Volume One Hundred and One

The Voice of Truth International

The work of all Christians: ***"You are a chosen generation ... that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light..." (1 peter 2:9,10).***

Switching Homes

Louise Buffington

Lord, I am so grateful
That You have made a way
For us to talk to You
Every minute, every day.

I know that You must listen
To my oft repeated prayer,
And when I ask You for Your help
I shall always find You there.

I hear Your words of wisdom
As they spill across each page
Of the Bible, dearest treasure
Which can never fade with age.

From the sacred word You've given
I learn Your will for man,
And how Your church was started
Through that great eternal plan.

Lord, I want to honor You,
Singing praises 'round Your throne
In the presence of my loved ones
Where we shall know as we are known.

How I wish to celebrate
The cherished Bible story,
And how it changed my home down here
For a mansion up in glory!

I long to go to heaven
When my life on earth is through,
Not just to dodge the flaming pit
But for eternity with You.

The Timeline of Salvation

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey...

...whether of sin unto death...

But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin… (Romans 6:17a)

Because of inherited sin or sin-nature? No (Ezekiel 18:20)! Because we yielded ourselves to sin in the past!

...or...

(Romans 6:16)

...**but** ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. (Romans 6:17b)

What form (or pattern) does Paul mean? The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, which is re-enacted through baptism in water, discussed a few verses earlier. (Romans 6:1-5)

...of obedience unto righteousness

Being **then** made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. (Romans 6:18)

Freedom from sin—salvation, forgiveness—comes at the point of obedience, and simply not by faith alone (James 2:17-24). Nobody was ever told to pray the Sinner's Prayer!

PAST ← → **FUTURE**

CHART BY TIMOTHY W. CARIGNAN, PURCELL, OK. PREPARED FOR VOTI BY RC LUPO 05/15/19

The Scriptural Organization of the Church

Illustrated By RC Lupo

HEAD

CHRIST
Chief Shepherd
1 Peter 5:4

Acts 2:32-36

Eph. 1:19-23

Elders (mature men), **Bishops** (overseers), **Pastors** (shepherds). **All same office. Plurality** (never one man). **Job: Take care of/feed the church** (1Ti. 3:5).

Qualifications Must be Met. 1Ti. 3:1-7

Every City/Church Titus 1:5,7; Acts 14:23

Deacons (Special Servants) | **Preachers** (Evangelists) | **Saints** (Christian servants)

(All Christians are servants and under authority of the elders)

Deacons
Qualifications must be met.
1Ti. 3:8-13

Preachers
Preach the word... Reprove, Rebuke, Exhort in uncompromising, but long-suffering manner.
2Ti. 4:1-5

Saints=Christians
Sanctified in Christ, Called to be saints
1Co. 1:2

See also Psalm 111:9; Matthew 23:8-11

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

The Beggar

Louis Rushmore

The further south one travels, even in mostly prosperous America, the more beggars populate traffic islands and road intersections. Often, they hold cardboard signs on which they have scrolled their respective messages for passing motorists, hoping to elicit enough sympathy to be the recipients of charitable gifts.

One such vagrant's sign provoked some reflection on the implication of his specialized message. The signboard simply read, "OUT OF WORK, GOD BLESS." Further, the sign was decorated with crosses.

Clearly, this man's appeal was to people who he suspected were influenced by Christianity, rather than to people who were inclined to favor other world religions (e.g., Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism or atheism). Especially Christianity is noted for charitableness. One does not naturally, for instance, ascribe a charitable trait to atheists toward the less fortunate. After all, the atheistic theory of evolution champions the notion of the survival of the fittest.

Hospitals, homeless shelters, medical missions and a host of charitable organizations characteristically throughout history owe their inception to religious persons (those who subscribe to Christianity or Judaism) who revere the God of the Bible. This beggar knew where he was standing (i.e., in the USA) and to whom he was appealing for a handout (a society, at least once upon a time, that was heavily indoctrinated by Christianity). Appealing to atheists and Muslims, for instance, doubtlessly would have produced less favorable interaction with the traveling public.

Christianity, according to the beggar, is a nobler as well as a more generous and sympathetic religious system than other world religions and

atheism. God is visible in Christianity in action but not apparent in other world religions and atheism. Christianity stands alone and aloof from all other religions and doctrines of men.

What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. (James 2:14-18 NKJV)

Then the King will say to those on His right hand, "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me." (Matthew 25:34-36) ✝

Where He Leads, I Will Follow

Jerry Bates

Most Christians would probably say they subscribe to the above-mentioned statement, and the Bible commands us to have this attitude. ***"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps"*** (1 Peter 2:21). This text has two main ideas. One is that Christ is our example, like the blueprint of a building that should be followed exactly. The second is that of being a follower. We should be like a small boy trying to put his feet is the same footprints of his father. Jesus is our leader upon whose footprints we are to walk. There is an old song that echoes this sentiment, "Footprints of Jesus."

Following Jesus sounds exciting. Jesus lived like any normal human being and experienced the same emotions that we do. Thus, as we struggle through hard times, we can imagine that Christ suffered those times as well. As we experience the highs of life, Jesus experienced highs as well. However, as we continue to look at our text in 1 Peter 2, our excitement leaves. We see that following Christ is not like an adventure but simply hard work. In verse 23 we read, ***"who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously."*** Our very existence as Christians involves the idea of suffering.

It is easy to say the words, "I will follow Jesus wherever He leads," but most of the time, the ones making the statement are not prepared for the demands of that statement. In Exodus 19:8, the people of Israel made

a bold promise, ***"All that the Lord has spoken we will do."*** Soon after, they broke most of the commands that God had given them. In Matthew 8:19, a scribe made an even bolder statement to Jesus. ***"Teacher, I will follow you wherever You go."*** Notice that this man placed no restrictions on his promise, but he did not realize what he was saying. When the man made this statement, multitudes were following Jesus, and He was healing many who were sick of various ailments. I imagine that this man envisioned a glorious journey filled with excitement, amazing miracles and memorable events, but Jesus quickly ended that idea. Following Jesus involved walking the paths of sorrow, shame and death for which he was not prepared. In John 11:16 and 13:37, Thomas and Peter boldly proclaimed that they would lay down their lives for Jesus. Undoubtedly, both were very sincere when they rashly made these promises, but later events certainly proved they were unprepared to fulfill those promises.

While we may want to think that following Jesus would bring great blessings, Jesus usually pointed out the opposite. In the cases we just cited, when people boldly said they would follow Jesus, He pointed out that following Him involved suffering and hardship. Unfortunately, it seems that

many today are like the ones mentioned. We boldly make the promise, "I will follow Jesus wherever He leads," but we do not want much sacrifice either.

We need to remember what it really means to follow Jesus. He said, ***"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me, and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor"*** **(**John 12:26). The word for "serve" simply means to be a servant. Most people do not want to be servants. To serve Jesus means to follow Him, to imitate Him, particularly regarding His suffering, because immediately after this, Jesus predicted His death (12:30-33). To be Christ's disciples, we must be completely and totally committed to Him and His cause.

That is very difficult to do. While many say they are committed, that commitment is only up to a certain point. Of course, the point beyond which they are not willing to go might vary greatly depending upon the individual. For some, that point might be being an elder of the Lord's church. I have heard some declare they would never be an elder due to fear of being criticized by others. Was Christ never criticized? For some, it means never leaving friends and family to teach others about Christ. For others, it may mean only doing those things that lead to honor and praise.

Following Jesus means we are ready to do whatever needs to be done, even if it is nothing more than helping others do the work. Too often, Christians want to do their own thing without much regard for the work of others. To really follow Christ means we work for the growth of His kingdom, not our own kingdoms. That may mean that we simply help others, even if this means that others will receive much of the earthly credit for what is done. There is an old song entitled, "Ready to Suffer," which echoes this sentiment. The chorus of that song reads, "Ready to go, or ready to stay, Ready my place to fill; Ready for service, lowly or great, Ready to do His will."

"I will follow Jesus wherever He leads" is a worthy promise to make, but we should be prepared for what it entails. It likely will at some point mean suffering and hardship. However, we can rest assured the end will make all the cost worthwhile. Jesus promised, ***"If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor"*** **(**John 12:26).

1932—2008

Why Are Christians Left in this World?

J.C. Choate

Imagine this: a person hears and understands the Gospel, he repents of his sins and is baptized into Christ. Immediately, God transforms his body into immortal substance, and he goes to his eternal home. Wouldn't that be wonderful? No struggles. No temptations. Not one soul ever being lost! What a perfect plan!

Why didn't God think of that?

Wait! If every Christian was taken to be with God the moment he was born into the family, who would be left in the world to bring that message of salvation to others? No one! So the saving power of the Gospel would have ended on the first day of the beginning of the church, and the world would have been lost in total darkness ever since then!

So, that is why we live in this alien environment, in this world whose lord is Satan—so that each one of us can be the light of Christ, shining in all the darkness of sin. Think back to your own conversion; in most cases, was it not the result of some caring Christian loving you enough to teach you the Truth? That explains why you are here, facing whatever trials and troubles Satan brings into your life. ***You are here to bear fruit in the form of souls saved from eternal damnation.***

Jesus' farewell words to His followers included the all-important command, ***"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"*** (Mark 16:15-16). In time, as a result of

their obedience to that command, great persecution occurred and ***"… those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word"*** (Acts 8:4). Through the dedication of those first Christians, in less than **one generation,** the apostle Paul could write by inspiration: ***"…the word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it has also in all the world…"*** (Colossians 1:5-6).

Even though almost 2,000 years have passed since that time, neither the command to Christians nor the work we have been left in the world to do has changed. However, the population has changed! How can the relatively small number of Christians take the Gospel to more than seven billion people? Is it humanly possible? If the work was to be done solely through the efforts of humans, it would not be possible, but Jesus promised, ***"…lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age"*** (Matthew 28:20). In John 14:18, He promised, ***"…I will not leave you orphans."*** What is the message? It is that this work He has ***entrusted into our hands*** is still ***His work,*** and that He will be with us every step of the way.

In practical terms, what does that mean? God has provided the tools the church would need to evangelize the world. God does His part: He lays the tools on the table; then, it is the decision of Christians and the church as to whether or not we will use the equipment He has provided.

- Today, to evangelize such a large population, **a nucleus of Christians is vital.** We have just such a nucleus in the world—in the U.S., in India, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Ivory Coast, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Peru, Brazil, Mexico, France, Italy, Philippines, Myanmar, New Zealand, Australia and many other countries where the church was established in decades past and has grown to maturity. Yes, much more work needs to be done everywhere, but the needed nucleus is there in many places.
- Those **Christians must be able to travel,** at home, into neighboring countries and abroad. Certainly, that movement is possible. In these vital points, God has blessed the church with the necessary basic tools for going into all the world with His message of salvation.

But, with so many souls in the world today, He knows that first-century tools — one on one — will not be enough, so what equipment has He laid in our hands that the early Christians did not have?

- **The complete Bible** is available at very little cost in all major

languages of the world and most of the minor ones. Through the circulation of the printed Word, the message has already gone before us and has helped to make a highway in the desert.

● **Printing presses, computers** and **copiers** mean that duplication of the message can be done inexpensively anywhere, and **the international postal system** is a reliable method for taking **letters, Bible courses and books** to every corner of the world. **Radio** and **shortwave radio** have made it possible for decades for people everywhere to hear the Gospel, and in more recent decades, **television** has opened the world to the visual preaching of the Gospel. Even in very poor countries, almost every home has access to this means of entertainment and teaching. **Cell phone service** is available almost everywhere also at a very reasonable cost. The **Internet** is increasingly available to even the most isolated people. Churches have **websites with archives of thousands of lessons** available to those who can access them. **CDs, DVDs** and **thumb drives** are inexpensive tools for **recording volumes of materials—the Bible in different languages and versions, commentaries, concordances** and **other reference materials**—so that even those who have no access to physical religious books and libraries can study God's Word.

● Every day the arsenal of tools increases: **Skype, Facetime and YouTube** have come on the scene. Yes, they may be used secularly—whatever God has brought into existence has been overtaken and often used for worldly things—but in reality, these are provisions supplied by God to enable His church to bring the Gospel to every creature of all the world! It is exciting to see the number of churches that have developed their own websites, making sermons, worship services and printed lessons available for anyone in the world who has access to the Internet. There are countless YouTube lessons provided by brethren. Many Christians work diligently answering requests from all over the world for Bible Study Lessons, grading the lessons and establishing caring relationships with their students. Tools too numerous to list have been providentially laid in our hands by God.

What will we, as individual Christians and as congregations, do with the trust committed to us?

Did a scene like this possibly happen?

The story is told that after Jesus' return to heaven, Michael the archangel came to Him in tremendous excitement. "Now we know what You have been doing since before the creation of the world! Let me summon the host of Heaven so that we can go out and tell everyone the glorious news of the Gospel!"

"No," the Lord answered. "This is not your work."

"Then whose is it?" Michael asked.

"I left it in the hands of My disciples."

Michael was stunned. "You've left ***Your work of the ages*** in the hands of ***men?*** But, Lord, You know that ***men can't be trusted!*** Adam brought sin into the world! Peter denied You! Judas betrayed You! What if they fail You again? Surely You have another plan, just in case they fail You again?"

"No, Michael," Jesus answered.

"I have no other plan."

God Is Working

If in the work you are trying to do,
You have done all that you can,
Be still:
God is working.
— And though you may not now be able
to see
or hear
or feel
what He is doing,
Know that He is not idle.

~ Betty Burton Choate

5-Minute Bible Study

Good Works

Paula Bates

1. Who gave _____ for us, that he might _____ us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for _____ works. Titus 2:14
2. And let our people also learn to _____ good _____, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be _____. Titus 3:4
3. In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and _____, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but which is proper for women professing _____, with good works. I Timothy 2:9-10
4. _____ those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain _____ but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they may be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on _____ _____. I Timothy 6:17-19
5. Jesus answered them, "Many good works I have _____ you from My Father. For which of those works do you _____me?" John 10:32

Answers:

1. Himself, redeem, good
2. Maintain, works, unfruitful
3. Moderation, godliness
4. Command, riches, eternal life
5. Shown, stone

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Greatly Loved

Raymond Elliott

The Bible is replete with the names of persons who found favor in the sight of God and His Son, Jesus Christ. Following are just a few names. We read in Genesis 5:23-24 that Enoch ***"walked with God; and he was not, for God took him."*** Elijah ***"went up by a whirlwind into heaven"*** (2 Kings 2:11). Thus, these two men of God did not die as Hebrews 9:27 states death comes to all men.

Abraham trusted in God inasmuch he was willing to sacrifice his son Isaac (Genesis 22:1-18). The writer of the Book of Hebrews (11:17) and James in his epistle (2:21) declared that in God's sight, he did offer up his son. Abraham was truly a ***"friend of God"*** (2:23).

God told the prophet Jeremiah, ***"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations"*** (Jeremiah 1:5). The angel announced that Mary, who ***"was betrothed to Joseph,"*** would ***"bring forth a Son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins"*** (Matthew 1:20, 21). The apostle John, was, without doubt, ***"the disciple whom Jesus loved"*** (John 13:23; 19:26). It is written that ***"Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus"*** (John 11:5, 36).

There were five men mentioned in the Old Testament who had endeared themselves to God. They were Moses, Samuel (Jeremiah 15:1), Noah, Daniel and Job (Ezekiel 14:14, 16, 18-19). The Lord said that if these men

stood before Him and prayed to Him on the behalf of the children of Israel, His people would not be spared because of the depth and darkness of their sin and rebellious ways. These godly men ***"would deliver only themselves by their righteousness."***

Among the five men previously mentioned by the Lord, I want to observe what He said about Daniel. In Daniel 9:20-23, while Daniel was praying on the behalf of his people, Gabriel spoke to him, saying, ***"At the beginning of your pleas for mercy a word went out, and I have come to tell it to you for you are greatly loved…"*** (ESV). This expression, ***"greatly loved,"*** regarding Daniel is used again in Daniel 10:11 and 19. In *Gills Exposition of the Entire Bible*, we read:

> and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved; or, "art desired" (p); all desire, exceedingly desired; very lovely, amiable, and delightful, in the sight of God, and all good men: or, "that thou art greatly beloved" (q); thus the angel came from God, out of heaven, to show it to him, to make it appear that he was highly in the favour of God, in that he made known his secrets to him.

How wonderful that such an expression should be used for any child of God!

Though our names are not found in the Word of God, we can know with all assurance they are written in the ***"book of life"*** (Revelation 3:5; 21:27), provided we have been saved by the grace of God and the blood of His son, Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8-9; Ephesians 1:7). How great was God's love for us? ***"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"*** (John 3:16-17 NKJV). ***"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends"*** (John 15:13). ***"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"*** (Romans 5:8). God gave His precious Son to die for us on Calvary's cross! His love is immeasurable. Praise be to our Heavenly Father, and to the Lamb of God, by whose blood we have been cleansed from our sins (Revelation 1:5)!

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

Seeing Him Who Is Invisible

Brian Kenyon

The Bible explicitly says of Moses, ***"By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible"*** (Hebrews 11:27). It is earlier said of Noah, ***"By faith…being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith"*** (Hebrews 11:7). The faith by which both these men (and others) operated is defined as ***"the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"*** (Hebrews 11:1). In all three of these verses, the unseen has a significant emphasis. Enduring as a Christian is sometimes difficult, especially when all we consider is what we can see or at least what we think we see. Like Moses, we may have to face what seems an insurmountable hostile army and deliberately go against the orders of its furious commander. Like Noah, we may have to steadily do what the Lord says despite our limited understanding of God's way and the possible ridicule of the masses. Like both of these men, though, any obstacle we face can be overcome by obedient faith!

The key to overcoming is to focus on ***"Him who is invisible."*** Paul reminded us that ***"we walk by faith, not by sight"*** (2 Corinthians 5:7). May we take comfort in knowing that God ***"will never leave you nor forsake you"*** and that ***"the Lord is my helper; I will not fear"*** (Hebrews 13:5-6). May we have courage to ***"put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil"*** (Ephesians 6:10-18). May we with confidence ***"be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord"*** (1 Corinthians 15:58). Jesus acknowledged to His disciples, ***"And you will be hated by all… But he who endures to the end will be saved"*** (Matthew 10:22). Let us trust the invisible God to see us through!

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

Understanding Where God Is

Robert D. Rawson

Psalms 42, 48, 55 and 73 point out King David's pondering of this question. He cited many problems created by the wicked for him. Yet, in each of these situations where God was not personally present working a miracle in his life, he cited the Lord's continued loving kindness, righteousness and trust.

What was God doing during this time of sorrow in David's life? The answer comes in Psalm 73:17. David noted that he suffered pain at the thought of the profits of the wicked and the Lord's seeming absence **until he went into the sanctuary of God**. There God's Word was being read, and David said **he understood the wicked are set in slippery places**. They would slip up, be cast down and suffer for their sinful ways. King David had not left the Lord to curse Him, to leave His righteous ways or to deny Him during the time of sorrow. Instead, he understood God's work on the wicked **when he went into the sanctuary of God**.

As we enter worship and have a part of God's Word taught to us, we may come to understand that God still cares for us despite what may befall us. Do we wish to be on a slippery slope as are the wicked around us, or do you and I prefer to abide inside God's teaching and enjoy His blessings?✝

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Right View of God

Joe W. Nichols

Perhaps the great stumbling block in mankind establishing his religion (being reattached to God) is a proud spirit. The proud spirit exalts man and reduces God. God is consequently challenged and judged on man's level. His words, actions and will are thought to be debatable. Limitations are placed upon Him, and He is remanufactured to fit the "whim and fancy" of mankind. The proud spirit has failed to recognize the greatness and sovereignty of God and to humble himself in total submission and dependency. It is like the child that says, "I can do it myself."

In respect to religion, we cannot do it ourselves. Without God and His work on our behalf, we are hopelessly lost, left groping in our sins. Were God not mindful of us, we would be without hope. ***"But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"*** (Romans 5:8 cf., 1 John 4:10).

God

God is the **Absolute Monarch**; there is none other. His ways are so immeasurably superior to man's that comparison is eliminated (Isaiah 55:11). Man, therefore, is dependent totally upon God for his salvation (1 Corinthians 1:21). God's plan is the perfect plan; it embodies superior wisdom, power and perfection. The Gospel is God's perfect means of saving man, who could not save himself. It is the *perfect of perfection,* meaning that it has no rivalry (no alternative, no choice or selection). It is simply the **perfect plan.** There is no other plan. Man must either accept it or be lost (Acts 4:12; John 14:6; 6:44-45).

In order to be saved, man must yield his proud spirit and humble himself before the Almighty God of love and compassion in complete obedience (1 Peter 1:22-23). His salvation is thus wrought by God through the Gospel as man submits to the conditions of His grace. This results in ***"that no flesh should glory before God"*** (1 Corinthians 1:29). The writer further stated, ***"But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us the wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption; that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord"*** (1 Corinthians 1:30-31). Wherefore, man's glorying is totally eliminated.

To know God is to understand His greatness, rule and perfect plan by which He saves man, and to humbly submit to Him. Anyone otherwise minded has been misled and is reprobate, whether self-inflicted or otherwise (Titus 1:16; Matthew 7:21; Luke 6:46; Hebrews 11:6).

One who offers alternatives to God and His will does not know God. The proud spirit prevents him from representing God correctly and yielding himself humbly and completely to Him. As man lowers and diminishes God, he thereby is found to whittle away at the only means of his salvation. God help him!

Joe W. Nichols is a Gospel preacher living in Bastrop, Louisiana, USA.

Kenney's Penneys

"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord, The people He has chosen as His own inheritance" (Psalm 33:12 NKJV). God's holy nation today is the church. The church is among multiple nations. These nations and our nation must follow the Lord, if they want the blessings from the Lord.

What Is the Relationship between Scholarly Research and the Supernal God?

Stacey L. Carter

God and Research

The God of the Bible is the manufacturer of all things. John, the beloved disciple wrote, ***"Through*** [Jesus] ***all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made"*** (John 1:3). When the world and the things that inhabit the world are studied, the findings reflect the mind of the Creator. As scholars stare into the face of evidence with scrutiny in one hand and a pen in the other, forthright research declares the irrefutable existence and dominion of a supernatural force operating from outside the terrestrial, closed system. However, not all people regard the earth as the work of God's hands. In this case, aspirant scholars seek to understand the intricate mysteries woven into the universe in attempts to unveil glimpses or hints at potential cosmic origins. The embarrassing reality is that the most advanced research consistently points to an outside force imparting life to the earth in a singular episode. Maintaining a firm comprehension and acceptance of the biblical account of the confirmed beginning relieves Christians of engaging in a directionless search for a genesis and, by subsequent implication, a purpose. For the Christian, embarking on academic investigation presents the opportunity to divulge the unmissable truth that the God of the Bible deliberately designed the earth and everything in it to bring about His divine purpose.

Spiritual Impact of Research

Questioning observable processes and conducting measurable research affords limitless opportunities to grow in faith. However, the

researcher and the reader must decide on the meaning of the data. Two men may gaze upon a breathtaking mountain and come to vastly different realizations. One considers the magnitude of God's creativity and power while the other quietly reflects on the enigma of evolutionary processes that gave life to the awe-inspiring view. Personally, research acts as a spiritual prompt to ponder the great works of the Great God. Just as art students study the sculptor to understand the sculpture, the sculpture also depicts a dimension of its designer. In the same way, people study the Creator to understand the creation, and the creation portrays aspects of the Creator. Hence, research pulls back layers of materials—physical, social, psychological, economical, mental and emotional—to reveal precious certitudes pertaining to the multi-faceted operations of the One True God. Truly, questioning and conducting research can bring people closer to God.

Explaining God

The New King James Version of the Bible contains roughly 783,137 words; within it there are many phrases that work to explain who God is. For example, God is love; God is faithful; God is holy; God is the Alpha and Omega; God is righteous; God is eternal (1 John 4:8; 1 Corinthians 1:9; Leviticus 19:2; Revelation 1:8; Psalm 111:3; Deuteronomy 33:27). This list of attributes is far from complete. If God Himself breathed over 700,000 words, and those words described a myriad of features attributed to Him, how probable is it that mankind can explain the entity of the Creator through research? Surely, research has the ability to uncover, whether in part or in whole, God's processes; however, explaining God is another exploit altogether. Knowing this, researchers who hold fast to the Faith should proceed with reasonable expectations. While God's beauty and intricacy may be observed, measured, analyzed and interpreted, there will always be ***"secret things*** [that] ***belong to the Lord our God"*** (Deuteronomy 29:29).

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Parting the Red Sea

Robert Johnson

A recent Reuters news report states, "Moses might not have parted the Red Sea, but a strong east wind that blew through the night could have pushed the waters in the way described in Biblical writings." Using computer simulations, U.S. researchers said wind could push water back at a point where a river bent to merge with a coastal lagoon. "The wind moves the water in a way that's in accordance with physical laws, creating safe passage with water on two sides and then abruptly allowing the water to rush back in."

Skeptics have always shown an interest in trying to turn miraculous events in Scripture into ordinary occurrences governed by natural law. In reality, this is testimony to the historical accuracy of the accounts themselves. If they were myths, there would be no need to try to debunk what Scripture says happened through divine intervention. That critics of Scripture offer natural explanations is evidence of their historical accuracy.

Regarding the parting of the Red Sea, Scripture makes clear it was indeed a strong wind that separated the waters. ***"Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord swept the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land, so the waters were divided"*** (Exodus 14:21). After the Israelites were across the sea, ***"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Stretch out your hand over the sea so that the waters may come back over the Egyptians, over their chariots and their horsemen.' So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal state at daybreak, while the Egyptians were fleeing right into it; then the Lord overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea"*** (Exodus 14:26-27).

What these scientists do not recognize is not just the wind factor, but also the timing of the event. The miracle is not just God using natural forces to part the waters, but when it occurred. God did not sweep the

water of the Red Sea back until Moses stretched his hand over it, and the water did not return to its place until Moses again stretched out his hand over the sea. Is it coincidence that the water parted when the Israelites could pass through to the other side? Is it chance that the water came back when the Egyptians were in the midst of the waters, where it would cover all their chariots and horsemen? Not only this, but it had been foretold by God to Moses (Exodus 14:15-18), so that ***"the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord, when I am honored through Pharaoh, through his chariots and his horsemen"*** (14:18). The miracle is not just the wind, but also the timing of the wind, in that it had been determined beforehand by God and revealed to Moses.

This is similar to a miracle Jesus performed with Peter in the New Testament. Those who collected the annual half-shekel temple tax, which every Jewish male was to pay for the maintenance of the temple service, questioned Peter. Jesus told Peter, ***"However, so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up; and when you open its mouth, you will find a shekel. Take that and give it to them for you and Me"*** (Matthew 17:27). It was a miracle, but not just because there was a shekel in the mouth of the fish. People catch fish with all sorts of items in them that they have swallowed. It was that Jesus had foretold this, and the exact manner in which it would happen.

Scientists, then, have not disproved the parting of the Red Sea. They have collaborated to show how God used a strong wind to accomplish it. What they have missed in all their efforts is how it happened in God's time, exactly when God said it would (by Moses stretching out his hand), accomplishing exactly what God said it would (the destruction of the Egyptians). Perhaps they need to spend more time reading the entire account of Scripture. They would discover, as anyone with a good and honest heart, ***"The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever"*** (Isaiah 40:8).

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UNDENIABLE EVIDENCES

Betty Burton Choate

We could use many ways to convince readers that **The Word—The Angel of the Lord**—Who was with God in the beginning as one of three coequal entities of the Godhead **[The Lord of Hosts, the Angel of the Lord and the Holy Spirit]** ***was born in the flesh as Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*** Among the most compelling are the hundreds of prophecies in the Old Testament that were fulfilled by Him. **The place of His birth** (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1), **He was born of a virgin** (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:22-23), **a descendant of Abraham and Judah** (Genesis 12:3 and 49:10; Matthew 1:1; Luke 3:33), **that He would be betrayed** (Zechariah 11:12-13; Luke 22:47-48) **that He would be crucified with criminals** (Isaiah 53:12; Matthew 27:38), **that His hands and feet would be pierced** (Psalm 22:16; John 20:25-27), **He would be resurrected from the dead** (Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:22-32), that **He would sit at God's right hand** (Psalm 110:1; Mark 16:19), and many others that could be cited, but I ask you to prayerfully consider these thoughts in addition.

Throughout time, great and powerful men have dominated their eras in the world's history. The Pharaohs of Egypt were powerful rulers. Alexander the Great, as King of Macedonia and commander of a mighty conquering army, established the largest empire the ancient world had ever known. Emperors of Rome extended their control through most of Europe and into much of Africa and west Asia. Their names, and others who rose to power in their own age are well known in history. Probably all of us are familiar with these rulers, but ***do they impact our lives today?***

No.

During that same approximate era of time, in a small suburb of Jerusalem, Israel, a baby was born *in a stable.* Out of fear for his life, his parents fled to Egypt and later returned to Israel to the small town of Nazareth in the section known as Galilee. The child grew to maturity there, under the tutelage of the man known as His father who was *a carpenter.* This man's human

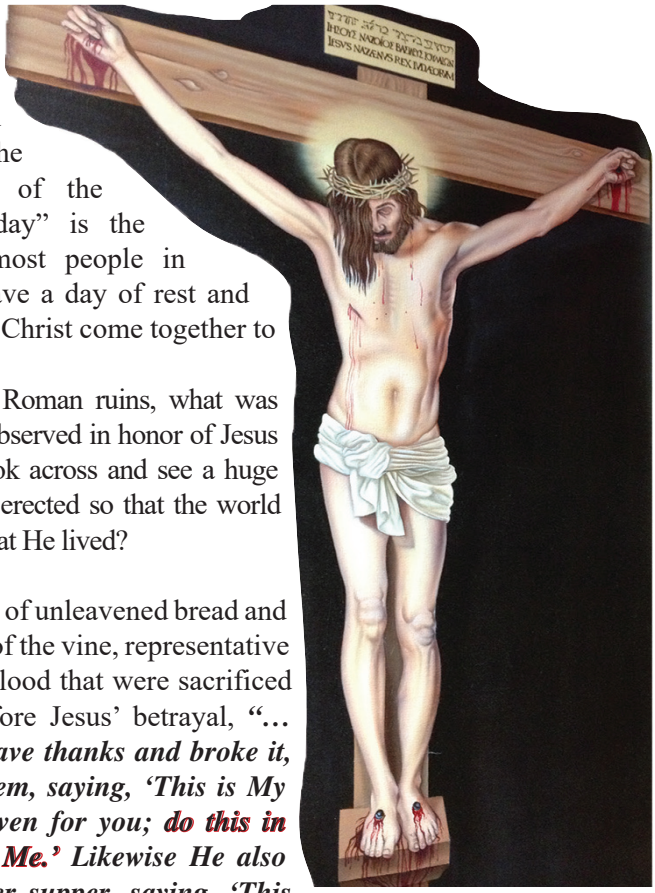
beginnings can only be described as the most humble of the humble.

At the age of thirty, He began to roam throughout His small country, collecting followers from among fishermen and other lowly people and teaching a message that was deemed by the nation's leadership as blasphemy and heresy. Ultimately, he was arrested, tried, convicted and executed. Common sense and all past history of such general types would have declared the story of this unimportant nobody from nowhere to be buried and totally forgotten from that day forward. Yet, was that the end of the story of this uneducated, unknown itinerate preacher?

Hardly! Today, almost two thousand years after His execution, time itself on calendars throughout the world is dated from His birth: **2019, "In the Year of our Lord"!** The fame of Jesus Christ has spread beyond the borders of the small country in which He was born so that, "With 32 percent of the world's population, **Christianity is the largest religion today…"** (Pew Research Center). No other single individual has impacted history and the world as has this lone Galilean!

The account of Jesus of Nazareth was written more than 1,900 years ago. The resulting book, His "New Testament," was closed at the end of the first century and should have ceased to be of importance to any except His dedicated followers. However, it, too, has defied the historical pattern. Instead of being forgotten or revised over and over to keep it "up to date," the New Testament as originally written by Jesus' disciples under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is the most revered book in the world today as part of the "Holy Bible." **It has been translated and printed in more languages, with more copies being sold every year than any other book in existence.** Even in those countries where Christianity is not the dominant religion, what is considered "right" and "wrong" in most cultures has been largely reshaped by the principles taught by Christ.

Many magnificent monuments have been erected to honor powerful men of history. The majority become "ruins" with the passing of time. Sitting among the Roman ruins, our family worshiped God on "Sunday," **the first day of the week,** the day Jesus rose triumphantly over death and the grave almost two thousand years ago. Though the days of His birth and of His resurrection have been declared annual "national holidays"—



"Christmas" and "Easter"—in many countries, most of the world also follows the seven-day week of the Scriptures. "Sunday" is the day on which most people in most countries have a day of rest and when believers in Christ come together to worship God!

Among those Roman ruins, what was the memorial we observed in honor of Jesus Christ? Did we look across and see a huge golden monument erected so that the world would not forget that He lived?

No!

We simply ate of unleavened bread and drank of the fruit of the vine, representative of the body and blood that were sacrificed for our sins! Before Jesus' betrayal, ***"… He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you…'"*** (Luke 22:19-20). How could that unimpressive, perishable "memorial" have come down to us through those many centuries? Further, how could it be that, beginning in the farthest eastern time zone and circling the globe back to the beginning point, this worship in the name of Jesus Christ and the partaking of the memorial of His sacrifice is observed hour-after-hour by His followers on every "first day of the week" two thousand years after

His sojourn on this earth? There is no human historical explanation for such a phenomenon!

Only one answer suffices. He was Who He claimed to be, **the Son of God, incarnate in human flesh.**

"When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, 'Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?' So they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God'" (Matthew 16:13-16).

"He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves" (John 14:9-11).

"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

"Then He said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.' And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, 'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.'

"And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy…" (Luke 24:44-52). ✝

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A Closer Look at Alleged Discrepancies Among the Gospels

Kevin L. Moore

Rabbi, Master or Lord?

In recounting Christ's transfiguration, the synoptic writers employ different words in their respective versions of Peter's statement. Mark records the title ***"Rabbí"*** (Mark 9:5), whereas Matthew uses ***"Kúrios"*** [***"Lord"***] (Matthew 17:4) and Luke ***"Epistátēs"*** [***"Master"***] (Luke 9:33). Which of these words was originally spoken by Peter? Do these differences amount to a contradiction? Does this legitimately call into question the integrity of the biblical record? Studying these passages contextually resolves the issue.

The original conversation was almost certainly in the Aramaic language, and the synoptic writers provide independent translations for their respective audiences. Contrary to the popular literary-dependence theories of redaction critics, these differences demonstrate independence and serve as separate witnesses to the life of Christ. The word ***"rabbi"*** is of Hebrew origin, essentially meaning "master" and used as an honorary title for "teacher." Luke, writing from a Greek perspective, never employs the Hebraic term "rabbi." John, a Jewish author writing to a non-Jewish audience, uses the Jewish term "rabbi" and then translates it into Greek as *didáskalos* ("teacher") for his Gentile readers (John 1:38). This informs John's audience of the functional role of the person wearing the title but does not explicitly convey the deep

respect inherent in the term. The other Gospels do.

In the parallel accounts of Christ's transfiguration, Mark records the original Hebraic title ***"Rabbí"*** (Mark 9:5), while Matthew employs the comparable expression ***"Lord"*** [*Kúrios*] (Matthew 17:4) and Luke ***"Master"*** [*Epistátēs*] (Luke 9:33). These different renderings not only recount what was said in Greek translation (or transliteration in Mark's case) for respective readers, but also convey the title's reverential intent.

The Crucifixion Inscription

The inscription affixed to Jesus' cross is variously reported by the Gospel writers: (a) ***"This is Jesus the King of the Jews"*** (Matthew 27:37); (b) ***"The King of the Jews"*** (Mark 15:26); (c) ***"This is the King of the Jews"*** (Luke 23:38); (d) ***"Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews"*** (John 19:19). Each Gospel writer only partially gave the wording of the inscription. The full inscription would read, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." All four accounts collectively provide the full account. This is evidence of four independent witnesses (Deuteronomy 19:15). The inscription, having been written in three languages (Luke 23:38; John 19:20), would have been intelligible to the local Jews (Aramaic-speakers) and Romans (Latin-speakers) as well as all foreign visitors (Greek-speakers).

Abiathar the High Priest?

In recording Jesus' response to the Pharisees (Matthew 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5), Mark is the only synoptic writer to mention "Abiathar" in the account (2:26), and there are variations among manuscripts: ***"in the days*** [time] ***of Abiathar the high priest"*** (ESV, NASB, NKJV) vs. ***"when Abiathar was high priest"*** (ASV, N/RSV). While the circumstances involving David eating showbread did occur in the days of Abiathar, it was actually his father Ahimelech who was high priest at the time. Ahimelech was killed soon afterward, and his son Abiathar was then appointed high priest (1 Samuel 22:17-21). As a prolepsis [anticipating a future status], Mark simply describes Abiathar as he was known at the time of writing.

What to Take and Not Take?

In Matthew's account of Jesus sending out the twelve, the Lord instructs them not to take ***"two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs"*** (Matthew 10:10). In Mark's account, the Lord instructs them to take nothing ***"except a staff…but to wear sandals, and not to put on two tunics"*** (Mark 6:8-9). In both narratives Jesus assures provision of their necessities, so extra supplies were not needed. Lodging would be available, thus no reason to have an extra tunic for a bedroll or covering for outdoors. They would obviously be wearing sandals (as Mark reports) but no need to ***"take"*** another pair (as Matthew reports). Each would have a staff (as Mark reports) but not multiple staffs (as Matthew reports).

How Many Times Did the Rooster Crow?

Matthew, Luke and John each records the Lord's prediction of a rooster's crowing subsequent to Peter's triple denial, then confirming its fulfillment (Matthew 26:34, 74-75; Luke 22:34, 60-61; John 13:38; 18:27). Mark's version alludes to a rooster crowing "twice," the first of which occurred after the initial denial and the second in conjunction with the third denial (Mark 14:30, 68, 72). Nighttime in the ancient Mediterranean world was divided into four periods or watches, and the third (12–3 a.m.) was designated "the crowing of the rooster" (Mark 13:35). Matthew, Luke and John give a general report of the Lord's prediction, viz. that Peter will have denied him three times before this period either begins or ends, with an abridged record of the fulfillment. Mark is more specific and detailed with regard to the timing of the events.

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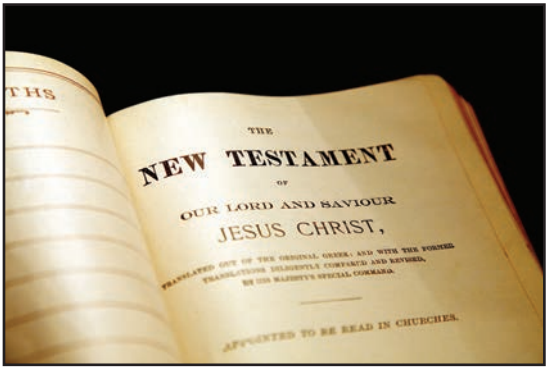
Introduction to the Bible

Jeremy Barrier



Within various different religions and cultures, certain pieces of literature have been revered as Scriptures from the Divine by their followers as they have sought to know the Divine and to find out what the gods desire for them in their lives. Within Hinduism, the Vedas, the Upanishads, *Ramayana* and the *Bhagavad Gita* attempt to point people to the Divine. Within Islam, Muslims claimed the *Qur'an* is the actual words of Allah as spoken and recorded through Mohammed, the Prophet. Further, within the ancient religion of Zoroastrianism, the *Avestas*, the ancient "scriptures" written in an ancient Indo-European Iranian language, have been consulted by their priests as they have aimed to please the Divine.

Yet, from the East, another major religion has sprung forth that has influenced billions of people over the centuries, which still has a tremendous impact today: the religion of Christianity. An essential source within Christianity has always been the Sacred Scriptures that we call the Bible. In fact, the Bible has been such an influential book that it inspired Mohandas Gandhi in more ways than one as he began his political activities in India. For the remainder of this essay, I would like to discuss some of the virtues of the Bible and how to approach the Bible with its two testaments, many books and various other divisions. My hope is that you will develop a love for the Bible in the same way that many other people have done for many generations.

THE WORD OF GOD

When one begins to approach the Bible, it can be somewhat overwhelming and amazing all at the same time. Within this collection of writings one will find an account of the creation of the world, the beginnings of civilization and humanity, the history of a small group of people in the Middle East who served the One, almighty God—and last—the ultimate manifestation of God, when He appeared upon this earth as a dynamic political and spiritual revolutionary, challenging all people of the world to look to God and prepare themselves for God to occupy their lives.

In an anticlimactic way, the Bible then moves on to the organization of small cells of believers who followed the Great Teacher, Jesus. Then, the Bible ends with an apocalyptic declaration of the final triumph of God over all enemies who might oppose Him. This moving story of the World can be both exciting and tiresome all at the same time! Gandhi commented in his *Autobiography,* "I began reading it [the Bible], but could not possibly read through the Old Testament… But the New Testament produced a different impression, especially the Sermon on the Mount which went straight to my heart." For this reason, I hope to encourage you to take the Bible one part at a time, so I will now help break down some of the contents of the Bible to assist one's reading of the materials.

The Bible is divided into two major collections of writings—the Hebrew Scriptures or Bible (i.e., Old Testament) and the Christian Scriptures (i.e., New Testament). The Hebrew Bible is a collection of writings that is still used and revered within modern Judaism today. At the same time, these writings have been embraced by the Christian community as the Words of God also. Therefore, Christians call the Hebrew Bible the Old Testament.

Within the Old Testament one is going to find either 39 books or 57 books depending upon whether one is looking at a Catholic Bible or a Non-Catholic Bible. For the sake of brevity, I will deal with the Bibles that only have 39 books in the Old Testament. This Old Testament begins with the five books (Genesis through Deuteronomy) of the great Prophet Moses. Within this section, a story is recounted that tells of the creation of the world, the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses and, finally, the entrance of God's people, the Jews, under the leadership of Moses into Palestine, the land which God had promised to

give them. Following the first five books, one will find the continuation of the story of the Jews as they passed from a small nation into a regional kingdom and empire that spread from Southern Palestine to the edge of modern-day Syria and Iraq. This story is found in the books of Joshua through Esther. Following this section, the Old Testament switches gears from a narrative of the history of the Jews over to the Sacred Wisdom literature (Job through Songs of Solomon), passed on from the wisest people within Judaism. The Wisdom Literature ranges from subjects of the meaning of life, the problem of pain and suffering, how to use one's finances wisely and even into poetry that recounts the words of a groom and a bride who share a sexual relationship.

The last section of the Old Testament shifts to the prophets of Israel (Isaiah through Malachi), as they constantly encouraged the Jews to seek after God. After taking some time with the Old Testament, one will immediately realize that this is an extraordinarily rich and diverse collection of Scriptures that are extremely rewarding.

Within the New Testament, one is going to find 27 books that range from the accounts of Jesus to personal letters written by one of the early followers of Jesus, named Paul. The first four books of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) are the four Gospel records that recount the life of Jesus, beginning at birth and leading all the way up to His death—then through His strength as God, rising out of the grave to live forever. In many ways, the Gospel accounts record the heart of Christianity as we Christians attempt to model our lives after Jesus Christ.

Following the four biographies of Jesus, one will then find the history of the early church, entitled, *The Acts of the Apostles.* In the first four New Testament books, one learns that Jesus selected twelve men to take His message to the world. *Acts* tells this story by emphasizing two of the apostles in particular, namely Peter and Paul. Following *Acts*, one will then come to a corpus of thirteen letters (Romans through Philemon) that are attributed to the hand of the apostle Paul. These letters contain many different teachings that Paul handed over to the early followers of Jesus—the church. These teachings helped the church to determine

how to be better followers of Jesus and how they could worship so that they might be able to always remember and worship God through Jesus. Following Paul's letters, one finds several other letters and epistles attributed to other apostles and early church leaders (Hebrews through Jude). These writings are also filled with various teachings on belief and practice of the early church. The last book of the New Testament, Revelation, is an apocalyptic writing that foretells the end of times, when Jesus will finally bring all people into submission, so that all peoples will celebrate Him as Lord and God of all the earth.

One can often find a Bible in his own language. The original languages of the Bible (the language of Hebrew for the Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament) are still used and studied today by numerous scholars and students of the Bible within Judaism and Christianity. Today, the Bible can now be found in hundreds of languages. One encouraging feature of Christianity is that God is not concerned with whether one knows the ancient languages, but God is concerned with whether one knows Him! The Bible is the primary source for coming to know God. In a number of ways, the Bible is a mouthpiece for God as He continues to proclaim to the world His Good News. To put it simply, the Bible is God's way of telling us how He has interacted with humans in the world since the beginning of time and how He has paved the way, through Jesus, so that humans will always be able to share a friendship with Him as we serve God in our lives.

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[**Editor's Note:** Through obvious design evident in all of creation, one can know assuredly that a Master Designer—God—is behind it all (Romans 1:20). Yet, beyond that and for the details relating to creation—including man himself—one must turn to the revealed will of God—the Bible. There are, then, two senses in which a person can legitimately and absolutely know something about God—observation of creation and the written Word of God—the Bible. The latter contains information how man and God can interact favorably on earth (in each time period—Old Testament and New Testament) as well as make preparation to spend eternity with God in Heaven. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

His Most Precious Possession

David A. Sargent

The story is told of two soldiers who had recently been released from a prison camp in Siberia following World War II. "We did our best," said an officer, "to repatriate the men as fast as possible, but many were still there when winter threatened to close up the port." Only a limited number could board the last small boat.

Among those waiting to be transported were two who had been friends all through the war. One of them was selected, but the other seemed doomed to remain behind. An order was given that those who were leaving could take only one important item of luggage. The heart of the man who was chosen went out to his friend, so he emptied his duffle bag of its prized souvenirs and his personal belongings and told his companion to get into the canvas sack. Then, carefully lifting the bag onto his shoulders, he boarded the ship with his dear friend—his single, most precious possession!

Because of our sins, you and I are doomed! ***"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"*** (Romans 3:23) ***and "the wages of sin is death"*** (Romans 6:23). However, Jesus Christ died on the cross on our behalf as payment for our sins (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus did this willingly so that you and I might gain safe passage "home" to live together with our Heavenly Father for eternity. Our "ticket" home came at a great personal cost to Him; however, His self-sacrifice was motivated by His

great love for us. ***"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends"*** (John 15:13).

Through the death of Jesus, a ***"new and living way"*** has been opened up for us to enter that heavenly home (Hebrews 10:22). Accessing this way to Heaven requires faith (Romans 5:1), repentance (Acts 17:30-31), confession (Romans 10:9-10), baptism (immersion) for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38) **and** faithful obedience in walking the well-lit path of righteousness (1 John 1:7).

The last ship is leaving. Can you hear the boarding call (Mark 16:15-16)? Jesus has given up everything so that He can take you with Him into that ship whose destination is the safe harbor of Heaven. Don't be left behind—because **you are His most precious possession!** Will you allow Him to carry you home?

David A. Sargent preaches for the Creekwood congregation in Mobile, Alabama, USA.

David's Devotional

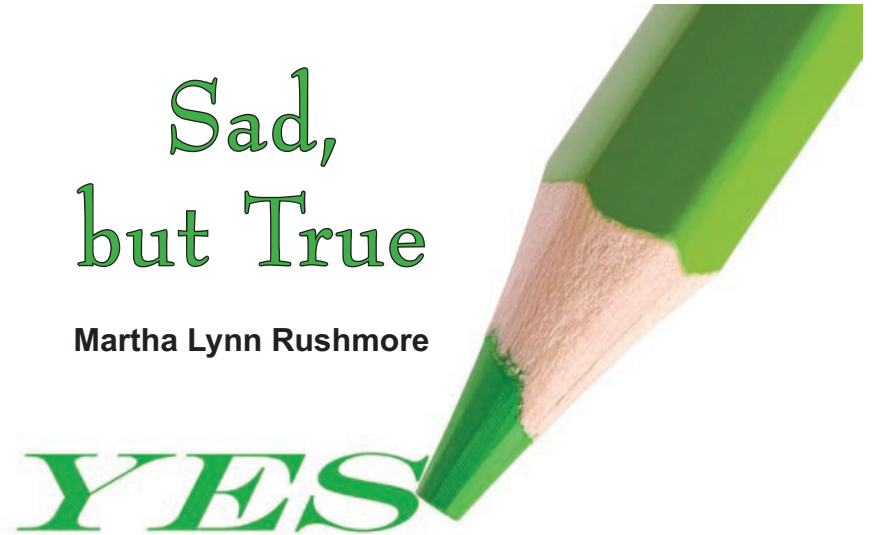
Be Patient With Them!

The other day I gave Madison, my granddaughter, her bottle. Afterwards, I held her up to my shoulder and patted her back so she would burp (she always feels better after a good burp!). This time she produced **much more** than a simple burp! My shoulder was suddenly soaking wet! You know, I didn't even get mad! In fact, it didn't bother me in the least. I simply changed shirts and dismissed the whole thing! After all, she has only been in this world for three months and I've been around for 42 years! I've seen spit up before!

Christians are at various stages in their growth. Some are "babies," and some are "mature." When the "babies" do things that make a mess (even on other Christians), notice the "mature" ones; they don't seem to let it bother them! They still love them! They are patient with them! They realize that they, too, made mistakes when they first became Christians!

Sad, but True

Martha Lynn Rushmore



If we did a survey of 100 people, probably all would say they are going to Heaven. Often, people have the wrong perception about the Bible. To the world, it does not matter if one attends worship or if one follows God's Word. Many people think that it does not matter the kind of life a person lives, just as long as he believes in God. To many in the world, God is perceived to be a loving God Who will not send anyone to Hell. Yes, God is a loving God and will not send anyone to Hell ***arbitrarily***. Hell is a punishment **earned** by those who will spend eternity there. A heavenly reward cannot be earned, but by God's grace, we can receive our heavenly home as a gift!

I was listening to some group singing, "When We All Get to Heaven." It made me think of many people who are so sincere about their Christianity, and yet, some of them are so sincerely wrong. We all want to go to Heaven, but not everyone wants to follow God's instruction Book, the Bible. Even religious people like to pick and choose out of the Bible what they want, not what God commands. If it were just that easy to get to Heaven, there would be a lot more gaining a home in Heaven. Unfortunately, sincerity alone will not work.

How many of our friends are sincere in their false doctrines? How many people do we see every day who are good people and would do anything to

help those in need? Yes, there are good people in denominations as well as among others who do not claim any Christianity. However, most believe they will go to Heaven anyway.

Have you ever attended the calling hours preceding a funeral of a friend or a loved one who was not a faithful Christian or someone who does not proclaim to have anything to do with religion? How many times do we hear, "At least they are out of pain now. They are in Heaven with God"? We hear this all the time for Christians and non-Christians alike.

In 2 Timothy 2:15, we are told to study for ourselves so we can rightly divide the Word of God. We are not told to listen to others and not study for ourselves. Unfortunately, this is what we hear a lot. "Let me ask my preacher what the Bible says about this or that." Often, sincere people go to the wrong source—man instead of God. I am not saying it is wrong to go to others for help, but after we are told an answer to our question, we must go to the Scriptures to make sure we were given the right answer.

Matthew 7:21 says, ***"not everyone who says unto me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of Heaven."*** We must be sure to follow God's commandments. Also, in Matthew 25:31-46, the ***"goats"*** who were lost were sincere. They asked Jesus when did they see Him to give Him a drink, to feed Him, to give Him clothing or to visit Him in prison. These people wanted to know what they had done wrong. Jesus told them they did not **do** these things to those around them that needed these things. If they had done for others, they would have done this to Jesus.

Then, in this same passage, the ***"sheep"*** did for others what was needed. They did not do this for praise. Their good deeds were done because it was what they knew should be done. They also asked Jesus when they did these things to Him. He told them by doing for others they did them for Him.

So, let us all study God's Word and make sure we are following it. We all want to go to Heaven, but there is only one way—through Jesus Christ. Jesus said in John 14:6-7, ***"I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."*** Therefore, we **must** do the full will of God.✝

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Babies Are Not Born Sinners!

Dennis Sumpter

There are many in the religious world today who believe that babies are sinners from their birth (e.g., the Roman Catholic Church, the Anglican Church (Church of England). Roman Catholics and Anglicans sprinkle little babies for this belief (i.e., they call it baptism) to protect them, but of course it is **not** baptism.

In addition to believing that babies are born in sin, there are those in the religious world who even teach this as Scripture. What does the Bible have to say about babies—about the innocent—for it is man's **only** source of authority for religious practices. ***"And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done"*** (Genesis 8:21). Note whether man's heart is evil from his birth! Is that what Moses wrote? **No!** He said, ***"…Man's heart is evil from his YOUTH…"***—from his youth and **not** from his birth.

Again, this time from the pen of Jeremiah the prophet we see the same truth. ***"We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our God, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our God"*** (Jeremiah 3:25). Jeremiah concurred with what Moses wrote, also guided by divine inspiration, as were **all** the writers of the Bible.

One of the favorite verses of those who teach the doctrine of babies being born in sin is Psalm 51:5, which reads as follows. ***"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me."*** They claim that this verse is referring to the sins of David, but we know from the New Testament that sin is the transgression of the Law of God. This verse, however, is **not** referring to David but to his mother. His mother was in sin when she gave birth to David.

Let's look to one more Old Testament writer—Ezekiel. ***"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the***

righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him" (Ezekiel 18:20). Now let me ask you, in all honesty, can a newborn baby possibly sin? **No!** A newborn baby can neither speak nor understand. The only thing the child knows is that it is hungry, it needs its diaper changed or it is in pain. Anything other than that is beyond its understanding.

Now let's turn to the New Testament, and we will read the very words of Jesus concerning young children. First, we note Mark 10:13-14, ***"And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God."*** The word ***"suffer"*** here means "allow." However, look more closely at what Jesus said. ***"…for of such is the kingdom of God."*** Jesus was not saying that little children are Christians, for the church didn't exist until after His death. What He was saying is that little children are pure and innocent. This is a far cry from those who believe and teach that a baby is born in sin.

Now turn to Matthew 18:1-4. ***"At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."*** This is a very interesting passage of Scripture. In verse 3 Jesus said, ***"…Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."*** Here, Jesus was telling His disciples that they were to be converted, and once converted, there needed to be a difference in their lives. They needed to be pure, to be like little children who are pure. In verse 4, He told them that little children are humble, and that whosoever humbles himself like that little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom. That is a very powerful statement, is it not?

The Bible verses we have examined provide overwhelming evidence that **babies are most definitely not born sinners!** There are a number of verses that speak of people sinning from their youth up, including the following from

Job. ***"For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth"*** (Job 13:26). Again, from Job 20:11, we read, ***"His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust."*** The Psalmist wrote, ***"Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD"*** (25:7). **Nowhere** in the Bible do we read, "Remember Oh Lord, the sins that I had at my birth." They are just **not** there! It is a grave indictment against Almighty God to accuse Him of creating a person a sinner.

What do we read in the opening chapter of Genesis after God had finished all His creation? ***"And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day"*** (Genesis 1:31). We know that God created Adam from the dust of the earth (Genesis 2:7) and that He created Eve from one of Adam's ribs (Genesis 2:22), and yet, **all** mankind is created in the image of God.

We know from Scripture that before one can receive salvation, he needs to repent of his sins (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 17:30). Let us think about this command carefully. Before one repents of sins, he must first believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 8:24). However, can a newborn baby believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? How about a toddler, can he or she believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? Of course, they can't. They are not old enough to understand. Also, they do not need to repent for they are pure and innocent.

When a person reaches the age of accountability, then and **only then** will he or she need to repent and to obey the Gospel. This age will vary from person to person. Prior to this time, babies and young children are **not** lost, but they are safe in the arms of Jesus!

The late Leroy Brownlow, in his book entitled, *Why I Am a Member of the Church of Christ*, stated:

> David was not of the belief that his child [born out of his adulterous relationship with Bathsheba, D.S.] died with a corrupted nature and guilty of sin. Contrarywise, he said, ***"I shall go to him, but he will not return to me"*** 2 Samuel 12:23. It is impossible for sin to be inherited: sin is violation of God's Law, by either

commission or omission. Concerning commission: ***"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law"*** (1 John 3:4). Relative to omission: ***"To him therefore that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin"*** (James 4:17). Sin is either a transgression or an omission of the law [God's Law, D.S]. This being true, it is absolutely impossible for a man to inherit it because it is not an inherent quality. The fact that God has not given a plan for saving infants is certain proof that they are not lost, that they are not sinners."

In conclusion, babies **are not** born in sin, and young children **are not** sinners, but they are most precious in the sight of Jesus and in the sight of the Father. To teach contrary to this would make God a liar, but Scripture clearly says, ***"…Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar…"*** (Romans 3:4). God's Word is **the truth**, just as Jesus declared in John 17:17, when He stated in His prayer to His Father, ***"Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth."*** Woe to anyone who tampers with the Word of God (Revelation 22:18-19). They will face the wrath of Almighty God! ***"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"*** (Hebrews 10:31).

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Kenney's Pennies

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:11-13 NKJV). Searching for God includes an open book—an open Bible! We call on Him in faith and obedience to His Word.

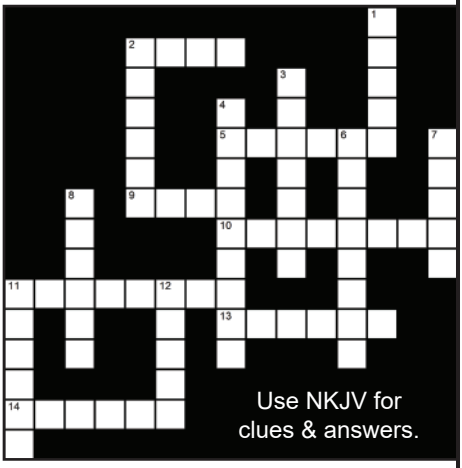
Bible Find

Martha Rushmore

Men's Names starting with the letter "A"

Across

2. Killed by his brother, Genesis 4:8
5. He was from the tribe of Benjamin, the son of Gideoni, Numbers 1:11
9. Grandfather of Ethan, a Merarite, 1 Chronicles 6:44
10. Azariah's Chaldean name, Daniel 1:7
11. He was a son of Korah, Exodus 6:24
13. He was the fourth son of Midian, a son of Abraham and Keturah, Genesis 25:4
14. Father of Shelemiah, Jeremiah 36:26



Down

1. Judge of Israel, son of Hillel the Pirathon, Judges 12:13
2. One of seven eunuchs who brought Vashti to King Ahasuerus, Esther 1:10-11
3. He was the son of Hammoleketh, 1 Chronicles 7:18
4. He told David that Saul had killed the Lord's priests, 1 Samuel 22:21
6. Solomon's officer in charge of forced levy/labor force, 1 Kings 4:6
7. Son of Amram and Jochebed, Exodus 6:20
8. A son of Guni, a Gadite of Gilead, 1 Chronicles 5:15
11. Second son of Samuel, 1 Samuel 8:2
12. He was the father of Kish and his other name was Abialbon (not in reference), 1 Samuel 9:1

1. How many bodies are there? (12:12)
2. How do we enter the body of Christ? (12:13)
3. Who can enter the body of Christ? (12:13)
4. What illustration does Paul give to show the unity of the body? (12:15)
5. Who is ultimately responsible for the many members of the body and their gifts? (12:18)
6. "But now indeed there are many _____, yet _____ body." (12:20)
7. Are all the members of the body necessary? (12:22)
8. What do we do to the less honorable or less presentable parts of the body? (12:23)
9. God has purposed that there should be no schism or division in the body.
   True False
10. When one member of the body suffers, what should the other members do? (12:26)
11. What offices has God appointed in the church? (12:28)
12. Did God intend for all members to perform miracles? (12:29-31)

(See the back cover for answers.)

12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.

15 If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? 18 But now God has set the members each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. 19 And if they were all one member, where would the body be?

20 But now indeed there are many members, yet one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you;" nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary. 23 And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor, and our unpresentable parts have greater modesty, 24 but our presentable parts have no need. But God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it, 25 that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it, or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. 28 And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues? 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? 31 But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way.

NOTE: In this section of Scripture, Paul discussed the diversity and the unity of the body. The body is composed of many members, though it is still one body. All the members have a function to perform, and all these functions are important. Thus, no one should say he is not important to the body. Paul used the human body as an illustration of this vital truth. God intended the body to be diverse in this manner.

Paul closed with a brief discussion of spiritual gifts. This discussion continues into chapters 13 and 14. God did not intend for every person to be a teacher, perform miracles, speak in tongues, etc., but these gifts were given for a time for the growth and the maturity of the church. All these gifts were necessary and important, but they were not the best gifts. The best gift, which Paul said all should seek, is presented in the next chapter to be love.

The Glue of Life

Clarence Lavender

In the September 28, 1992 edition of *Time* magazine, there is an excellent article entitled, "The Glue of Life," written by Dick Thompson (62-63). The article is about cell structure adhesiveness. Thompson says:

> If living cells didn't have a fondness for sticking together, we would all be colorful gobs of jelly oozing all over the floor. Fortunately, cells hold to a basic biological premise that stickiness is desirable for form and essential for function. They violate this premise at our peril. When cells become either too sticky or too slippery, arteries can get clogged, cancer cells can skate around the body, and inflammation can turn subversive. Researchers have long believed that if they could somehow manipulate stickiness, they would have a formidable new set of tools for healing.

After reading the whole article, I thought how marvelously made the human body really is. Sins of all kind, have no doubt, brought defection to the physical body, for God did not make it that way. What He made was good. ***"And God saw every thing that he made, and behold, it was very good…"*** (Genesis 1:30).

I thought also of the unity of the spiritual body, the church. ***"And he is the head of the body, the church…"*** (Colossians 1:18). There is a "stickiness" that must continually permeate it, if it is to maintain its "form" and "function" as the Bible teaches. Jesus prayed, ***"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through the 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. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:20-22).

As members of the body of Christ, there has been placed on us the responsibility, obligation or "stickiness" to keep the unity of the faith! Paul said, ***"Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace"*** (Ephesians 4:3). ***"Keep"*** and ***"endeavoring"*** in the passage mean to "keep by guarding, to guard by exercising watchful care, make haste, do one's best." ***"Peace"*** means "that which is bound together." **We must exercise watchful care to maintain our binding.** When we do not do our best, problems arise in the spiritual body, and it suffers untold harm.

Just as in the physical body, cells can become "too sticky" or "too slippery"; the spiritual body must avoid extremism. Neither being religiously ultraconservative nor liberal benefits the spiritual body. Our spiritual premise to "stickiness" or unity must be based on our authority, the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Jude 3; 2 John 9-11). It alone is our "glue of life" (John 10:10).

Brethren, if we are to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, then we as individuals must continue to accept our responsibility. Such responsibility involves attendance at every service, teaching our neighbor the Gospel, giving as we have prospered and utilizing our every talent for God. The basis for our action is love for God and each other. Paul said:

> ***But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; For whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*** (Ephesians 4:15-16)

In preparing ourselves for eternity in this vale for soul making, there must be "adhesion," "stickiness" and genuine love for each other in the church. Unity alone does not come by accident in either the physical or the spiritual body. It takes each member doing its respective part (Ephesians 4:16).

Clarence Lavender has been a longtime Gospel preacher and resides in Virginia, USA.

Working Well with Others

Ronald D. Reeves

The ideal congregation has a membership that works well with others and strives to deepen godly fellowship with other faithful members. Paul's working relationship with the Philippians was set in a positive light and provides an example for us (Philippians 4:3). John expressed interest in promoting godly fellowship as he addressed first century Christians (1 John 1:3). Working well with others contributes to deeper and stronger fellowship among faithful children of God. Those having achieved a quality working relationship with their coworkers do not place an emphasis upon personal power, prestige, influence or position. Rather, these seek the position and work for which they are best suited in the local congregation (1 Corinthians 12). Through such efforts, godly fellowship is promoted and qualitatively impacted. The passage of time may present one with opportunities to elect to work more closely with other children of God. May we possess the wisdom that will assist us in electing alternatives which will positively enhance our personal working relationship with others in the body of Christ, even at the expense of personal power, prestige and influence.

[**Editor's Note:** Most of the fussing and divisiveness within local congregations could be avoided or curbed when it appears upon remembering to Whom the church belongs—Jesus Christ. The body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12) or church is not human property over which mortals dare wrangle among themselves for dominance in any way (3 John 9-11). Every child of God is a servant of Christ. ***"…a servant of the Lord must not quarrel…"*** (2 Timothy 2:24 NKJV). ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

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Ministers

Dwight Fuqua

Over my office door is a sign that says, "minister." Are preachers "ministers"? Are preachers the only "ministers"?

Preachers are referred to as "ministers" on several occasions in the King James Version of the New Testament. Paul referred to himself and his coworkers as ***"ministers through whom you believed"*** (1 Corinthians 3:5), ***"ministers of Christ"*** (2 Corinthians 11:23), ***"ministers of the new testament"*** (2 Corinthians 3:6) and ***"ministers of God"*** (2 Corinthians 6:4). It is appropriate to refer to the preacher as a "minister." However, we need to understand what the word "minister" means. It is not an official title, but it is simply descriptive of what he does. A "minister" is a "servant." In each of the above passages, the word "ministers" is translated from a Greek word *(diakonos)* that simply means "servant." When we refer to the preacher as a "minister," we are acknowledging that he serves God.

Are preachers the only ministers? Not if we understand that "ministers *(diakonos)* means "servants"! This word is also used in the New Testament of domestic servants (John 2:5), the civil government (Romans 13:4), false teachers (2 Corinthians 11:15), a woman (Romans 16:1), deacons in the church (1 Timothy 3:8-13) and Jesus (Romans 15:8). While translated ***"minister"*** or ***"ministers"*** in the King James Version, it is translated ***"servant"*** or ***"servants"*** in other translations. A "minister" is a "servant," and a "servant" is a "minister."

The point is that every Christian, not just the preacher, is a "minister." The Master said, ***"…whoever desires to be great among you, let him be your servant"*** (Matthew 20:26). Again, He said, ***"If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor"*** (John 12:26). Guess what? The word "servant" in these verses is that Greek word *(diakonos)*. All Christians are ministers.

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Attitude of Thankfulness

Emily Fisher

A wise, older preacher once told me, "Your attitude determines your altitude." The older I have gotten, the more I understand this. What we think in our minds affects our actions and our lives. Many days end good or bad depending on our mindset that day. Several situations could have turned out differently if an attitude check had preceded the event. The overall mindset we possess in life will ultimately determine where we end up. This applies in the physical realm with our careers and earthly endeavors, but also and more importantly, it applies in the spiritual realm—where we will be in eternity.

One important characteristic of God's people is an attitude of thankfulness. God's Word stresses the importance of having a disposition of thanksgiving. As we keep that attitude, we will not forget the love of God shown toward man, take blessings for granted or forget the sacrifice Christ paid for us, thus 'setting our minds on things above' (Colossians 3:2, 15; Ephesians 4:23-24). With thanksgiving at the center of our minds, we will have the attitude of the Psalmist (100:4), spend more time in God's Word (Matthew 5:6) and live Spirit-filled lives as commanded in the New Testament (Ephesians 5:15-21).

Having an attitude of thanksgiving means we will think about and be thankful for Christ's sacrifice every day (not just on Sundays). Have you ever contemplated what it would be like in this world if He had not made that sacrifice and fulfilled all righteousness? Without His death, burial and resurrection, Christianity would be pointless, and we would have no hope of eternal life (1 Corinthians 15). It is a terrible thought. The wonderful fact is, God came down and dwelt among His creation, showing Himself to be the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). He became fully human with all the weaknesses, desires and temptations therein (Hebrews 2:18; 4:15). He did not sin because He always remembered His purpose, leaving for us an example to follow (John 5:30; Matthew 7:21). How thankful we should be (and encouraged, too) that Jesus did not submit to the devil. He laid aside for a time full equality with the Father in order to accomplish His will and become our Passover Lamb, High Priest and King (1 Corinthians 5:7; Hebrews 8:1-6; 1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 1:5). Jesus makes

it possible for man to approach and come to God (1 Timothy 2:1-7). Because of Christ, we can come to God's grace through faithful obedience (Romans 5:1-9; 6:3-6; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8). Our Lord made the ultimate sacrifice, and may we offer the sacrifice of our lives in service to Him, being ever thankful for the God of salvation (Romans 12:1-2).

Christians should be thankful for the written Word that God has given us. Our Creator has not left us to wander aimlessly in the dark concerning our salvation. He gave us His will, written down over hundreds of years, by about forty inspired individuals and containing a unified theme running from the first page to the last. There are a number of ways that God could have revealed His will, but He has made the Scriptures available to all men. How thankful we should be that the Bible can (and should) be in every home in the world. There is a poster online that reads, "What if we treated our Bibles like we do our cell phones? We would take it everywhere with us. We would turn back to get it if we forgot it. We would check it throughout the day for messages. We would use it for an hour or more every day." Indeed, how different the world would be if everyone treated God's Word in such a way. When people receive the Word as from God and not from man, rejoicing and thanksgiving follow (1 Thessalonians 2:13). His Word is ***"settled in heaven,"*** 'pure and proven' and 'a light for our path' (Psalms 12:6; 18:30; 119:89, 105). No other book can give us a glimpse of our Almighty God, give us daily bread to consume and guide our way to Heaven. It is God-breathed, and it is the only way God speaks to us today (2 Peter 1:3). Are you spending time in God's Word? Are you truly thankful for His Word?

When we spend time studying God's Word, **we will develop an attitude of thankfulness for the blessings our Lord has given us and others, with whom we can share those blessings.** The Holy Spirit emphasized the importance of giving thanks to God for life's necessities and spiritual blessings. One does not have to read far in the New Testament to come across the words or phrases, ***"thanks," "be thankful"*** and ***"thanksgiving."*** A few examples are 2 Corinthians 4:15; Ephesians 5:4, 20; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 2:7; 3:17; 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Hebrews 13:15 and Revelation 7:12. We can see the example of a thankful attitude set forth by our Lord in Matthew 15:36, Luke 22:17-19 and John 11:41. May we follow Jesus' example and be thankful for **all things**. When was the last time we thanked God that we got out of our comfort zone and had the opportunity to speak about

the Gospel, were persecuted for His name's sake or for some simple task we did behind the scenes that helped others? How often (other than the prayer for giving during Sunday worship) do we give thanks to God for the means to work and make money so we may give back to Him, provide for our families and help the poor (2 Corinthians 9:6-15; Ephesians 4:28; 1 Timothy 5:8)? There are so many blessings we take for granted, and instead of focusing on what we do not have or our own problems, let us start counting the blessings with thanksgiving that God gives us every day.

We should be thankful for the role God has given us. Through His Word, God tells both man and woman what He expects from them. He has given men the responsibility to lead the worship assembly of the church and to be the spiritual leaders in mixed-gender groups as well as in the home (1 Timothy 2:8-15; 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:22-25; 1 Peter 3:1-7). The reason for this goes all the way back to the beginning, and male leadership has been expected by God since He created the first man. In Scripture, we can see that God made man and woman equal in His sight (Genesis 1:27). We are sinners in need of a Savior (Romans 3:23; Galatians 3:28). Being equal, however, does not mean we have the same functional roles. God placed different, but equally important, responsibilities upon man and woman. The woman's role is one of submission. We are to submit to our husbands as the leaders of our families (even if he is not a Christian because you ought to be a good example to him, 1 Peter 3:1). We submit to the men in the public assembly of the church by not becoming the teacher or taking over their authority. The inspired apostle Paul commanded the older women to be ***"teachers of good things,"*** admonishing the younger women to remain faithful (Titus 2:1-6). A woman may teach women or children during Bible classes and in everyday personal situations. A woman may accompany her husband in teaching others outside the assembly, as Priscilla did in Acts 18:26. Indeed, there is a great need in the Lord's church for women to teach and to exhort other women and children to be faithful. We need to be thankful for our role in serving God and be more willing and able to teach His Word! Let us have a thankful attitude in all things and exclaim, ***"Give thanks to the Lord for He is good! For His mercy endures forever"*** (Psalm 107:1).

Emily Fisher is a missionary and works with World Evangelism. She resides in Winona, Mississippi, USA.

A Christ-Centered Religion

Cliff Holmes

Jesus Christ is at the center of our religion. He is the focal point, and so He must remain. Notice how central He was in the early church.

He was the message. When Christians scattered after Stephen's martyrdom, they went to Antioch, ***"preaching the Lord Jesus"*** (Acts11:20). Paul preached Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23). He preached the good news of our Lord's death, burial and resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Likewise, Jesus must remain the content of our preaching—the main point of our Gospel proclamation.

He was the One to whom people converted. In Antioch, those who heard about the Lord Jesus believed and ***"turned to the Lord"*** (Acts 11:21). Paul remembered how the Thessalonians had turned to God (1 Thessalonians 1:9). Sometimes, one will ask another, "When did you become a member of the church?" True, we become part of the Lord's body, the church, when we become Christians (Acts 2:47). However, it might be better to ask, "When did you turn to the Lord?" When a person becomes a Christian, he establishes a relationship with Jesus. He is the One to Whom we turn.

He was the Person to whom Christians gave their allegiance. Barnabas encouraged new Christians in Antioch to remain true to the Lord (Acts 11:23). A Christian's loyalty is pledged to Christ. He is the flag around which we rally. We are only loyal to sound doctrine and to God's people because we are loyal to Christ. If we are unfaithful to the Truth or to the church, we are unfaithful to Christ.

He was the Person to whom sinners were brought. Luke penned that many residents of Antioch were brought to the Lord (Acts 11:24). ***"Come to me,"*** Jesus said. We must keep the Lord Jesus Christ at the center of both our message and our religion. If a man were to take Christ out of Christianity, what would remain? To supplant Christ with a manmade creed, doctrine or denomination and to elevate the name of a man as leader of this church or that church is a vain attempt to dethrone Christ as the rightful head of **the church**, which He built and for which He died. **A religion without Christ at the center is no religion at all!**

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

Doctrine To Live By

Eternal Security

Tom Baxley

In an article entitled, "7 Questions about Once Saved, Always Saved," Joe McKeever asks, "Can you unfry an egg?" He then goes on to confidently state, "Then, after being saved—genuinely forgiven and accepted and transformed by the Holy Spirit of God into something far different from what you were, more than any hen's egg ever dreamed possible—you cannot undo it. Once saved, always saved. To say otherwise, and to preach it, might be something akin to insulting the Holy Spirit." Mr. McKeever goes on in the article to make a positive case for eternal security, explaining the biblical case for why this is true and should be believed.

While you cannot unfry an egg, a Christian can most certainly lose salvation if not careful. ***"For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries"*** (Hebrews 10:26-27).

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

[Editor's Note: Illustrations are great and useful only if they correctly and accurately illustrate a biblical truth. Illustrations of themselves and by themselves do not prove anything! As brother Baxley indicated, the *fried egg* illustration above is cute, but it does not represent biblical truth. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

KENNEY'S PENNIES

"Who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began" (2 Timothy 1:9 NKJV). Notice and consider the phrase ***"before time began."*** Time and eternity are not the same. Also, notice the phrase ***"in Christ Jesus."*** Whether we are "in Christ Jesus" is up to our obedience to Christ Jesus. The plan for redemption was determined before the foundation of the world, but we decide if we are going to follow that plan.

Quick Commentary on Crucial Verses
(Matthew 5:43-44)

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, <u>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...</u>

Did our Lord issue commands that are "self-centered"?

Of course, we would hurriedly declare, "No!" Yet, let's stop a minute and think: My enemy feels my attitude toward him *only* if it is verbally or physically expressed, which most Christians would not do.

No, we would probably keep hatred for someone as *a burning flame inside our own consciousness.* Yet, what does hatred—anger—do to *our minds* and *bodies?* Doctors and scientists tell us that many of the fatal diseases in our organs result from the inflammatory and rotting effects of anger! So when Jesus commanded His followers to LOVE their enemies (the Greek word for "love" in this case does not mean "emotional love" but describes our attitude in the way we treat others, even those who oppose us), He was actually giving a command that would result in ***self-protection!***

Then, when Jesus commanded us to pray for those who spitefully use us and persecute us, what *could* be the ultimate result of those prayers? Through the countless tools God holds in His hands to use in helping those blinded to the Truth to come to a realization of it, the answer to those prayers *could be the converting of the soul that was at enmity with us!* What happened to Saul? What happens even in today's world as time and events impact an enemy's attitude, sometimes resulting in his total change of heart? So, again, when we pray for those who hate us, those prayers may ultimately be the means of changing that soul to become a dear brother or sister in Christ! I ask again, "Are these commands ultimately self-centered?" ***Aren't we the ones guaranteed to benefit in the long run?***

Woe to the Land!

Denny Petrillo

There is trouble in the land when our leaders have the philosophy to "party first, work later." This is because there is usually no time to work later. Those who watch out for our welfare need to be hard at work. We are depending on them.

Solomon was not giving a lesson in "Political Science 101" in Ecclesiastes 10:16, which reads, ***"Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, And your princes feast in the morning!"*** (NKJV). He was talking about the wise use of one's time. Notice the following lessons.

First, **our work ethic affects others**. The laziness of the king has a direct impact upon the land. Equally, the slothfulness of parents will encourage the same in their children. A poor work ethic on the job pulls down the company and frequently requires other employees to do more than their fair share. It has been noted that approximately 80% of the work done by the church is done by only 20% of her members. This is not fair. Just as our body has members that all contribute, so also must all the members of the church (the body of Christ) contribute (1 Corinthians 12:11; Romans 12:3). Solomon had earlier said, ***"whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might"*** (Ecclesiastes 9:10). He said in 11:6, ***"sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle in the evening…"*** The point? Work! Work often, work hard and work whenever you can.

Second, **our work ethic affects us**. If we don't have a good work ethic, then we will suffer. Solomon observed that ***"through indolence the rafters sag, and through slackness the house leaks"*** (10:18). We reap what we have sown! Who is to blame that we have to watch the rain come into our house and ruin our furniture? Solomon also notes that the lazy man will reap very unpleasant results (Proverbs 6:9-11).

Third, **our work ethic affects God**. We were created so that we might do good works (Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:14; James 2:14-26). Laziness will activate the wrath of God. ***"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked: For***

whatever a man sows, this he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7). Hosea noted that sometimes we'll reap even more than we have sown (Hosea 8:7)!

It is generally recognized that affluence brings apathy and laziness (Ecclesiastes 5:11). In our wealth, have we grown complacent? The Christian must set the pace of diligence in work—at the workplace (Colossians 3:23) and in the Lord's work (2 Timothy 2:15).

Denny Petrillo is the President of Bear Valley Bible Institute in Denver, Colorado, USA.

Stay Focused

Tom Baxley

One thing that has hindered my evangelism in the past is getting sidetracked with questions that are not particularly pertinent. When a person asks a question, I want to give an answer, but that often leads to more questions. So, we quickly get off track and get lost chasing rabbits, which accomplishes very little. Looking at Jesus' ministry style has helped me see that I don't have to or need to answer every question immediately or directly. Often in Jesus' ministry when He was asked questions, He would not answer the questions directly. For example, in Luke 10:26 when a lawyer asked Jesus about inheriting eternal life, He responded by asking him what is written in the Law and how he understood it. At the end of Mark 11, Jesus' authority was challenged, and instead of answering questions directly, He asked about the authority of John's baptism.

Since Jesus didn't feel the need to answer every single question directed to Him, we don't need to feel like we have to answer every question directed to us either. Often, it is better if we don't. We will fare much better in evangelism if we don't. Do not permit extra questions to derail you from your task; don't get lost chasing rabbits. Stay focused on your task, and after a foundation has been laid, then you can take more time to answer one question at a time.

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

A Fair Test

Aaron Cozort

The king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar, gave an order. He appointed a daily portion of his wine and delicacies to be given to certain young men who were in training for positions in his government as wise men and leaders. Yet, four of the young men could not accept the allotments.

Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah were from Jerusalem. These four were among the best young men in Judah. When the Babylonian king besieged Judah, He carried them and many others like them back to Babylon to train for his courts.

Daniel and his friends knew that the appointed food would be delicious to eat. They also knew what God had spoken through Moses to their ancestors. They could neither taste these delicacies nor drink this intoxicating wine. Doing so would make them unclean before God and cause them to sin against His commands.

They requested an alternative for themselves. Daniel petitioned the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself. The petition was met with

hesitancy by the head of the eunuchs. Why should he endanger his life so that Daniel might do this?

Daniel sought an alternative. Daniel 1:12-13 reads, ***"Please test your servants for ten days, and let them give us vegetables to eat and water to drink. Then let our appearance be examined before you, and the appearance of the young men who eat the portion of the king's delicacies; and as you see fit, so deal with your servants."***

The test was approved. ***"And at the end of ten days their features appeared better and fatter in flesh than all the young men who ate the portion of the king's delicacies"*** (Daniel 1:15). God blessed Daniel, Hananiah, Azariah and Mishael for their faithfulness. Upon examination by the King, they surpassed all his magicians and astrologers in wisdom and understanding.

There are a few lessons here for us today. When we are faced with a choice to do good or evil, we ought always to **choose the good**. After we decide to do good, we must **not back down** from that choice when unbelievers stand in our way. Finally, when we choose the right action and persevere, we should **prepare ourselves for God's blessings** and give thanks to the One who cares for us.

Aaron Cozort preaches for the Church of Christ in Collierville, Tennessee, USA.

Robison's Rubies

If there is a moral standard, there had to be someone to give it. Morals just don't evolve out of non-living matter. Like love, joy, conscience, and guilt, they are personal and of one's spirit. They are very real, yet they are unseen and intangible; they can't be tested in a test tube. Since nothing comes from nothing, I'm forced to the conclusion they had to come from someone. They didn't just happen. Right and wrong can't be determined by individuals because so many people disagree. Right and wrong can't be determined by nations or cultures (after all, some nations, like Nazi Germany, had some wild ideas about what was right). Morals are above mankind; therefore, there had to be a morality-Giver above mankind. The existence of morals tells us there is a God.

Christian Relationships

Gary C. Hampton

All are sinners. Sin's reward is eternal death (Romans 3:23; 6:23). God has provided for our salvation in His tender mercy. On the basis of that mercy, Paul begged his fellow Christians to give over every part of their being in service to God (Romans 12:1). The Christian's body belongs to God; so, it should be kept holy or pure, free from sin, for God's work. Each should keep his or her body acceptable to God by doing His will (1 John 5:3). This is only reasonable since God purchased the body of the Christian with His Son's blood (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

Paul did not want the brethren at Rome to imitate or conform to the world and its practices. He instructed them to daily reshape their minds so that they might judge the worthiness of God's way (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 4:16; 5:17; 1 Peter 1:14-15). Before they became Christians, they practiced the fulfilling of their passions and lusts. Now that they were members of Christ's body, the apostle asked them to test the goodness of God's high standards.

Paul commanded the Roman Christians to not be proud but to ***"think soberly"*** or develop a right-thinking estimate of themselves (Romans 12:3). The Lord said, "***Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth"*** (Matthew 5:5). Any gifts and abilities we possess were not self-made but God-given. The Father measured out the portion each should have. None has the right to say he or she is better because of his or her own worth or work. Our very existence depends on God (Acts 17:25).

The church is like the human body. Many members make up one body. Each has its own function. None can boast of superiority because each function is necessary for the body (Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

Each of us must do the Father's will rather than letting worldly thinking shape us. Every Christian should recognize the value of every brother and sister in Christ. Commend them. Pray for them. By these means, we will maintain a good relationship to God and His family.

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

With the Spirit and with the Understanding Also

Rodney Nulph

Christianity is a singing religion! God's people sing. In fact, singing is a commanded act of worship (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). However, for the faithful child of God, singing goes far beyond the command. One of the great ways in which private and public worship is given to the Almighty is by raising our songs of praise. The faithful live by the wisdom of James. ***"…Is any merry? Let him sing psalms"*** (James 5:13b). The apostle Paul, by inspiration's pen, declared that our singing must be done ***"with the spirit and with the understanding also"*** (1 Corinthians 14:15). While most Christians understand the need and the requirement for vocal singing as per the New Testament pattern, this author is fearful that the spirit and the understanding part of that pattern often is not considered. What did God mean when He demanded that our singing was to be done with spirit and with understanding?

Firstly, ***"spirit and understanding"*** include **concentration**. In the immediate context of 1 Corinthians 14, Paul was dealing with people who were zealous for certain things (i.e., miracles), but they were not interested in the spiritual edification of others (cf., 1 Corinthians 14:12). The entire reason for the miraculous gifts at Corinth was so that understanding and enlightenment could come to all, not just to those who were using the gifts. Although the miraculous has ceased today, the principle is still the same. One result of vocal singing is to edify (build up spiritually) the worshippers (1 Corinthians 14:16). When our singing is merely rote and we do not really concentrate on the words and their meaning, we certainly neither please God nor fulfill the demand or reason for singing.

Secondly, ***"spirit and understanding"*** involve **interpretation**. Singing words that make little sense or that are unknown is a spiritual waste of time. Understanding what we sing is a vital part of pleasing God. Some songs use words with which many in the assembly are not familiar. Another serious

concern are songs that simply do not teach truth, but in fact, they teach error. Remember, many of the so-called worshipful songs we sing were not written by New Testament Christians. Therefore, just because a song is in our songbook or on our digital song list does not mean it is a scriptural song! Far too many songs teach Calvinism, Premillennialism, faith only as well as a myriad of other false doctrines. While many congregations would never let false doctrine be preached, these same congregations are often guilty of teaching false doctrines through song, which is equally reproachful. This author has witnessed a sound congregation whose elders went through the songbooks and stamped "do not sing or lead this song," due to the false teachings contained therein. This is commendable and certainly proof of 'watching for your souls' (Hebrews 13:17). We sometimes get to the point where the only command as far as singing is concerned about which we care is that we sing without musical instruments. While there is certainly **no** authority for mechanical instruments of music in Christian worship, a cappella singing is not the only requirement for scriptural singing.

Thirdly, ***"spirit and understanding"*** include **motivation**. Singing in spirit engages our emotions. Please understand it is not "emotionalism" but rather genuine emotion that comes from a thankful heart. Our emotions are gifts from God, and they must be engaged as we praise Him. Singing should result in passion, power and a path by which we can live what we have sung. If our singing does not motivate our living, then one would have to question whether that singing was properly accomplished. Singing, by its very nature, is uplifting and affects our emotions.

Scriptural singing should light a fire in our hearts that will melt the lead in our feet as we go forth to serve the One to Whom we sang. I believe singing is one of the great ways in which we extol the King. Next time we 'make music in our hearts' and allow that music to roll off our lips, let's consider Paul's admonition to sing with the spirit and with the understanding. Today and always, ***"…let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name"*** (Hebrews 13:15). ***"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer"*** (Psalm 19:14).

Rodney Nulph is a Gospel preacher and the Associate Editor of *Gospel Gazette Online* magazine. He resides in Beavertown, Pennsylvania, USA.

Some Things that Hinder Our Prayers

David Conley

When we pray to God, there are some **effective consequences**! God chooses to **need** our prayers! When we pray, God **responds** to our prayers! Wow! Think about it; the God of the universe **listens** to us! He waits for us to pray so He will move on the earth! Yet, there are things that **hinder** our prayers. These things will **stop** our prayers from being effective! Listed below are **six things** that can hinder our prayers.

1. **Satan (Daniel 10:2-14; Ephesians 6:12)**
2. **Doubt (James 1:6-7; Matthew 11:22-24)**
3. **Asking "Amiss" (James 4:3)**
4. **Insincerity (Matthew 6:5-8)**
5. **Pride (Luke 18:9-14)**
6. **Sin (1 Peter 3:7; Job 42:8)**

The next time you pray, ask God to help remove these **hindrances** from us! God **wants** to respond to our prayers; may they not be hindered!

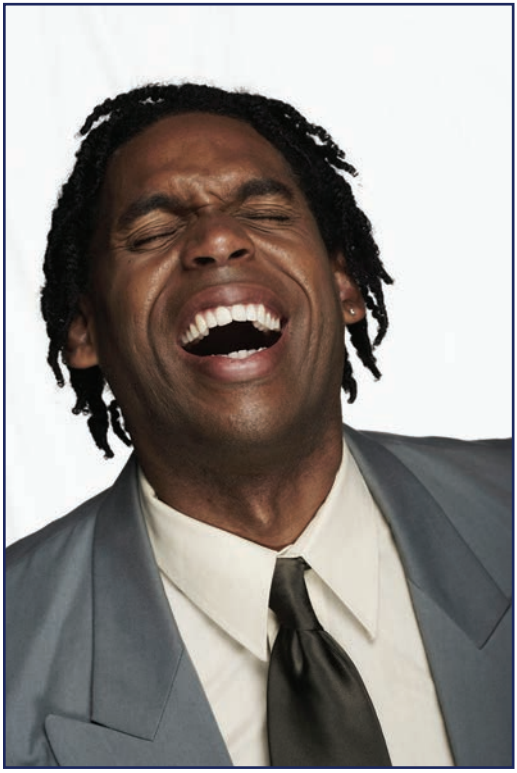
David Conley is the pulpit minister of the Liberty Church of Christ in Dennis, Mississippi, USA.

Singing

Cecil May, Jr.

We sing ***"psalms, hymns and spiritual songs"*** to worship God and to teach and admonish one another (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). Many efforts have been made to define the three terms in ways that distinguish among them, but no definitions have found wide acceptance.

It is recognized, however, that ***"psalms, hymns and spiritual songs"*** as a group are distinguished from drinking songs, love ballads, war songs, comic ditties, etc. The sentiment and the words of the songs accomplish the purposes for which we are directed to sing them: praising God and teaching and admonishing one another. Tempo and harmony are important, but the words are more so.



Singing can accomplish both teaching and admonishing. Organs, pianos, keyboards, guitars and drum sets accomplish neither.

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

How Do You Measure Up?

Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.

Glory to God

Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling,
And to present you faultless
Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy,
To God our Savior,
Who alone is wise,
Be glory and majesty,
Dominion and power,
Both now and forever.
Amen.

Jude 3, 20-25

A little boy visits his farmer grandpa and watches him milk the cows.

The next day one of the cows runs away and grandpa is really upset about it.

"Don't worry, Grandpa," says the boy helpfully, "she can't have gone very far with an empty tank."

While visiting a country school, the chairman of the Board of Education became provoked at the noise the unruly students were making in the next room.

Angrily, he opened the door and grabbed one of the taller boys who seemed to be doing most of the talking. He dragged the boy to the next room and stood him in the corner.

A few minutes later, a small boy stuck his head in the room and pleaded, "Please, sir, may we have our teacher back?"

A balding man went into a barber's shop and asked how much it would be for a haircut.

"Twenty-five dollars," said the barber.

"Twenty-five dollars, that's crazy!" exclaimed the man. "I've hardly got any hair. How can it be that expensive?"

The barber explained, "It's $5 for the actual cut and $20 for the search fee."

I recently read that love is entirely a matter of chemistry…

That must be why my wife treats me like toxic waste.

A woman walks into a store to return a pair of eyeglasses that she had purchased for her husband a week before.

"What seems to be the problem, madam?"

"I'm returning these glasses I bought for my husband. He's still not seeing things my way."

Look at this mess!" roared an angry customer at a local cafe, pointing to his squashed doughnut.

"It's just as you ordered it, sir," the waitress replied meekly.

"What do you mean?" barked the customer.

"You told me to bring you coffee and a doughnut and step on it."

One day a woman entered an auto body shop claiming that she'd suffered extensive damage to her new car.

The mechanic thought he'd have some fun with her so he told her that she didn't need him to fix all the dents.

He said she could fix them herself by blowing into the tailpipe as hard as she could and they'd all pop out.

The woman went home and proceeded to get down on her hands and knees in the driveway. She was blowing into the pipe as hard as she could and her face was turning purple when the neighbor from across the street walked over and asked what she was doing.

After hearing the whole story the neighbor paused for a moment and then responded, "Hello! The windows are down!"

While stitching up a cut on the hand of a 75-year-old rancher, whose hand was caught in the gate while working cattle, the doctor struck up a conversation with the old man. Eventually the topic got around to one of the political candidates.

The old rancher said, "Well, ya know, that candidate is a 'Post Turtle.'"

Not being familiar with the term, the doctor asked him what a 'post turtle' was.

The old rancher said, "When you're driving down a country road and you come across a fence post with a turtle balanced on top, that's a 'post turtle.'"

The old rancher saw the puzzled look on the doctor's face, so he continued to explain.

"You know it didn't get up there by itself, it doesn't belong up there, it doesn't know what to do while its up there and ya just wonder what kind of dummy put it up there to begin with."

A guy spots a sign outside a house that reads, "Talking Dog for Sale."

Intrigued, he walks in. "So what have you done with your life?" he asks the dog.

"I've led a very full life," says the dog. "I lived in the Alps rescuing avalanche victims. Then, I served my country in Iraq. Now, I spend my days reading to the residents of a retirement home."

The guy is flabbergasted. He asks the dog's owner, "Why on earth would you want to get rid of an incredible dog like that?"

The owner says, "Because he's a liar! He never did any of that!"

A man goes into a dentist's office.

Man: "Excuse me, can you help me? I think I'm a moth."

Dentist: "You don't need a dentist. You need a psychiatrist."

Man: "Yes, I know."

Dentist: "So, why did you come in here?"

Man: "The light was on."

Overcoming Ugly

Tam Raynor

My sister has this hobby that I call **creepy cactus cultivation**. She loves finding weird, ugly, exotic cactus plants and coaxing beauty out of them. My sister just sent me photos of a cactus she found recently that she calls a **caterpillar** for lack of knowing its real name. It's as ugly as sin, motley brown and looks a bit like animal droppings. Nevertheless, one day, a pod-type extension appeared on it, also ugly. Then, a couple of days later, a gorgeous flower flushed out of the pod! The bloom was delicate and sported pretty colors of pink, purple and blue. It was multilayered and beautiful. I saw the photos and thought, "Wow, this is like people!" Thus, the following thoughts emerged.

Beauty can come from ugly. God finds sin uglier than the **caterpillar cactus**, but He created a way for humans to pretty-up and produce beautiful flowers through Jesus. We're all obnoxious in sin without Jesus, but in Him we can overcome ugly and produce great splendor! Paul proudly stated that God ***"delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His Beloved Son"*** (Colossians 1:13). Because of this, on a daily basis, we need to take long looks at ourselves in the spiritual mirror and continue transforming ourselves into good, acceptable and brand-new creations in God's eyes (Romans 12:1-2; 6:4; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15). God excels in creating beauty out of ugly; He's the master craftsman in this field (Ezekiel 37).

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For What Is Your Life?

Sunny David

Each year that goes by is another reminder of just how fleeting our time on earth is. As James said, ***"For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away"*** (James 4:14). The brevity, the frailty and the uncertainty of life ought to check the vanity and presumptuous confidence of every individual. However, almost all people go about with the evident expectation of continued living in this passing world, without realizing that human life is like a vapor that appears for a while and then vanishes away. We may plan what we intend to do in the next few weeks or months, but anything may happen to prevent us from doing that. The point is that we have no certainty of life. We know nothing of tomorrow and certainly not of a year into the future (Proverbs 27:1).

While man's physical life is uncertain (1 Peter 1:24), his spiritual life is certain. Having been created, in the beginning, in the image and after the likeness of God, His Creator (Genesis 1:26-27), man is destined to live forever, like His Maker. The end of physical life for man on earth is not the end of man's existence. There is no power on earth that can obliterate man's spiritual existence. The physical life of man vanishes away as to this world, but there is a life that will continue in the other, spiritual world.

Yet, since this life is so uncertain, each of us needs to prepare and lay

up in store for eternity. **The irony, however, is that man is trying to save the one he cannot save, and in the process, he is losing the other, the spiritual and the eternal, which he must save.** The need for preparation for the life to come is of no importance to earthly and materialistic men. Nonetheless, compared to eternity, we are here on this earth for a precious few moments. When Christ was on earth, He taught, ***"Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses"*** (Luke 12:15). The material things of this world are not as important as eternity, where every person must enter and live forever after life on this earth is over (Matthew 25:46).

So, ***"What is your life?"*** Is it focused on the things of this earth or on things heavenly in preparation for eternity? The apostle Paul warned, by saying, ***"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life"*** (Galatians 6:7-8). Wasted years of seeking the earthly and temporal things, wasted opportunities of choosing the physical over the spiritual, characterize the majority of human existence.

Yet, Christ taught, ***"For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"*** (Matthew 16:26). The soul of man, which man in the beginning received directly from God (Genesis 2:7), is the most precious and valuable commodity on earth. That's why to redeem man from sin, God allowed His Only Begotten Son to leave Heaven and come down to Earth to save man from the wages of sin. He gave Him to suffer and to die for us as the great propitiation for the sins of the world (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2). Man's life in this world is uncertain, but eternity, where every person will enter to live forever, is sure and certain. Why not accept God's gift of eternal life in Heaven (Romans 6:23) by believing in His Son and obeying His commands (Mark 16:16)? Thereafter, live in Jesus by a faithful life to Him until death (Revelation 2:10). Act while there is still time and opportunity!

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Thanking God All Day—Every Day

Marilyn LaStrape

I wrote an article in November 2016 entitled, "God Gives Us Everything." Since then my attention continues to be drawn to the virtually countless times that the Bible tells us what God gives us and why. It tells us what God **has given us**, **is giving us** and **will give us** until He brings this world to an end. Whatever "it" is, if God does not give it to us, we literally don't and can't get it!

This irrevocable truth was beyond debate when God created Adam. Genesis 2:7 reads, ***"And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being."*** Adam was a corpse, a dead body until God **gave** him breath! Job 12:10 asked, ***"In whose hand is the life of every living thing***

and the breath of all mankind?" Job 34:12-15 says, ***"Surely God will never do wickedly, nor will the Almighty pervert justice. Who gave Him charge over the whole earth? Or who appointed Him over the whole world? If He should set His heart on it, if He should gather to Himself His Spirit and His breath, all flesh would perish together, and man would return to dust."*** Do we thank God daily for still being alive?

As Christians, giving thanks to God should be as natural as breathing. We must be thankful daily for life, health, strength, provision, protection and care because God is who He is. God holds our breath in His hand and owns all our ways. Psalm 119:168 says, ***"I keep Your precepts*** [rules] ***and Your testimonies*** [God's divine truth or charges], ***for all my ways are before You."*** One writer's thoughts on remembering to give thanks stated, "Though our days may be cut short, we have tasted the good things of the Lord. In the worst of times, it is only appropriate to intermingle our petitions for His care with the gracious spirit of thanksgiving." Do we always thank God daily for watching over us?

Psalm 68:19-20 reads, ***"Blessed be the LORD, who daily loads us with benefits, the God our salvation. Our God is the God of salvation; and to God the LORD belong escapes from death."*** We are never more vulnerable than when we are asleep. Psalm 3:5 says, ***"I lay down and slept; I awoke, for the LORD sustained me."*** Psalm 4:8 says, ***"I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; for You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety."*** In his commentary on *Psalms*, Volume 3, "Psalms 50-72," Tom Wacaster wrote on Psalm 68:19-20,

> God's blessings are daily, not intermittent. His blessings are loaded, not light or sparse. His blessings are for all of Israel, namely "us." If we are bowed down with sorrow, our God will provide us comfort; if with fear, God will give us courage. No matter the burden, our God will provide release from it. Death surrounds us at every hand. We witness physical death almost every day of our life. Every obituary page in the newspaper and every funeral procession is a reminder that death is real. Spiritual death is just as real, yet carries far greater consequences. Men seek a cure to death, but it is in

vain, for ***"it is appointed unto man once to die"*** (Hebrews 9:27).

Do we understand our total physical and spiritual dependence on God?

In her book, *A Pearl Seeker,* Becky Blackmon wrote, "As we thank God for the blessings He pours down upon our heads daily, we will find ourselves living this verse." The verse she quotes is 1 Thessalonians 5:17, ***"Pray without ceasing."*** She wrote that the verse is "just three words, but how powerful they truly are." She continues, "We will be praying continually all day long." She then enumerates numerous things for which we should be thanking daily God because we are rich, rich, rich! She concludes that section of the chapter with, "He chooses to love us this much. Why in the world wouldn't we want to tell Him thank You all day long?" I was especially impressed with her repeating the phrase *all day long*. Psalm 100:2 reads, ***"Know that the LORD, He is God, it is He who has made us and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture."*** One commentary states that we as the sheep of God's pasture means He is the stately source of all spiritual food and water. Are we thankful all day long for His providential care?

Psalm 107 addresses God's care of the Israelites when He brought them out of Egypt. Verse 1 reads, ***"Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever."*** Verse 8 reads, ***"Oh, that men would give thanks to the LORD for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men!"*** Verse 8 is emphasized verbatim in verses 15, 21, and 31. What about us? Are we giving thanks to the Lord for His goodness and His wonderful works in our lives and in all the lives of those we love, know and about whom we care? Are we giving thanks for His care to all His creation because He is God and because His Son gave His life for every one of us?

Are we giving thanks to God for His goodness all day every day? Do we understand that glorifying God is **the** way of life for Christians? Do we give God exalted distinction, honor, praise, renown, adoration and thanksgiving all day long every day? Let us all answer with a resounding, "Yes!"

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A Person Or Just A Part?

Victor M. Eskew

The abortion issue seems to center upon whether the fetus is a living person or just a part of the mother? If it is a person, aborting the fetus is murder. If it is just a part of the mother, aborting the fetus is just a procedure. There is a broad gap between the two ideas.

Questions:

- **Does a body part resemble an entire human being?**
- **Does a body part have a heart?**
- **Does a body part have a brain?**
- **Does a body part have a tiny little face?**
- **Does a body part cry out when it is cut out?**
- **Does a body part live after it is removed?**
- **Does a body part have a soul?**
- **Does a body part have a spirit?**
- **Does a body part get a name before it is removed?**
- **Does a body part kick its "mother" in the womb?**
- **Does a body part look like a human in an ultrasound?**
- **Does a body part leave the body and cry for "Momma"?**
- **Does a body part leave the body with mom wanting to hold it?**
- **Does a body part being removed cause guilt and shame?**
- **Does a body part have millions fighting for its right to live?**

Who can honestly answer these questions and say that a fetus (a child) removed from the mother's womb through abortion is just a body part? ***That is a lie, and everyone knows it!***

The baby in the womb is as much a child as an eagle is an eagle while still in the egg. Yet, we make laws to protect eagle eggs and make other laws to allow the murder of our children. Our elected officials who make the laws and those who support them ought to be ashamed. The doctors and nurses who carry out the abortion procedures should be ashamed. Any mother who aborts her child should be ashamed.

We are a confused and an evil nation. We need to repent of this national disgrace and fight for the lives of those tiny, unborn humans beings. ✠

Christians in the Home

Beth Johnson

Husbands

"Love your wives and be not bitter against them" (Colossians 3:19). It will take time for wives to grow in submission, but husbands need to remember that the command to obey is for the wife to submit and **not** for the husband to force her to submit.

Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it and to love their wives as their own bodies (Ephesians 5:25-28). Putting yourself, your work or anything else ahead of her is not consistent with this command. The goal is to encourage (not demand) the wife to grow to be holy and without blemish (spiritually). This love requires time, attention and a sincere concern for her physical, mental, emotional and spiritual wellbeing.

The Christian Home

The wisdom that is from above is gentle, peaceable and easy to be entreated (James 3:17). God told Abraham to listen to Sarah. Changing one's mind is not a sign of weakness (Genesis 21:12).

Wives

Obey your husbands as it is fit in the Lord (Colossians 3:18). What is ***"fit"*** is for wives to be subject to their husbands ***"in everything"*** as the church is to Christ (Ephesians 5:22-24). The only exception would be if he commanded her to disobey God (Acts 5:29). The husband's authority is in matters of judgment. Submitting only when you agree with him or think he knows what he's talking about is not submission. A woman merely having short hair is a dishonor to her husband (1 Corinthians 11:5). How serious, then, are rebellious words and deeds towards him? ***"A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband: but she that makes ashamed is as rottenness in his bones"*** (Proverbs 12:4).

Fathers

Train your children; don't discourage them. ***"Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged"*** (Colossians 3:21). ***"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"*** (Ephesians 6:4).

God puts the responsibility on the fathers for how the children are raised. Fathers need to be actively involved in the rearing (training) of their children. Providing for them physically is important, but the main job is to train them (Proverbs 22:6).

Mothers

Mothers have a responsibility to train children too. ***"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it"*** (Proverbs 22:6). Love your children and be keepers at home (Titus 2:4-5). ***"Keepers at home"*** literally means, "house guard," not just guarding their bodies but, most importantly, their souls.

Mothers have to learn from older Christian women how to have God's

love towards their children: this means they have to learn how to train the children the right way. ***"The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed"*** (Titus 2:3-5).

First Timothy 5:14 tells mothers they are literally to be the "house despots." However, there should be one law (one set of rules) in the house, which flows from God, through the father, through the mother, to the children (Proverbs 6:20). This requires much advance planning, discussion and praying by husbands and wives. The mother is the enforcer of the family laws while the head of the house is away. Mothers who leave their children to themselves will be brought to shame (Proverbs 29:15).

Children

"Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:20). Compare with ***"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right"*** (Ephesians 6:1). Obeying parents lasts for a few years; honoring them lasts a lifetime (1 Timothy 5:4, 8, 16). ✝

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[Editor's Note: What a fine, concise devotional for the home from a sister who is a sage. For a home to be everything that God wants it to be, cooperation must occur in biblically prescribed ways between husband, father, wife, mother and children. Ideally, each family member accepts his or her respective, God-ordained role and voluntarily subjects himself or herself to Almighty God. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

Spiritual or Material?

T. Pierce Brown

In these days, one may hear of one group that is more "spiritual" than another because they sing songs to a livelier tempo, because they greet each other with a holy kiss or because they produce a sort of "exalted feeling" by something they say or do. However, what does the Bible mean by the term, "spiritual"?

In most of our conversations and prayers when mention is made of "spiritual" and "material" things, they are assumed to be mutually exclusive. If we look in the dictionary, we find the first definition of spiritual to be "of or pertaining to or consisting of spirit, not material, incorporeal." If it is not made up of matter, then it is probably spiritual! Is that what God meant in Galatians 6:1 when He said, ***"Ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness?"*** Surely not! Much of our thinking and language is built upon Socratic, Aristotelian or Platonic concepts rather than biblical ideas.

The most apparent meaning of the word in Galatians 6:1 is, "The word 'spiritual' means that which is produced, directed or controlled by God's Spirit." Let us see how close that comes to fitting every use of the word in the New Testament.

In Romans 1:11, Paul mentioned ***"some spiritual gift."*** If he was talking about the same thing of which he spoke in 1 Corinthians 12:1, 11, 30, 31; 14:1, 12 (and who can doubt that he is?), then the thing that made the gifts "spiritual" is that the Spirit produced them (1 Corinthians 12:8ff).

Space limitations prevent us from giving even a partial exegesis of each passage where the term ***"spiritual"*** is used, but even a casual reading of them will convince a person that the meaning I have suggested will fit all of them. Romans 7:14; 15:27; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 3:1; 9:11 and 14:37 all use the term ***"spiritual"*** in such a way that we can see that it refers to that which is produced by God's Spirit. When Paul spoke of the natural

body and the spiritual body in 1 Corinthians 15:44-46, we need to realize that we will **not** be disembodied spirits. We will have spiritual bodies. The union of an earthly father and mother produced the present natural body. The process takes about nine months. The Spirit of God will produce the spiritual body in a twinkling of an eye.

In 1 Corinthians 10:3-4, we find that the Israelites ***"did eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink."*** If Paul was speaking of the manna they ate and the water that came out of the rock, then we must conclude that the reason they were called ***"spiritual"*** is that the Spirit of God produced them. They were not natural. If we wonder why he said, ***"The Rock was Christ,"*** the simplest explanation may be that the rock out of which the water came represented Christ, for He gives us living water.

In Ephesians 1:3, we find that ***"he hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ."*** If ***"spiritual"*** means "produced or directed by the Spirit of God," then we are to understand that all blessings such as forgiveness that we have in Christ are by God's grace, not able to be produced or achieved by man's work, wisdom or power. Of course, that grace must be accepted on God's terms.

Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 speak of ***"spiritual songs."*** They are songs we are to sing as a result of the fact that we are ***"filled with the Spirit"*** (Ephesians 5:18) or the parallel expression that ***"the word of Christ dwells in us richly"*** (Colossians 3:16). If I am not mistaken about the grammatical construction and consequent meaning of Colossians 3:16, the imperative verb, followed as it is by a modifying participle, shows that the teaching and admonishing in spiritual songs is **how** we obey the command to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly. A comparable example might be, "Clean the floor, sweeping it." "Clean" is the imperative. "Sweeping" is how the command is to be done.

When Peter said in 1 Peter 2:5, ***"We are built up a spiritual house,"*** he surely means that a church produced by the Spirit of God is ***"spiritual,"*** and one not so produced is not, irrespective of how pretty the singing or how loving the fellowship! We are to offer up ***"spiritual sacrifices."*** Can anyone properly deny that the sacrifice given or ordained of God is a ***"spiritual"***

one? If my analysis and reasoning is correct, then the sacrifice of praise of Hebrews 13:15 is a ***"spiritual"*** sacrifice (offering) just as in Ephesians 5:19.

The only verse of which I am aware that my conclusion may not seem to fit at first glance is Ephesians 6:12, and it does there when properly understood. The *Authorized Version* reads, ***"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but…against spiritual wickedness in high places."*** I suppose we normally understand that to mean "those whose spirits are wicked," and no doubt these are wicked spirits. Yet, if we say "spiritual" means "produced of God," then we have wickedness produced by God. This will not do. The *American Standard* translators apparently recognized some difficulty with that translation and supplied the word, ***"hosts."*** So ***"hosts"*** or "forces" would seem to be the logical word. Those satanic forces were those that had been produced by God but perverted to evil uses.

Our study has led us to conclude that in the New Testament the word ***"spiritual"*** is **never** used to refer to some ethereal, non-material thing or something that is "better felt than told" or some quality or feeling that is ecstatic or that gives one a "holy glow." Instead, ***"spiritual"*** always refers to something that was produced or directed by the Spirit of God. **The way to be more *"spiritual"* in our worship is not by turning on a glow of red lights to remind us of the blood of Christ when we take the Lord's Supper, dimming the lights during prayer or going through some other psychological gimmick, but by making sure our thinking, talking and acting are produced by the Spirit of God.** ✝

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Scavenger Hunt

through Galatians

Rebecca Rushmore

(Answers inside back cover)

1. What should happen to one who preaches “any other gospel”?
2. How many days did Paul visit with Peter in Jerusalem?
3. Which companion of Paul’s was also carried away by the hypocrisy of Peter?
4. What would make the death of Christ vain?
5. How does Paul describe the function of the Law?
6. How does one “put on Christ”?
7. What will those who practice the works of the flesh forfeit?
8. Against what is there no law?
9. What will one who “sows to the Spirit” reap?
10. When should we “do good” to all, especially fellow Christians?

Judge Nothing before the Time

John Gipson

Tucked away in the book of Judges is a man by the name of Manoah. His wife was barren, but one day an angel appeared to the woman and told her that she would conceive and bear a son. The woman quickly told her husband, and Manoah prayed to the Lord that the man of God would come again and teach them how to raise this son. So it was that the angel appeared again with his instructions. Manoah wanted to prepare a feast for the angel, but he said, ***"I will not eat of your food; but if you make ready a burnt offering, then offer it to the Lord."*** The angel then went up in the flame while Manoah and his wife looked on. ***"And Manoah said to his wife, "We shall surely die, for we have seen God."*** But his wife said to him, ***"If the LORD had meant to kill us, he would not have accepted a burnt offering and a cereal offering at our hands, or shown us all these things, or now announced to us such things as these"*** (Judges 13:22-23).

Manoah, as many of us, jumped to a wrong conclusion. We encounter trials and troubles, and then we conclude that God has forsaken us. For years Jacob thought his son Joseph was dead, but God was working out

a plan to make of him a great nation. Joseph might have wondered about all of the bad things that happened to him, but later he testified that God meant it for good.

The next time you brood over your situation and think that God is against you, remember to judge nothing before the time. If God had wished our destruction or any absolute evil to befall us, he would not have sent His Son to make atonement for our sins. By the very fact He has done that proves that He desires our highest welfare and will make all things subservient to our everlasting good. We must pass no sentence of condemnation on God's work until it is completed.

In due time, Manoah's son was born. You remember him well. His name was Samson.

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Love is Not Rude

Cecil May, Jr.

Good manners are more than how to set a dinner table and which fork to use. Primarily, they teach us how to treat others with due regard for their interests and sensitivity to their feelings.

It is good manners to not cut line to get in front of those already waiting, to hold the door for others, to give a seat to an elderly or infirm. The Bible says good manners flow from Christian love, "Love is not rude" (1 Corinthians 13:6).

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Sinking Souls

Therman Hodge

Matthew 14:22-23 tells us about the time that Peter began to sink in the sea. There are a number of lessons that should help us when we begin to sink in sin. We even sing about "sinking deep in sin," and this song evidently came from this section of Matthew. In this article, we will notice the **storm**, the **Savior** and the **sinking**.

The Storm (22-25a)

In thinking about the storm, I want us to notice the problem of a storm, the people of the storm and the principle of the storm. First, the disciples were facing a real problem. They were in a troubled sea. There was a problem of distance as they were in the ***"midst of the sea."*** There was a problem of danger as the boat was ***"tossed with the waves."*** There was the problem of darkness as it was at the ***"fourth hour of the watch at night."*** They were right in the middle of the problem and did not see any way out.

Think about the people in the storm. We expect wicked and sinful people to be troubled and have problems, and, of course, they do (Proverbs 13:15; Isaiah 57:20-21). Yet, these people were ***"His disciples"*** (22). They were following Jesus, but here they were in the midst of a real problem.

Consider the principle of the storm. The principle taught here is that even disciples of Christ will sometimes find themselves in the midst of trouble and surrounded by problems. Even God's greatest servants were not exempt from troubles and trials (Job 3:26; 14:1; Daniel 6; 2 Corinthians 4:8). The Bible clearly teaches that as long as Christians are in the world that they will have tribulations and problems (John 16:33; 2 Timothy 3:12).

Many times today, Christians find themselves in a stormy sea of problems, when the winds of trouble toss us to and fro and the situation looks dreadful, dark and dreary. You see, God doesn't promise us smooth sailing in this life, but He does promise us a safe landing. God does promise to help us get through the troubles.

Remember, we can't send some religious racketeer [televangelist] some money and expect all our problems and troubles to cease. Our problems may come from our flesh, family, friends, foes, finances or some other area. At times, problems are cruel and rough, and we find that living can get pretty tough.

The Savior (25b-27)

The second thing I want to concentrate on is the Savior. In thinking about the Savior, I want us to notice His perception, His presence and His power. Regarding our Lord's perception, Mark's account tells us that, ***"He saw them toiling in rowing"*** (Mark 6:48). He knew what kind of difficulty they were in and how they were struggling to survive.

Jesus also knows about our problems and troubles. When He had John write to the church in Smyrna, He said, ***"I know thy works and tribulations"*** (Revelation 2:9). He knew the problems they were having, and Jesus knows just what I need. ***"All things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do"*** (Hebrews 4:13). As the poet says, ***"He knows each winding way I take and every sorrow, pain and ache. And me He never will forsake."***

About Jesus' presence, the text says, ***"Jesus went unto them…"*** (25b). He came to them in the midst of their troubles. He was there when they really needed Him, and even though they did not recognize Him, He was there! Our Lord promises us that He will be present when we have problems. He not only knows when His disciples are having problems, He also goes to them when they have them (Matthew 28:20; Philippians 4:5; Hebrews 13:5). What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear.

Concerning our Lord's power, the text says that He went to them, ***"walking on the sea"*** (25c). He was already on top of their problem. The problem that seemed to be over their heads was under His feet. When it comes to our problems today, we need to realize that Jesus has the power to solve them. Even if we can't see any way out, that does not mean that He can't see a solution. The Bible says that God is ***"able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us"***

(Ephesians 3:20). We need to learn to look and to lean on the Lord (Hebrews 12:1-2; 1 John 4:4; Philippians 4:13). As one man said, "Yesterday God helped me. How long will this continue? Forever, praise His holy name."

The Sinking (28-33)

The final thing that we will notice is the sinking of Peter. This section ends with Peter ***"beginning to sink"*** and crying, ***"Lord, save me."*** Let's notice the wish, the walk and the wind. Respecting the wish, according to verse 28, Peter wanted to walk on the sea, and he asked permission to do so. Exactly why he wanted to walk on the water is not known, but the Lord granted his wish and told him to ***"come."***

Of the walk, the text says, ***"When Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus"*** (29). At this point, Peter was listening to and looking toward the Lord. He was walking by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). Bear in mind that Peter was trying to do what the Lord said when he began to sink. The Lord had told him to ***"come,"*** and Peter stepped out in faith.

Regarding the wind, verse 30 says, ***"But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried saying, 'Lord save me.'"*** He took his eyes off the Lord and started looking at the wind. Please note that it was when he started concentrating on the problem rather than on the Savior that he began to sink. This caused him to doubt and to be afraid. Many times today, Christians begin to sink because they are surrounded by problems and pressures in life, and they start concentrating on them rather than on being faithful to the Lord. They fail to keep ***"looking at Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith…"*** (Hebrews 12:2). May the Lord help us not to let the winds of adversity and the sea of trouble cause us to take our eyes off Jesus and sink back into sin.

In this article, we have considered sinking souls from Matthew 14:22-23. We have discussed the storms, the Savior and the sinking. Hopefully, we have learned some things that will help us avoid letting problems and pressures in this life cause us to fall.

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Is the Kingdom Coming?

Royce Frederick

Some people claim that Christ will return to earth to set up His kingdom and begin reigning on earth. However, they overlook one important fact: He set up His kingdom long ago. He has already been reigning almost two thousand years!

In Mark 9:1, Jesus told His disciples, ***"Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power."*** Jesus clearly told them that the kingdom would come very soon within the lifetime of some of the people who were standing there. Later, all of those people died, and they've been dead for many centuries. So, the coming of the kingdom cannot be a future event.

In Colossians 1:13, Paul said this about God: ***"He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love."*** This clearly shows that the kingdom of Christ had already been established before Paul wrote Colossians. In the first century, he and every Christian had already been ***"conveyed"*** (transferred) into the kingdom of Christ. Therefore, we know that the kingdom came soon after the words of Jesus in Mark 9:1, and before the words of Paul in Colossians 1:13. Every person who obeys the Gospel becomes a citizen of His kingdom (Philippians 3:20), a member of His body, the church (Colossians 1:18; Galatians 3:26-27).

There is no need to guess when the kingdom of Christ came. Acts 2 shows that the kingdom came with power in Jerusalem on the Jewish day of Pentecost. Three thousand people obeyed the Gospel that day! That was the beginning of the church, the kingdom of Christ.

Will Christ come again? Yes! Acts 1:11 declares that He will come again. However, the Bible does not teach that He will live on earth and reign from an earthly headquarters. Some men use Revelation 20 to teach that He will come to earth to reign. Yet, if you search Revelation 20 carefully, you will see that it says nothing about Christ coming to earth.

The kingdom has already been established. Christ is now reigning as King. When He returns, all Christians, living and dead, will be taken up into the clouds ***"…to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord"*** (1 Thessalonians 4:17). The return of Christ will not be a time for setting up a kingdom on earth. It will be a time for removing His kingdom from the earth and giving it to God. ***"Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father…"*** (1 Corinthians 15:24).

We should certainly look for the kingdom, but we should not try to look into the future to find it. The kingdom of Christ is His church. When we have found His church, we have found His kingdom!

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

Robison's Rubies

The Bible, of course, claims over and over to be inspired by God. Of course, claims by themselves don't make the case for inspiration. There is a lot of evidence, though—enough for a lifetime of study! Basically, just as an effect demands an adequate cause and design demands a designer, the Bible—full of beautiful design—demands an adequate explanation. Man could not have tied it together; its separate books were written too far apart in time, and yet they have such a unity! Archaeological finds routinely confirm Bible narratives! Further, predictive prophecy is so specific in the Bible, particularly regarding the person of Christ. The only adequate explanation is a divine, supernatural mind behind it.

MISCELLANEOUS RELIGIOUS QUESTIONS & BIBLE ANSWERS

Ken Tyler

QUESTION: Should small children be baptized?
ANSWER: Small children are safe—not accountable to God. Jesus stated in Matthew 18:3, ***"…Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."*** From this statement it is obvious that little children are in a safe relationship with God. In Acts 8:30, Philip pointed out that an individual must be able to understand before he can obey the Gospel. Small children and those who are mentally incompetent do not fit into this category. Please read Ezekiel 28:15 and Ezekiel 18:20 to see that children are not born sinners. Small children should not be baptized because they are not lost, and baptism is ***"…for the remission of sins…"*** (Acts 2:38).

QUESTION: What is ***"the book of life"*** mentioned in Philippians 4:3?
ANSWER: The book of life in the above passage is the Lamb's book of life kept in Heaven, in which the names of God's children are written. In Revelation 3:5, we are told, ***"He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before His angels."*** This indicates very clearly that the names of the saints are kept in Heaven, and that none of those who continue faithfully until death will be blotted out. Please also notice Revelation 20:12, 15, ***"And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life… And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."*** When a person obeys the Gospel, his name is written in the book of life. It can be blotted out by a person becoming unfaithful to the Lord. Is your name in the book of life?

Bible Questions

QUESTION: Is the doctrine of "once saved always saved" a Bible doctrine?
ANSWER: The Bible plainly teaches that a person can fall and be lost after he has been saved. Demas is a perfect example of this happening. In 62 A.D., Paul referred to Demas as one of his fellow laborers. Please note Philemon 24, which says, ***"…Marcus, Aristarchus, Demas, Lucas, my fellow laborers."*** However, in 68 A.D., Paul sadly told Timothy, ***"For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica"*** (2 Timothy 4:10). It is obvious that Demas had fallen and was no longer saved. The reason was that he ***"loved this present world."*** Look at the statement in Galatians 5:4, which reads, ***"... ye are fallen from grace."*** According to God's Word, the doctrine of once saved always saved is false.

QUESTION: Does the Bible teach that premarital sex is a sin if the couple are sincerely in love and plan to be married?
ANSWER: First, let me point out that the standard for true morality is not determined by us. What God says is the standard we must follow. God instructs in Ephesians 5:3, ***"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints."*** Hebrews 13:4 tells us that ***"Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whore-mongers and adulterers God will judge."*** The bed is undefiled in marriage, not before. Premarital sex is fornication, and the Bible says fornication is sin.

QUESTION: What does the word "reconcile" mean?
ANSWER: Vine, in his *Dictionary of New Testament Words,* states, "To change from enmity to friendship." Paul stated in 2 Corinthians 5:18-19, ***"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."*** Through Jesus Christ and His Gospel, we can be reconciled to God. Today, are you God's friend or enemy?

Ken Tyler is a preacher of the Gospel in Arab, Alabama, USA.

Alexander the Great

David R. Kenney

It may seem strange to have an article on Alexander the Great. However, there were reasons why Alexander was referred to as "the Great," and these reasons influenced the New Testament world. The fact that both the Old Testament was translated into and the New Testament was written into Koine Greek demonstrates the great influence of Alexander the Great.

Alexander was born to King Philip II of Macedon (382-336 B.C.) and Olympias. His teacher was the philosopher Aristotle. In 336 B.C., Philip II was assassinated by Pausanias, who stabbed Philip as he stood between his son Alexander and his new son-in-law Alexander at his daughter's, Cleopatra, wedding celebration. Philip had decided to invade Persian territory in Asia Minor in retaliation for their alliance with foes of Greece. There was a force of 10,000 on the march when Philip died. Alexander would take this force and begin empire expansion like it had never been seen before.

Alexander defeated Darius III and the Persian Empire at the Battle of Issus in 333 B.C. Darius was murdered before Alexander could catch him in pursuit. Alexander treated Darius' family, whom he had abandoned to flee, with compassion. In fact, Alexander did this with many of the nations

he conquered. His conquest of the island portion of Tyre was incredible. Although Alexander is not named in the Bible, there are prophecies relating to his conquest and the rise of Greece as a world power (Ezekiel 26:1-14; Daniel 2:1-45; 8:18-22; 10:20-11:4).

According to Josephus, Ant. 11:317-335, Alexander was about to conquer Judea after their refusal to send him reinforcements at Tyre. When he approached Jerusalem, he was met by High Priest Jaddus and an entourage paying homage. According to Josephus, they made such an impression on Alexander that he left them to be self-governing. Scholars contest aspects of Josephus' account, even some doubting Alexander ever came to Jerusalem. Alexander certainly had "bigger fish to fry" with the Persians, but he was known to leave some to govern themselves if they were friendly toward him.

Alexander the Great, unlike the Roman Empire to follow, forced his subjects to learn Greek and to express themselves in Greek conventions. He encouraged cities to follow the Greek model called *polis*. The term "Hellenism" refers to those who adopted the Greek way. Even though the Jews resisted assimilation, there were those who embraced Greek ways. Recall the Hellenists who were Greek-speaking Jews in Acts 6:1. Alexander the Great began his conquest at the age of 20, and he continued his conquest even into parts of Egypt, India and beyond until his death at the age of 33 in 323 B.C. The psalmist wrote, ***"God reigns over the nations; God sits on His holy throne"*** (Psalm 47:8 NKJV). God used Nebuchadnezzar, Cyrus, Alexander the Great and others, whether they realized it or not, to accomplish His divine plan to bring salvation to the entire world through the work of Jesus, the Son of God.

David R. Kenney preaches for the church of Christ in Wadsworth, Ohio, USA.

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7 TIMES IN ONE DAY

J.J. Turner

INTRODUCTION:

What Causes the Following Health Issues:

Rapid heart rate and increased palpitations?
High blood pressure?
Back pain?
Headaches?
Stomach problems?
Stress/sleeplessness?
Depression?
Ulcers?
Anger, rage?
Stress issues?

Unforgiveness! (Psychologist, Medical Doctors)

Which is more difficult:

To accept forgiveness from others & God?
To forgive yourself?
To forgive others?

Luke 17:3-4: ***"Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."***

Matthew 6:14-15: ***"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. BUT if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you."***

What Is Forgiveness?

Hebrew (nasa, "To lift up, takes away"; salach, "to let go, send away")
Greek (aphiemi, "to send or let off, let go away").

General—Psychology:
"Forgiveness is the intentional and voluntary process by which a victim undergoes a change in feelings and attitudes regarding an offense; letting go of negative emotions such as vengefulness, with an increased ability to wish the offender well."
Forgiveness is a function of LOVE! A Choice.

What Forgiveness is not, from a biblical point of view:

Forgiveness is not condoning (failing to see the action as wrong and in need for forgiveness).
Forgiveness is not excusing a person's wrong actions (not holding responsible for his actions).
Forgiveness is not a pardon granted by a Judge.
Forgiveness is not forgetting (removing from consciousness).
Forgiveness is not reconciliation (restoration of relationship).
Forgiveness is not absolving one of a debt, loan, obligation.

Why Forgiveness Is Difficult:

There are several reasons why forgiveness is difficult:
A sense of justice—person needs to be punished
Automatic thoughts about being wronged
Lack of empathy
Explaining away our role and behavior
Believe in "justice and retaliation"
Living in past—won't/ can't let go
Don't understand how God can help

Some Keys to Forgiveness: (There are several keys, Ephesians 4:32)
Be kind, forgiving.
Know God has commanded it—must be able to do it.
Remember how God has forgiven you.
Pray continually about "letting it go."
Replace thoughts—Philippians 4:7-10, "Think on these…"
Matthew 18:21-35: Parable of Unjust Servant.

CONCLUSION:

Do you intentionally need to forgive someone? SELF? Unforgiveness/resentment is like taking poison hoping it will kill the other person.

GOD WON'T FORGIVE YOU IF YOU WON'T FORGIVE OTHERS!

Biblical Examples of Forgiveness:

The Prodigal Son, Amazing Forgiveness

Very familiar Bible account:
Son'S freedom of choice exercised
Father received back
Older brother wouldn't forgive
"Close to God but won't forgive"

Joseph Forgave His Brothers

Sold into slavery, Genesis 37:23-28
Joseph forgave, Genesis 50:15-26, Perhaps will hate us." NO!

Stephen, Church Deacon, Forgave

Acts 7:60

Consequences of Not Forgiving:

Disobey God and Christ (John 14:15). 70 x 7 = 490
Fail to imitate God (Ephesians 5:1)
Poison your body's 7 Systems—keep anger, resentment
Set poor examples for others (1 Timothy 4:12)
Will not be forgiven (Matthew 6:14-15).
Violate law of love: Agape—1 Corinthians 13. "Love enemies"
Will never be truly happy or at peace with self and God
Failing to have "attitude of Christ" (Philippians 2:4-9)
Will miss heaven (Revelation 22:14)
Will regret it eternally
Sin against God (Psalm 51:3-4)

From the author's book *The 490 Forgiveness Rule* (amazon.com).

J.J. Turner, Ph.D. works with the church of Christ in McDonough, Georgia, USA. To order his books, go to worldbibleinstitute.com and click on Dr. J. J. Turner.

Witness to the Resurrection: The People

Serge Shoemaker

One cannot be a Christian without believing in the Resurrection. The event is nearly 2,000 years old, but testimonies of witnesses to it remain, starting with the testimony of the people.

I. The Unlikely.

A. Jesus's first appearances were to women.
   1. Mary Magdalene (John 20:13-14).
   2. Other women leaving the tomb (Matthew 28:7-9).

B. Not invented stories.
   1. Others were "closer" to Jesus (Matthew 17:1; Mark 14:33; John 13:23).
   2. Their testimony was considered worthless (Luke 24:11).

II. The unexpected.

A. Appearances to disciples.
   1. On the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:15).
   2. The appearance to Peter (Cephas) (1 Corinthians 15:5; Luke 24:33-34).
   3. In the upper room (John 20:19-20).

B. The Resurrection was unexpected.
   1. They didn't understand Jesus' teaching (Mark 9:31-32; Luke 18.34).
   2. They sought to prevent His death (Mark 8:31-32; John 18:10).

3. They were left sorrowful (John 16:20; John 20:19).
4. They were hesitant to believe (Luke 24:10-11; John 20:24-25).

III. The unbelieving.

A. The skeptic, James (1 Corinthians 15:7).
   1. Jesus's brothers were unbelievers (John 7:3-5; Mark 3:21).
   2. James became a leader in the church (Acts 15:13; Galatians 1:19).
   3. He died for his faith!

B. The enemy: Saul (1 Corinthians 15:8; Acts 9:1-9; 22:5-11; 26:12-18).
   1. Christianity's most fervent persecutor (Acts 8:3; 26:9-10).
   2. He became its most forceful proponent (2 Corinthians 11:5, 23).
   3. He risked all for Christ (Acts 21:13; 2 Timothy 4:6)!

IV. Final thoughts.

A. The witnesses were not deceived (Acts 1:3; 1 Corinthians 15:6).
B. They were not deceptive (2 Corinthians 4:8-11).

Serge Shoemaker preaches for the Glendale Church of Christ in Newbern, Tennessee, USA.

Schools of Preaching

Louis Rushmore, Editor

Schools of preaching are religious technical or vocational institutes by which men (and their wives) are thoroughly but expeditiously prepared for preaching and teaching the Gospel in minimal time. A school of preaching that is overseen by a local eldership is essentially an extension of and a variety of a congregational Bible class. There is a place for university studies for some men regarding their preparation for the ministry, but neither are all men suited for the 4-year route (or more) nor is it obligatory to preach the Gospel. However, many graduates of schools of preaching continue their education in universities, and sometimes university graduates continue their preparation for the ministry by enrolling in a school of preaching. Schools of preaching offer specialized instruction to optimize one's effectiveness as a preacher (i.e., minister, evangelist).

There are several noteworthy schools of preaching stateside and abroad. Following are brief introductions to two such programs.

West Virginia School of Preaching

Andy Robison, Director

In the early 1990s, a dedicated group of Gospel preachers approached the eldership at the Hillview Terrace church of Christ in Moundsville, West Virginia about overseeing a school of preaching. The

eldership eventually took on the work, and in 1994 the school began. By 1996, a new facility was completed. Under the oversight of these good shepherds, many individuals and congregations have given selflessly to make this work a success.

Research is aided by a library of nearly 10,000 volumes. The school has an intensive two-year curriculum that includes an examination of every book of the Bible plus Bible-related subjects. Students receive courses in Christian Evidences, Church History and Restoration Movement History. They learn to answer the doctrines of denominations and world religions. Courses in grammar, homiletics, personal evangelism and communication through media prepare graduates to effectively relay the biblical message. Four quarters of Greek grounds students in the basics of the New Testament's original language.

The school's schedule is daunting. Chapel is at 8:30 every morning. Then, the daily class schedule is from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., with a lunch break. Students often have 4-5 hours of homework per evening. In addition, they have numerous opportunities to preach at area congregations on Sundays. This gives them a lot of practical experience in pulpit preaching.

West Virginia School of Preaching continues to function on a donation basis. Students are not charged tuition but are expected to raise their own living expenses through their home congregations.

Single students may live in the school's dormitory, which houses up to seven men. There, they live rent-free and are only charged for their share of utilities. Married students must find their own housing in the area.

The school is under the oversight of the elders of the Hillview Terrace

church of Christ, whose facilities are across the parking lot. The aim of the West Virginia school of Preaching is to produce men who, upon graduation, are ready to preach. Most of our faculty are area preachers who offer their time and experience willingly. Utilizing seasoned preachers enables students to have a more practical view of preaching even beyond the valuable textbook knowledge they receive. If a student wants further education, some Christian universities offer our school's graduates several hours toward a Bachelor's degree. Students' wives are offered classes on how to become better preacher's wives; these are scheduled flexibly so that the wives can be able to attend.

West Virginia School of Preaching is located in Moundsville, in the beautiful Upper Ohio Valley of the Northern Panhandle of West Virginia, about twelve miles south of Wheeling, West Virginia and about an hour and a half southwest of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Moundsville has a rich mixture of history, culture, commerce and industry.

Restoration Movement history abounds in the area. About a 45-minute drive away is Bethany, which was the home of Alexander Campbell. Living in Moundsville is cost-effective, with conveniences and amenities all nearby.

Do you want to learn more about us? Examine our website at wvsop.com or look for our Facebook Page. Feel free to call us at 304-845-8001. Give us a call, write us or come visit us. We would love to hear from you!

[Editor's Note: It was my privilege to teach for 10 years at the West Virginia School of Preaching. The instruction was on par with and several of the instructors were themselves products of a brotherhood school of preaching. The pace of life is much more relaxed and the cost of living is more reasonable than comparable opportunities in metropolitan areas. West Virginia School of Preaching is worthy of thoughtful consideration by potential students and possible benefactors. ~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]

From the Heart Of

Introducing the Florida School of Preaching

Brian Kenyon, Director

For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." 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? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" *(Romans 10:13-15 NKJV)*

Romans 10:13-15 is a chain. A chain is used to connect the items attached at either of its ends. In the case of Paul's metaphorical chain, we find at one end the need to ***"call on the name of the Lord"*** if a person is to be saved. At the other end of the chain, we find a person must hear about the Lord to have any hope of calling on Him. What brings together the one who needs to ***"call on the name of the Lord"*** with the knowledge necessary to call on Him? Paul's answer is a preacher. Preaching the Gospel is the chain that brings together one who needs to believe with the knowledge to make belief possible. Training men to preach is truly one of the great mission works of the church today, for no mission work takes place without someone teaching or being sent with the Gospel.

How Preachers Are Made

How are preachers made? There is a popular idea that God drops preachers down from Heaven through some kind of mystical calling received here on earth. There is no evidence for this kind of calling in the New Testament. According to the Bible, preachers are taught. The Florida School of Preaching has been dedicated since 1969 to serving the churches

of Christ through training faithful Christian men to preach the Gospel.

The template for creating preachers today is contained in 2 Timothy 2:2, ***"And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."*** The pattern is simple: faithful men select faithful men to whom the Gospel is entrusted that they in turn might teach others. This passage well describes what takes place at the Florida School of Preaching.

History

The Florida School of Preaching began as the result of the vision of a few faithful brethren. B.C. Carr, who was preaching for the South Florida Avenue church of Christ, was challenged by brother B.C. Goodpasture, Editor of the *Gospel Advocate* from 1939-1977, to consider starting a school of preaching in Lakeland, Florida. Largely due to the direction taken by many brethren and the only Christian college in the area over church cooperation and "non-institutional" issues, a great need arose in Florida for training scripturally balanced preachers. About this same time, G.K. Wallace retired from Freed-Hardeman College and moved to Central Florida. He also encouraged brother Carr to start a preaching school. G.K. was one of the instructors in those early years.

The South Florida Avenue eldership took on this work, allowing the school to use the congregation's facilities with brother Carr as the Director. The foresight of these men made the school possible, and in September 1969, it began its first semester of operation, meeting three nights per week with two classes each night. In 1972, the school was approved for

students using the "GI Bill" and became a full-time day school, teaching two three-hour classes per day, five days per week, a format that remains. The Florida School of Preaching owes much to the South Florida Avenue church, not only for her role in starting the school, but for her consistent support through the years. In 1980, an entire wing of the church building was constructed especially for the school, adding offices, classrooms and a library. This year, the Florida School of Preaching marks its fifty years of existence, faithfully training Gospel preachers. We have always been located at 1807 South Florida Avenue, Lakeland, Florida 33803.

In its fifty years of existence, only three men have served as director: B.C. Carr (1969-1992), Jackie M. Stearsman (1992-2009) and Brian R. Kenyon (2009-present). This, by God's grace, speaks of the faithful stability of the school. Many preaching schools have risen over the years, but few have remained a consistent, stabilizing force for the ***"gospel of peace."*** Throughout our history, we have prepared students and helped equip brethren to withstand the attacks of "ant-biblical expediency" doctrines, Crossroads-ism and various other efforts to "loose" where God has "bound" (Matthew 16:19; 18:18).

Academics

The Florida School of Preaching has a two-year course study of 120 semester hours (which is 1,920 clock hours). All of the courses offered are directly related to the work of a Gospel preacher. Students will get no algebra here! We are not opposed to secular education. In fact, our catalog has stated for years: "The school encourages in-

dividuals to pursue education to the highest extent possible." However, our focus is on the Bible, which we know is God's revelation to humanity. Virtually everything we know about God and His will are learned from the Bible. Therefore, our curriculum is weighed heavily with courses that are dedicated to studying the biblical text. Every book of God's Word is studied in our two-year course of study.

In addition to Bible knowledge, it is vital to the work of a preacher that his learning include several other areas of study. These areas are communication, critical thinking, religion and technology. Classes such as English (both written and spoken), church and restoration history, logic, comparative religions, missions and computers provide our students with the skills needed to communicate God's Word to God's people as well as to those who have never obediently turned to Jesus in submission to the Gospel.

Influence

The influence of the Florida School of Preaching is global. Our students have worked in every part of the world in mission efforts. Also, our annual lectureship reaches people in many different countries via books, electronic media and through internet streaming. Satellite classes are also offered at local church buildings throughout the State of Florida. At the present time, these are found in Jacksonville, Apopka (Orlando area) and Auburndale. This makes learning available to those who are unable to attend our day classes at our main campus in Lakeland. Additionally, some of our classes each semester are available online for qualified students.

Financial

Many are surprised to learn that all of this education is tuition free. The only classroom cost to our students is the cost of their books. Students also need to raise funds for their living expenses and to provide for their families (1 Timothy 5:8). We are able to offer these classes without tuition because of generous and faithful Christian people who believe in the importance of preacher training. Individuals and churches throughout the country support the Florida School of Preaching because they understand the need for faithful

men to be trained to preach the Gospel without addition or subtraction.

In addition to offering our classes tuition free, we also have limited student aid available for living expenses to those who qualify. We recommend that students needing support start by informing their local congregations of their plans to attend the Florida School of Preaching and see what support is available there. Then, they can contact other local churches of Christ and faithful Christians.

With the continued support of faithful Christians and local churches of Christ, the Florida School of Preaching can continue training men to preach the Gospel and better prepare souls to serve the Lord. You can help us by (1) becoming familiar with our work through our monthly publication, *The Harvester* (contact us to receive it), our annual lectureships and accompanying books, and our Bible study material; (2) praying for our work, including new students and financial support; (3) financially contributing to the Florida School of Preaching, toward student support or the day-to-day operation of the school and (4) remember us in your estate planning. If you would like to know more about the Florida School of Preaching or to schedule a visit from the Director, Brian R. Kenyon, please see our Facebook page, visit our website (www.fsop.net) or email us at fsop@fsop.net.

[Editor's Note: I have personally attended and benefitted from lectureship programs of the Florida School of Preaching. Its Director, Brian Kenyon, is also published in the World Evangelism publications of *The Voice of Truth International* **and** *Gospel Gazette Online*. **~ Louis Rushmore, Editor]**

All FSOP directors in one picture (1990-1991 school year). At this time, Jackie was the associate director and Brian was just a student.

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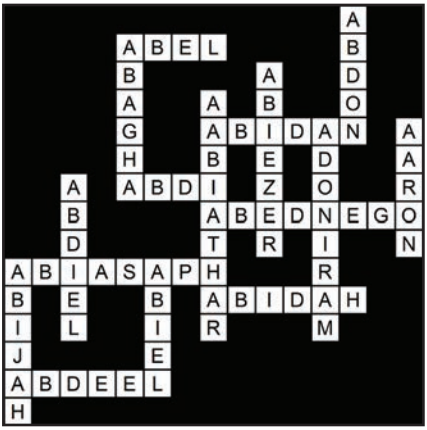
Answers to Puzzles

Verse Search (Page 46)

1. one
2. Baptized into the body
3. anyone, Jew or Greek, slave or free
4. the different parts of the human body
5. God
6. members, one
7. yes
8. bestow greater honor and modesty
9. True
10. suffer with it
11. Apostles, prophets, teachers
12. No

Bible Find (page 45)



Scavenger Hunt (page 84)

Answers:

1. he should be accursed (1:8-9)
2. 15 (1:18)
3. Barnabas (2:13)
4. righteousness through the Law (2:21)
5. as a tutor to bring us to Christ (3:24-25)
6. through baptism (3:27)
7. the kingdom of God (5:19-21)
8. fruit of the Spirit (5:22-23)
9. everlasting life (6:8)
10. as we have opportunity (6:10)

For Further Information, Please Contact:

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2:9,10).

How many different words are used in the New Testament to designate the church which Christ died to own? There are those who advocate "preach Christ" but "leave the church alone", as though it is some prejudicial attitude that would cause one to make mention of *the* church in a world in which there are so many, called by so many different names.

But the New Testament is absolutely filled with the idea of "the called out", which is what "church", "ekklesia" in Greek means. Look at Peter's description of this glorious body of people — not glorious because of our own goodness or uniqueness, but glorious because those in the church have deliberately left the "kingdom of darkness" to be in the "kingdom of light.

Peter said of the church — of Christians — you are:

- a ***chosen*** generation
- a ***royal*** priesthood
- a ***holy*** nation
- ***His own special*** people.

There is purpose in this uniqueness in Christ: **that** we may **proclaim** — tell to the world (this is our work) — the **praises** of Him who **called you out of darkness** — the world — **into His marvelous light** — another way of designating, *into* His family, His church, His kingdom, His holy nation!

He further describes this body of people: That at one time we were not a people, because we were all mixed up in the world, but now we have become **the people of God;** once we were lost, being without mercy, because we were under the condemnation of sin; but now, in Christ, in the church, in this royal priesthood, this chosen family, we have obtained mercy.