we can't win them unless we do what they do. Boy, that philosophy is straight out of Hell itself. Like ancient Israel, the church wants to be like the world around it. We can't win the lost with those tactics. What we need to do is to preach the fire out of Devil-dominated men. The Gospel alone is the power of God to save (Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 1:18, 21). We need personal evangelists who will go into homes or wherever the lost are with the Gospel. When the Word of God increases, disciples will multiply (Acts 5:42; 6:7)

I can't think of anything worse than a bunch of kids going down to a beach in shorts and with long, shaggy hair trying to reach the lost. Yet, it takes place all the time. Christians are in the world, but they are not of the

world (John 15:19). God's people are to look like God's people, they are to talk like God's people, and they are to act like God's people.

Finally, the Devil will try to get your children. If he can't keep you from being saved, if he can't keep you from doubting your salvation, if he can't keep you from acting and dressing like the world, he will try to get your soul by getting your children. For instance, one crime report told of two young boys who killed four students and one teacher. They lured them outside by setting off a fire alarm, and then they shot them down. Several other students were wounded. This scenario, which has been replayed in other schools, too, is proof that Satan is going after our children. Our young people are hooked on sex, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, rock music and Satan worship. The list of things that are sending our kids to Hell today is endless. The Devil has a lot of tricks available to him. Seventy-five per cent of all college age students are lost to the church. Young people are suffering from the divorce of their parents. They are beaten, abused sexually and are being deprived of a Christian home that they all deserve. Parents are not nurturing them with the chastening and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). They don't have the parental example and influence to make them strong enough to resist Satan. Satan can be resisted by Christian young people. John wrote, ***"I write unto you young men, because you have overcome the Wicked one"*** (1 John 2:13). Yet, when Satan does overcome our children, it has such a debilitating effect, that it often causes us to succumb to Satan's temptations. Christians can resist the Devil, and he will flee from them (James 4:7). Christians can resist Satan if they are steadfast in the faith (1 Peter 5:9).

My friends, we can become Christians and be glad about it. We can maintain the assurance of our salvation. Christian joy is irrepressible. Not even Satan can put out the flame of our enthusiasm for our Savior. If we want to look and act like a child of the King, no power on earth, not even satanic power, can keep us from so doing. Christians are educated. We know all about Satan's devices; therefore, we shall use every God-given weapon at our disposal to save our children from the Devil, and we will win! John wrote, ***"This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our faith"*** (1 John 5:4).✠

John Stacy has been a longtime preacher and author of religious books. He lives in Newbern, Tennessee, USA.

Is Fasting for Christians Today?

Eric Obeng Asante

What does the Bible teach about fasting? Is it for Christians today?

Fasting, in the biblical sense, is the abstaining from food and drink for a spiritual reason. In the Old Testament era, the Jews fasted frequently, though there was only one fast prescribed by the Law. Once each year, on the Day of Atonement, the Hebrews were to "afflict" their souls (Leviticus 16:31), which meant fasting (Isaiah 58:3).

Though there are no compulsory fasts required of Christians today, the New Testament seems to take for granted that children of God would see the need to fast occasionally. When the Lord's disciples were criticized for not fasting, Jesus responded by suggesting that it was hardly appropriate for them to fast while He was yet with them. The time would come, however, when He would be taken away from them. Then, they would fast (Luke 5:35).

Too, in cautioning against improper motivation in worship, Christ warned, ***"Moreover when you fast, be not, as hypocrites"*** (Matthew 6:16). It is significant that He did not say, **"if,"** but **"when"** ye fast—reflecting the expectation that they would.

Fasting, for the Christian, is strictly a voluntary matter. It should arise out of a feeling of intense need, not as a result of mere formality.

What Is the Value of Fasting?

When, then, might fasting be of value? Fasting may be spiritually beneficial in times of personal sorrow. David and his men mourned and fasted upon hearing of the death of Saul (2 Samuel 1:12), and Nehemiah did similarly when he was informed of Jerusalem's decimated condition (Nehemiah 1:4). Fasting and prayer would certainly be fitting when a loved one is critically ill (2 Samuel 12:16).

Fasting frequently accompanied repentance as an outward and a genuine indication of contrition for spiritual rebellion (1 Samuel 7:6). The people

of Nineveh proclaimed a fast when brought to a recognition of their sins (Jonah 3:5). Fasting was practiced in connection with great and important religious events. Moses fasted during that period when he was receiving the Law (Exodus 34:28). Christ fasted prior to His encounter with Satan in the wilderness (Matthew 4:2). The church fasted before sending Barnabas and Saul on that perilous first missionary campaign (Acts 13:2-3). Fasting was certainly a component in the ministry of Paul (2 Corinthians 6:5; 11:27).

Warnings for Those Who Fast

Admittedly, however, fasting can be abused. The practice must never be employed as a substitute for personal godly living. Isaiah delivered a blistering rebuke to those who fasted, then pursued their own worldly pleasures (Isaiah 58). Moreover, fasting must not be an occasion for the flaunting of one's religion. The Pharisees were guilty of this very thing (Matthew 6:16-18). Finally, the rigors of fasting must not be allowed to ignite a spirit of religious smugness and self-righteousness. This certainly could be a temptation (Luke 18:9-14).

Benefits of Fasting

In the final analysis, there does seem to be some benefit in voluntary fasting at certain times. Reflect upon the following.

The Scriptures seem to suggest that God honors fasting when performed as a token of deep and sincere dedication. Physicians indicate that moderate fasting can be a benefit to health, having the effect of allowing our systems to occasionally cleanse themselves. The mind appears to be able to plumb greater depths of contemplation during periods of fasting. It can help one hone a keener edge on self-discipline. Fasting can also have the added effect of reinforcing our appreciation for those things of which we're deprived during the periods of abstention.

Scripture References

Leviticus 16:31; Isaiah 58:3; Luke 5:35; Matthew 6:16; 2 Samuel 1:12; Nehemiah 1:4; 2 Samuel 12:16; 1 Samuel 7:6; Jonah 3:5; Exodus 34:28; Matthew 4:2; Acts 13:2-3; 2 Corinthians 6:5, 11:27; Isaiah 58; Matthew 6:16-18; Luke 18:9-14.

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WHAT'S WRONG WITH INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP?

Louis Rushmore

"I don't see anything wrong with instrumental music in Christian worship, and I like it," is the sentiment sometimes expressed. Well, I like instrumental music, too, and if God had asked me for my input, I would have recommended it. However, God stipulated, a long time before I or anyone else who has lived in the last nearly 2,000 years was born, precisely how we in the Christian Age are authorized to worship Him musically. Specifically and exclusively, Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 authorize ***"singing."*** Note that singing is not only distinguishable from instrumental music, but it is also distinguishable from vocal expressions other than singing (e.g., humming, whistling, extraneous noises, etc.).

The very next verse following Colossians 3:16 pertains to authority in religion. While the passage applies generally to the authority of God's Word, in its context, Colossians 3:17 applies first to singing being authorized for Christian worship. ***"16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. 17 And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of*** [by the authority of] ***the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him"*** (Colossians 3:16-17 NKJV).

Some Old Testament Bible characters could have said that they, too, didn't see anything wrong with doing something in an alternative way to what God stipulated or authorized. For instance, Nadab and Abihu—sons of Aaron and priests themselves—could have reasoned and verbalized, "I don't see anything wrong with using an alternative fire-source to burn incense with which to worship God." On that occasion, God reacted miraculously and immediately to demonstrate clearly His displeasure. ***"Then Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censer and put fire in it, put incense on it, and offered profane*** ["***strange***" KJV] ***fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them. So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord"*** (Leviticus 10:1-2). God Himself had been the initial source of authorized fire as He sent forth fire to ignite the animal sacrifice (Leviticus 9:24). We read about that just a few verses prior to the event chronicled in Leviticus 10:1-2. Censors were to be ignited with coals from the altar (Leviticus 16:12), rather than from an alternative, unspecified source.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:21-23). Truly, God said, through the Holy Spirit to the inspired New Testament penmen, what He meant, and as assuredly, He meant what He said! Everything else is ***"lawlessness."***

What is Sacrifice?

Jerry R. Kendall

In this day of unbelievable blessings and of tremendous affluence, one of the most difficult concepts to get across to God's children is the need for sacrifice. It is not acceptable to eliminate the necessity of sacrifice from Christian living. Sacrifice is the privilege of intelligence, the means of maturity and the measure of our individual and congregational strength. It is essential to pleasing God in every generation. Also, it gives the recognition of the sovereignty of God, His Lordship and His supreme power.

When I think of the Bible and sacrifice, my mind turns to Abraham when he offered Isaac, his son whom he loved, on the altar (Genesis 22). Hebrews 11: 17-19 tells us how he was able to do this. Then, ultimately, I remembered the Father, not sparing His Son, but offering Him for our salvation (Romans 5:8; 8:32;

1 John 4: 9, 19). What is involved in the life that desires to sacrifice out of deep love for God?

Obedience One who has the heartfelt desire to obey the Father will grow to understand that sacrifice is still His will and still necessary for the obedient child (1 Peter 1:14). The sacrifice of the Lord Jesus was in obedience to His Father's will (Matthew 26:39; Acts 2:23; Hebrews 5:8-9).

Acceptance One may think that he is doing God a favor by giving anything at all. He needs to remember that God does not need his offering. God is not enriched no matter how much one may choose to sacrifice. What he must keep in mind is that the gift must be acceptable to God, not simply pleasing to one who is giving. It must come from a purposeful heart (2 Corinthians 9:7), thinking about how one has prospered. This leads to his grateful giving.

Gift to God One is to give to God first, and from that which sustains his life. Matter of fact, he is to give to God the gift of his life (Romans 12:12; 2 Corinthians 8:5). When God sees the gift brought to Him, and knows what has been kept for self, how much love does He see in the giver? God has never asked His children to stop bringing Him the first fruits. Aware of the sacrifice of God's Son, we should give lovingly.

Privation One has never sacrificed if he only gives as an afterthought and has never done without in order to give to his Savior and Lord. Until he learns to give up some of the good things that appeal to the flesh, one has not given as God desires. What privation have I, are we, suffering to advance Christ in the world?

Motive Godly giving comes from the purest intent of the heart. It comes from self-denial and sacrifice. The grace of the cross and a heart of love are proper motives for giving.

Has the church ever been hurt through a lack of sacrifice? Understanding the joy of forgiveness through the blood of Christ, will all sacrifice? Jesus gave His all, but what will we give?

Discovering Jesus

Steve W. Reeves

INTRODUCTION:

The great question of our day is not, "Who are you," but "Who is Jesus?"

1. Was Jesus real or was He a mythological character?
2. Was He the Son of God or merely a wise teacher?
3. This is a question that refuses to go away. It is the subject of documentaries and debates, movies and music, novels and news. It is just as relevant in 2018 as it was in the first century.
4. The great commentator, William Barclay said, "Real religion is a personal discovery." There is no one who can make this discovery for you. You must investigate it yourself.
5. Half way through the first century, there was a physician who wrote about the identity of Jesus and the impact He had on the world. His name was Luke, and the two books he wrote were the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts. Who was this man, and what was his method for discovering Jesus?

I. THE MAN

A. He was the writer of the third book in our New Testament.

1. The books of Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the "synoptic" Gospels, called "synoptic" because they present a common view of Jesus.
2. In all likelihood, Mark was the first Gospel to be written. Perhaps Matthew and Luke used Mark as a general outline for their books.

B. Luke was one of the most educated writers in the New Testament.

1. He was a physician. Colossians 4:14 describes him as, ***"the beloved physician."*** Physicians have inquisitive minds. Do you see how this type of mind assisted Luke in his quest to discover Jesus?
2. The extent of Luke's scholarship can be seen in the first four verses of his book. These verses comprised one long sentence

in the Greek language. This sentence is comprised of some of the most classical and formal Greek language in the New Testament. Luke had the ability to write in a scholarly manner.

3. The idea that faith cannot coexist with scholarship is erroneous.

C. Luke was a Gentile.

1. He was from Antioch. In Acts, Antioch plays an important role in the history of the early church. This was Luke's "hometown."
2. He was the only non-Jewish writer of the Gospel accounts and perhaps of any book of the New Testament.

D. Luke was a missionary.

1. We know that he traveled with the apostle Paul on his second and third missionary journeys.
2. The first fifteen chapters of Acts were written as one relating what companions of Jesus had witnessed. In chapter 16, Luke began using the word, "we," indicating that he was traveling with Paul, an eyewitness of many things about which he wrote.

II. THE METHOD

A. Luke did not make up the story of Jesus as he went along. He investigated and wrote with a very deliberate method. Isn't this what you would expect from a physician? You do not want a physician to diagnose your health with a random guess. You want him to investigate and to use his knowledge and expertise.

B. Luke wrote with a three-fold strategy.

1. Preparation

a. Those who are students may ask, "Why do I need to know about a subject that seems to have no bearing on my field?" The answer is, "preparation."

b. Luke's preparation is described in the first two verses of his Gospel: ***"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word..."***

c. There were many people who were eyewitnesses to the life of Jesus. The miracles of Jesus, the teachings of Jesus and

the compassion of Jesus were not fabricated. These were facts established by eyewitness accounts.

d. Courtroom testimony must be based on fact, not "hearsay." The Gospel accounts of Jesus are based on eyewitness accounts.

2. Planning

a. Luke's plan is expressed in verse 3. ***"It seemed fitting for me as well, having investigated everything carefully from the beginning, to write it out for you in consecutive order."***

b. Luke's plan was to investigate.

c. The scope of his investigation was, "everything." He interviewed eyewitnesses. He collected data. He was interested in facts.

d. He investigated carefully. Luke records several accounts not found in any of the other Gospel records, including the parables of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin and Lost Son in Luke 15, the detailed story of the thief on the cross, the story of Zacchaeus and others.

e. Many people make assumptions about Jesus without careful investigation. You have no right to make a decision about Him without carefully investigating His life and the impact He has had on history.

3. Purpose

a. Luke's purpose was to take everything he could learn about Jesus and present it in consecutive order.

b. Did he do this so it could be placed on a shelf in a library? Notice verse 4 as he wrote to one referred to as, Theophilus: ***"So that you may know the exact truth about the things you have been taught."*** He was writing to present evidence for faith (Hebrews 11:1).

III. THE MESSAGE

A. There is remarkable consistency throughout the synoptic Gospel accounts. Luke, however, writes as one of us.

1. He was not Jewish.
2. From his Gentile perspective, he wrote about Jesus' concern for

those who had been excluded from Jewish society—the poor, the lepers and women. He demonstrated how every person is important to God regardless of gender, ethnicity or economic standing.

B. You and I need to listen to Luke.

1. In a deeply troubled world, Luke tells us about the only One who offers lasting hope.
2. In a world of political division, he tells us of the One who transcends human authority.
3. In a world of power, prestige and possessions, Luke tells us that the real meaning of life is to follow the One who was born in humility.

CONCLUSION:

James Allan Francis (1864–1928) wrote a brief essay entitled, **"One Solitary Life." Here is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village, where He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty, and then for three years He was an itinerant preacher. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never owned a home. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never put his foot inside a big city. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place where He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself. He had nothing to do with this world except the naked power of His divine manhood.**

While still a young man, the tide of public opinion turned against Him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth while He was dying—and that was his coat. When he was dead, He was taken down and laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Nineteen wide centuries have come and gone and today He is the centerpiece of the human race and the leader of the column of progress. I am greatly within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that ever were built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned, put together have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that One Solitary Life.

Steve Reeves works with the West Side Church of Christ in Searcy, Arkansas, USA.

Insight for Blinds

Spiritual & Benevolence Mission for the Visually and Physically Challenged

Philemon Rajah, India

About 90% of information to the brain is through the eyes (visual). Because of the incredible amount of information that we consume visually, we process visual information 60,000 times faster than the text. When one loses his or her eyesight, a person completely lacks self-confidence, and then, every minute of one's life becomes a challenge.

Through "Insight for Blinds," we are not only providing spiritual light to the visually impaired people, we are also helping them to regain their confidence to face every challenge of life, due to the complete darkness they feel. That is done through continuous motivational programs, sharing of love and Bible camps. Since most of the blinds hate their lives and even want to commit suicide, our sharing and caring towards them gives them hope.

Statistics

Can you imagine, out of the 37 million people who are blind (visually challenged) throughout the world, nearly 15 million are from India. The latest census in India shows that there are around 21 million differently abled persons who are visually, physically or mentally challenged. The major causes for this tragic situation are lack of nutrition and also no proper access to precautionary measures and treatments. In most of the families, even now, when a child is born blind, they think of the baby as their gods' curse on the family. Hence, they want to distance such a child from the family. In most cases, blind children are left in hostels and care centers. In worst cases, some blinds and differently abled people are left on streets as beggars. Our primary focus is to win the souls of these blind people for Christ, but we are able to do that only by encouraging them through our love and sharing. When they feel like there is a group of people who genuinely care and love them, they are moved and come near to Christ.

From the Heart Of

It All Started Like This

During the year 1995, when the Arasaradi Church of Christ was started with our family members and the first members, Kingsly and Camiluz (young men), we were zealously looking for souls to win for Christ. We were trying to make use of every opportunity to meet people and share the Gospel. One time, we met a young blind girl in a library for the visually challenged people in Madurai city. She was staying in a hostel owned by a Muslim man, and she was studying for her undergraduate college studies. The love shown by my wife and the Gospel message led her to attend the worship service in our house. However, when the hostel owner came to know this, he wanted the blind girl to either stop attending the church gathering or leave the hostel. The young blind girl decided to leave the hostel, so that she could worship the one true God of Heaven. She was living on the streets and starving to death because of her brave decision, so we took her into our family to stay with my children and share what we had. Though we were at that time ourselves almost starving, the blind lady's brave decision encouraged us to accept her.

After seeing our love, and hence, coming to know the real love of our Lord, she then started to introduce many of her friends to the church. So, through this blind lady, we went to a hostel for blind people run by a Muslim man. One or two times we were able to go inside and teach her friends inside the hostel; however, the Muslim owner of that hostel soon came to understand what we were doing, and he no longer allowed us inside his hostel to conduct personal Bible studies with these few,

interested blinds. Yet, out of their thirst to know the love of Christ and message from cross, some blind men and women gathered outside the hostel gate on the streets, under a Hindu temple Mandapam (street side open place). After a few of them became Christians and started attending worship, the blinds from the Muslim hostel were also sent out and were on the streets. So, we took them into our home to eat and live with us and our three daughters. This love without any expectation moved their hearts, and they started to bring many of their friends to the worship and Bible studies. Initially four blind men and women were living in our house, since they became Christians and had no place to stay. After completing their studies for three years, some got admission for higher studies and continued to stay with us. Some got jobs and moved to other cities, but every year, we have had a minimum four or five blind people staying with us in our home and enjoying Christian truth and fellowship. My wife, Baby, cooked for them for many years and is still continuing to do the same.

One fine day when we had our congregational brothers' meeting (business meeting), one blind brother rose and expressed his anxiety and anger, saying, "You people only think about sighted people and having programs for you, but kindly think about our blind people community." He pleaded to have mercy on them and help his visually challenged friends to be saved, by conducting special Bible camps for blinds. This moved our small congregation, and we started the Insight camp for blinds in 1998. It was very much a faith-based Bible camp for the blinds, because we had no money in savings. We conducted the Insight blind camp every year for two days, which had some 100 blind people and destitute non-Christians participating. This was made possible through the sacrificial help of the church members and also brother Glynn Langston of the USA. This annual camp for the blinds and destitute later turned into monthly Bible camps for Blinds. Every church member brought rice, vegetables and groceries from their houses for the 2-day meeting, and blind people were given food. This good time of fellowship with blind people included general preaching, group discussion, prayer time, etc. This Insight camp for blinds started so that the visually challenged people should not think in their minds that

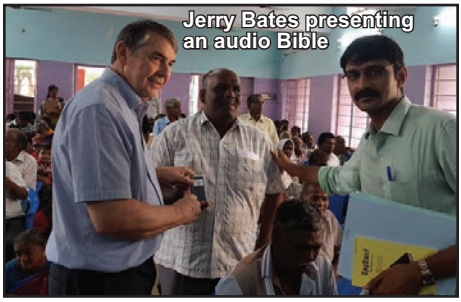
there is discrimination in the sight of the gracious God regarding the soul of the sighted versus the blinds.

Insight Camp for Blinds Organization

Initially it was an annual camp, but then due to the need to reach more blinds and their request, opportunities increased. We are now conducting Insight Bible camps for blinds every month. Also, in the early years, we conducted the Insight camps in our state of Tamil Nadu only, but later they were extended to other parts of India. We also organized some insight camps in neighboring countries too. We are teaching the Gospel message and sharing our love to blind people, to more than 15,000 blinds through almost 300 and more Insight blind camps, and we are still counting. Thank God that through the present, 600 blinds have been baptized, and they are mostly faithful.

Some of them are preachers and evangelists too. Because of these Insight Blind camps and the continuous comforting and teaching to these blinds, five blind couples who were baptized and took a regular Bible study course are now preaching for five different congregations for blinds, in which nearly 200 are faithfully serving the Lord. Every Insight Blind camp empowers and helps the blinds to identify themselves, improve self-confidence and to know their Savior. They realize their potential to be productive citizens of the Lord's kingdom and of their country, too. At present, brother Jerry Bates and sister Paula Bates have kindly taken the responsibility to be a part of this ministry among the socially neglected blinds.

Through these Insight Bible camps, baptized blinds are provided with audio Bibles. Every month through our Insight camps, we are bringing a minimum of 100 blinds to come out of darkness and find the way of light. They are now beginning to live their own lives by themselves. Their former condition was pathetic, when their parents thought of them as a curse to


Jerry Bates presenting an audio Bible

the family. In many families, they were thrown out on the streets. The society and the government also had pity on them and helped for the time being. We took up the challenge of changing their lives with continuous counseling, training to move on their own and to handle great tasks and challenges. The Word of God helps them to keep moving. A considerable number of the blind converts, who stayed in our house with us, are now working for the government as teachers, professors and printing press clerks. Some are preachers and evangelists, showing the eternal light to their friends. Most of the blinds are being trained to earn their own money by selling perfume sticks, pen and other household items. A considerable number of blinds are still living pathetic lives and are begging on the streets. Though we are not able to provide everyone their needs, we are trying to help as many blinds and differently abled people as we can through the strength God provides us.

We would not be able to bring so many blind people to Christ without our brothers and sisters in the Lord's Church. During every Insight Blind camp, the members of the local congregation volunteer with us to guide the blinds and help them to have food, making the registrations, passing Braille literature to them, taking them to restrooms etc. When we have the Insight Bible camps in different areas of our country, we invite and encourage the local congregation's preacher and members to participate and give those Christians training to work with blind people. The good thing is that, even after the camp is over, the local congregation's preacher and members can win them for Christ with constant visits and teaching. We also encourage the members of Lord's church to share whatever they can to feed and help these poor blinds who are participating in the Insight camps.

From the Heart Of

Daycare Center for Blinds & Physically & Mentally Challenged

Through our daycare center, some 20 poor and destitute people have food two times a day. These are blinds, physically challenged and mentally retarded people, who are provided food and medical care regularly, are in two different places. Most of them are sick and aged people. Through our love and feeding, these blind and mentally retarded people are now gaining a hope to live.

Year End Gifts for Blinds

During every year end, a minimum of 100 poor blinds and destitute widows are provided a new dress and a bag of rice. This is done every year with the help of kind and loving Christians. We are moved in our heart when we see smiles and joy in the faces and lives of these poor blinds.

Reading Braille

Braille Literature

Brother J.C. and sister Betty Choate helped us to print and distribute Braille literatures (VOTI Braille magazine and Braille Bible lessons) in different languages, wherever we are conducting the Insight camp for blinds, and now Sister Betty Choate continues to help the work. We do have our own small Braille printer to produce the Braille literature for these insight camps, bought with the help of dedicated and kind-hearted Christians.

Center for Blinds

Now especially through the help of faithful Christians and churches, we have our own land on which these blinds gather every month for the Insight camp. The land purchased has a very old building, and we are waiting with prayers to build an auditorium hall that can accommodate 300 blinds for the Insight camp, as well as dormitories in which they can stay.

Our Work among the Blinds & Differently Abled Persons

Philemon Rajah & Pradeep at the "new" blind center

1. Monthly Insight Bible camp for blinds
2. Providing Braille Materials (Braille songbook, Braille VOTI magazine, Braille Bible lessons in different languages)
3. Audio Bibles in different languages
4. Providing talking watches, Braille slates and styluses, walking sticks
5. Providing volunteers to blinds to be scribes for writing exams and studies
6. Medical help for sick and old age blinds and physically challenged
7. Year-end gift of new clothes and rice bags
8. Monthly providing rice bags for minimum 100 poor blinds
9. Training the sighted people to guide and handle the visually challenged people
10. Providing education help for needy blinds and their children
11. Through daycare center providing food for destitute sick old blinds and taking care of their medical needs

Contact: Philemon Rajah at obey2jesus@gmail.com or Jerry Bates at jerry@worldevangelism.org or (870) 897-2373. Jerry and Paula Bates are overseen by the elders of the Strickland Church of Christ, Glen, Mississippi, USA.

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

Apologetics Press has been the voice in churches of Christ for many years, speaking clearly and biblically on subjects pertaining to **Creation/Evolution, the Godhead, the inspiration of the Scriptures, and other vital questions of faith.** A new line of Bible class curriculum, **Exploring God's Word,** is available online, and much of it can be downloaded free of charge. Dave Miller has produced excellent DVDs on **The Silencing of God in America** and **The Quran. Phone: 800-234-8558; Website: www.ApologeticsPress.org.**

What Can You Do to Help Spread the Word?

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

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

Through mass media — radio programs, TV, and literature — we are doing all we can to bring God's Word to people who have so little hope. Half of each issue of ***The Voice of Truth International*** is sent free of charge to churches and individuals who have few or no other study materials, to aid in their spiritual growth. We ask brethren to help us with $35 a month, to cover the $8,000 postage bill incurred with every issue. Will you please have mercy on these souls and help us share the saving Gospel with them?

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

THE VOICE OF TRUTH INTERNATIONAL
P.O. Box 72, Winona, MS 38967

To speed up your announcement that you want to help,
call us at 662-283-1192 or send your email to
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◆ We want to give $_____ each month to help send this magazine to mission fields of the world, including the USA.

◆ As a congregation we want to help print and circulate copies of each issue of this magazine by making a special contribution to this effort. We can specify where the copies we pay for will be used, whether in our personal work, in jail ministry, overseas, or . . .

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Verse Search (Page 38)

1. Divisions
2. It became a common meal. One was full, while others were hungry.
3. Despising the church and shaming the poor
4. Body and blood of Jesus
5. In remembrance of Jesus
6. Proclaiming the Lord's death
7. Examine ourselves
8. Eat and drink judgment to ourselves
9. We do not discern the Lord's body.
10. Many were weak and sick, and many slept.
11. Wait for one another
12. Eat at home

Bible Find (page 46)

Scavenger Hunt (page 86)

Answers:

1. in Christ (1:3)
2. seated at the right hand of God in Heaven (1:20)
3. salvation by grace through faith (2:8)
4. Jesus Christ (3:9)
5. body, Spirit, hope, Lord, faith, baptism, God (4:4-6)
6. God (5:1)
7. expose them (5:11)
8. love them (5:25)
9. "in the training and admonition of the Lord"
10. sword (of the Spirit) (6:17)

For Further Information, Please Contact:

Help for the Helpless

The "Heart of..." article in this issue of *The Voice of Truth International* focuses on one important part of the work of the Lord's church in the nation of India: evangelism and aid to the helpless.

Churches of Christ in the US and in India work together to provide funds and personnel for Radio/TV evangelism, printed materials, personal evangelism, seminars and other outreach programs. In addition, orphanages, aid for the aged, and evangelistic and charity work among India's 15 million blind people are important aspects of the compassion evident in Christian outreach. Even though property is very expensive in India, a small plot and an old building have been purchased in Madurai to help with the blind work there. Funds are needed to add to facilities for the care of those who will be residents. As described in the "Heart of..." article, Christians in the US are encouraged to help financially with this work.